



Vol. 1 • Spring 2015

Close Reading Update

USING ACT NOW! IN MY CLASSROOM

by Amy Miles

I am truly excited to let educators everywhere know about *ACT Now!* because I have found it to be a wonderful resource that supports my students deeply analyzing the thoughts of many authors. It has become a station in my classroom that I use with small heterogeneous groups of students, because this format allows me to probe their thinking and to be sure that each student is participating. I can quickly observe their annotations and listen to their responses, so I am able to add questions to the terrific ones included in *ACT Now!*

Having texts aligned with grade-level Common Core Standards gives me the security that I am providing readings within the appropriate Lexile range. Students are stretched by the content of these articles, which are grouped as three genres around a similar topic.

Students appreciate having wide margin spaces on which to make their notes. This eliminates pasting texts on larger sheets of paper, and in reality, what teacher has time to do that or wants to spend her time gluing? In addition to the

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Providing Close Reading Scaffolds Effectively

by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey

Close reading is hot; there's no doubt about it. This time, it's not only teachers of adolescents and college students but also elementary educators who are paying attention to this instructional routine. Clearly more information is needed if this practice is going to be implemented well in classrooms.

One aspect of close reading that has garnered a great deal of attention is the support that teachers can and should provide for students. More specifically, we were interested in finding out the answers to two important questions:

- How do you support students during close reading?
- Are there actions you take when students don't understand the text?

To answer the question about appropriate scaffolds during close reading, we interviewed 12 teachers, two each from grades 3 to 8 inclusive. These teachers were purposefully selected because they were widely recognized as leaders in close reading implementation.

Before each interview, we observed a close reading lesson in each teacher's classroom. As part of the observation, we collected field notes detailing the flow of the lesson and students' responses to the instructional event.



Dr. Doug Fisher Dr. Nancy Frey

SCAFFOLDS DURING CLOSE READING

The teachers in this study identified four scaffolds that were automatically used as part of their close reading instruction. As a fifth-grade teacher noted, "We used to rely on front-end scaffolds so that students would understand the text when they read it. Now we use scaffolds that are spread out over the course of the close reading." These distributed scaffolds include:

1. repeated reading,
2. collaborative conversations,
3. annotations,
4. text-dependent questions.

Repeated Reading

One of the scaffolds that teachers identified as part of close reading instruction lies at the heart of this instructional approach: rereading.

As teachers discussed this scaffold and we observed close reading lessons, we realized that they were not simply telling students to reread the text.

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Students were invited to reread in response to new questions that they formulated or that teachers asked—when there was a new purpose introduced. And students reread the text when they needed to provide evidence for their responses.

As we observed lessons, it became clear that teachers were providing guidance and support in a number of ways, including the flow of the text-dependent questions and the conversations that students were

complexity. Several of the teachers described an organizing framework they used to plan close reading lessons:

- What does the text say?
- How does the text work?
- What does the text mean?

In some lessons, students read or listened to the text twice before even beginning the discussion. In other classrooms, students read all or portions of the text three or four times to figure out how the text worked. In still other classrooms, students read

As we observed lessons, it became clear that teachers were providing guidance and support in a number of ways...

having about the text. A third-grade teacher said, “I used to have students reread, but I didn’t really have them reread the texts for discussions, and it never occurred to me that they could be rereading social studies and science texts. Now we do!”

Text-Dependent Questions

As we discussed the various ways that teachers support students during close reading, it was clear that the questions they ask students are a critical part of the reading. One fourth-grade teacher said, “I have a lot of questions ready, and the questions help students pay attention to specific parts of a text, or even a word, that will help them get to the meaning of the text.”

Another fourth-grade teacher said, “I tend to ask a few questions at once so that different groups of students take on questions that appeal to them. Then I walk around listening to them talking, to make sure that they are really getting it. If not, I can ask another question to support their thinking.”

These questions are generally organized into three phases of

the text several times based on the discussions they were having with their peers, with no instructions to do so from their teacher.

