

HELLO! READER

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH



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Teaching Readers

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What is reading?

Until recent times, researchers used three main definitions of learning to read:

- 1 Learning to pronounce words
- 2 Learning to identify words and get their meaning
- 3 Learning to bring meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it

These definitions reflect long-standing views of reading, but current literacy research supports a more comprehensive definition of reading. This new definition includes all of the above-mentioned definitions and places learning skills in the context of authentic reading and writing activities (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; Maryland State Department of Education, n.d.; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

What are readers?

Readers are stories written in graded books. They are always written in simple English so as to help students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or students of English as a Second Language (ESL) learn the language, and they are always graded in all aspects – vocabulary, grammatical structures, story structure, etc. Readers can be used at all language levels, from beginners to advanced.

Why are readers used in EFL and ESL classes?

Reading is an indispensable skill. However, both EFL and ESL learners find it a challenging experience and a demanding task that entails a number of sub-skills. In addition, it is nearly impossible for EFL learners to read, comprehend, and enjoy an authentic story, that is, one that is not written specially to be taught in classes. This is why EFL course books are usually supplemented with graded readers that cope with language level: students are motivated to read and enjoy the language put in context.

Thus we use readers so that students can see certain language items used in context, enjoy reading in the new language by integrating their life experiences, and get involved emotionally and mentally with what they read.

What should we focus on when teaching readers?

Having agreed on the above, then all story incidents are only important so as to check students' ability to comprehend the content. Teachers sometimes pay too much attention to story sequencing (putting the incidents in order) and pay minimal attention to the language items presented and the mastering of reading itself. Many teachers fall into this trap, forgetting that teaching readers is not an objective on its own, but is a means of teaching a number of reading skills in an interesting, enjoyable way that eventually enhances language competency.

General reading skills

Competent readers have the following sub-skills:

- 1 **Skimming:** ability to get the main idea of the text regardless of the details
- 2 **Scanning:** ability to extract a specific piece of information or details from a passage regardless of the main ideas
- 3 **Drawing inferences:** ability to draw conclusions that are not directly stated in the text
- 4 **Recognising coherence:** ability to figure out the logic sequencing of different parts of a text
- 5 **Guessing meaning of unfamiliar words:** ability to guess the meaning of new vocabulary based on contextual clues
- 6 **Tolerating ambiguity:** ability to understand the overall meaning of a passage or a sentence without necessarily understanding every single vocabulary item in it

Stages of teaching readers

Teachers should follow three stages in teaching readers – pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. Each stage is discussed here.

Pre-reading stage

What is it?



The pre-reading stage involves a task or an activity that learners do just before reading the passage or chapter. Teachers are sometimes used to asking questions like *What happened in the last chapter?* or *What did Axel do when ... ?* Such questions that recap the previously read parts are important because they enhance the overall story coherence and ensure comprehension of the previous parts before adding new. However, they are not pre-reading tasks because they have a different objective.

The ultimate objective of a pre-reading task is to get the learners “hooked,” that is,

involve them mentally and emotionally with the story.

Pre-reading tasks or activities are usually open-ended, allowing students to express their opinions, expectations, and predictions. Thus, students’ responses at this stage should not be evaluated in terms of correct and incorrect; all answers are possible and are accepted, and teachers should be very encouraging and supportive when eliciting all possible outcomes.

These are some examples of pre-reading questions:

- ◆ *Has anyone of you been to ... ? Can you tell us about it?*
- ◆ *Can you imagine ... ?*
- ◆ *What do you think will happen to ... ?*
- ◆ *What do you think will happen next?*
- ◆ *Do you think that ... will happen? Why/ why not?*

These are some examples of pre-reading tasks:

- ◆ The teacher talks about the book cover with students, guiding them with a set of prediction questions about the story content. This is an excellent aid that can help get students involved before starting the reader.
- ◆ Students look at the pictures included in the reader and predict what will happen based on the pictures and on the previous incidents. For example, before starting chapter 7, students look at the picture of the two sea monsters fighting while the three passengers are on the raft. The teacher asks questions such as *What do you think is happening? What do you think will happen? Where do you think this is? Could it be a dream? Do you think that the monsters will eat them?*
- ◆ The teacher puts two or more possibilities of upcoming story incidents on the blackboard and students vote for each. For example, before Axel and the professor set off on their journey, students vote for these two possibilities: *Who thinks that they will die? Why? Who thinks that they will succeed? Why?*

Why pre-reading tasks?

The pre-reading stage is often skipped by teachers who do not recognise its vital importance.

