Understanding Texts & Readers

Responsive Comprehension Instruction with Leveled Texts

STUDY GUIDE

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Contents

Part I

Focusing on Vanessa (and Your "Vanessas")

Activity Summary

Read Vanessa's story across pages 2–6. Discuss your reactions with colleagues. What resonates with you? What are you wondering about?

Coaching Tips

I included Vanessa's story in *Understanding Texts & Readers* because it was while working with her that the importance of understanding text complexity, and the variables to consider besides levels, really cemented for me. It illuminated how dramatically the assessments we use and what we conclude from them can alter a student's reading trajectory—for better or worse. To begin with Vanessa's story is also to begin with an actual reader in mind, which should be the root of all our work as teachers of reading. That is to say that every assessment, practice, and structure we implement in our classrooms should honor our students.

So, while reading her story, what resonates with you? Does it make you think about your own reading assessments? If so, consider a close examination of what assessments you use and what they can specifically tell you about your students' comprehension.

Or maybe you're reflecting on how you currently use your assessments to match readers with books. Vanessa was matched with books by her running records alone. What variety of sources and information might you use to match your students with books?

Perhaps a particular student in your class is coming to mind who reminds you of Vanessa. Might this student you currently work with be a place to start with a close examination of text complexity work and reading comprehension? If so, let that child be your starting point for the work in this book.

Conducting a Unit Audit

Activity Summary

After reading page 14, audit your own reading curriculum. Starting with one unit, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which goal(s) are you hitting in this unit?

- Are there any goals that are missing? (If so, are they featured in previous or upcoming units?)

- Is there more emphasis placed on some goals than others?

Then, with that information in mind, repeat this with each reading unit you teach. Look for an overall balance across the year.

Coaching Tips

Curriculum gives us a framework for covering content with our students. But sometimes we can live within a particular unit so closely that our vision narrows and we might not see how this particular unit supports our yearlong work. Ultimately, we hope to provide students with multiple access points to each reading goal on the hierarchy across the year, though some units may focus on certain goals while others focus on different ones. To do that, we can examine, unit by unit, what goals are covered and in what sequence.

As you go through each unit and determine which goals it addresses and which ones it omits, you can then decide to either add a few lessons that support the missing goals *or* you can look toward other, upcoming, units and see if the goals are addressed there instead. To find lessons that teach into the goals on the reading hierarchy, consider using *The Reading Strategies Book* as a resource.

Mind you, just because we address certain goals in our curriculum does not mean that students are mastering that content during the whole-class instructional time. Mastery does not come from the minilesson. Mastery, in reading and in everything else in life, comes from the actual *doing*, from practice. But it's still important that our curriculum is balanced because actual reading process is balanced and asks us, as readers, to draw upon many skills and strategies at once.

Reflecting on Comprehension Terminology

Activity Summary

After reading page 14, jot down the terms *you* use to describe comprehension. How do they align to the proficient reader research's seven areas of comprehension? How do they align with my hierarchy of goals? Share these terms with your colleagues. Which ones do they use? How might you start to use an agreed upon, shared set of terms?

Coaching Tips

I often discuss how skilled readers are strategic. That means that skilled readers are aware of their thinking, and they purposefully use reading strategies to deepen their comprehension. If we are to maximize our efforts and effectiveness with students, then we need to know about all of the metacognition involved in engaging with a text. It is also helpful if we use a shared language while describing the skills that readers might use at any given time.

Once you look over your terms, the way you describe comprehension, what do you notice? Do you use more terms? Fewer? Different ones? What about your colleagues? And what does that now make you think? Maybe you will broaden your definition of comprehension. Maybe you will make it more specific. Ultimately, you'll decide on terms with your colleagues so that you are using a shared language when referring to the reading work your students demonstrate. If you all use the same terms, then it's likely you'll be able to assess your readers for the same skills. Once you do that, you'll be able to begin the work of goal setting. And where does that get you? To a place where students in your classroom, building, and district are seen through a shared set of lenses to support them in being skilled readers.

Terms I use to describe COMPREHENSION... | How I define those terms...

* Infer — * Develop ideas about characters the author doesn't directly say

* Determine importance — * Know which events are most important to the plot + character development

* Visualize — * Use sensory details to picture action + setting within a scene

Which ones am I missing?

How are my colleagues defining the terms?

Considering Variables That Impact Comprehension

Activity Summary

Read through the table on page 17 that lists reader and text variables impacting comprehension. Think about your assessments. What variables are you assessing?

Coaching Tips

The level of a text that a student can read is dependent on several variables. Taken together, these variables paint a fuller picture of the work that readers do with a text. If you lean on only one or two assessments, you might not be equipped to successfully match your readers with books.

So, how can you determine that you are assessing your readers with all of these variables in mind? Let's think about a few of those factors for a moment.

Consider memory, stamina, and attention. Does your assessment match the work that readers will do during independent reading in chapter books? If not, consider offering that student a whole-book assessment to monitor their accumulation of text and retelling.

The instructional support an assessment provides can also impact a reader's comprehension. Look at your assessments. Are the prompts scaffolded or supportive? Or are they open-ended?

Another factor is the cultural relevance of the text. Are your assessments using texts that are current, relevant, and reflective of the students who are taking them? Consider the plot, setting, characters, vocabulary, and themes in your assessment texts. Are they familiar to your students? Try to see if you notice a shift in your students' comprehension.

Discussing Reader, Text, and Task Case Studies

Activity Summary

Offer a "case study" of a student and their book choices like those on page 18 or the examples on page 19. Be sure to discuss level of challenge of the text, motivation, support, and the task. Then, determine how those factors impact their comprehension.

Coaching Tips

After reading the two case studies provided on page 18, what do they call into question for you? Are you reflecting on how you match your readers with books? Do you take enough of their lives and experiences into account while helping them shop for books? While reading these case studies, did you see how comprehension is influenced by much more than the level of a text?