Collaborative Conversations

In every classroom we observed, students discussed the complex texts they were reading. Close reading was not a silent or independent activity but rather an interactive and inquiry-based experience. The co-construction of knowledge was what was most important. In most classrooms, students asked one another questions and displayed argumentation skills as they agreed and disagreed with one another about the information contained within the text. In several classrooms, we saw posters with sentence frames on them that provided students with support for engaging in these collaborative conversations.

As a fourth-grade teacher noted, “We have known for a long time that cooperative learning was a good thing. Close reading just lets us use

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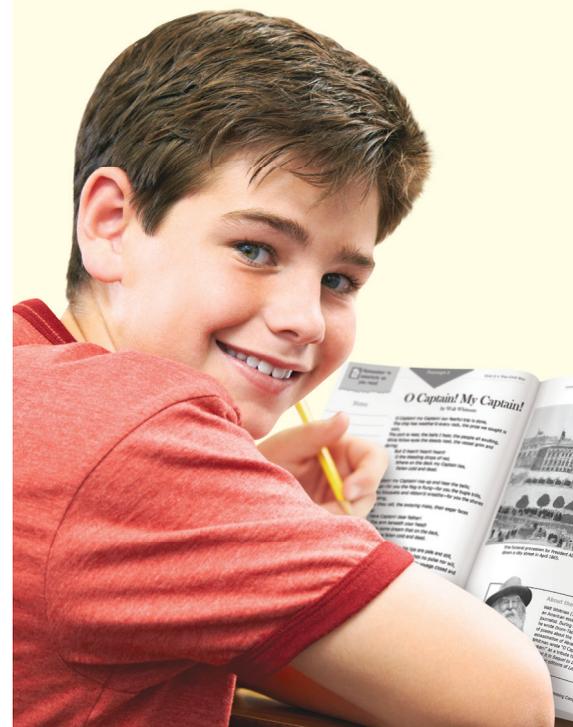


Close Reading Resources Guide Students to Success

Innovative books and instructional support help students build key skills.

- Annotating complex text is explicitly taught and effectively practiced.
- Collaborative conversations develop understanding and clarify thinking.
- Writing to sources enables students to create evidence-based answers.

Topic Sets include authentic texts, primary sources, and Common Core Exemplars.



Student Books guide collaborative practice that develops Grades 3–8 close reading skills!

Sample Pages: Grade 3 Student Book

NEW from **Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey**

Students read and annotate grade-level passages that feature diverse genres.

Remember to annotate as you read.

Passage 1 Unit 2 • Amazing Animals

Life in a Pack



Some animals are social. They live together in groups and know each other by scent or sight. These animals cooperate with each other. Which animals are social butterflies? Wolves, orcas, and dolphins, just to name a few. Wolves use their

So what is the drawback to group life? Chances are not everyone in the group will mate. Also, food fights are common.

Look at the meerkat. This energetic animal lives in the desert in Southern Africa. It has a keen sense of smell, vision, and hearing. Meerkats live in groups that usually include one dominant female, called the alpha meerkat. A meerkat's job is to watch for predators. Other meerkats come to her for protection. Meerkats often participate in cooperative behavior. When it's time to forage, or search for food, some members search. Others act as a sentry, or guard. Standing on its hind legs, the sentry can remain on post for hours. He lets out a bark or whistle if he spots an enemy. That's how meerkats practice cooperation.

Notes: Groups can work together as teams. But food fights are common!

Students think about and discuss the passages, using text-dependent questions.

Close Reading and Collaborative Conversations

What Does the Text Say?	How Does the Text Work?	What Does the Text Mean?
<p>1. What is the text mostly about? Turn to a partner and summarize the text.</p>	<p>1. What text structure does the author use in paragraphs 2 and 3? How does it help the reader?</p>	<p>Why do you think some female meerkats need to "pay rent" to the dominant female in the group?</p>
<p>2. How does living in groups help animals survive more easily?</p>	<p>2. Why is the photograph on page 32 a good choice to accompany this passage?</p>	

Students write either an opinion/argument or an informative/explanatory text based on the passage.