The aim of the pre-reading task is to get learners engaged in reading the passage with interest. In other words, it is meant to motivate students to read the text interactively.

A pre-reading task or activity activates the students' background knowledge, experience and perception of the world (the students' *schema* or *schemata*). Students can then relate the newly read content to what they already know of the world and of the story. This ensures a better quality of reading because the brain always relates the unknown to the known.

While-reading stage

What is it?

The while-reading stage involves a task or activity that students do while reading. Students should see the questions or activity instructions before they read the story so that they can find the answers as they read.

Examples of while-reading tasks:

- ◆ **Sequencing events:** The teacher summarises the section or chapter in points, then students read the selection and put the points in correct order.
- ◆ **Choosing true or false:** Students read and tick a number of statements about chapter content as correct or incorrect.
- ◆ **Completing a summary:** Students read and complete a paragraph that briefly summarises the chapter. This activity ensures quality reading for details. Having finished the task, students will have a summary that they will find hard to forget because they helped create it.
- ◆ **Choosing titles for paragraphs:** Teachers write on the board possible titles for each paragraph in a chapter. Students read the passage and write the title in the margin next to each paragraph. This activity improves the students' ability to skim texts. Moreover, writing the titles in their books will map the chapter for further future use of the text, such as whenever they need to go back and scan for any detail.
- ◆ **Making character sketches:** The teacher writes in a word web the name of main characters in the chapter, and possible words (adjectives or nouns) that describe them. Students read and match the character with the words(s) based on their understanding of incidents. While reading, students may also underline sentences that support their opinion.
- ◆ **Using graphic organisers:** While reading, students use graphic organisers (cognitive strategies) such as completing a diagram, a flow chart, or other non-linear form of text to sum up the main chapter incidents.

Why while-reading tasks?

Reading can never be a passive skill. While-reading tasks ensure the quality of reading by making students read interactively. While-reading tasks make reading purposeful and help students practise a number of skills like skimming, scanning, and recognizing coherence devices.

Tasks such as character sketching improve critical reading skills and inference skills, and boost students' ability to express themselves.

Post-reading stage

What is it?

The post-reading stage involves tasks or activities that students do after finishing the allocated reading part so as to evaluate their achievement of teaching aims and objectives.

Examples of post-reading tasks include the following:

- ◆ **Book report:** One of the more famous tasks required by teachers upon finishing a reader is the book report or book review. This is because it not only reveals students' comprehension of the story incidents, but also provides room for learners to express their viewpoint.
- ◆ **Questions:** An endless set of questions can be of relevance.
- ◆ **Cognitive strategies:** After reading the whole story, students draw or complete a diagram, a flow chart or any other non-linear form of text that sums up main story incidents. A possible expansion of this task is that they add to the chart problems faced by the characters at each station, for example, *running out of water, facing the sea monsters*, etc.

Why the post-reading stage?

This stage is for the comprehension check of the story. Thus, answers are to be evaluated as correct or incorrect. Incorrect answers should be seen as indicators of comprehension problems and remedial procedures should be taken.

Exploiting the reader to the full

Whenever possible, teachers should get the students emotionally involved with the story characters. This can be done by asking oral questions such as *If you were Axel and you saw the sea monsters fighting, how would you feel?*

Eliciting possible feelings and thoughts – such as *afraid, mad, sure of death, can't breathe, thirsty* – will get students emotionally involved with the main character, and eventually they will enjoy the habit of reading, which is an ultimate objective.

Literature, including readers, is the teaching of language and life experiences. Thus ethics can also be discussed and reinforced during the teaching of the reader whenever it is relevant.

For example, the teacher and students can discuss when Axel was thinking of burning the parchment so that his uncle would not discover the secret code. From Axel's viewpoint, he knows that his uncle will set off on the journey no matter how risky, and he will definitely take Axel with him. Questions like the following can be used: *Do you think that it is Axel's right to burn the parchment? If you were Axel, would you do the same? Why? Why not? If you were the Professor, what would you feel if Axel had burned it?*

In brief, such questions can handle major issues such as the right of the individual versus the rights of others, selfishness and the open expression of one's viewpoint.

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While-reading tasks

These are examples of the kinds of tasks students can do while reading the text. Students should see the tasks before they start reading so that they can look for the answers as they read.

Task 1

Complete the following paragraph, which summarises chapter 1 of the story.

