

VIEWING GUIDE

TONY STEAD

BRIDGES *to* INDEPENDENCE



GUIDED READING *with* NONFICTION



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Introduction

Guided reading has long been recognized as an important strategy that helps children consolidate and apply the reading strategies they have been taught. However, nonfiction text accounts for only 10 percent of texts selected for these small-group encounters. This is of concern because nonfiction is not only a vehicle for helping students discover more about their world, but promotes a love of such texts. Children need to see reading nonfiction as a valued part of their daily lives.

Over the past five years I have explored the use of informational texts in guided reading sessions with many teachers around the country. Specifically, I worked in two classrooms at The Manhattan New School with two wonderful teachers, Lisa Elias Moynihan, a third-grade teacher, and Lauren Benjamin who teaches first grade. Together we looked at ways to strengthen children's aptitudes as nonfiction readers by using guided reading as the bridge to independence.

At the beginning of the process, we had more questions than answers and so we all took off the teacher's hat and replaced it with that of a learner. Through the reading of professional texts, experimentation, and discussion, we were able to refine our thinking to provide better small-group instruction based on the needs of all our learners. While we still have many questions, we are also aware of how our thinking has changed, and this is reflected in our current practice. Bridges to Independence documents our growth as learners while celebrating our success as teachers.

Refer to Appendix A for an overview of our current practice which highlights considerations and guidelines for guided reading implementation procedures with nonfiction.

Suggestions for Viewing These Programs

Each of the four programs is broken into segments that deal with a particular aspect of guided reading with nonfiction. We highly suggest you view Program 1 first.

The viewing guide is divided into two main sections:

1. Background information
This provides the viewer with a context for what is being discussed and/or demonstrated.
2. Discussion Points
These are conversation generators for discussion after viewing each segment. It needs to be noted that there are no right or wrong answers here. The discussion points for Program 1 are embedded in the notes for this program. Programs 2, 3, and 4 follow the same organization: before reading, during reading, and after reading. The discussion points for these programs are the same, and are on pages 8–9.

If you are viewing these programs in a workshop setting, there are a number of ways to prepare for success:

1. Check out the equipment and sound in advance. Make sure the segments are cued to the correct spot. (We provide time cues in the information on each program that follows.) After you begin running the program, walk to the back of the room and listen. The goal is to have the sound as low as possible but still loud enough so participants in the back can hear. The most common error instructors make in using audio visual material is playing them with the audio too loud.
2. Read the background information provided for each program or segment prior to viewing. This way you are setting the scene for what is about to be viewed and tuning your audience into the content they are about to see.
3. Ask participants to keep notes as they view each part. We suggest you give each participant a copy of the discussion points for each section and have them read through these before watching each part. Most people's experience in watching television is passive and this can easily result in a stone cold silence when the instructor asks participants for comment at the end of the viewing. By giving participants discussion points prior to the viewing, you are tuning them into what is important so that they are all focused on the same issues.
4. At the end of the segment, give participants time to discuss their observations with each other in pairs or small groups before bringing the conversation to whole-group discussion



Program 1: Getting Started

Background Information

In order to effectively conduct guided reading with informational texts, Lisa, Lauren and I needed to be organized and prepared so that these small-group encounters afforded us maximum impact with instructional strategies. Before we actually conducted guided reading sessions, we had to be cognizant of the children's needs as readers of informational texts. And, of course, it was essential that the rest of the class were engaged in meaningful learning encounters during the guided reading session. In this program these considerations are examined. They are broken into the following areas:

Forming groups

Selecting a focus and text

Management of the other children during guided reading encounters

Forming Groups Using Assessments

Lisa, Lauren and I knew it was quite possible that many of our children were operating at lower text levels in their nonfiction reading than they were in their read-

ing of fiction (for further information see Stead 2005, pp. 175–180). We had to make informed decisions as to where each child was functioning when they read informational texts. To realize this goal we conducted both formal and informal assessments to ascertain each of our learner’s needs using tools such as running records and conferences.

Once groups were formed we found that we needed to be flexible with these groupings and make astute observations to ensure each child was receiving appropriate instruction based on their growing needs as readers.