Write About the Text

After reading "Life in a Pack," write one or two paragraphs about what you might observe if you studied a meerkat mob for one day. Give examples from the passage to support your ideas.

Introduction:

Text Evidence:

Wrap Up

Check Your Understanding

- What is the central idea of paragraph 5?
 - A. Only the dominant female meerkat has children.
 - B. Meerkats pay rent.
 - C. Some females nurse the dominant female's offspring.
 - D. Living within a group is important to meerkats.
- This question has two parts. Answer Part A first. Then answer Part B.

Part A What does the phrase *safety in numbers* in paragraph 2 mean?

 - A. Some animals are safer than others.
 - B. Animals living in groups offer protection.
 - C. Animals are safer when they live alone.
 - D. Predators hunt for animals that live in groups.

Writer's Checklist

continued from page 2

cooperative learning with complex texts. I don't have to tell students what to think about the text. But I do have to guide their conversations so they develop a new habit of figuring out what the text means."

Another teacher said of her sixth-grade students, "I was worried they would give each other the wrong ideas, but that didn't happen...they keep pushing each other for evidence from the text so they get to the understanding and I don't have to tell them what the text means."

Annotations

A fourth scaffold identified by teachers was the direct marking students did on the text, either in print or digitally. These annotations may relate to confusing parts of the text or allow students to identify central ideas. In addition, the annotations should include written margin notes that contain questions, summaries, and inferences in the students' own words.

An eighth-grade teacher stated, "Annotations are really about getting students to slow down and pay attention to the text. Annotating a text causes students to use their comprehension strategies, such as monitoring, questioning, clarifying, and predicting."

A seventh-grade teacher commented, "When we started this, the students would just annotate when they first got the text. And their evidence was always from their initial understanding. We talked about this as a class and I reminded them each time we read that they needed to update their annotations...And their responses have really improved because it's not just about the evidence, it's also their thinking about the evidence that I'm looking for."

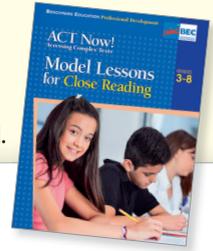
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Lesson Book helps you teach close reading.

Sample Pages: Professional Book

Annotation skills and symbols are taught, modeled, and practiced.



Mini-Lesson 10 Introduction to Annotation

Objectives:

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Understand the basic symbols used for annotation
- Practice making notes in the margin

Introduce

Remind students that annotation, or marking the text as they read, can help them closely read a text.

Display for students the annotation guide and review each of the symbols they can use when annotating.

Point out that one way of annotating a text is to make notes in the margin. Writing notes in the margin is a way to record thoughts, questions, and answers to questions. Readers can return to those notes when they are rereading and when they are speaking and writing about

Analysis of prompts helps students respond effectively.

Mini-Lesson 14 Understanding Argument Prompts

Objective:

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Read and analyze an argument prompt

Materials:

- Model Text 11

Introduce

Explain to students that a prompt is just another way to ask a question. An argument prompt requires students to formulate their own opinions about a text, which they must then explain and defend in an essay. Tell students that one of the most important things about answering a prompt is to first read it carefully. As writers, students need to analyze the prompt to make sure they understand what it is asking so they can respond thoroughly and thoughtfully.

Model

Mini-lessons on selecting and using text evidence improve responses.

Mini-Lesson 16 Identifying Text Evidence to Use in Writing

Objective

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Understand how to introduce text evidence in written responses
- Use different approaches to introduce text

Introduce

Explain to students that when writing either an argument piece or an informative/explanatory piece, there are two ways to introduce text evidence from a source text. Writers can quote directly from the source, using quotation marks. Writers can also introduce evidence by paraphrasing—or restating in their own words—either specific examples from a source text or general information gathered from one or more sources.