In the city of, a young man called Axel lived with his uncle, Professor Lidenbrock, after the death of’s parents. As Axel and the Professor were examining an old book, they found an even older in it. They found out it was written by an Icelandic scientist called The parchment was written in a secret, either in or, but they couldn’t understand it. Axel and, the cook, were worried about the Professor because he was too interested in solving the mystery and he went without his

Task 2

Put these topics of chapter 4 in the right order.

Last look at Iceland

Which path to take?

Down the chimney

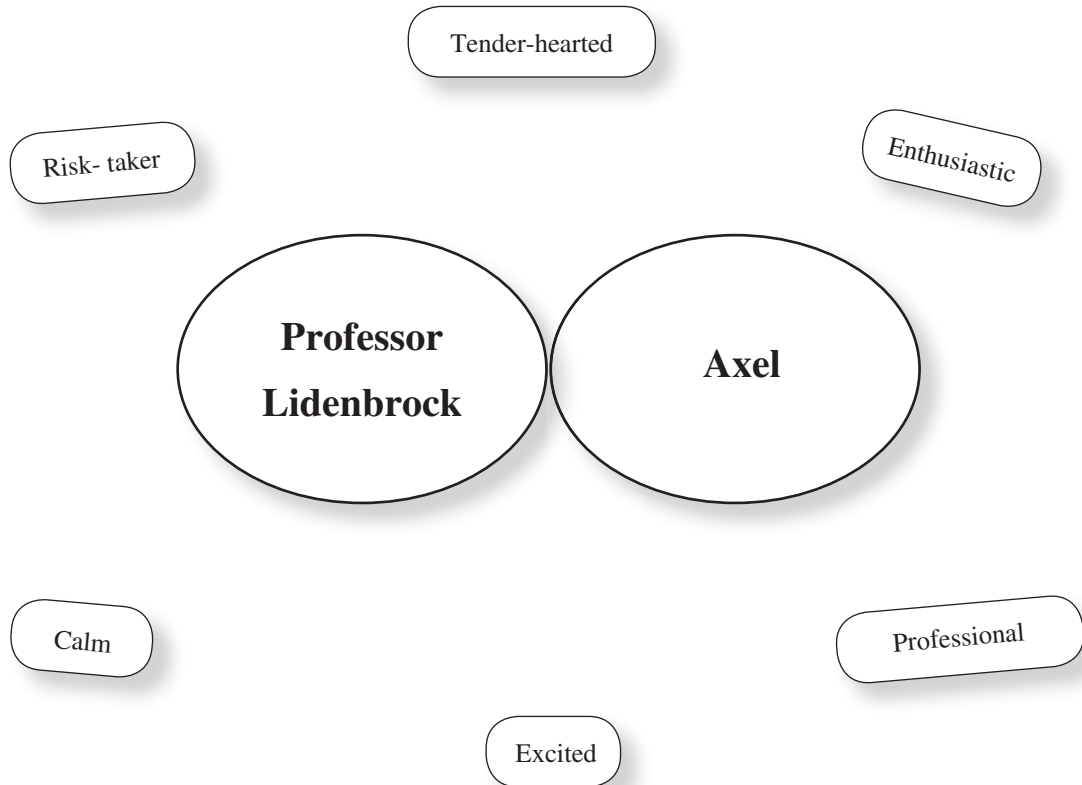
Worries about water

Cloudy sky

A great discovery

Task 3

Below is a word web. Choose which characteristics belong to Professor Lidenbrock and which to Axel. Some may belong to both. As you read, find sentences in the book that show why you think so.



Teachers can expand this activity for production by asking the students to write a paragraph about Axel and/or Professor Lidenbrock.

Task 4

Match these summaries with the corresponding paragraphs in chapter 7.

They find an island.

Hans fishes in the Lidenbrock Sea.

They sail on the Lidenbrock Sea.

They make a fast escape.

Two sea monsters fight.

A storm hits them.

They see extinct mammoths.

Task 5

Find these words as you read chapter 8 and make mental or written notes about each one to answer questions such as Where was it? Who found it? What was it used for? Why was it used? Who was killed? Who or what killed him? How was he killed?

knife – tunnel – gunpowder – tools – killed

Task 6

The following are titles for all the story chapters. Put them in the right order.

