Improving Reading Comprehension, Fluency and Accuracy

WebQuest Description: Use of different reading strategies to comprehend, interpret and evaluate the text, draw on prior knowledge, knowledge of words meanings and understanding of textual features.

Grade Level: 6-8
Curriculum: English / Language Arts
Keywords: Reading, Comprehension, Skimming and Scanning, Fluency and Accuracy

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Introduction: The purpose to create this webquest is to enable the students to improve their accuracy and fluency through reading skills, not only in school, but also in the world of work. Knowing how to effectively learn and comprehend information and apply what they have understood. Taking time to assess their reading skills abilities, learning techniques to make acquiring information more effective, and applying them to their every-day life will help to ensure that they reach their goals.

The purpose of this WebQuest is to gain more knowledge about reading practices that improve comprehension for all students. You will gain more information on specific strategies to use before, during, and after your reading lesson. This WebQuest is also designed to be used throughout the school year as a resource to improve reading.

1. Read the story "Why the Sky Is Far Away" before answering Numbers 1 through 8 in the Answer Section.

"Why the Sky is far away"

Ramon looked at the food on his tray and made a face. "Macaroni and cheese again," he said to his friend Brian. "They never serve anything good for lunch." Brian gave his own lunch a critical look and frowned. "You think that's bad," he said, "I've got peanut butter and jelly again. It's the third time this week!"

They pushed the food aside. "We can get something at the burger place after school," Ramon said. They concentrated on studying for their English test instead of eating. English was next period, and Mr. Friedman had a reputation for giving difficult tests. When the bell rang, they dropped their uneaten lunches into the garbage. Mr. Friedman was standing nearby. "Not hungry, guys?" he asked. They shook their heads and hurried off to class.

When the test was over, there were still ten minutes left in the period. Mr. Friedman stood at the front of the class. "Before you leave today," he said, leaning against the desk, "I'd like to share an old African folktale with you. I think you'll find this one interesting. It's called 'Why the Sky Is Far Away':"

The bell rang for the next period. "That's the end," Mr. Friedman said, smiling. He looked at Ramon and Brian. "What did you think of the story?" he asked. They slouched in their chairs and looked apologetic. "We get the message," they said, smiling. "No more lunches in the garbage!"

2. Read the article "Popular Sports Around the World" before answering Numbers 9 through 16 in the Answer Section.

"Popular Sports Around the World"

For centuries, people have been playing kicking games with a ball. The game of soccer developed from some of these early games. The English probably gave soccer its name and its first set of rules. In European countries, soccer is called football or association football. Some people believe that the name "soccer" came from "assoc." an abbreviation for the word association. Others believe that the name came from the high socks that the players wear. Organized soccer games began in 1863. In soccer, two teams of eleven players try to kick or head the ball into their opponents' goal. The goalie, who tries to keep the ball out of the goal, is the only player on the field who is allowed to touch the ball with his or her hands. The other players must use their feet, heads, and bodies to control the ball. Every four years, soccer teams around the world compete for the World Cup. The World Cup competition started in 1930. Brazil is the home of many great soccer players, including the most famous player of all, Pelé. With his fast footwork, dazzling speed, and great scoring ability, Pelé played for many years in Brazil and then later in New York. During his 22 years in soccer, he scored 1,281 goals and held every major record for the sport. People in more than 140 countries around the world play soccer. It is the national sport of most European and Latin American countries. Soccer is definitely the world's most popular sport! James Naismith, a physical education teacher in Massachusetts, invented basketball in 1891. Naismith's boss asked him to invent a game that students could play indoors during bad weather. He wanted to find a game that wasn't as physically rough as soccer, football, or wrestling. Naismith attached peach baskets to a railing ten feet above the floor at either end of the gym. The players used a soccer
ball. A person sat on a ladder next to each basket at either end of the gym, and threw out the balls that landed in the baskets. Naismith decided that having only five players on each team would keep the game from getting too rough. Two years later, metal hoops with net bags replaced the peach baskets. Officials pulled a string on the nets to release the balls that went in. In 1894, Naismith added the backboard behind each net and changed to a larger ball. In 1913, people began using the bottomless nets that are used today. During a basketball game, two teams of five players each throw the ball into two baskets at opposite ends of a court. Players bounce, or dribble, the ball to the basket or pass the ball to teammates. A team scores points by getting the ball into their team's basket. The team with the highest score wins. By the 1900s, basketball was the most popular indoor sport. Athletes in approximately 130 countries play the game. Basketball is especially popular in the United States, China, and Puerto Rico.

