

Meaning making: a complex process

As Scarborough's well-known reading rope image illustrates, reading with meaning is a multifaceted process. Readers who read with a deep level of meaning habitually select the right reading strand or use them simultaneously to orchestrate an overall understanding through continually building and updating their own **mental model**.

Beyond the reading rope image, comprehension relies heavily on the specifics of the text being read: the background knowledge for that particular text; the vocabulary in that particular text; the structure of that particular text; alongside the motivation for reading that particular text.

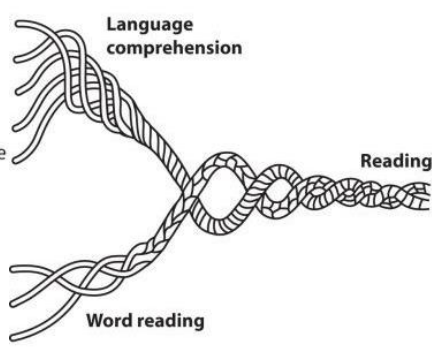
Successful comprehenders (in addition to intertwining the strands, building mental models and adapting to the text structure in front of them) will also set their own **purpose** and aims of reading AND will instinctively monitor for comprehension to meet their own internal high standards of coherence. Why is this important? Because, the unsuccessful comprehender will repeatedly fail to understand the texts they read so that reading with no meaning becomes the rule rather than the exception; children will merely crack the code with no purpose or understanding, becoming the literate illiterates.

Developing accurate **mental models** from texts and having high internal standards of coherence are crucial in reading with meaning, yet so often reading instruction, especially reading intervention, rely on teaching individual strategies or skills; keeps the process of intertwining the strands needed to build effective mental models a secret; misses opportunities to support children in gaining high-levels of coherence. At Nanclendra we aim to make the complex task of making meaning, explicit enough for all to be successful, confident and motivated readers through:

- ✓ Precisely pitched texts
- ✓ Connecting and wondering
- ✓ Explicit modelling of expert reading
- ✓ Purposeful dialogic book talk
- ✓ Rereading
- ✓ Explicit vocabulary development
- ✓ Fluency instruction

- Activating word meanings
- Understanding sentences
- Making inferences
- Comprehension monitoring
- Understanding text structure

- Letter-sound knowledge
- Accurate word decoding
- Automaticity in decoding



Poor comprehenders tend to view reading as a word decoding activity, whereas good comprehenders view reading as a meaning making activity.
[1. Pg 150]

Providing purpose

As children get older, they need to learn to set their own purposes and aims. They need to take charge of their comprehension and become active readers. [1. Pg 108]
Nanclendra's approach builds purpose through two ways:

1. Connect and wonder

Before each read, children will actively engage prior to reading by drawing out any previous and personal connections and wondering about what the text might be about. This opens the gateway as early as possible to engage purposefully with the author; to allow pupils to start to integrate the text with their prior knowledge whilst also providing a sense of purpose for the reading of the text.

2. Precisely pitched texts

Each text has been chosen to spark curiosity in the reader and to provide a perfect platform for quality questioning to take place. The texts provide enough challenge to explicitly model high standards of coherence whilst also providing genuine moments of comprehension monitoring. A wide variety of text types are covered to ensure children understand that different texts require different approaches.

Repeated reads

It is widely accepted that rereading has the power to transform a difficult read into an easier one and that learning to make sense of texts that one cannot already read easily is at the heart of successful reading instruction. [2]
Providing repeated reads allows the teacher to set a climate which allows pupil motivation to flourish: learning experiences are challenging yet achievable and concepts and processes are broken down so they can be learned in small parts - granular chunking. [3. Pg 43]

We follow three evidence informed stages:

Get the gist. The teacher reads and models what a successful reader does to build an effective **mental model** of the text – visibly intertwining the reading strategies; framing success for the pupils. [3. Pg 47]

Get to grips. The teacher rereads and poses problems for the pupils to solve together to make explicit the link between author and reader; guiding and facilitating direct communication between writer and their audience. [4. Pg 60]

Go solo. Pupils are provided with a learning experience which puts them in control of their outcomes; they believe they are successful readers and attribute that success to themselves which builds motivation. [3. Pg 48]
Additionally, each read develops both the pupils' ability to monitor their comprehension but also supports them in developing an accurate, appropriate **mental model**. The teacher will repeatedly draw the pupils' attention to what information matters, what information does not make sense yet and what needs to be done to ensure it does.