Discussion Points

- Why are initial assessments with informational texts important?
- How many groups are feasible to set up in your classroom?
- What is the best thing to do with children who do not fit neatly into one group because they are operating at a different text level than the rest of the children?
- What assessments are available in your school to begin locating children’s instructional level with nonfiction?
- What additional resources are needed to assess children’s instructional level?
- What are the ways to ensure flexibility in grouping?

Selecting the Focus and Text

When Lisa, Lauren and I reflected on past practices, we realized that our comprehension focuses in small-group settings were random at best. On most occasions we had made no direct link between whole-class comprehension focuses and our guided reading sessions. While we were clear on our focuses in working with words, letters, and sounds, our comprehension focus in these small-group settings was usually retelling or making connections. We hadn’t considered that these guided reading sessions were a perfect avenue for consolidating comprehension focuses discussed in whole-class settings. Refer to Appendix B for a list of some of the comprehension focuses that can be selected. Appendix C has a rubric that can be used to monitor each child’s understandings of these comprehension focuses.

Discussion Points

- Why is it important to make a link between whole-class and small-group learning encounters?
- What comprehension focuses do you cover over the course of the school year?
- What nonfiction texts are currently available in your school for guided reading to support these focuses? Apart from books also consider non-book resources.
- What additional texts are needed in respect to comprehension focuses, text levels, and genres?

Management

We knew that the success of our guided reading would be contingent on the rest of the class being engaged in meaningful literacy encounters, and in knowing what

to do while we were working with the small group. We established routines for independent reading, reading responses, and set up literacy centers. We constantly modeled and monitored.

We had many discussions on what constituted appropriate behavior during guided reading time. In effect we had to show our children how to be independent learners and acknowledge that some children would need more modeling and support than others. We also realized that it was not a simple case of setting these in motion once, at the beginning of the year, and expecting instant and ongoing success. Throughout the year we had to re-model and make changes to these learning encounters when they began to falter.

Discussion Points

- Apart from freeing you up to conduct guided reading sessions, what are the purposes of these learning encounters?
- What are some of the management strategies for the rest of the class that you could put in place to ensure success?
- What are some strategies you could use for children who are not on task during these learning encounters?
- What are some of the learning encounters that would be suitable for your children to engage in while you are conducting guided reading sessions?

Program 2:

Guided Reading with Early Emergent Readers

Segments 1, 2, and 3

Lauren Benjamin works with a group of early emergent readers using the book *Learning About Clouds*.

Background Information

From her assessments and ongoing observations, Lauren formed guided reading groups and found she had many children reading at an early emergent stage. These children were deemed ready for guided reading and so were grouped accordingly. In these segments, Lauren is working with one of these early emergent groups using an informational text about clouds. The children are successfully applying word strategies to decode text and Lauren is ensuring that they are also aware that what they read needs to make sense. She wants these learners to be able to talk to her about their existing knowledge about clouds and to be aware of the new information they are gaining from the text. Lauren has worked with this group before and it is evident from their talk that they are beginning to understand that reading is more than just decoding the words in front of them.

Segments 4, 5, and 6

Tony Stead works with a group of early emergent readers using the book *I Eat Leaves*.

Background Information

Learning to conduct effective guided reading sessions was a new learning experience for Lisa and Lauren. In addition to both teachers conducting guided reading sessions while I observed, I also did demonstrations to promote discussion on best practice. During Lauren and Lisa's planning times I would assemble a group of children and conduct a guided reading session for them to observe. Through these demonstrations I learned to be a more masterful practitioner as the questions and feedback raised by both teachers helped me refine my thinking. In these segments I am working with an early emergent group using the book *I Eat Leaves*. With the exception of Alexander, most of these children have worked in guided reading sessions before. You will notice that I have him next to me and I am constantly monitoring his responses to ensure he stays focused. Alexander can easily become distracted and in so doing could disrupt the learning of the other children. He needs to feel like a valued member of the group while also being aware of the needs of others.

See pages 8–9 for discussion points.