Baseball began in the United States in the early 1800s. Some people believe that Abner Doubleday invented the game. Others think that baseball came from an old British sport called rounders. Baseball and rounders are very similar. However, in rounders the field players throw the ball right at the runner. If the ball hits the runner, he or she is out. In baseball, a field player just touches the ball to the base or the running player to get the player out. Today's baseball players use special equipment to help prevent injuries. Field players wear baseball gloves to protect their hands. The catcher wears a metal mask, a chest protector, and shin guards. Batters wear plastic helmets to protect their heads. Every spring in the United States, people of all ages play baseball at local baseball fields.

It's no wonder that baseball is called the national pastime of the United States.

3. Cinderella

Once upon a time there lived an unhappy young girl. Her mother was dead and her father had married a widow with two daughters. Her stepmother didn't like her one little bit. All her kind thoughts and loving touches were for her own daughters. Nothing was too good for them - dresses, shoes, delicious food, soft beds, and every home comfort. But, for the poor unhappy girl, there was nothing at all. No dresses, only her stepisters' hand-me-downs. No lovely dishes, nothing but scraps. No rest and no comfort. She had to work hard all day. Only when evening came was she allowed to sit for a while by the fire, near the cinders. That's why everybody called her Cinderella.

Cinderella used to spend long hours alone talking to the cat. The cat said, "Miaow", which really meant, "Cheer up! You have something neither of your stepisters has and that is beauty." It was quite true. Cinderella, even dressed in old rags, was a lovely girl. While her stepisters, no matter how splendid and elegant their clothes, were still clumsy, lumpy and ugly and always would be. One day, beautiful new dresses arrived at the house. A ball was to be held at the palace and the stepisters were getting ready to go. Cinderella didn't even dare ask if she could go too. She knew very well what the answer would be: "You? You're staying at home to wash the dishes, scrub the floors and turn down the beds for your stepisters." They will come home tired and very sleepy. Cinderella sighed, "Oh dear, I'm so unhappy!" and the cat murmured "Miaow."

Suddenly something amazing happened. As Cinderella was sitting all alone, there was a burst of light and a fairy appeared. "Don't be alarmed, Cinderella," said the fairy, "I know you would love to go to the ball. And so you shall!" "How can I, dressed in rags?" Cinderella replied. "The servants will turn me away!"&nbsp;

The fairy smiled. With a flick of her magic wand Cinderella found herself wearing the most beautiful dress she had ever seen. "Now for your coach," said the fairy; "A real lady would never go to a ball on foot! Quicq! Get me a pumpkin!" "Of course," said Cinderella, rushing away. Then the fairy turned to the cat. "You, bring me seven mice, and, remember they must be alive!"

Cinderella soon returned with the pumpkin and the cat with seven mice he had caught in the cellar. With a flick of the magic wand the pumpkin turned into a sparkling coach and the mice became six white horses, while the seventh mouse turned into a coachman in a smart uniform and carrying a whip. Cinderella could hardly believe her eyes.

"You shall go to the ball Cinderella. But remember! You must leave at midnight. That is when my spell ends. Your coach will turn back into a pumpkin and the horses will become mice again. You will be dressed in rags and wearing clogs instead of these glass slippers! Do you understand?" Cinderella smiled and said, "Yes, I understand!"

Cinderella had a wonderful time at the ball until she heard the first stroke of midnight! She remembered what the fairy had said, and without a word of goodbye she slipped from the Prince's arms and ran down the steps. As she ran she lost one of her slippers, but not for a moment did she dream of stopping to pick it up! If the last stroke of midnight was to sound... oh... what a disaster that would be! Out she fled and vanished into the night.

The Prince, who was now madly in love with her, picked up the slipper and said to his ministers, "Go and search everywhere for the girl whose foot this slipper fits. I will never be content until I find her!" So the ministers tried the slipper on the foot of every girl in the land until only Cinderella was left.

"That awful untidy girl simply cannot have been at the ball," snapped the stepmother. "Tell the Prince he ought to marry one of my two daughters! Can't you see how ugly Cinderella is?"

But, to everyone's amazement, the shoe fitted perfectly. Suddenly the fairy appeared and waved her magic wand. In a flash, Cinderella appeared in a splendid dress, shining with youth and beauty. Her stepmother and stepisters gaped at her in amazement, and the ministers said, "Come with us Cinderella! The Prince is waiting for you."