The reader, the text, and the task are working simultaneously at any given moment to influence a student's motivation and comprehension while reading. Taken individually, we can understand how each impacts a student's reading.

Consider the **reader**. Has the reader been given a choice over the material? Does the reader have background knowledge on the content? Will the reader get to share their reading with peers?

Now consider the **text**. Is the structure similar to other texts the student has read before? Is the content familiar? Is the text at a lower reading level or a higher reading level than other texts the student normally reads?

Think about the **task**. Has the student been given choices as to how to engage with the text or has the task been set by the teacher? Are they reading for an authentic purpose or is this task for someone else? What will they do while and after reading—talk about it, write about it, keep the text to themselves?

Case Study			
Reader	Text	Task	Comprehension?
Highly motivated, but doesn't have background info on this time period. Chose book with club.	At lower reading level than what she typically reads. Book has several text features.	Read in book club to learn more about this time period in history. Talk with club 2x/week	Likely, comprehension will be okay as reader is motivated, was given choice, and has support of club!

Professional Learning Activity 1.6

Practicing Qualitative Leveling

Activity Summary

After reading the qualitative leveling example on pages 28–29, take a few books from your library and do the same.

Coaching Tips

The task of getting to know the levels of the books in your library may feel daunting. There are so many books, and so little time. So, where might you begin? Start with popular titles your students all want to read, the new titles that you just bought for your classroom, or the titles that a particular student in your room is reading who you want to better understand. Ultimately, this leveling work serves to help you better understand the texts in general, and children's books in your classroom library more specifically, so find a stack of books that makes sense for you to do that with.

Next, read through a sample text characteristic chart. The charts can be found in *Understanding Texts & Readers* on pages 32–34 for fiction and 35–37 for nonfiction. These and others like them can also be printed as part of the online resources. Then, start to sort your books in a continuum of increasing complexity. At that point, begin aligning the books with specific levels. Use the list of text characteristics and examples from the touchstone text on the charts to help you find where your books fit in best.
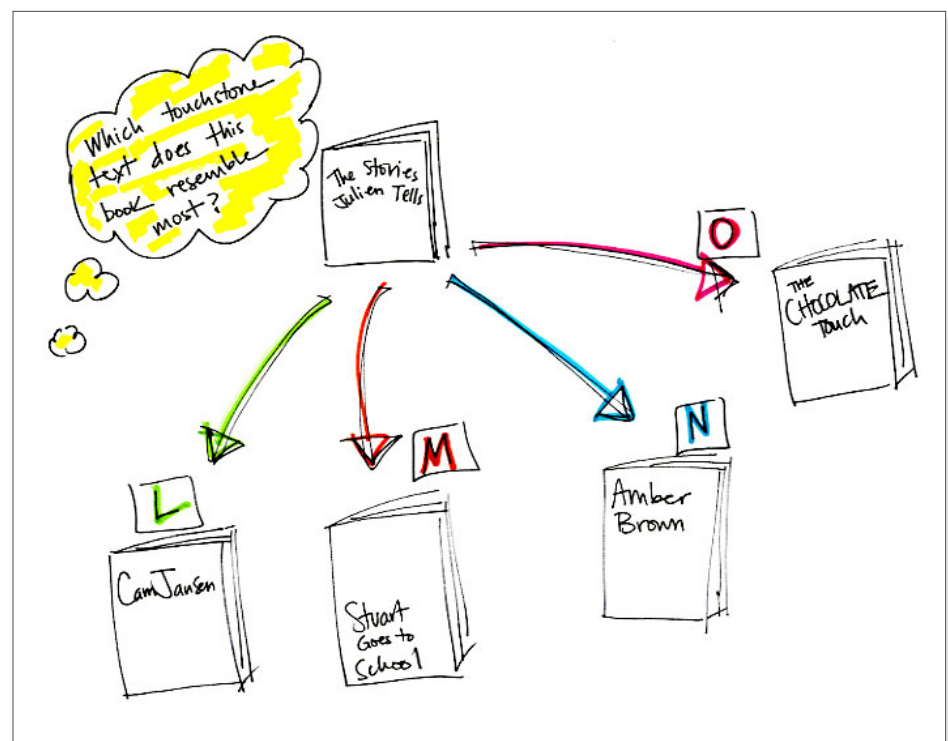
Getting to Know Characteristics of Texts in Your Libraries

Activity Summary

Download sample text characteristics charts from online (like those shown on pages 32–37). Add another column to the right and analyze another book you've read from your own collection.

Andy Shane and the Very Bossy Dolores Starbuckle
by Jennifer Jacobson–Level K

GOAL: PLOT AND SETTING

Text Characteristics	Examples from *Andy Shane and the Very Bossy Dolores Starbuckle*
Overall book structure is either entire stories across chapters, undefined scenes within the book, or episodic chapters. Series books are common.	The entire book is one story and should be read start to finish. The whole story is 56 pages long, with four chapters.
Problem-solution plotline is common.	The problem of the story is clear from the first chapter. Even the chapter title "I Hate School" helps support the reader's understanding of the problem.
Settings are usually familiar to the reader.	School and home
Settings change from chapter to chapter, but not usually within a chapter.	Settings stay the same within each chapter. The story starts at school, then [...] home, and then the next two chapters are back at sch[...]
Dialogue may be unassigned. Often the untagged dialogue is a continuation of the dialogue that came before it, with a dialogue tag in between.	See page 21 [...]

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Examples from <u>Meet Yasmin!</u>

- Divided into chapters; Each story is unique and can be read out of order (episodic); Book is 90 pages long

- In each story, problem is introduced as either something Yasmin wants or is afraid of, then the problem is solved by end of third chapter

- Home, school, park

- Settings change across chapters (home → park) but stay same within chapters

- See page 6 for an example of this, happens frequently throughout

Coaching Tips

Text characteristics provide a way to see beyond the content of a specific text and to be able to generalize some things about the reading skills and strategies that will be helpful for a reader to have when reading the text. An understanding of the text characteristics and how they change from one level to the next alters the way you confer with your readers. Instead of teaching into the specific book a reader has during a conference, you can see what makes that book supportive or challenging based on its level. Revealing those characteristics to your readers makes the work you do in that conference transferable to other books, on other days.