Model

Show Model Text 12 with students. Read the first

Teacher's Guides provide detailed support for building key skills.

Sample Pages: Grade 3 Teacher's Guide

Information about the texts and the close reading process helps you guide students.

Accessing Complex Text

Life in a Pack	Let's Talk About It	The Snow Monkey
Quantitative Measures Word Count: 369 Lexile: 670L	Quantitative Measures Word Count: 516 Lexile: 788L	Quantitative Measures Word Count: 455 Lexile: 660L
Purpose and Level of Meaning The main purpose of the text is to describe the passage provides many examples that directly support the central idea.	Purpose and Level of Meaning Students need to keep the main purpose of the text in mind as they track discussions of various scientific techniques and technology.	Purpose and Level of Meaning The main purpose of the text is to describe the passage provides many examples that directly support the central idea.
Structure The passage begins with a general overview of animal pack life and then narrows the focus to one animal group: meerkats.	Structure The passage begins with an introduction to a radio interview and then follows with the transcript of that interview. Students need to keep track of who is speaking in each paragraph.	Structure The long passage includes a text box that includes scientific study findings. A key writer the text about a particular snow monkey's behavior, and a sidebar.
Language Conventions and Clarity The passage contains many complex sentences and academic and domain-specific vocabulary, such as cooperate, pack mentality, prey, dominant female, offspring.	Language Conventions and Clarity The passage contains many complex sentences and academic and domain-specific vocabulary, such as cooperation, dominant female, frequency, offspring.	Language Conventions and Clarity The passage contains many complex sentences and academic and domain-specific vocabulary, such as frequency, offspring, prey, dominant female, climate, adapt.

Read and Find Text Evidence
Have students read the passage independently. Remind students to underline the central idea, writing questions in the margin, circling any unknown words. Observe students as they read and take notes to identify the areas of the text to focus on during close reading. Use the Error Analysis Chart to record observations.

Collaborative Conversation
After students have finished reading, have them discuss text evidence columns. Top students can be charged with modeling answering one question before having students work with a partner.

Option 1: Peer Conversations
Answers and Supporting Text Evidence
1. What is the text mostly about? Turn to a partner and summarize it.

Option 2: Guided Conversations
Answers and Supporting Text Evidence
1. What is the text mostly about? Turn to a partner and summarize it.

Suggested answers and scaffolding make the teaching process faster and effective.

What Does the Text Say? *RI.3.1, RI.3.2, RI.3.3, RI.3.4*

Reading Objectives
In this close reading, students will:
- determine the main idea of "Life in a Pack," and recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea
- describe the causes and effects of living in a group
- refer explicitly to "Life in a Pack" to explain how meerkats cooperate with each other

Answers and Supporting Text Evidence
1. What is the text mostly about? Turn to a partner and summarize the text.
Some animals live in groups in order to take care of young, stay warm, and have more protection from predators. Meerkats live in groups that cooperate with each other to find food, watch for enemies, and care for babies.

Seafield Using Text Evidence
Have students read the title and notice how the paragraph supports it. Explain that good readers can often tell a lot about a passage from titles and pictures.
The text explains how meerkats cooperate with each other to help them remember the reading parts.

How Does the Text Work? *RI.3.1, RI.3.2, RI.3.3, RI.3.4*

Reading Objectives
In this close reading, students will:
- describe the structure of paragraphs in "Life in a Pack"
- use information gained from a photograph to understand how it works in connection with the text
- describe the logical connections in a paragraph

Answers and Supporting Text Evidence
1. What text structure does the author use in paragraphs 2 and 3? How does it help the reader?
In both paragraphs, the author uses a question-and-answer format. Both paragraphs begin with a question, which is then answered in the following sentence. For example, paragraph 2, starts with the question "Why do some animals live in groups?" Then the author explains...

Seafield Using Text Evidence
Have students read the first two paragraphs. Guide them to picture in their minds what the text is describing. Ask them to identify details that are in groups to help each other.