Program 3:

Guided Reading with Developing Readers

Background Information

Lauren and I found that in addition to early emergent readers, we also had children operating at more advanced text levels. The group of children I am working with in this program are able to read fiction at a mid-second grade level, even though they are only in first grade. They are equally adept when reading informational texts that deal with descriptions such as books about animals, plants and space, however their experiences in working with procedural or instructional texts is limited. The book I am using in this guided reading is many levels below where these children normally read but I know it is a suitable choice for guided reading because of their limited experiences with this text type.

You will notice that at one point one of the girls, Kiana, begins to cry because of her frustration at being able to read the words but not understand what to do. It would have been easy to have stopped the guided reading at this point but I didn't. Through careful scaffolding it was not long before a smile returned to her face. This reinforces the notion that guided reading takes children to the edge of their comfort zone. We always need to be aware when children are feeling too challenged and provide the necessary supports to ensure success.

See pages 8–9 for discussion points.

Program 4:

Guided Reading with Fluent Readers

Background Information

In Lisa's third-grade classroom most of the children were deemed fluent readers but their strategies for working with informational texts were not as well devel-

oped as their skills with fiction. Lisa and I found that many of the children would quickly scan through nonfiction texts, often missing key events and details. In this program Lisa is working with a group of fluent readers who often miss important information because of their tendency to race ahead. Consequently when asked to discuss what they have read they often exclude important details.

The text Lisa is using is a biography of Tiger Woods. Lisa has specifically selected this text because it presents information on both the life of Tiger Woods and golf in general. The text also includes visual information, including illustrations and captions, to impart information. Lisa is aware that many of the children may become overwhelmed with all the different kinds of information presented and may struggle in retelling important details. She knows that these children are experts when they talk about important details but do not always apply these understandings to their own reading. This will become evident when you listen to their talk before the reading and compare this to what they actually do when they read the text independently. Lisa uses a graphic organizer to help the group organize their thinking and to raise awareness of some of the details they should be looking for as they read.

A copy of the graphic organizer Lisa uses in this program can be found in Appendix D.

Discussion Points for Programs 2, 3, and 4

Before Reading

- How is the focus of the lesson introduced?
- What is the advantage of having the goals of the lesson written down on chart paper?
- How are the challenges of the text overcome before the children begin reading?
- Why is it important for children to understand text features and structures when reading nonfiction?
- What type of questions does the teacher raise before the reading of the text?

During Reading

- Why is it important for the teacher to hear each child read some of the text?
- What do you think the teacher is listening for as he/she hears each child read?
- What kinds of notes does the teacher need to keep as he/she hears children read?
- Why doesn't the teacher hear each child read the entire text?
- With the early emergent readers in Program 2, you will notice that the children are reading out loud. How come they are not distracted by each other?
- What strategies could you use if children did become distracted?
- What strategies does the teacher employ if children finish reading the text before others? What other strategies might you use?
- What type of support does the teacher provided as he/she hears each child read?
- What should the teacher do if he/she finds most of the children are struggling as they read the text?

After Reading

- What are some of the questions the teacher asks to ensure the goals of the guided reading are realized?
- With the early emergent readers in Program 2, why is one session on this text adequate?
- With the fluent readers in Program 4, why is it necessary to meet the children again with the same text? How is the follow-up different than the initial guided reading session?
- What children do you think need extra support?
- How would you provide this additional support?
- Were there any children that you thought could be moved into a more advanced grouping?
- What notes do you think the teacher needs to keep either during or after the guided reading session? Why are these important? Refer to Appendix E for a monitoring sheet that can be used to record observations during the guided reading session.

Bonus Interviews

Interview 1: Guided Reading with Nonfiction

Synopsis

In this interview, Lisa, Lauren and I are discussing the value of using informational texts in guided reading sessions. They examine the importance of children understanding what they read and not simply decoding the texts in front of them. The issue of linking content understandings with these small-group encounters is also discussed.

Discussion Points

- What value do you see in including nonfiction as part of guided reading encounters?
- How much nonfiction do you use in your classroom during guided reading sessions?
- How can content focuses be strengthened in guided reading sessions?

Interview 2: *How to Make a Paper Airplane*

Synopsis

This conversation between Lauren and I provides the viewer with my additional reflections after conducting the guided reading with the group of developing readers.

Discussion Points

- Why do you think working with procedural texts is important with young children?
- Why do you think procedural texts are so challenging?
- Apart from guided reading encounters, what are other ways to strengthen children's understandings of procedural texts?