Before downloading a text characteristic chart from the online resources, think about a level it makes sense to study first. It might be a level of text that most of your students are reading, so understanding it better will help you in multiple conferences. Or, it might be a level one particular student is reading, a student you want to better support. Wherever you decide to start, once you've chosen a level you'll want to find a book that is also at that level. Then read it, paying attention to all of the four goals simultaneously and mark down examples for each of them as you go. After doing so, you'll have more command of the text characteristics, and the text you're studying will become like a touchstone for you to help you remember what to look for in other books of the same level. Over time, you won't need to rely as much on the sample charts because you'll own the information for yourself, which then helps you better teach into the text characteristics during conferences with your readers.

Part II

Studying Your Own Leveled Touchstone Texts: Fiction

Activity Summary

Explore the level-by-level descriptions for the levels of texts that your children are reading across pages 54–81. Pull a few titles you know well from your classroom library or personal teaching stash and describe them in terms of the four categories.

Coaching Tips

The goal in learning about text complexities and shifts across the levels is to be able to know what makes them supportive and challenging for students who are reading them. When you learn about the features of a particular text level, notice how they appear in the touchstone texts you have selected from your personal collection. Say you're looking through a text marked as Level O. You should find that within the complexities of plot and setting, several things are happening that did not happen in texts at Level N. While paging through the Level O text, you might notice that it's longer than books at Level N and how there is very little to no picture support. The reader is now expected to retell multiple important events and synthesize more of the text to truly understand the "why" in any given scene. And that's just the work around plot and setting a reader must do to fully comprehend the text!

As you notice how each of the goals come to life in a particular text you are studying, try marking your observations on a sticky note. Jot down the goal the complexity falls under and what a reader of the text must notice to have a high level of comprehension of the content. Then, when you see a student reading that particular text or any text at that same level, you'll be able to be more responsive because you will know the prompts to ask and the responses the student should be providing. And if the student's responses aren't matching the complexities of a particular goal, that's a place you might start in your instruction.

Creating Reading Response Exemplars: Fiction

Activity Summary

Look at the four Progression of Skills tables (on pages 86–87, 96–97, 104–105, and 108–109). Create a sample student response for each goal and skill to be analyzed.

Coaching Tips

In *Understanding Texts & Readers* I provide a sampling of student responses to each goal and skill. The responses I selected illustrate how the work a student must do becomes increasingly nuanced and detailed across the levels of texts. For your own personal learning, I suggest creating sample responses for the collection of touchstone texts you gathered in the previous activity. Those responses will serve as mentors that you can refer to as you read a student's own writing or talk with a student about their thinking in a text. The responses you create can also be used as an instructional tool to help students revise their own work within a text. If you provide students with an example of the kind of thinking they should do within a particular level of text, they will be more inclined to know how to approach those texts independently to deepen their own comprehension.

To try this work, go to the parts in the touchstone texts you marked that align with a particular goal and skill. In activity 2.1, I gave the example of marking up a Level O text. In that text, for example, you may have put a sticky note on a part that requires the reader to synthesize multiple causes to explain a character's actions. Now, try jotting a response to a prompt relating to synthesizing cause and effect, such as, "Why does [event] happen?" (Prompts for fiction texts can be found on pages 190–191.) Your response should consider the many things that have happened to the character thus far that causes them to act in a certain way. Repeat this work for each goal and skill presented on the progressions. This collection of responses will hone your own understanding of text complexities within and across levels while also helping you create a conferring toolkit to use with students when you are working with them in a conference or small group.
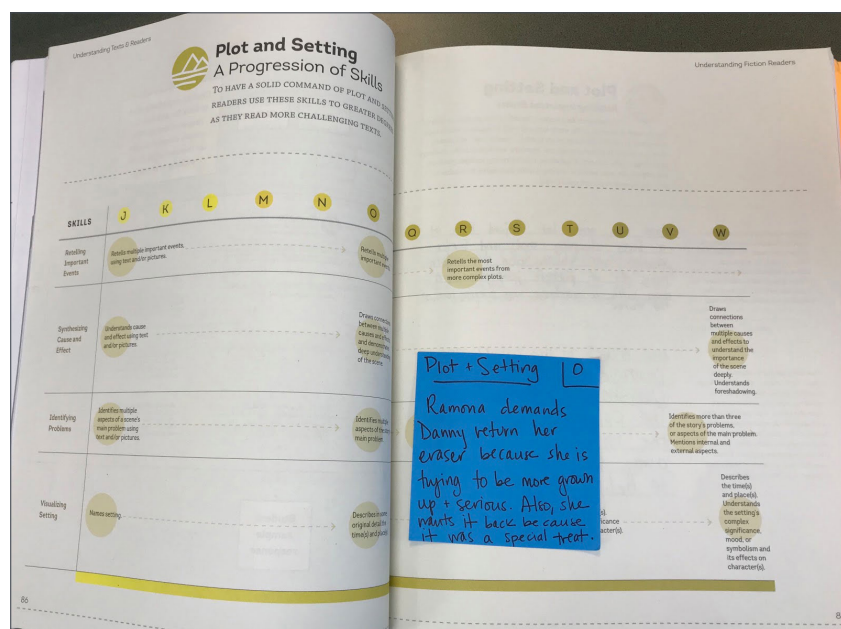
Professional Learning Activity 2.3

Studying Student Writing Against the Skill Progressions: Fiction

Activity Summary

Use the skill progressions to look at some of your student writing about reading. While looking through students' sticky notes and notebook entries, assess whether or not their responses align with the complexities of the texts they are responding to.

