

Readers Theater as a Tool for Fluency Development

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Introduction

Literacy is a key component to students' learning and success in the classroom. Without a strong literacy base, students will struggle with all other content areas. While literacy is commonly thought of as merely reading and writing there is much more that ties into it. All content areas have an aspect of literacy to them. Once students begin to piece together the building blocks of literacy development, they will be on their way to many future successes inside and outside the classroom. As a reading teacher, it is important to encourage students to fall in love with learning through literacy. It is easy for students to become discouraged by challenges they encounter while learning literacy skills, but as a reading teacher, one must encourage perseverance. The reading teachers is there to help students achieve greater heights with literacy.



Methods and Materials

I have been working with four students to improve their fluency while reading. This group consists of three second graders and one first grader. They all have a firm grasp on decoding words and the basics of reading but often read monotone or word by word. While working with them, we begin the lesson by having a discussion about what we read during the previous lesson and talking about ways we can improve for this lesson. Following this, we begin reading. We usually spend three days on each reader's theater script. The first day is an introduction to the premise of the text and a cold read of the script. The following lesson, we discuss how we can read the script with more expression or any way we can change the way we read to be more interesting for an audience to listen to. The third day, the students "perform" the script. While we do not perform for an audience, the students are told to act like they are on stage and do their best to read their part like an actor or actress. Finally, we conclude with word work that ties into the script we have been working with.

Background on Students

Student A:

- Instructional J
- Accuracy at 90% → most errors were visual errors
- Struggled with beyond the text questions
- Read with expression but struggled with pausing and phrasing

Student B:

- Independent H
- Strong comprehension
- Struggled with fluency → read with little expression and struggled with phrasing

Student C:

- Independent I
- Most errors were visual errors
- Read with little expression and intonation
- Sounded out most words in the text, including known words
- Struggled with phrasing and pausing
- Strong comprehension and was able to make strong connections

Student D:

- Instruction I
- Read with few errors → most errors were visual errors
- Read with appropriate phrasing and pausing
- Had little to no expression while reading

Overall Student Needs

- Fluency development → phrasing and expression
- Beyond the text comprehension questioning
- Answering specific questions through writing

Results

Student A

- Independent J
- Accuracy at 99% → mostly visual errors
- Strong comprehension skills
- Read with expression and appropriate phrasing

Student C

- Independent I
- Improved fluency
- Sounded out fewer words in the text

Student D

- Independent I
- Read with appropriate phrasing
- Strong and appropriate expression while reading the text

*Student B was absent for the week of final assessments

Summary of Findings and Reflection

Reader's Theater helped benefit the students in their use of expression. They took each of their parts and found it helpful to imitate a voice they would be appropriate for that character prior to reading.

Overall Improvements:

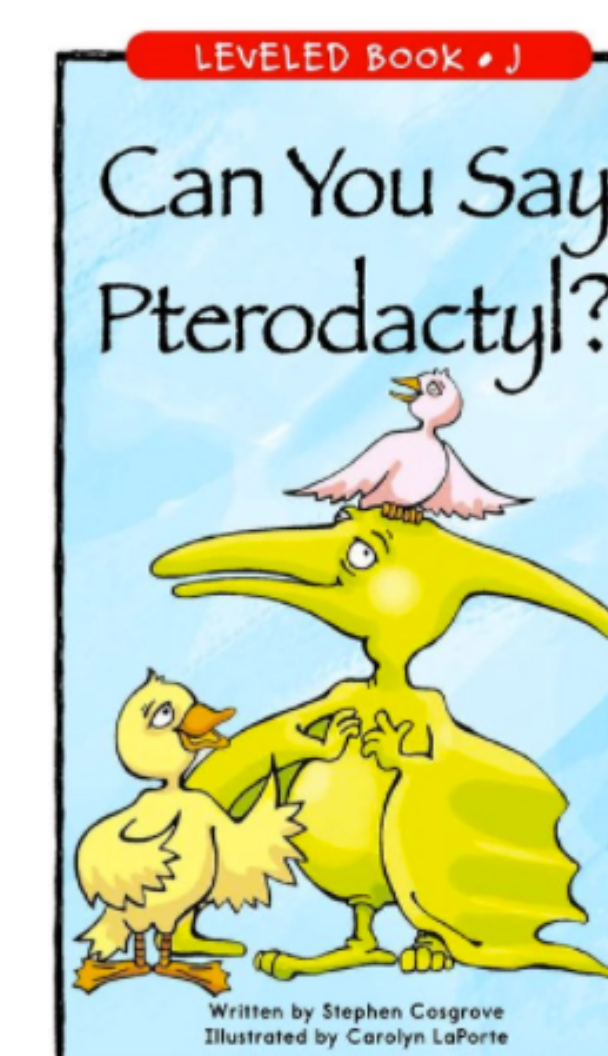
- Greater confidence in reading
- Improvements in automaticity when reading
- Higher Running Record accuracy

Future Learning:

- Reader's Theater full performance rather than small group read aloud
- Reading aloud texts with dialogue
- Students write their own Reader's Theater scripts based around a familiar story

Important Factors in Small Group:

- Establishing a routine is key to success with small group Reader's Theater.
- Ensuring students work cooperatively with one another from the beginning
- Selecting scripts at one reading level below students to start to encourage success in reading
- Encourage students to practice speaking to each other in character during specific times of small group
- Engage students in scripts they find interesting and encourage many readings of the script to help students become familiar with the text



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