

## Dialogic Read Aloud / *La lectura dialógica repetida*

**CCSS:** RL1, RL2, RL3, RL 4, RL7, RL 10, SL1, SL2, L5, L6,  
**Preschool Foundations:** Listening & Speaking: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 3.2;  
Reading: 1.1, 1.2, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2

### Summary

Reading to children is an important strategy for overall language development and fostering a connection to books. Children who are read to regularly do better in developing literacy skills than children who are not read to often. Even as children become able to read to themselves, reading aloud plays an important role. In school, most often, teachers read a story out loud, and students listen. It is a useful, enjoyable but passive experience for children. Merely reading books aloud is not sufficient for accelerating children's oral vocabulary development and listening comprehension. HOW we read to children is as important as how frequently we read to them. A planned oral reading of a book that engages children in talking about what is being read, or an Interactive read-aloud, provides an expanded opportunity for conversation and the development of rich oral language as well as building reading and comprehension skills.

This is true even for children who have become readers. As the new CA Framework for ELA/ELD (2014) writes in the chapter on the grade 2/3 span:

*Rich exposures to text contribute to students' language development. As important as independent reading is, at this point in the development of their decoding skills, children are more likely to expand their academic language through teacher read alouds of high quality literary and informational text. When children attend to complex texts written above their reading level, they are exposed to new language and ideas. Reading aloud both literary and informational texts **should be a regular part of every school day**. Teachers select texts that expose students to sophisticated ideas, rich vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and different discourse features. Selections stretch children, but are within their reach, and the teacher provides explanations of vocabulary and phrases, including figurative uses of language, as they read aloud, as appropriate. One research study revealed that while rereading texts to children improved their understanding of word meanings, teacher explanations of unknown words during reading aloud resulted in greater gains. Contextualizing vocabulary instruction within rich read aloud texts, providing multiple opportunities for children to use new vocabulary meaningfully are especially helpful for EL children.*

In Dialogic Read-Aloud, children are invited to make predictions and inferences, to explain and ponder a character's motivation, to make connections to their own lives, and to take on responsibility for retelling aspects of the story. They are shared book experiences that build vocabulary, understanding of the structure of stories, and increases the pleasure of engaging with books. As the story unfolds, the teacher explicitly shares and models her own thinking processes. Through this approach, children learn and internalize the practices that "good readers" use and develop skills of analytic talk. Benefits include:

- Listeners build listening and comprehension skills through discussion during and after reading
- Listeners increase their vocabulary foundation by hearing words in context
- Listeners improve their memory and language skills as they hear a variety of writing styles and paraphrase their understanding
- Listeners develop imagination and creativity by visualizing the story
- Listeners increase their fluency and expressiveness in reading
- Listeners gain access to complex text and high-quality language

Dialogic Read-Alouds are a systematic method of reading aloud multiple times with increasing student participation and depth of analytic talk.

## Implementation

### Step 1: Selecting a Book

The selection of books for a Dialogic Aloud is important. The book should connect to the thematic unit. Beyond that, the book should be a somewhat sophisticated story in which the reader needs to infer character motivation as well as cause and effect. The book should have a rich repertoire of vocabulary and expression. While predictable, easier books are enjoyable for children and should definitely be read to children and be part of their “literature diet,” a good Dialogic Read-Aloud book provides exposure to expanded vocabulary and enhanced comprehension. It is a book with wonderful language, and complex character motivation in which something “happens.” Good, rich illustrations are also important for prompting prediction and recall.

### Step 2: Identifying key vocabulary

Read the book carefully to yourself before reading the book to students. Mark particularly wonderful language, and select 5 – 10 vocabulary words or phrases from the book (10 – 15 for 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade) that you will highlight or define during reading. They should be words that are critical to understanding the story and are likely to be encountered in other books or useful in non-book contexts. You can also add vocabulary that is useful in characterizing or analyzing the book in your book introduction or comments and prompts (e.g., “catastrophe, mistake, disaster, foolish”).

### Step 3: Present the Book to the Class and Read it a first time

*(This description of the steps in a Dialogic Read Aloud is largely based upon Lea McGee and Judith Schickedanz, Repeated Interactive Read Alouds, Reading Rockets, 2007).*

In Dialogic Read-Alouds, a book is read several times, in slightly different ways in order to increase the amount and quality and opportunities for children to engage in analytical talk as they answer carefully crafted questions. In 2nd and 3rd grades, children should also be engaged with reading text. The teacher determines whether students will have access to their own copy of the book, or uses the document camera to project the book during all or some of the readings.

In the first reading, the teacher takes an active role by reading the text, thinking out loud and making comments. Students are actively listening and sometimes comment or respond to questions. During the first reading, the teacher introduces the story’s “problem”, inserts

comments, asks a few key questions, prompts predictions, models higher-level thinking through her own “think aloud” process, and finally asks a “why” question calling for extended explanation. The teacher is able, during this reading, to pause at key phrases of wonderful language and to emphasize and elaborate upon some key vocabulary.