Coaching Tips

Ultimately, all of these activities around reading books through the lens of text complexity will help you evaluate your students' comprehension.

1. Gather student responses.

2. As you read their responses, first determine which goal and skill the writing falls under.

3. Look at the description of that skill work for the particular level of text about which they responded. Ask yourself, "Considering the complexity for this skill at this particular level of text, does the response align?" Keeping the text-level descriptions and skill progressions on hand will be helpful as you determine the level of proficiency the student is demonstrating.

If you believe that the answer is *yes*, then compliment the student on what they did well and name their process in the form of a strategy so they continue to respond to their reading in such a way. However, if you determine that the student's response is not aligning with the text complexities of that particular text, then offer them a mentor response. Point out the text complexities that occur in the books they are reading, show them the mentor response and how it reflects the level of the text, then support them in revising their writing about reading. They can use that revised jotting as they continue to read books at that level and jot down their thinking.

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Part III
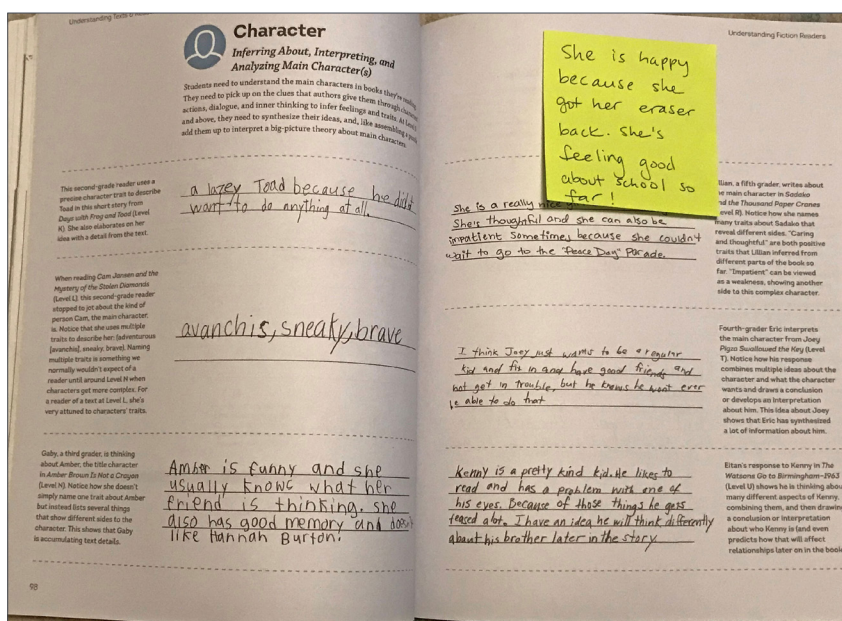
Learning About Nonfiction Text Levels

Activity Summary

Gather some nonfiction texts your students are reading. Then, explore the level-by-level descriptions across pages 126–153 that best match those titles. Next, describe the texts in terms of the four goals: Main Idea, Key Details, Vocabulary, and Text Features.

Coaching Tips

I have noticed that most teachers report that it's harder to find nonfiction texts on leveling databases than fiction texts, and that they are more comfortable identifying text complexities within fiction texts and have spent more time leveling the fiction baskets than the nonfiction ones.

Start by gathering a few of the nonfiction titles from your library that your students love reading. Select one of the titles and describe it according to the four goals: Main Idea, Key Details, Vocabulary, and Text Features. This is challenging work because it's tempting to describe nonfiction texts according to the topics about which they are reading. Stay focused on looking through the lens of text complexity! Within pages 126–153, locate the level that seems to best match the complexity of this particular text. See if the way I describe the four goals correlates with what you're noticing about that text. Jot your observations onto sticky notes as a guide to help you remember the complexities of that text.

The benefit of this activity is twofold. One benefit is that you can start to level your nonfiction library using the nonfiction text complexities as I explain them. A second benefit is that when you see a student reading that particular text you just explored (or any text at that same level), you'll have a more successful conference because you will know the complexity of responses the student should provide. And if the student's responses aren't matching the complexities of a particular goal, then start your instruction right there.

Creating Model Nonfiction Responses

Activity Summary

Look at the four Progression of Skills tables (on pages 158–159, 164–165, 170–171, and 174–175). Create a sample response for each goal and skill to be analyzed.

Coaching Tips

For this activity, return to that stack of nonfiction titles you gathered for activity 3.1. Select one of the titles you'd like to work with first. As you read that text, jot your thoughts onto sticky notes, but rather than record what you're noticing about the four goals, instead do some writing about reading.

