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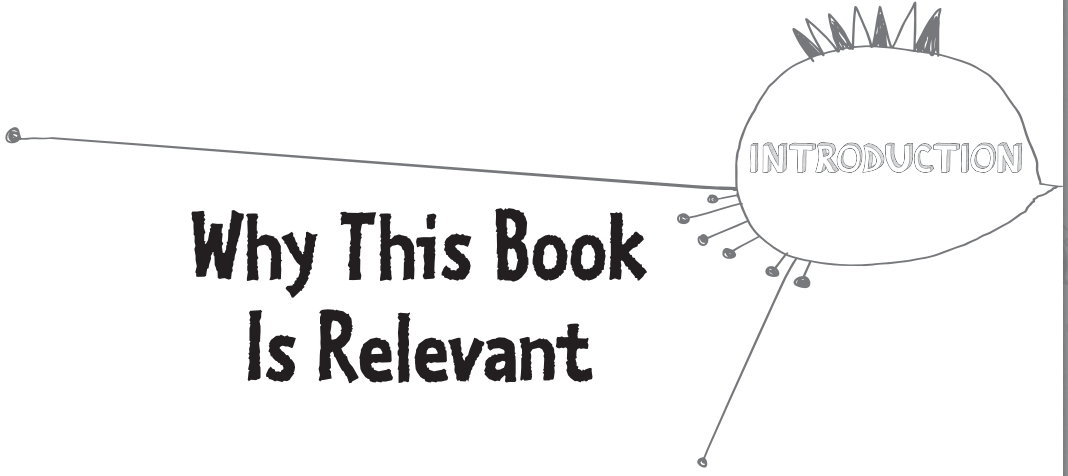


Why This Book Is Relevant

Content-Area Literacy: Reaching and Teaching the 21st Century Adolescent offers teachers an array of practical instructional strategies that target test preparation, vocabulary, comprehension, studying, critical reading, fluency, and online reading comprehension. We want to emphasize that it is crucial to think about the way in which your subject area discipline organizes knowledge and which strategies may be relevant to your particular community of practice (Moje 2008). For example, which academic vocabulary strategies will help your students develop a sense of what it means to be a biologist, a mathematician, a historian, and so on? The strategies we feature in the book are well supported by recent research syntheses (e.g., Biancarosa and Snow 2006; Lee and Spratley 2010), standards-based instruction, and content-area literacy theory and practice (e.g., Bean, Readence, and Baldwin 2012). In addition, the instructional approaches we demonstrate in the following pages are affirmed by adolescent literacy policy and position statements from major national and international professional organizations, including the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA), among others. While traditional print literacy remains important, we also target online digital reading processes that can be second nature for contemporary students, and yet can be one more obstacle to reading and learning for struggling readers (Bean 2010; Tapscott 2009). A new cadre of teachers, curriculum literacy leaders, and literacy coaches is taking up the challenges of literacy development in an age when the nature of text is changing and the needs of English language learners (ELL) loom. We

believe that the contents of *Content-Area Literacy: Reaching and Teaching the 21st Century Adolescent* can help you and your students meet the literacy demands of learning in the 21st century.

Organization of the Book

We have organized this book to accommodate short-range and long-range staff development with a focus on a community-of-practice model that values teachers' classroom experiences and creativity in guiding students' content learning. The first section of this book describes the foundation for reading development; the next section provides a collection of research-based strategies that enhance students' performance in reading material in the content areas.

The Context for Adolescent Literacy

The first four chapters of *Content-Area Literacy: Reaching and Teaching the 21st Century Adolescent* provide a rationale for content-area reading, a brief introduction into the psychology of reading, a model for reading comprehension, and recommendations for preparing students for standardized reading tests.

Research-Based Strategies

The remainder of this book is dedicated to specific strategies for teachers of grades four through twelve that can be used to improve reading comprehension and learning across subject areas. In six chapters, we focus on strategies for vocabulary development, comprehension, study skills, critical reading, fluency, and online reading comprehension. The examples apply to subject-area content. For example, semantic mapping, a vocabulary development

strategy in Chapter 5, uses the science topic *volcanoes* with a focus on disastrous volcanoes. Similarly, in Chapter 8, we use an example from economics to demonstrate the application of Opinion-Proof, a critical reading strategy for social studies.