Interview 3: *Tiger Woods*

Synopsis

In this interview, Lisa reflects on the guided reading with the book *Tiger Woods*. She talks about why she brought this group of children together and why a biography was selected. Lisa reflects on both the implementation of the guided reading and the need for a follow up session.

Discussion Points

- What information does Lisa use to group her children?
- How does Lisa see guided reading as the link to independent reading?
- Why does Lisa see the need for a follow up to the guided reading?

References

Stead, Tony. 2005. *Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K–5*. Portland, Me: Stenhouse

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Appendix A: Considerations and Guidelines for Guided Reading with Nonfiction

Area	Considerations/Guidelines
Initial Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We located children's instruction levels with nonfiction. • This was slightly higher than their independent level of decodability with comprehension. We achieved this through observations and conferences with each learner. Reading assessment kits which included nonfiction examples assisted us with this task.
Grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We used our initial assessments to form guided reading groups. • We were aware that children could be operating in two different groupings, one for their reading of fiction the other for nonfiction.
Focuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our selected comprehension strategies mirrored whole-class focuses. • Strategies at working with words, print, and text features varied according to the needs of each group. Our running records assist us in locating these common needs for each group.
Text Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We selected texts suitable to further process the comprehension focuses selected. • We were aware of the challenges and supports the selected text offered. • We used a variety of different types of nonfiction texts not just books. • We didn't attempt to get through an entire book/text in one sitting if it was too dense.
Implementation Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We introduced the comprehension focus and ensured the children were aware of this focus. • We helped children solve the challenges within the text. • We made sure children were aware of the supports within the text so that they were able to successfully navigate the text should they encounter difficulties. • Each child was given their own copy of the text to read independently. • As we listened to each child read, we assisted them with strategy work as needed. • Children who finished before others were encouraged to go back and reread the text thinking about the focuses that had been set. • We brought the children together after they have independently read the text to discuss the focuses and the strategies they utilized to navigate the text. • Follow-up activities were set if needed.
Ongoing Monitoring Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We used a focus sheet to record each child's understandings and future needs. (Appendix E) • We tracked children's understanding by using rubrics for comprehension. (Appendix C) • We assisted children who required additional support through individual conferences.
Post Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with our initial assessment, at the conclusion of the school year we used reading assessments to measure our children's growth as readers of nonfiction.

Appendix B: Comprehension Strategies

Literal Understandings

These require the student to recall or recognize ideas and facts that are explicitly stated in the material.

Some specific strategies include how to:

Retell/synthesize information

Visualize Information

Summarize

Locate specific information and use specific text features such as a table of contents, headings and index to achieve this.

Gain information from visual sources.

Find supportive details

Locate cause and effect

Understand problem/solution

Compare and contrast

Understand a sequence of events or instructions

Recognize main idea/s

Solve unknown vocabulary

Interpretive Understandings

These require the student to make inferences from the information stated. It calls upon the reader to use not only the information presented in the text but personal knowledge, connections and experiences to make meaning.

Some specific strategies include:

Inferring:

- what will happen (predicting)
- cause and effect
- problem/solution
- main idea/s
- sequences/events
- comparisons
- information from visual sources

Making Connections:

- text to self
- text to text
- text to world

Note: Strategies such as cause and effect, problem/solution, sequence of events, comparisons and main idea are both literal and interpretive. When they are explicitly stated in the text they are literal. When they are not stated in the body of the text and require the reader to infer and make connections, they are interpretive.

Evaluative Understandings

These are understandings where the reader makes judgments as to the content of the material. As with interpretive meanings, it calls upon the reader to utilize information both explicitly and implicitly stated in the text as well as personal knowledge and experiences. In essence it calls upon the reader to use both literal and interpretive understandings to encourage more complex thinking. Many of these understandings are tied in with areas of critical literacy (Luke and Freebody 1997).