For example, with the title you've selected, read a part and then jot down the main idea. Remember to use the Progression of Skills as a guide to help you consider all the work that level of text demands. You might use the sample prompts to assess comprehension found on pages 192–193 to help you as you engage in this work. Continuing with main idea, you might ask yourself after reading a section, "Look back at this chapter/section/page. What is it mostly about?" After reading the entire text, try asking yourself, "What is the most important idea you learned from reading this whole book?" After jotting your responses around main idea, refer back to the Progression of Skills. Did your response reflect an understanding of the text complexities of the particular book you were reading? If so, nicely done—that sticky note is a great sample response you can use while coaching your students to lift the level of their work around main idea. If you think your response needs to be revised, use the Progression of Skills and the sample responses I've already included in *Understanding Texts & Readers* to support you. Ultimately, in writing your own responses that align with the complexities of texts in your library, you'll develop a stronger understanding of what is required of your students to deepen their comprehension while reading nonfiction. You may also decide to use these exemplars in your teaching, or include them in a conferring toolkit.
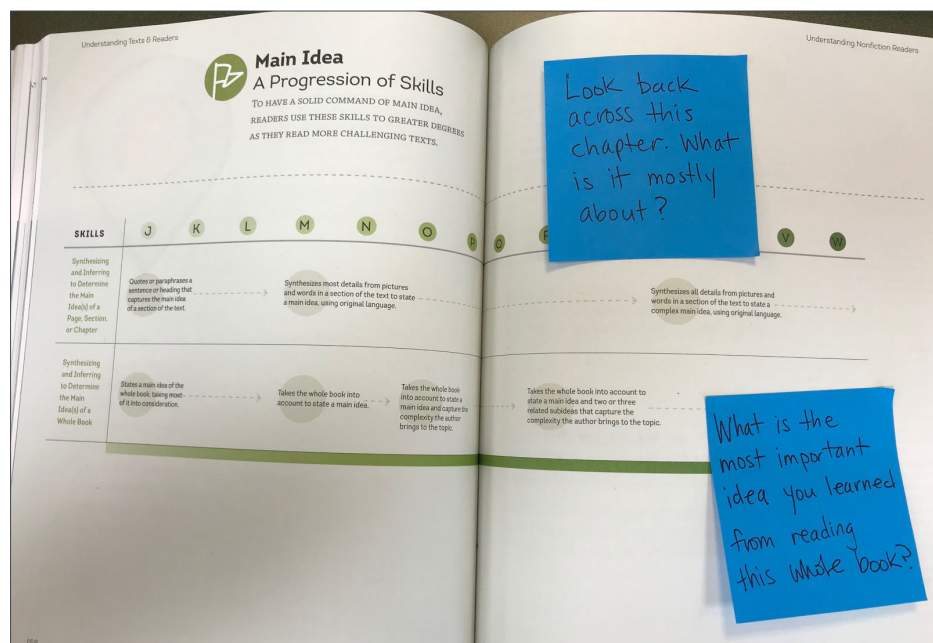
Studying Student Writing About Reading: Nonfiction

Activity Summary

Use the skill progressions to look at some of your students' writing about reading. While looking through their sticky notes and notebook entries, assess whether or not their responses align with the complexities of the texts they are responding to.

Coaching Tips

Looking at writing about reading is one way to better understand how students are comprehending their texts. If their written responses align with the sample student responses I've provided in *Understanding Texts & Readers*, then it's a good sign that they are choosing nonfiction books they are comprehending well. If, however, their responses are missing complexities of the level of text they're responding to, that's a reason to start doing some investigating. You might share the sample student responses from Part III with your students and ask them to find the responses that are most similar to the ones they've jotted. See if they can then add to or revise their response to include the complexities of the texts they're writing about. After coaching them in that work, you will hopefully see an improvement in their understanding of text complexities and the work required to fully comprehend their nonfiction texts.

However, if their responses are still missing components of the complexities of the text, then consider supporting them in this work with texts that might be easier for them than what they are currently reading. After doing so, when you invite them to stop and jot about the four goals, you will probably notice they are taking more of the text into consideration and getting the most out of their experience with that book. Ultimately, the goal for deepening your understanding of text complexities is to support your students while they read and respond to their nonfiction books.
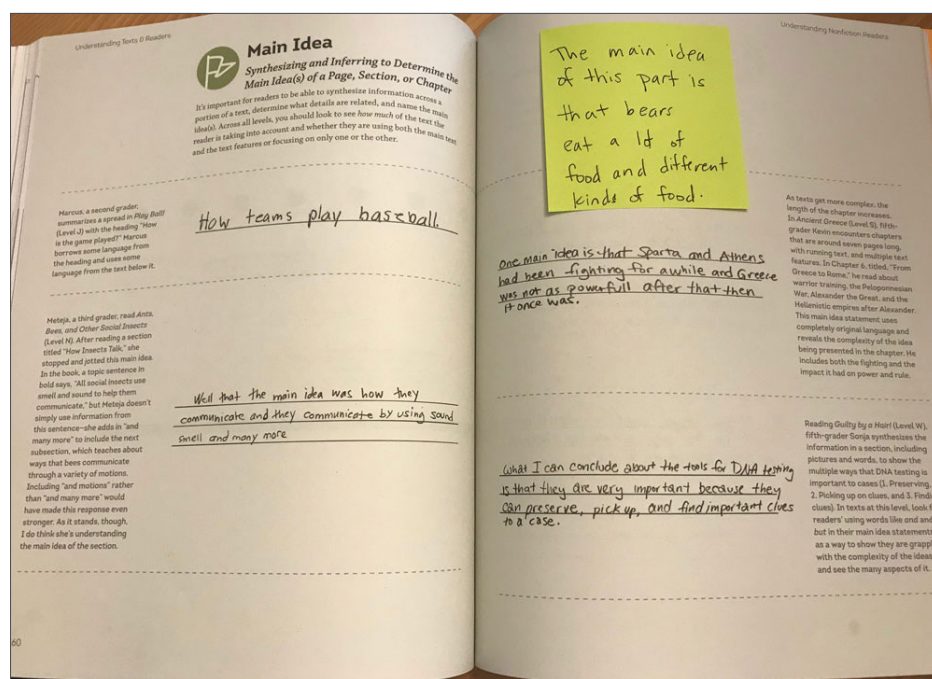
Getting to Know Students

Activity Summary

On pages 180–185 are several tools and suggestions that can help you get to know your students. Choose a few of them that you haven't tried before. Try them out. Then share with colleagues the impact they've had on your relationships with students and knowledge about them.

Coaching Tips

As I discuss in *Understanding Texts & Readers*, the level of a text is only one tool you might use while matching readers with books. Your students' interests and past experiences are other pieces of the puzzle when it comes to getting the right books in their hands. There are several ways to learn more about the individuals in your classroom; I have described a collection of such ways across pages 180–185. As you look through these tools, take note of the ones you've tried and the ones you have yet to explore. Select a few that you are excited to try to get to know your students on a more personal level.