Travellers return

Old parchment mystery

Mystery solved and a journey planned

Underground sea discovered

Volcano erupts

Instant departure from shore

Water found and Axel lost

Last barrier exploded

Journey starts and chimneys found

Sea crossing and strange creatures

Answer key

Chapter 1

A

1 c 2 c 3 a 4 b

B

1 d 2 a 3 f 4 b 5 c 6 e

Chapter 2

A

1 A 2 P 3 A 4 P

B

- 1 While he was sitting in front of the window he saw the back of the parchment and then the front. Suddenly he saw some Latin words which he knew.
 - 2 Axel didn't want to tell his uncle the secret message because he would want to do it (follow the Icelandic scientist) himself and take Axel with him and they would never return to Hamburg.
 - 3 Axel decided to tell his uncle about the secret message because he saw his uncle's face was white and his eyes were red and he felt sorry for his uncle/he thought he could stop his uncle from making such a dangerous journey. (Answers may vary.)
-

Chapter 3

A

1 d 2 g 3 e 4 f 5 h 6 b 7 a 8 c

B

- 1 Professor Lidenbrock prepared guns, tools and scientific instruments for their journey and they were packed into boxes.
 - 2 Professor Lidenbrock didn't want to explore Reykjavik because the most interesting part of Iceland was under the ground.
 - 3 Professor Lidenbrock told Dr Fridrikson that he was interested in exploring Iceland's geology.
 - 4 The Professor was angry because he didn't want to waste any time on his journey.
 - 5 He saw the name of Arne Saknussem.
-

Chapter 4

A

1 h 2 g 3 f 4 e 5 d 6 a 7 c 8 b

B

1 F 2 F 3 T 4 F

Chapter 5

A

- 1 Axel finds a preserved shell of an insect.
- 2 Hans gets hit by a hot jet of water.
- 3 The group reaches 125 km below the earth's surface.
- 4 Axel gets lost.
- 5 Axel faints.

B

- 1 relieve
- 2 persuade
- 3 insect
- 4 give up
- 5 dreadful
- 6 despair

Chapter 6

A

- 1 b 2 a 3 c 4 a

B

- 1 e 2 f 3 g 4 a 5 c 6 b 7 d

C

- 1 Axel said this when he was lost and he heard his uncle calling to him.
- 2 Dr Lidenbrock said this when he was telling Axel to come to him when Axel was lost.
- 3 Dr Lidenbrock said this when Axel awoke after he had hit his head on a sharp rock.
- 4 Dr Lidenbrock said this when they were looking at the giant mushrooms and plants on the shore of the sea.

Chapter 7

A

- 1 c 2 f 3 e 4 g 5 a 6 b 7 d

B

- 1 Hans caught a strange-looking fish.
- 2 Professor Lidenbrock tried to find out how deep the sea was.
- 3 Hans found teeth marks on the pickaxe.
- 4 A huge monster threw the raft into the air.
- 5 One of the sea monsters died.

C

- 1 Dr Lidenbrock said this to Axel when Axel wanted to lower the sail and take down the mast. (Reasons why may vary.)

- 2 Axel said this to his uncle when they saw the mammoths. (Reasons why may vary.)
 - 3 Dr Lidenbrock said this to Axel when (Axel said that no man would risk his life with the mammoths but) Dr Lidenbrock saw a giant man. (Reasons why may vary.)
-

Chapter 8

A

- 1 b 2 a 3 b 4 c 5 a

B

- 1 Axel found a knife shining in the sand.
 - 2 It was important because they knew that Arne Saknussemm used this knife to carve his name on a rock to guide their way on their journey.
 - 3 They saw his initials carved on the rock at the entrance to a dark tunnel.
 - 4 As soon as the gunpowder exploded a huge hole opened and the rocks changed.
 - 5 Axel thought that they would probably be killed soon so there was no point to worry about food.
-

Chapter 9

A

- 1 The Professor thought it was their only chance of returning to the surface of the Earth.
- 2 When the Professor looked at the compass he felt very excited and knew that they must be in the middle of an active volcano.
- 3 Axel's last memory was of Hans looking at him and his face was calm as always. There was one last explosion and then Axel fainted again.

B

- 1 splash
- 2 upwards
- 3 unbearable
- 4 compass
- 5 active

C

- 1 Dr Lidenbrock said this when they were in a chimney and the water was rising and taking them with it. (Reasons why may vary.)
 - 2 Axel said this (to the reader) when they had come out of the volcano and were back on the surface of the earth. (Reasons why may vary.)
-

Chapter 10

A

- 1 F 2 T 3 T 4 T

B

- 1 b 2 d 3 a 4 c

Practice Test Questions

First Term

Model 1

A

- 1 1863
- 2 Snorri Sturlasson
- 3 more than 600 years
- 4 the book

B

- 1 When the professor read the words written on the parchment, he saw they were written in runes/ he couldn't understand them/ he saw the writing was not the same as in the book. (Answers will vary.)
 - 2 At first, Professor Lidenbrock thought that the parchment was written in a secret code (in Latin or Icelandic).
-

Model 2

A

- 1 Professor Lidenbrock couldn't read the writings on the parchment because they were written in a secret code.
- 2 He thought it was written in Latin because scientists of the 16th century always wrote about their discoveries in Latin.
- 3 Dr Fridrikson arranged for a guide called Hans.
- 4 Dr Fridrickson was helpful because he was also interested in exploring Iceland's geology.