Text-dependent questions and helpful suggestions develop student responses.

What Does the Text Mean? *RI.3.1, RI.3.2, RI.3.3*

Reading Objectives
In this close reading, students will:
- refer explicitly to the text to answer questions and draw inferences about animal behavior
- describe the cause of why some female meerkats need to "pay rent"

Answers and Supporting Text Evidence
1. How is meerkat community similar to a human community? Use text evidence to support your answer.
Meerkats live together in a cooperative group and divide up jobs to accomplish different tasks, such as finding food, keeping each other safe, and caring for their young. Humans are also social and live in groups. Some humans grow and food for others to buy. Police stand guard to keep the rest of the community safe. Both humans and meerkats help care for children. Text Evidence: In paragraph 1, the text states that some meerkats are social and live together in groups that cooperate with each other and defend each other. In paragraph 5, the text describes how females in the group cooperate to help raise the young.

Seafield Using Text Evidence
Discuss that sometimes authors include language that does not mean exactly what it describes. Say: In this text, the phrase "paying rent" is a saying. Other people may need to pay money to live in a place. Meerkats don't live in money.
Have students read paragraph 5. Tell them that the dominant female is the strongest female. Say: Why would it be a good idea for a meerkat to get along with the dominant female?

Write About the Text: Informative/Explanatory *W.3.2, W.3.4, W.3.5*
Read aloud the writing prompt on page 36 of the student book and ask students to write a response to the prompt that they will use their understanding of the text to respond to this prompt.
Informative/Explanatory Writing Prompt
After reading "Life in a Pack," write one or two paragraphs about meerkats if you studied a meerkat mob for one day. Give the passage to support your ideas.

Seafield Using Text Evidence
Have students use the graphic organizer with the prompt to remind students to review their close reading annotations and the notes they noted during their collaborative conversations. Use the Writing Rubric: Informative/Explanatory on page 125 to assess students' work.

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THE SUCCESS OF CLOSE READING SCAFFOLDS

The vast majority of close reading lessons resulted in students' understanding complex texts as evidenced by the products they created. These products ranged from written responses to debates to discussions that mirrored the Socratic Seminar approach.

In essence, close reading resulted in a much more sophisticated understanding about the text. As a teacher said in a subsequent interview, "The students amaze me with their understanding of the text after close reading. I have really pushed up my expectations and the students are really doing well with it."

And as a seventh-grade teacher noted, "Most of the time, close reading works beautifully and the process just gets them to a great level of understanding of the text. But sometimes I have to do a little more work to make sure that the students really understand."

CLOSE READING ACTION PLAN

- Select** a text worthy of close reading. It should be complex enough to support multiple readings and discussions.
- Analyze** the text and list its qualitative factors of complexity, then keep that list near you as students read and discuss the text.
- Engage** students in a close reading of the text using the scaffolds outlined in this article. Make sure to clearly state the purpose for reading.
- Observe** students closely to determine whether they are making sense of the text.
- Collect** and analyze students' annotations to determine "next steps" instruction.

This article was adapted from "Contingency Teaching During Close Reading" by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, which originally appeared in the December 2014/January 2015 issue of *The Reading Teacher*. Reprinted with permission.

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margins, students appreciate the space provided for answering each critical thinking question.

Each booklet also encourages students to use annotations by providing an annotation key, which reminds them of the importance of their unique thinking. It's great to have a variety of exemplary texts to choose from, and the flexibility of this resource allows the class to bounce around the book, matching up the text with what they are learning in their other content areas. We have

truly been able to connect their background knowledge from what was previously learned in class, as well as promote excitement about what is to come in science, history, and even health.

The information in the teacher's manual is also so well presented that each time I read it I feel as if I am in a professional development session. Originally I was apprehensive to try close reading with my students, but *ACT Now!* has given me the

confidence I needed. The texts are terrific, and throughout a lesson I add questions that relate to those originally shared in the text, feeling secure that my students are learning across the disciplines.