You'll notice that the first method I list is the individual conference. Conferring is at the heart of workshop teaching because it allows you to really understand your students—where they are and what they're ready for. Students benefit from the tailored instruction as well as from the special time spent with you, their teacher, validating who they are as readers and as people. To learn more about your students as readers, invite students to share about their reading histories and to complete a reading interview.

If you are curious about more than your students' relationship with reading and want to know more about who they are as individuals outside of the school day, consider having them create an identity web or a heart map, fill out an interest survey, or write in response to the prompt "I wish my teacher knew . . ."

There are several other ways to get to know your students than I have just listed. As you go through the methods I include in the book, think about the methods you want to use with your whole class, with a group of students, or with individuals. And remember that interests and experiences change. So, consider revisiting this list of "getting to know you" tools at different junctures in the year to find ones that help you match your students with books as they grow as readers and as individuals.

Creating Your Own Comprehension Assessment

Activity Summary

Use the prompts on pages 190–193 to create your own whole-book assessment (steps for which can be found on pages 187–189) or short-text assessment (as described on page 198).

Coaching Tips

There are many benefits of creating your own whole-book assessments and short-text assessments. The first is how in creating them you will familiarize yourself with a particular text level and a particular text. By reading through the book or short passage you select, you will see the content as well as good places to invite students to share their thinking. Then, as you evaluate your students' written response against the sample responses in *Understanding Texts & Readers* (see activity 4.3), you can acquaint yourself with level-appropriate work. Obviously, an additional benefit of creating these assessments is that once you administer them, you will have a better sense of your students' goals as readers. Thus, the assessments are really for you *and* your students!

Aside from creating a whole-book or short-text assessment, the prompts can also help you while working with your students. This way you can assess students informally in an ongoing fashion during conferences. Consider printing them and keeping them with you while you confer. If a student is working toward the goal of Plot and Setting, for example, ask prompts related to that goal such as, "Why does [event] happen?" or "What are the events that lead up to [event]?" Phrasing your research questions in such a way during a conference helps you stay focused on work around a student's goal.

Creating a Whole-Book Assessment:

① Find high interest books for each level you plan to assess. Select two books per level to offer choice.

② Create 8—12 prompts per book then plant them throughout the text.

Evaluating Student Responses and Finding Goals

Activity Summary

Evaluate a student's responses to a whole-book or short-text assessment using the progressions. Use the information on pages 196–197 to help you with this work.

Coaching Tips

While evaluating any response, you will always want to see if the answer a student gives you aligns with the complexities of that particular level of text. The skill progressions will show what is expected at each level of text according to the goals so you can then see if the student included enough accurate and relevant information while jotting their responses. The goal here is not to see if the student was right or wrong with each answer, but to see how proficient their comprehension is within each goal and skill. Follow the directions for evaluating a student's responses, noticing a pattern, and determining a goal on pages 196–197.

Try the goal-setting conference structure (pages 219–224) to allow the child to reflect on their reading and to give them ownership over a goal. After setting a goal for the reader using their responses to this assessment, offer strategies tied to that goal. Continue to use the progressions and sample responses to support your students in the books they self-select and in those they read across the day for a variety of purposes to see if their thinking reflects an understanding of the texts' complexities.

Professional Learning Activity 4.4

Revising the Classroom Library

Activity Summary

Read the procedure for creating and organizing a classroom library across pages 206–211. Set some goals for yourself and try some library revisions.

Coaching Tips

From the very first day of school, the classroom environment sends a message about what is valued. If the library is full of baskets labeled by level, the message sent to students is that levels are the most important part of one's reading identity. If, however, baskets of books are sorted and labeled by topic with a range of levels within each basket, then the message sent is that readers have identities they consider when selecting texts. If some baskets are still to be created when kids first arrive, it can say, "I want to know about you first. This is your library, too. Let's build it together." To keep engagement high, you will need students to lead with their interests and teach them to shop for books based on what topics they want to read about and the interests they have (base baskets on the information you learned about your students from their interest inventories, heart maps, conferences, and the like). You could even invite a colleague to come into your room and, after looking at your library, tell you what they can learn about the readers in your room. Ideally, the information a visitor learns about your students after looking at your library is a true reflection of your current class.

As you audit your classroom library, make sure that students can find books that are not only mirrors of their own lives, but also windows into other people's stories. Make sure that the readability of the books within your baskets reflects the readers in your classroom at that given moment. Also, remember that the library is a living, breathing part of your classroom that will change with your students. So, don't worry about making perfect labels and systems. Rather, ask your students to help you sort, label, and manage the library. After all, it's just as much their library as it is yours! Let them leave their mark.

Questions to Guide Your Classroom Library Audit

- Do the books I currently have reflect multiple perspectives and cultures? Can students see themselves in the books I currently have?

- What range of levels of texts can my students currently read? Do I have books they'll be able to comprehend?

- Do a quick calculation of the number of students you have and number of books they'll read each week. Do I have enough books to support those students in reading multiple books per week for the year?

- Do I have a balance of fiction and nonfiction texts?

Reconsidering Your Language Around Levels

Activity Summary

On pages 213–218 I discuss language choices we might use when matching books to readers. What resonated with you? How might you change how you talk with kids about levels?

Coaching Tips

Think about some of the common situations that come up in your classroom and school around leveled texts and matching readers with books. Brainstorm with colleagues language you've used, you've heard colleagues use, or you've heard parents and kids use around levels. Using the table on page 213 and the discussion on pages 213–218, think about some ways you might talk among yourselves as teachers and with kids. Here are some to get your started:

- A child chooses a book that is much, much harder than what you've seen them able to read with comprehension. What do you say?

- You hear a colleague refer to a child as "one of my Level Ps"; what might you say?

- A child tells you, "These books are not my level"; what might you say?