So Cinderella married the Prince and lived happily ever after. As for the cat, he just said "Miaow!"

4. Read the following text:

Researchers say: jogging alone is unhealthy.

A newly published eport indicates that jogging could have adverse health effects, especially for those who do it alone. A team of researchers from Harvard University has suggested that going for a run on your own is not as healthy as previously believed and is nowhere near as beneficial as jogging as part of a group. They suggested it could actually be detrimental to one's health. Experiments conducted on rats indicated that running alone raises stress levels and stifles brain cell regeneration. Professor Elizabeth Gould, who led the research, said: "These results suggest that, in the absence of social interaction, a normally beneficial experience can exert a potentially deleterious influence on the brain."

The researchers monitored two groups of rats on exercise wheels. One group exercised alone, the other as part of a rodent jogging team. After two weeks, the scientists conducted tests to ascertain the rate of brain cell growth in all of the test animals. The results revealed that the communal joggers had double the amount of new brain cells as the solo runners. Professor Gould concluded that: "When experienced in a group setting, running stimulates neurogenesis (brain cell growth). However, when running occurs in social isolation, these positive effects are suppressed." Joggers around the world should perhaps take the research with a pinch of salt and remember that jogging is healthier than the rat race.

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Task One: You and your group members are to read, comprehend and interpret the text.
Task Two: You are to read the title, introduction, first line of every paragraph, headings, sub-headings and italicized or bold words to skim the text.
Task Three: You are to locate for the specific information, anticipate the answers and clues.
Task Four: You are to read the text for comprehension of meaning and for identification of structure, words and sentences.
Task Five: You and Your group members are to read the text, get the main idea of text and to locate for specific information.

Engagement Activities (1, 2)
Following link is of the text "Why The Sky Is Far Away" and "Popular Sports Around The World" along with its Activities (1, 2) on Scanning.
http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/marketing/sfesl/tests/grade6.html

Engagement Activity (3, 4)
Students will read and comprehend the text for Skimming and Scanning, to get the main idea of the text and to locate for specific information.
http://www.scribd.com/doc/2056650/Unit-III-Skimming-Scanning-Microclass1

Engagement Activity (5)
Story Pyramid (Scanning)
Students will read the given text of "Cinderella" and locate for the specific information i.e, Scanning.
http://www.docstoc.com/docs/19668094/The-Story-Pyramid

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Learners will be evaluated on the basis of this rubric/checklist.
Reading aloud is necessary for checking Fluency.

**GRADING READING TECHNIQUES**

**Excellent**

**Good**

**Satisfactory**

1. Comprehension

Those who are able at profound and deep understanding of text, meaning of the text, interpret effectively and able to answer all questions.

Those who are able at better understanding of text interpret and answer most of the questions.
Those who are able to understand the text and answer some of the questions.

2. Skimming & Scanning

Clearly and accurately identify the main idea(s), all specific information and includes most of the relevant supporting details.

Identify the main idea(s) correctly, and includes many supporting details.

Identify the main idea(s), and includes some supporting details. Some of the response is copied directly from the text.

3. Accuracy (Intensive Reading), and Fluency (Extensive Reading)

Change of voice tone, emphasize on important content. Alter voice and pace in accordance with text punctuation. Fully understand the structure of words.

Tone and Pace follow text punctuation well. Understand the structure of words well.

Read in monotone, little change in pace and voice inflection. Somewhat understand the structure of words.

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Conclusion:
This webquest on Reading Skill includes Subtypes of Reading Skills, strategies/techniques of reading, is useful for teachers and students. There is much focus on reading skills, skills includes subtypes of reading skills like Skimming to get the main idea or theme of the text & Scanning to locate for specific information given in the text. Intensive and Extensive Reading to improve Accuracy and Fluency, Comprehension and Interpretation to know the underlying meaning of the given text. With the help of different tasks and engagement activities you will overcome your weaknesses while reading and comprehend the text, and getting command on your reading comprehension i.e, to understand the text and answer the questions.

Teacher's Page:
This webquest has been designed for target learners to improve their reading skills by/after applying different reading techniques as;

1. Allow the students to Comprehend the text in general and in detail to get the Meaning of the text and answer the questions.
2. Give opportunity to students to read loud to improve their pronunciation, intonation and stress and also apply the techniques of intensive and extensive reading to enhance your students' accuracy and fluency in reading.
3. Skimming and Scanning: Allow the students to skim the text to get the main idea and scan the text to locate for specific information.

Standards

Credits

Other