A. Introduce the Book Offer a short 3 – 4 sentence introduction to the story that states the main “problem.” For young children (PreK-1), show the front cover of the book. As you explain briefly the “dilemma” of the story, end with “Let’s find out what happens.” Discuss clues from the illustrations. Set the purpose for reading. For 2nd and 3rd grades, activate prior knowledge about content to be read and make connections to that content in ways that promote inferential thinking. An example might be: “What do you know about \_\_\_\_?” or “Have you ever.....?”. Students share with a partner and then teacher calls on several students to share with the group.

B. Read the story using expression, gestures and dramatic pauses, varying the pace of the reading to dramatize the action, and use plenty of eye contact with the children. Your job in the first read is to capture and maintain children’s interest and enjoyment of the story.

C. Insert Vocabulary Development As you read through the book with children, insert vocabulary support. You can do this in one of several ways. Decide before you read the book out loud which of the vocabulary enhancers you will use for each vocabulary word.

- Insert a short phrase or sentence that defines or explains the word (e.g., “Feast, that’s a really big meal”)
- Point to salient parts of the illustration that help clarify a word or phrase meaning, such as pointing to the illustration of an acorn as you read the word in the text.
- Use dramatic gestures
- Use voice modified to fit the characters and the emotions
- Vary the pacing to illustrate the actions

D. Comment and pose questions to support and extend comprehension. During the reading, think out loud to model analytic thinking. Do this at three or four junctures in which ideal readers would make an inference or a connection or a prediction about a character’s thoughts, feelings or motivations. When you make those comments for younger children, use language and gesture to signal mental activity (e.g., *put your finger to your temple and say, “I’m thinking that....” or “I’m wondering if....”*).

E. After-reading questions. After reading the entire book, ask a “Why?” question requiring children to make inferences about and explain several story events. Use follow-up probing questions to support children’s ability to answer broader explanation questions. Extend their thinking beyond the book with prompts such as “What if...” For 2nd and 3rd grade, ask several “On the Surface” questions.

#### **Step 4. Read the book a second time**

Second read-alouds occur a day or two after first reads. The purpose is to enrich student’s comprehension of the story and provide further opportunities for them to engage in analytic talk. The second read capitalizes on student’s growing comprehension of the story by providing enriched vocabulary explanations and adding additional inference and connection



questions. It becomes an opportunity for students to “chime in” on key refrains. In the second read, students participate more verbally in answering questions and commenting more frequently.

*For TK-1st grade*, begin the second reading by reminding children that they have heard this book before and that they will remember many things. Ask some recall questions.

Highlight the same vocabulary as in the first read, but this time verbally define more words. Continue modeling analytic comments, but ask more frequent questions that help children make additional inferences. For example, if you focused on the main character in the first read, focus on other characters in this second read.

*For 2nd and 3rd grade*, begin by having students recall some details of the story, ask “on the surface” questions, and have students Think Pair Share. Pose a focusing question based on a predetermined Big Idea/Key Understanding of the text. Display some focusing questions. The focus questions will determine the type of questions the teacher will ask students in working through the text. Ask “Below the Surface” questions that require students to use text evidence as well as background knowledge.

Highlight the same vocabulary as in the first read, but this time verbally define more words. Give students opportunities to repeat and use the vocabulary. Continue modeling analytic comments, but ask more frequent questions that help children make additional inferences.

### **Step 5. The Third Read: Guided Reconstruction for TK-1**

The third reading consists of guided reconstruction of the story in which children recount information as well as provide explanations and commentary. Extensions include creating opportunities for students to retell the story or dramatize the book, dramatic play with objects related to the concepts or characters introduced in the book, and encouraging children to use the vocabulary from the book when they are in conversations related to the topic or theme or in their writing.

In the third read aloud, children take a highly active role as they reconstruct the story with teacher guidance and make deeper sense of the story. The third read aloud occurs a few days after the second read while the story is still fresh in children’s minds, but they need to remember information across some time. This close repetition is important for reinforcing vocabulary carefully developed during the first and second read.

The third reading differs from the others because it is a guided reconstruction of the story. The teacher reads some of the text and invites the children to say what happens next. Children take more responsibility for telling the story. This begins with the introduction. “We’ve read this two times before, so I know you know the title of the story. What is the title?” Continue to prompt children to reconstruct information. Point to illustrations, “What is happening here?”, “Do you remember what will happen next?” Reread bits of the text and ask another reconstruction question. Follow up children’s comments by extending their comments or asking for clarification.