- A parent asks you, "What level is my daughter? I want to get some books for her from the bookstore for her birthday." What's your response?
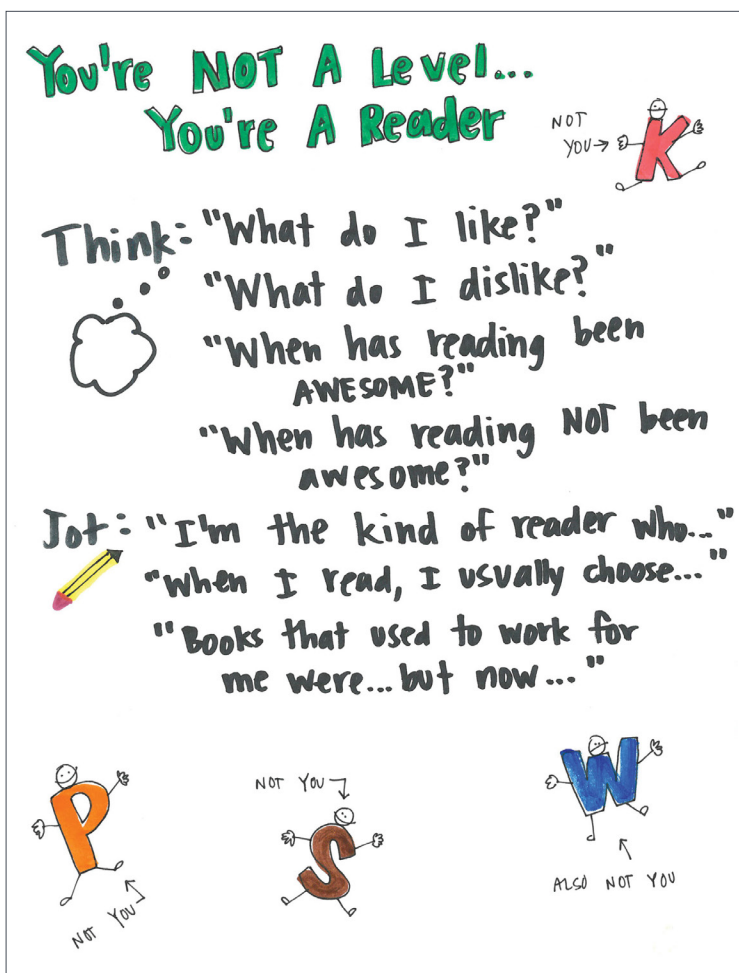
Professional Learning Activity 4.6

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Practicing Goal-Setting Conferences

Activity Summary

Read through the goal-setting conference transcript on pages 221–224. Then, try one! If you feel up for it, audio or video record yourself and view it with colleagues for feedback.

Coaching Tips

One thing you might notice while reading the goal-setting conference transcript is that the student is an active participant in the setting of their goal. When students are involved in this process, they are more likely to stay motivated and invested in working toward their goals. Another thing you might notice is that once the goal is established and the student is on board, the teacher immediately offers a strategy to help the student work toward their goal. The strategy is quickly explained or demonstrated and then the student begins practicing it within their own self-selected texts while you coach them in this work.

You might try reading through the transcript provided on pages 221–224 in groups of three colleagues, with someone reading for Carly, another colleague reading for the teacher, and a third colleague jotting down their observations of this type of conference. The observer might pay attention to a variety of features, such as the amount of teacher talk versus student talk or the kinds of questioning and prompting the teacher uses while working with Carly.

Then, when you try this type of conference with a student in your own class, you can record the interaction (or just invite a colleague to watch in real time) and ask the observing colleague to give you feedback regarding your amount of talking, the language you used, and the ways you supported the student in being independent with this work.

Finding Strategies to Support Comprehension Goals

Activity Summary

Read pages 225–232 to learn about how to make decisions about reading strategies aligned to goals and levels. Try this work for a particular student in your class. Gather that student's analyzed work, find the corresponding chapter or chapters in *The Reading Strategies Book* that align with that student's goals, and find a series of lessons that you could teach the reader in conferences and/or small groups.

Coaching Tips

The work of gathering and analyzing student work and assessments involves a small investment of time. However, once conference notes, running records, whole-book assessments, and other forms of data have been administered and evaluated, you will find an accurate goal for your student *and* you will then be able to plan out a series of strategies that you can offer that reader over the course of several weeks.

While looking through *The Reading Strategies Book*, make sure the strategies you select connect to your student's goal and the reading levels of the texts they are choosing to read. For example, the strategies you select for a reader working on the goal of Character while reading lots of books at Level M would need strategies that can be used in Level M texts. If that reader selects a text at Level N, then you would need to find a Character strategy that aligns with the shifts that occur in texts within that level.

Student's name: Zoe W.
Goal: Character

Skills	Strategies
Inferring	• How's the character feeling? (6.1) • Feelings Change (6.4)
Synthesizing	• Look for a pattern (6.8) • Yes, But Why? (6.13)

Professional Learning Activity 4.8

Exploring Methods of Instruction

Activity Summary

Read pages 233–246 about different instructional methods. Then, check out my (Jennifer Serravallo) YouTube channel to see some lesson types in action. Try one of the methods that is new to you or that you're working on becoming more proficient with. Consider recording yourself, playing it for colleagues, and giving each other feedback.

Coaching Tips

One of my tenets of reading instruction is the importance of matching as much as possible to the individual reader. That means matching students with texts—texts they are interested in and can read with a high degree of comprehension—*and* matching them with goals and strategies that will help them most, *and* matching the instructional methods we use to support them in those texts. You may rely on a handful of methods when instructing your students. This is an opportunity to try out a variety of practices to expand your repertoire while also finding ways that are effective for helping your students meet their goals.

You may begin by watching videos you can find online. There are some on my (Jennifer Serravallo) YouTube channel. There are also dozens on my online course, *Strategies in Action*, which can be found through the Heinemann website.