ACT Now! is a resource that will help your students become more proficient readers, while saving you time and offering the support you need to make close reading a regular experience in your classroom.

AMY MILES teaches English at the Health Sciences Middle School in San Diego, CA. Almost 75% of the students at this public charter school receive free or reduced-price lunch, and about 20% are English learners.

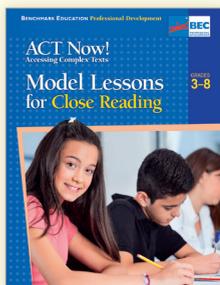


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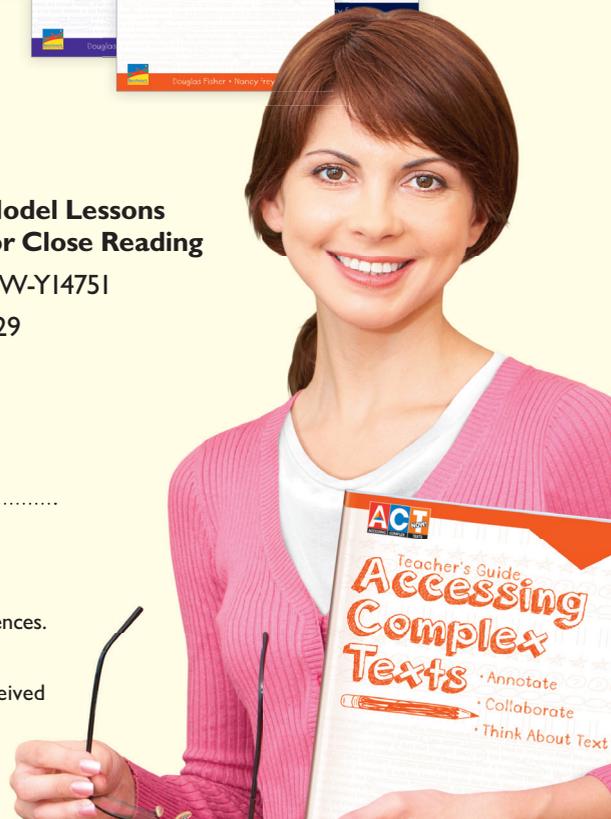
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Douglas Fisher, Ph.D., is Professor of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High & Middle College. He has published numerous articles and books, and presents frequently at national conferences.

Nancy Frey, Ph.D., is Professor of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University. She has co-authored several books on literacy, and in 2008, she received the Early Career Achievement Award from the Literacy Research Association.





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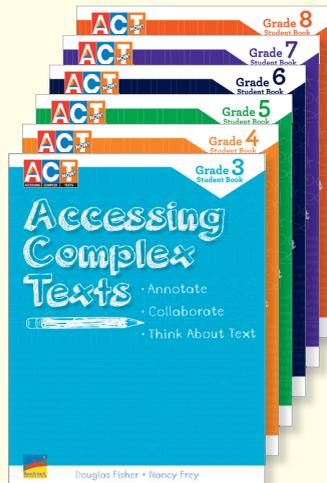
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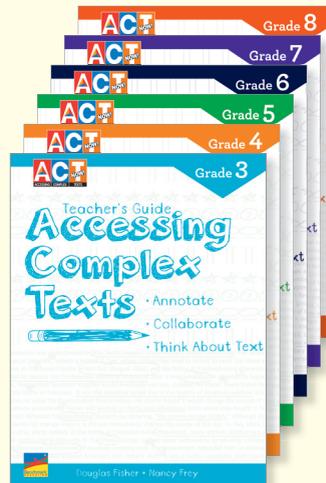
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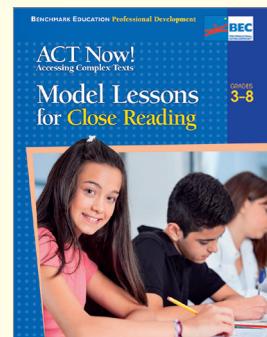
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