Suggestions for Professional Development

Content-Area Literacy: Reaching and Teaching the 21st Century Adolescent is designed for both individual and collegial professional learning. Read the chapters consecutively or selectively, or start directly at the strategy section (page 76), where each strategy is presented with its own rationale and easy-to-follow directions. However, rather than offering a cookbook of reading strategies without any theory or insights into reading and learning, we feel that understanding the theory behind the strategies will assist you in selecting those which are most relevant for your students. Use this book in either a one-day in-service seminar or as a year-long professional development model, with community-of-practice seminars where teachers share their application of the strategies.

Model for Short-range Professional Development

The following guidelines will contribute to a successful professional development program:

- Limit the number of participants to no more than 30 teachers to encourage broad participation. Include principals and department chairs as well as teachers for whom teaching is a calling and not just a job.

- Maintain a high level of professionalism so that the instructional leaders who complete this in-service seminar can replicate the training or find other ways to share the strategies and disseminate the information to colleagues.

- Use a comfortable room with good acoustics and tables and chairs suitable for adults. Auditoriums, cafeterias, and classrooms typically have furniture designed for children and young adults only. A local college campus or community agency may offer an appropriate setting and can add an air of special significance. You can even conduct small professional development seminars in local restaurants that have a quiet room where teachers can meet over a meal to discuss readings and classroom application of the strategies.

- Announce the in-service seminar with enthusiasm, but do not release the book in advance. It is important that all participants work together as a group. If some of the participants have read all of the book, skimmed some of it, or simply claim to have read it, the in-service seminar may be difficult to manage.

- Inform participants that the in-service seminar will include a full day of intensive reading, writing, and brainstorming for the short-range model (see a model agenda on page 16).

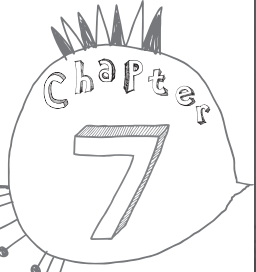
- Have teachers bring one or two textbooks to the in-service seminar so that strategies for reading to learn can be discussed within an appropriate context.

- Use strategies from Chapters 5 through 9 as pre-reading, during reading, or post-reading activities to introduce Chapters 1 through 4.

- As a means of debriefing and follow-up to a short- or long-range in-service seminar, consider creating a blog (WebLog) using any one of the many blogging sites available so participants can discuss their experiences using the strategies.

- Keep the group on task and together during the program by incorporating activities such as silent reading, discussion opportunities, individual and group exercises, and self-tests. These activities can be found throughout the chapters or in the appendix. The first four chapters have logical stop points called Brain Breaks, where the facilitator can pause for group activities and ensure that participants are on the same page. As new models develop for 21st century schools, literacy leaders and teachers must work collaboratively and productively to reform education.

We look forward to joining you on this journey and supporting your efforts to provide students with engaging and powerful content-area learning and success. While we prefer the long-term professional development model for this seminar, this one-day in-service model could serve as a launching pad for longer-range work with teachers, teacher leaders, and curriculum specialists in the individual school sites. In addition, if time will not allow for an overview of the whole book, the facilitator may simply focus on the most critical needs of the group (e.g., academic vocabulary development) and related chapters.



Strategies for Building Study Skills

Developing students' independent learning strategies is crucial for their future success in academic and career learning. Metacognitive strategies that help students monitor their comprehension and use fix-up strategies (like rereading and note-taking) are critical elements of reading print and online texts. The strategies described in this chapter are designed to help your students study challenging materials effectively:

- PLAE (Preplan, List, Activate, Evaluate)
- Verbatim Split Page Procedure
- I-Search Paper
- RAFT (Role, Audience, Format, Topic)

RAFT

Description

RAFT (*Role, Audience, Format, Topic*) is a writing activity that engages students in thinking deeply about a topic, thereby enhancing learning and retention of new information. Students select—or are assigned—a role, audience, format, and topic related to the reading assignment. From a reading assignment about nutrition, for example, a stick of butter (role) might be communicating with heart arteries (audience) by letter (format) about the importance of having health insurance (topic). The RAFT format encourages student responses that are highly creative and interesting. In addition, RAFT is a strategy that requires students to view reality from perspectives other than their own.

Timing

- ☐ Pre-reading
- ☐ During Reading
- ☑ Post-reading

Logistics

- ◑ Teacher preparation time
- ◑ Instructional time
- ● Complexity

Targets

- ☐ Increase fluency
- ☐ Increase attention during reading
- ☐ Utilize prior knowledge to facilitate comprehension
- ☑ Expand or restructure knowledge
- ☑ Enhance learning and memory

RAFT Directions

1. **Identify major concepts.** Evaluate the reading assignment to identify the major concepts that will be emphasized in the RAFT assignment.