Get the gist: what does the text say?

As previously mentioned, comprehension is a highly complex process which primarily happens as we read and yet, so often, the teaching of reading comprehension is structured around asking questions after the act of comprehending has taken place: ensuring the act of making meaning remains invisible to the novice reader. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The pedagogy behind Nancledra's reading approach prioritises supporting the novice reader *as* they read, bringing alive the often invisible intertwining of the strategies expert readers apply so effortlessly. How is this done? Through expert **modelling**.

Ron Berger in his *Ethic of Excellence* puts forward modelling as an absolute must in his description of effective teachers, describing them as those who are aware of their expertise and of how to reveal their skills to learners [5.]; yet the key processes behind successful readers usually remain hidden from the novices within the primary classroom.

Modelling *within* the context of reading instruction needs to be planned to ensure key moments are drawn upon and not missed; the experts need to know how to share the most powerful parts of the text with the novice so they see and hear key meaning-making opportunities; and the process must be succinct yet robust.

To simulate exactly what an expert reader does [9. Pg 3] opportunities to model four key strategies: summarising, predicting, questioning and clarifying- often through inferring - are explicitly planned for because the act of understanding a text does not conveniently wait for the end of a chapter or story. These strategies are not the central component of the reading lesson but are integrated into the reading, ensuring they are delivered as naturally and smoothly as possible. [4. Pg 134].

Reading is a complex process which so often sits in the abstract. If we want children to be motivated to read, it is imperative that we frame what success looks like for the novice reader and model the expectancy of reading success. [6.] . Nancledra's approach ensures the implicit, complexities of reading comprehension are made explicit, truly visible for all.

As educators, the moment we engage in modelling, we have to see it as a chance to do something really powerful for our students. We have a chance to leave them with an expert model; a chance to make the abstract concrete and support their conceptual understanding of a complex process. [5. Pg 40 & 41]

Get to grips: what does the author mean?

It is the reading itself and the related discussion that will most advance children's ability to read. [4. Pg 132] which is why Nancledra's approach provides high quality, interspersed discussion throughout the 'Get To Grips' read. The discussion is key and needs to be thoughtfully prepared; just reading the text aloud is not enough to scaffold it for some, the text needs to be made public information. Nancledra's approach provides structured, rich and tenacious discussion points which support pupils to make informed decisions about what the author means and not just what they say – children get to grips and discover the 'major understandings' of the text, [8. Pg 25]. Pupils actively engage in the meaning-making process, allowing them to integrate the information they read rather than just accumulating it as a receiver; developing the crucial **mental model** which ultimately future proofs their reading success.

The National Reading Panel, 2000 [7] , found the power of talk transformative when reporting on what teachers should do to successfully teach all children to read with meaning: 'they should facilitate discussions in which students collaborate to form joint interpretations of texts and to try to explain the processes that they are using to comprehend texts.' Nancledra's approach presents reading as a problem to solve, not with quick facts and statements, but with the development of ideas, connections and always with a close eye on monitoring meaning. The expert is actively involved to guide and facilitate discussions which focus on the important ideas; establishing connections between them; and enhancing students' awareness of authorial intent.

If it does not matter much to the reader whether the mental model makes sense, then the reader will see no point in struggling with inference making, comprehension monitoring, or understanding the structure of the text, and they will not appreciate that the text should fit with their background knowledge of a topic.

[1. Pg 106]

It is an iterative process which will allow the novice reader to comprehend the printed form of language beyond their own spoken language comprehension, ensuring all pupils are set up for success; they will believe they can comprehend; become increasingly confident in their own ability to think about texts; and steadily increase their own internal standards of coherence.