Consider inviting in a trusted colleague to either watch you in action or watch a video recording of you from earlier in the day. Ask them to watch through the lens you're trying to focus on. For example, you might ask them to pay attention to the amount of student talk versus teacher talk or the kinds of questions and prompts you offer your readers. Then, reflect on how that method matched the needs of the reader(s) you worked with.

Identifying Groups Based on Patterns

Activity Summary

Planning Your Week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Minilesson (every day—10 minutes)	"Find the context"	"Develop a group mentality"	"Read on, read on"	"insert a synonym"	orchestration lesson—apply M-Th's lessons as appropriate
Strategy Lesson (10 minutes)	Jason C. Dorian D. Wilson D. char. inference ⑩	Richard C. Nayeli D. Hazel H. Semaj Y. -retell ⑩	Janelle W. Dean K. interpreting theme ⑩	Jason etc. ⑩	Richard etc. -retell ⑩
Strategy Lesson (10 minutes)	n/a	n/a	n/a	(maybe— see "other")	(maybe— see "other")
Conferences (5 minutes each)	Sammie A. Elijah B. ⑩	Angel D. Jeremiah L. Destiny P. Kamil S. Justin W. Daisy C. ⑩	Nayeli D. Homaynis E. ⑩	Joseph G. ⑤	Jose B. (goal-setting) Ingrid P. ⑩
Guided Reading (15-20 minutes)	Hazel H. Nayeli D. K→L ⑮		Hazel H. Nayeli D. K→L ⑮		
Other (___ minutes)	Partnership: Shayna + Drualia (N) V + FL ⑤		Partnership (O) Jason G. Anthony O. V + FL ⑤	Check in with M-W kids, catch up with absentees ㉕	Partnership: Ezekiel + Pharoah (R) better convo by taking turns with an idea—maybe see Shayna or Drualia ⑮
Read-Aloud (every day—20 minutes)	Amelia Bedelia discuss lang. make chart	Amelia Bedelia (cont'd) continue chart	Judy Moody ch. 1 + 2 highlight char. change humor in language	Judy Moody ch. 3 + 4 character change	Judy Moody ⑩ ch. 5 whole class conversation ⑩

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Class Profile

Name	Level	Goal and Notes
Pharoah A.	R	V/FL - using context
Jose B.	R?	*need to assess at lower level
Sammie A.	P	
Elijah B.	L	V/FL
Richard L.	M	Plot - retelling - key events
Drualia C.	N	V/FL
Angel D.	S	
Jeremiah L.	T	
Destiny P.	Q	
Kamil S.	M	V/FL - sarcasm
Ezekiel S.	R	plot - multiple plotlines
Justin W.	M	
Daisy C.	P?	*need to assess higher
Jason C.	L	character - inferring traits
Nayeli D.	K	plot - retelling
Dorian D.	M	good w. literal details - inf. - character
Wilson D.	M	character
Homaynis E.	N	V/FL
Jason G.	O	
Joseph G.	M	
Hazel H.	K	Plot - retelling
Dean K.	P	theme/idea - theme - universal
Anthony O.	O	V/FL - sarcasm
Ingrid P.	P	V/FL - proficient → exceptional (use context
Shayna R.	N	V/FL
Janelle W.	M	Theme/idea - universal theme
Semaj Y.	M	plot - retelling

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While reading pages 233–246, think about the same child for whom you chose strategies during activity 4.7 or if you didn't do that activity, choose a student now. Then determine which methods would help support the student, taking into consideration how many other students might need the same work, and whether the teaching will be whole class, small group, or one-on-one.

Coaching Tips

As you begin to use the goals students are working toward as a guiding principle rather than levels, the way you group students will start to shift. There will most likely be many students in your class who would benefit from the same strategy or string of strategies, even if they are reading texts at varying levels.

Grouping students and matching the instructional method to the individual requires careful planning. Once you have determined goals for each of your students and then selected a handful of strategies that will help them reach their goals, it's important to figure out when and where in your week you will meet with them. You might consider meeting with a group of three students who each need the same strategy in a small-group strategy lesson on Monday. Then, later in the week, you might follow up with those individuals in individual conferences to see if they continue to apply the strategy into their independent reading. Meanwhile, one of those students might also need the support of guided reading to understand how texts go that are instructional for them. That child could be in a guided reading group with one to three other students who also need support at the same level of text that is instructional for each of them. You might gather that group for a guided reading lesson on Thursday, for example. At left, you can see sample planning pages. Download a blank copy of these forms at hein.pub/serravallo.

Exploring Options for Note-Taking

Activity Summary

On page 235 there are several note-taking sheets based on goals with skill progressions explored throughout the book. Download the sheets (hein.pub/UTR) and try using them as you teach. Compare them to any other note-taking forms you have used in the past during conferences.

Coaching Tips

While using the forms, notice what you tend to pay attention to while conferring with your readers now that the prompts are in front of you. For example, you might notice a shift from asking questions that make the conference "book specific" and focus your research on skills they are using. When I keep these prompts in front of me, I'm reminded how helpful it is to focus my research in a conference within the goal the student is working toward.

Also, notice what happens in your conferences when you use the two columns—one for strengths, one for teaching opportunities. Hopefully you keep your eye on the strengths your students are demonstrating and then find teaching opportunities from the strengths.

Once you find an area where you can begin teaching into your students' work, you'll most likely have goal-setting conferences. Once their goals are established, the note-taking form can help you stay with that goal over a period of time so you can track your students' progress with a particular goal and skill.

NAME: *Billy*

Goal: Plot and Setting

Questions and prompts to research:
- "Retell the book to me. What happened first?"
- "What problem(s) is your character dealing with?"
- "Describe what you picture in this part."
- "Tell me about an important event. What causes it to happen?"

Strengths	Teaching Opportunities
10/1 · retells by naming the main event from each chapter 10/8 · Could name the main problem after some coaching · saw how the ch. titles are related to the problem !!	· read to look for the character's problem · notice how the setting impacts how character deals with the problem

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