### **Step 5: Third Reading for Grades 2 and 3**

Focus on particular aspects of the text for students to understand more deeply and embed targeted vocabulary use (Deeper Dive Questions). Think of active engagement with the text

that will also involve oral practice. Extensions include using graphic organizers to analyze what has been read, word play, art, drama and writing components.

### **Tips & Resources**

A good read-aloud starts with careful preparation. Identify key words and concepts. Mark “talking points” where you want to stop and reflect or ask questions. Use sticky notes to mark those points in the text. Plan your prompts. Decide on gestures that will enhance vocabulary comprehension. Think through the differences between and purposes for reading the book three times.

#### **“CROWD” Prompts (Grades TK-1<sup>st</sup>):**

**Completion prompts.** The teacher leaves a blank at the end of a sentence for children to fill in. These are typically used in books with rhyme or books with repetitive phrases. Completion prompts provide children with modeling of the structure of language, and actively engages children in the telling of the story.

*Example: “I’ll huff and I’ll puff \_\_\_\_\_.”*

**Recall prompts:** These are questions about what happened in the story that was already read. Recall prompts help children in understanding story plot and in describing sequences of events. It can be used in the middle of a story about what has already happened, or at the end of a story, or when you are about to reread a story the children have already heard.

*Example: “What happened to the first little pig?”*

**Open-ended prompts:** These prompts give children freedom to answer in a variety of ways. They have no right or wrong answer, and often focus on the pictures in the book. They work best for books that have rich, detailed illustrations. If the story has already been read, the teacher can point to an illustration and ask children to explain what is happening in the picture. If the story has not yet been read, the children can talk about what they see going on in the story and what they think the story might be about.

*Example: “What do you think the wolf is planning to do?” “What is the third pig thinking on this page?”*

**Wh prompts:** These prompts usually begin with “what”, “where” “when” Why” and “how” questions. Like open-ended prompts, wh-prompts focus on the pictures in books.

*Example: “Why did the house of straw get blown down?” “Is there another way the wolf could get into the house?” “Which pig was the smartest? Why?”*

**Distancing prompts:** These ask children to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to experiences outside of the book. Distancing prompts help children form a connection between books and their world. (e.g., “What do you think YOU would do if you were the character?”)

*Example: “Why did the house straw get blown down?” “Is there another way the wolf could get into the house?” “Which pig was the smartest? Why?”*

## Text Dependent Questioning Prompts (Grades 2-3)

### On the Surface Questions:

(Who, What, Where, When, Describe) Bloom's Taxonomy: Remembering

#### Question Prompts:

What is this part mostly about?

What is happening?

When and where is it happening?

Who is involved in what's happening?

### Below the Surface Questions:

(Why, How, What if, Would) Bloom's Taxonomy: Understanding & Applying

\*Often the author will not come right out and tell you what is happening or what a character is thinking or feeling, so you have to go "below the surface" to get the deeper meanings

#### Question Prompts:

How does the author let us know \_\_\_\_\_?

Why does \_\_\_\_\_ happen? How do we know?

What if \_\_\_\_\_? How do we know?

Would \_\_\_\_\_? How do we know?

### Deeper Dive Questions:

Bloom's Taxonomy: Analyzing & Evaluating

#### Questions Prompts:

What does the author want us to understand about \_\_\_\_\_?

How does the author use special words to show us \_\_\_\_\_?

How does the author *play with language* to add meaning?



## Questions Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain

<p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What happened in the story?</li> <li>✓ What color was the...?</li> <li>✓ How big was the...?</li> <li>✓ Who brought the...?</li> <li>✓ What did...wear?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Can you sort and classify the different...in this story?</li> <li>✓ Compare characters. How are they alike? How are they different?</li> <li>✓ List all the different...in this story. Make up a chart showing each according to category.</li> <li>✓ What happened in the story that caused the...?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Comprehension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What does this mean?</li> <li>✓ What did you find out?</li> <li>✓ How would you describe the characters, setting, plot?</li> <li>✓ How does the author show what the characters are like?</li> <li>✓ Retell the story in your own words.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Synthesis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What would be another good title for this book? Why?</li> <li>✓ Retell the story as a poem.</li> <li>✓ How might this story have turned out differently if the setting were changed? If one character were changed?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Application</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What do you know now that you did not know before reading the story?</li> <li>✓ Does the title match the story?</li> <li>✓ What would a map of the area/setting look like?</li> <li>✓ What would...wear to school?</li> <li>✓ What would...eat for lunch?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe how Character X felt about... Do you think he/she was influenced to feel that way? Why?</li> <li>✓ Decide which character is the nicest. Which is the most clever? Why?</li> <li>✓ Which was your favorite part? Why?</li> <li>✓ What would you say to the author about this book? Why?</li> <li>✓ Why do you think the character did that?</li> <li>✓ How would you defend the character's actions?</li> <li>✓ What was the most important event? Why?</li> <li>✓ Why was it important for that event to occur?</li> <li>✓ What would you do in the same situation as this character? Why?</li> <li>✓ Was that a good idea or a bad one? Why?</li> <li>✓ Would you recommend this book to someone else?</li> </ul>