Go solo: responding to the author's intent

Developing *queries*, as described by Beck, McKeown and Sandora, is the process of designing open, text-based questions that invite students to engage with and build meaning from the ideas in the text. Comprehension relies heavily on the specifics of the text being read, therefore all our reading queries, reading response questions, will be intimately related to the text being studied. [4. Pg 144]

The previous reading sessions have led up to this point; the children now have a robust **mental model** of the text they are being questioned upon and have engaged in purposeful discussion facilitated through high-quality questioning which has checked both for meaning but also supported all children in analysing meaning. The expert (the teacher) has enabled each child to gradually accumulate an understanding of the text. The teaching which has gone before has 'overcome the curse of knowledge; made explicit the fundamental purpose of reading - to gain meaning' [4. Pg 60] and therefore, all children are set up to respond thoughtfully and most importantly with success.

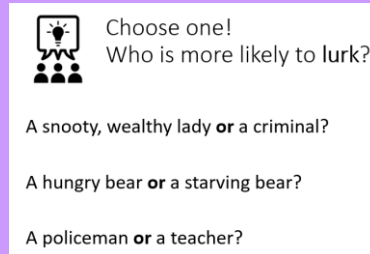
Vocabulary

We explicitly build in teaching time to explore vocabulary deeply; it ensures words are not barriers to the pupils' overall understanding. Whilst effective reading comprehension depends significantly on good knowledge of the meaning of the words it is not usually necessary to know all the words in a text, or to stop and look up all the words because, to some extent, their meanings can be worked out from the context. Therefore, our vocabulary instruction is through both **indirect** instruction: using rich reading experiences to grow vocabulary 'naturally'; paying attention to context to work out meaning; and using background knowledge; and through **direct** robust vocabulary instruction.

Our approach to **direct** instruction is underpinned by the evidence-informed idea from Beck, McKeown, & Omanson (1987) that to know a word well requires 'rich, decontextualised knowledge of a word's meaning, its relationship to other words, and its extension to metaphorical uses.' Children need to have a broad and deep understanding of the word so that they can use it flexibly.

We follow the SEEC model (Quigley 2018): select, explain, explore, consolidate. Both the explore and consolidate elements are heavily supported by Beck and McKeown's discussion related vocabulary activities as outlined in their 'Bringing Words To Life' vocabulary manual [See Fig 1 for an example].

Additionally, we use dual coding to support children's ability to recall taught words [Fig 2.] and also utilise Biemiller's (2010) 'drop in word' method which allows for definitions to be told without overly disrupting the flow of reading.



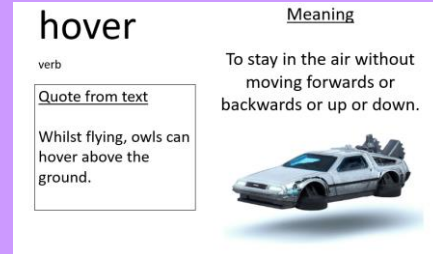
Choose one!
Who is more likely to lurk?

A snooty, wealthy lady **or** a criminal?

A hungry bear **or** a starving bear?

A policeman **or** a teacher?

Fig 1.



hover

verb

Quote from text

Whilst flying, owls can hover above the ground.

Meaning

To stay in the air without moving forwards or backwards or up or down.

Fig 2.

Fluency

"It is not enough for readers to read the words in the text accurately – they need to read the words automatically. All readers have a limited amount of attention: cognitive energy. If they have to use too much of that cognitive energy to decode the words in text, they have little remaining for the more important task in reading – comprehension."

The inside track: Rasinski; 2012

Nancledrs'a approach to reading instruction is built around fluency being defined as 'reasonably accurate reading, at an appropriate rate, with suitable expression, that leads to accurate and deep comprehension and motivation to read [Hasbrouck & Glaser, 2012, p. 13]. There are three active ingredients to our fluency approach:

1. The expert (teacher) **models** how to read texts with accuracy, prosody and speed; showing how they decide the best words to emphasise, the pace, the voices, pauses and how they use punctuation to help them.
2. Children are **assisted** to read texts fluently through tracking the text whilst an expert models fluent reading; echo reading with high expectations; and choral reading or partnered reading.
3. Texts are **practised** repeatedly. As pupils re-read the text, the number of words they read automatically and accurately increases and their intonation reflects their improving understanding.

Good oral readers tend to be good silent readers which is why we allocate time and energy to developing good oral readers; supporting them to cross the bridge between decoding accurately and reading with a level of expression which unlocks meaning.

What about reading strategies?