2. **Complete the RAFT options.** Prepare the RAFT assignment by listing possible roles, audiences, formats, and topics (see figure 7.2 on page 151). In history or English, students can take on various roles (e.g., kings, serfs, horses) with a variety of audiences, including future generations or tourists. Formats can range across a wide array of possibilities, including multimedia, digital ads, letters, memos, video clips, diaries, pleas, travel brochures, advertisements, and so on. Advice columns, love letters, yearbook entries, and a multitude of other formats are also possible. RAFT provides a voice for those elements of history, biology, and other fields that often go unnoticed. For example, the sword used in a murder in a Shakespeare drama could speak through the vehicle of the writer, expressing its angst at being used against its will to murder a king. RAFT affords a highly creative exploration of topics from multiple perspectives (see figure 7.3 on page 152 for an example on Gettysburg).

3. **Introduce RAFT to the class.** RAFT is a complex writing assignment and will prove challenging for many students. It will be useful to provide the class with simple practice examples: for instance, a cow (role) writing a letter (format) to a fast food company (audience) about the importance of reducing saturated fat in the diet (topic).

4. **Create individual RAFT assignments.** There are at least four possibilities for creating individual RAFT assignments:
    - Allow students to select their own roles, audiences, formats, and topics.
    - Teacher selects a topic for students.
    - Students select topics for each other
    - Use dice or some other procedure to randomly assign roles, audiences, formats, and topics.

    We suggest experimentation.

5. **Assessment.** Depending upon your purposes and the age and sophistication of your students, you may or may not want to grade the assignment. However, given the highly creative nature of RAFT, we recommend grading criteria and rubrics that are not overly dependent upon grammar and mechanics, especially if the writing is done in class and without the benefits of a dictionary. (See *RubiStar*, http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php, and other customizable rubric websites for templates you can use).

Fig. 7.2. Template for RAFT Assignments

RAFT

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: This is a writing assignment in which you will play the role of a person or thing from the reading assignment listed below. You will have to write to an audience that may be a single person or a group. The topic of your writing will also be based on the reading assignment. Finally, your writing will be in a particular format, such as a letter or newspaper article. The minimum and maximum length of your writing, due date/time, and grading criteria are described below.

Reading Assignment: _____

Main Topic: _____

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Minimum Length: _____

Maximum Length: _____

Due date/Time: _____

Grading criteria: _____

Baldwin, Readence, and Bean 2004

Figure 7.3. RAFT Assignment for Battle of Gettysburg

RAFT

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: This is a writing assignment in which you will play the role of a person or thing from the reading assignment listed below. You will have to write to an audience that may be a single person or a group. The topic of your writing will also be based on the reading assignment. Finally, your writing will be in a particular format, such as a letter or newspaper article. The minimum and maximum length of your writing, due date/time, and grading criteria are described below.

Reading Assignment: Assignment Chapter 23, pp. 166–174

Main Topic: Civil War Battle of Gettysburg

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Confederate Private	Abraham Lincoln	Newspaper Article	Slavery
General Pickett	Mother of Dead Soldier	Diary Entry	States' Rights
A cannon	Bayonet	Letter	Freedom
Union Surgeon	Newspaper Editor in 1859	Encyclopedia Entry	Death
Traveler	Squirrel on Little Roundtop	Advertisement	Honor

Minimum Length: _____

Maximum Length: _____

Due date/Time: _____

Grading criteria: _____

Baldwin, Readence, and Bean 2004

Reflections on 21st Century Learning

1. How do you currently develop students' independent study approaches in your classroom?

2. Which of the study strategies in this chapter would you like to incorporate in your teaching? Why?

3. What role does writing serve as an independent study approach in your classroom?

4. How will you differentiate instruction for students who need more guidance in using study strategies?

Strategies for Developing Critical Reading

Without a doubt, critical reading is an essential skill to have in the 21st century. As you develop your students' awareness of misinformation and flaws in text arguments, you are helping them to become astute citizens who are capable of deconstructing and critiquing ideas. The strategies described in this chapter are designed to scaffold the critical reading process in ways that engage students in dissecting and evaluating ideas:

- Polar Opposites
- Opinion-Proof
- REAP (Read, Encode, Annotate, Ponder)
- Phony Document Strategy