

Social Studies Whole-Class Instructional Strategy:

Read-Alouds

The Basics

What? Read-alouds are an instructional practice in which the teacher reads texts aloud to the whole class. The reader incorporates variations in pitch, tone, pace, volume, pauses, eye contact, questions, and comments to produce a fluent and enjoyable delivery. In elementary grades, reading texts aloud is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for successful reading.

When? During whole-class instruction, when reading primary or secondary sources. Teachers should read aloud to model specific pronunciations and expressions of words that are either newly learned or difficult for students to comprehend, particularly when students struggle to read the selected texts independently.

Why? To build social studies content knowledge and develop students' fluency. Reading aloud provides teachers with a practical way of illustrating particular pronunciations and expressions of words that may be newly acquired or difficult for students to comprehend initially.

How to Implement

Prework: Pre-read the selected text to become familiar with the words/ideas and read the text at an appropriate rate and with the appropriate prosody (patterns and intonation in a language) aloud to the students. For text with heavy domain-specific vocabulary, consider some direct vocabulary instruction before reading.

Procedure:

1. Communicate the purpose of the strategy (whole class read aloud) to the students.
2. Inform students that they need to track the words read with their fingers or with eye movement, and explain why that is important (by hearing the words and seeing the letter/word correspondence, they will recognize the word(s) again).
3. Establish a purpose for reading so that students are not just reading to read. The purpose could be to answer framing or supporting questions, or to describe or evaluate a particular claim or set of claims.

4. During the reading of each section, pause periodically to check student comprehension. One quick and easy way to do this is to have students describe what they see in their minds when reading a particular paragraph. Students who struggle to identify images may need a bit more support.
5. While reading the selection, ensure that students are tracking the words and redirect when they are not.
6. Provide students with the opportunity to discuss questions related to the text after they have read a section. Discussion opportunities will enable students to fully engage with the content and bring the themes or topics to life.

Resources and Additional Information

- For research on listening and reading comprehension, see: Sticht, T.G., & James, J.H. (1984). Listening and Reading. In D. Pearson (ed.) [Handbook of Research on Reading, Vol. 1](#), pp. 293-317.
- [Video Model](#) of this strategy
- Example topics in [Bayou Bridges: A Louisiana Social Studies Curriculum](#) in which the Read-Alouds strategy would be helpful:
 - **Grades 3-5:** The City-States of Ancient Greece (BB G4 U3, LSSSS 4.4, 4.12, 4.16, 4.16.e), The Inca Empire (BB G5 U4, LSSSS 5.6)
 - **Grades 6-8:** French Colonial Louisiana (BB G6 U3, LSSSS 6.10), Prelude to Secession and War (BB G7 U5, LSSSS 7.13, 7.13.a, 7.13.b)