Reading strategies do play an important part in ensuring all children read with meaning but they should be viewed as a set of tricks that can be quickly taught but which do not improve with extensive practice. [4. Pg 56]

Nancledra's approach shares the strategies to develop a common language between reading novice and reading expert; a language which supports clear teacher explanations and allows purposeful, reading orientated meta-cognitive discussions to flourish between all members of the classroom:

- Summarising
- Predicting
- Questioning
- Clarifying

However, our approach does not teach the strategies in isolation as transferable 'skills' as this may ask pupils to do something in addition to making sense of the text because if some mental resources are devoted to calling up 'skills', the mental resources needed for comprehension are reduced [8. Pg 52]. This will undoubtedly decrease the likelihood of coherence for pupils by limiting their cognitive capacity to engage other needed strategies and the essential mental model will remain unchanged, if it exists at all.



Summarise

A summary retells the main parts of a story in order or gathers the main points from an information text. It is written in your own words and is much shorter than the original text.

How to summarise...

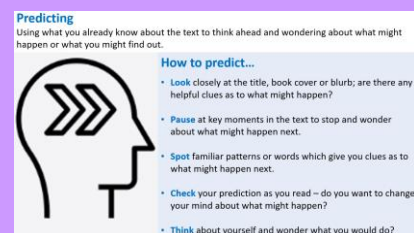
Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are the most important characters in the story?
- Where is the text taking place?
- When is the story taking place?
- What are the main events: the problem, the resolution and the ending?
- Why have actions taken place?

Decide what is the most important information in the text.

Use the most important words in the text with some of your own.

Keep it short!

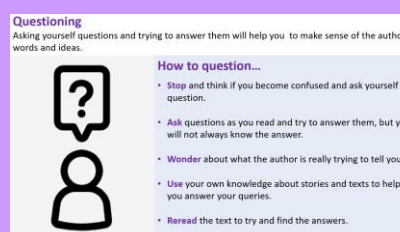


Predicting

Using what you already know about the text to think ahead and wondering about what might happen or what you might find out.

How to predict...

- Look closely at the title, book cover or blurb; are there any helpful clues as to what might happen?
- Pause at key moments in the text to stop and wonder about what might happen next.
- Spot familiar patterns or words which give you clues as to what might happen next.
- Check your prediction as you read – do you want to change your mind about what might happen?
- Think about yourself and wonder what you would do?

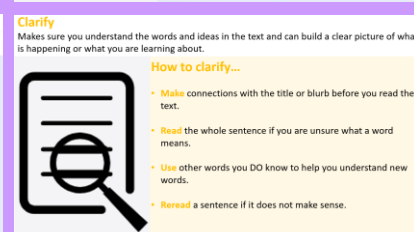


Questioning

Asking yourself questions and trying to answer them will help you to make sense of the author's words and ideas.

How to question...

- Stop and think if you become confused and ask yourself a question.
- Ask questions as you read and try to answer them, but you will not always know the answer.
- Wonder about what the author is really trying to tell you.
- Use your own knowledge about stories and texts to help you answer your queries.
- Reread the text to try and find the answers.



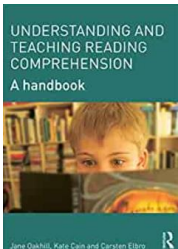
Clarify

Makes sure you understand the words and ideas in the text and can build a clear picture of what is happening or what you are learning about.

How to clarify...

- Make connections with the title or blurb before you read the text.
- Read the whole sentence if you are unsure what a word means.
- Use other words you DO know to help you understand new words.
- Reread a sentence if it does not make sense.

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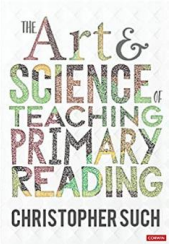
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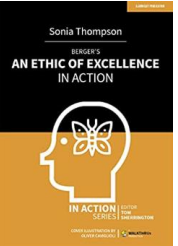
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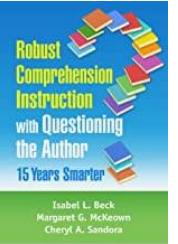
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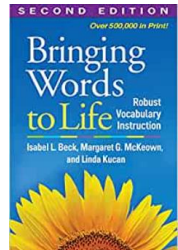
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