Some specific strategies include:

Fact vs. opinion

Reality vs. fantasy

Validity of a piece

Adequacy of a piece

Relevance of a piece

Author bias

Author intent

Point of view

Tools/Craft used by the author to affect thinking

Making overall judgments on a piece

Appendix C: Assessment Rubric for Nonfiction Comprehension Skills and Strategies—Literal Understandings

		Key:								
		N—Not in evidence				S—Strengthening				
		B—Beginning to show signs of				A—Nearly always				
						N/A—Not applicable				
Name:										
Year:	Date:									
<i>Literal Understandings</i>										
Able to retell										
Can summarize information read										
Able to locate information using text features such as table of contents, index, and headings										
Can locate cause and effect										
Recognizes main idea(s)										
Understands problem/solution										
Locates comparisons and contrasts where explicitly stated										
Able to gain information from visual sources										
Able to understand a sequence of events or instructions										
Can solve the meaning of unknown vocabulary										

Appendix C: Assessment Rubric for Nonfiction Comprehension Skills and Strategies—Interpretive Understandings

		Key:							
		N—Not in evidence			S—Strengthening				
		B—Beginning to show signs of			A—Nearly always				
					N/A—Not applicable				
Name:									
Year:	Date:								
<i>Interpretive Understandings</i>									
Able to make/change/confirm predictions based on events and facts presented									
Can synthesize information based on facts presented and interpretations									
Able to visualize information read									
Able to infer cause and effect									
Able to infer main idea(s)									
Able to infer comparisons and contrasts									
Able to infer problem and solution									
Can make inferences on events or sequences									
Can make inferences from visual sources									
Makes text-to-self connections									
Makes text-to-text connections									
Makes text-to-world connections									

Appendix C: Assessment Rubric for Nonfiction Comprehension Skills and Strategies—Evaluative Understandings

		Key:							
		N—Not in evidence				S—Strengthening			
		B—Beginning to show signs of				A—Nearly always			
						N/A—Not applicable			
Name:									
Year:	Date:								
<i>Evaluative Understandings</i>									
Aware of author intent/purpose for a piece									
Knows the difference between fact and opinion									
Can locate the facts and opinions in a given piece									
Aware of point of view									
Able to compare own point of view with that of the author's									
Able to locate author bias									
Aware of own bias									
Can locate the tools the author has used to present point of view									
Can evaluate the adequacy of a piece									
Can evaluate the validity/relevance of a piece									
Can make overall judgments on a piece									

Appendix E: Monitoring Sheet for Guided Reading

Book/Text _____	Level _____	Date _____				
Names						
Comprehension Focus Points						
Word/Print Strategies						
Reflection						
<p><i>Key:</i> 1—Limited/Struggled 2—Strengthening/Adequate 3—Solid/Mastered</p>						

Time Codes for *Bridges to Independence*

Program 1: Getting Started (00:00–20:10) 20:10

Introduction (00:00–04:23) 4:23
 Forming Groups Using Assessments (04:23–06:26) 2:03
 Selecting the Focus and Text (06:26–09:05) 2:39
 Management (09:05–20:10) 11:05
 Bonus Interview: Guided Reading with Nonfiction 5:21

Program 2: Guided Reading with Early Emergent Readers (00:00–30:00) 30:00

Introduction: *Learning About Clouds* with Lauren (00:00–01:40) 1:40
 Before Reading (01:40–06:17) 4:37
 During Reading (06:17–08:27) 2:10
 After Reading (08:27–14:45) 6:18

Introduction: *I Eat Leaves* with Tony (14:56–15:44) 0:48
 Before Reading (15:44–23:00) 7:16
 During Reading (23:00–25:52) 2:52
 After Reading (25:52–30:00) 4:08

Program 3: Guided Reading with Developing Readers (00:00–24:21) 24:21

Introduction (00:00–01:25) 1:25
 Before Reading (01:25–11:05) 9:40
 During Reading (11:05–17:30) 6:25
 After Reading (17:30–24:21) 6:51
 Bonus Interview: *How to Make a Paper Airplane* guided reading (2:27)

Program 4: Guided Reading with Fluent Readers (00:00–39:20) 39:20

Introduction (00:00–01:46) 1:46
 Before Reading (01:46–13:00) 11:14
 During Reading (13:00–19:00) 6:00
 After Reading (19:00–39:20) 20:20
 Bonus Interview: *Tiger Woods* guided reading (5:41)