### Extra Resources:

University of Iowa Reading Research Center

*Dialogic Reading: Having a Conversation About Books:*

<https://iowareadingresearch.org/blog/dialogic-reading-having-a-conversation-about-books>

### Components of TK-1<sup>st</sup> Grade Dialogic Read Aloud

	<b>First Reading</b> <b>Goal:</b> To enjoy story, model thinking and introduce vocabulary	<b>Second Reading</b> <b>Goal:</b> Enrich comprehension of story and vocabulary and engage in analytic talk with higher-level thinking.	<b>Third Reading</b> <b>Goal:</b> Guide students to a deeper understanding of the story/message or other focal features.
<b>Book Introduction</b>	<i>Give a few sentences introducing the main character and central problem. Activate prior knowledge about content (TPS). Use cover, title page and back cover as appropriate.</i>	<i>Remind children they have read the book before and know the characters and some things the characters do. Ask questions about the characters and problem (TPS).</i>	<i>Invite children to identify the problem and describe the solution. Have students recall main pieces of the book (TPS).</i>
<b>Book Reading</b>	<i>Insert vocabulary enhancements for 5-10 words by pointing to illustrations, gesturing dramatically, inserting a short definition. Make comments that reveal what the main character is thinking or feeling. Ask a few follow-up questions based on your comments.</i>	<i>Insert enhancements for the same vocabulary, including more verbal definition. Make comments that reveal what other characters are thinking or feeling. Ask more analytical follow-up questions.</i>	<i>Before reading the text, show an illustration and ask, “What is happening here?” Follow up comments by extending comments or asking for clarification. Continue reading with a mix of asking “who, what, where, when, why” questions and reading the text. Call attention to some vocabulary in different contexts.</i>
<b>After Reading</b>	<i>Ask a “why” questions that calls for explanation. Use follow-up questions to prompt answers. Give oral response frames (TPS).</i>	<i>Ask another “why” question or ask about something that might happen beyond the story. Use follow-up questions to prompt children’s thinking (TPS).</i>	<i>Ask another “why” question or ask, “What would have happened if.....?” (TPS).</i>



### Components of 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Dialogic Read Aloud

	<b>First Reading</b> <b>Goal:</b> To enjoy story, model thinking and introduce vocabulary	<b>Second Reading</b> <b>Goal:</b> Enrich comprehension of story and vocabulary and engage in analytic talk.	<b>Third Reading</b> <b>Goal:</b> Guide to a deeper understanding of the story/message or other focal features.
<b>Book Introduction</b>	<i>Determine Key Ideas of the text. Activate prior knowledge about content (TPS). Use cover, title page and back cover as appropriate. Pose a focus question for listening that aligns to development of key ideas.</i>	<i>Remind children they have read the book before and have them recall some of the events from the first reading using <u>On the Surface</u> questions. Questions might include making a connection to students' lives. (TPS) Pose a focus question about how the author has written the story to convey a deeper meaning.</i>	<i>Activate student's background knowledge of book by asking <u>On the Surface</u> and <u>Below the Surface</u> questions. (TPS) Establish focus question for re-reading/paraphrasing text to highlight vocabulary and key understandings of lesson.</i>
<b>Book Reading</b>	<i>Insert vocabulary enhancements for 10-15 words by pointing to illustrations, gesturing dramatically, inserting a short definition. Model analytic thinking, (where a good reader would stop to think, clarify or infer) at 3-4 stop points, using textual evidence. Might ask one question of students (TPS) that requires prediction.</i>	<i>Highlight same vocabulary but extend understanding (more verbal definitions, realia, photos etc.) encouraging students to say the words. Verbally define additional words. Stop more frequently asking higher level questions focused on purpose for reading that require inference using textual evidence and vocabulary.</i>	<i>Prompts should require students to <b>produce</b> vocabulary in their responses. Teacher may choose to paraphrase or have students summarize some pages while addressing others for specific learning goals. Use <u>Deeper Dive</u> questions stems to lead to deeper understandings of the text.</i>
<b>After Reading</b>	<i>Ask several <u>On the Surface Questions</u> about literal details that students can answer by referring to the text. (TPS)</i>	<i>Ask several <u>Below the Surface</u> questions. (TPS) Use follow up questions to prompt children's thinking. Option: students use a graphic organizer to read through text with partners to find evidence for questions.</i>	<i>Questions should tie into Key ideas, learning goals and/or theme. (TPS) Use higher order Bloom's Taxonomy thinking stems.</i>

## Resources

Jim Trelease, [The Read Aloud Handbook](#)

Mem Fox, [Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to our Children will Change their lives forever](#)

## Notes