B

- 1 Professor Lidenbrock thought that the parchment was written by the owner of the book because the book and the parchment were not written in the same handwriting and the writing of the parchment was later than the writing of the book.
 - 2 The Professor said that he would neither eat nor sleep until he had discovered the secret of the parchment.
-

Model 3

A

- 1 They packed guns, tools, and scientific instruments into boxes.
- 2 Axel couldn't persuade his uncle to give up his attempt because his uncle said they were scientists and they should go there and see for themselves.
- 3 Hans led the way to Sneffels. He made a hole in the rock to find water. He made a raft to sail on the Lidenbrock Sea and he caught a strange fish.
- 4 They started to feel they had taken the wrong path when they found the shell of an insect preserved in the rock. (They saw the rocks were younger there.)

B

- 1 Axel was just about to burn the parchment when the door opened and his uncle appeared/his uncle came into the room.
- 2 Dr Lidenbrock told Dr Fridrickson that he was interested in exploring Iceland's geology.

Model 4

A

- 1 They became sure that the eastern passage was the wrong choice when they came to a blank wall ahead of them (and there was no way past it).
- 2 Axel suggested that they should go back and give up their journey when they ran out of water.
- 3 The Professor replied, "Never!" But he asked Axel to give him one more day to find water, and if they did not find it they would go back together.
- 4 Axel felt stronger after he had drunk water and filled the bottles.

B

- 1 After the explorers left the coast road, the countryside of Iceland was strange, with beds of lava, hot springs and bare rocks.
 - 2 Sneffels had two peaks. One of them was called Scartaris.
-

Model 5

A

- 1 He cried out in pain because the water was very hot (almost boiling).
- 2 They decided to leave the hole in the wall because the underground river would run beside them and show them the quickest way down.
- 3 The explorers were directly under the Atlantic Ocean.
- 4 At the end of chapter 5 Axel became lost. He dropped his torch and ran down the path in the dark. He fell on the floor and fainted.

B

- 1 Sneffels hadn't erupted since 1229/the 13th century.
 - 2 Sneffels had a crater which led to three chimneys, one of which led to the centre of the Earth.
-

Model 6

A

- 1 The crater of Sneffels was shaped like an ice cream cone.
- 2 They waited for a sunny day at the end of June. They entered the chimney that the shadow of Scartaris touched.
- 3 The Professor believed that all the scientists who thought the centre of the Earth is hot were wrong.
- 4 The Professor told Axel to breathe quickly to relieve the pressure. Axel's ears hurt because of the increased air pressure.

B

- 1 Axel was afraid the volcano would erupt and dreamed that he was inside a volcano. There was a great explosion and he was shot up out of the volcano like a rocket.
- 2 The Icelanders were kind people because they gave the explorers the best food and drink and refused their offers of money.

Second Term

Model 1

A

- 1 Professor Lidenbrock knew where his nephew was lost because he could calculate how apart they were. Axel's voice took twenty seconds to reach his uncle. From that he calculated that they were six kilometres apart.
- 2 They were six kilometres apart.
- 3 Axel lost consciousness when he fell down a well and hit his head on a sharp rock.
- 4 When he woke up, he saw his uncle and he saw there was light coming from somewhere.

B

- 1 The explorers had entered the Earth through the extinct Volcano of Sneffels and returned through the active volcano of Stromboli.
 - 2 When Axel fell, he broke his electric torch.
-

Model 2

A

- 1 The light at the Lidenbrock Sea was strange because there were no lamps. The light was cold and white, unlike sunlight or moonlight.
- 2 The trees and plants were much taller than they were on the surface of the Earth.
- 3 The Professor intended to cross the sea on a raft. Hans cut down some of the trees and tied them together to make a raft.
- 4 He tied a hook on to the end of a rope, put some meat on it, and threw it into the sea.

B

- 1 When Hans caught an extinct fish, Axel wondered what other wonderful creatures they would meet on their voyage.
 - 2 Hans caught a fish that existed only as a fossil on Earth.
-

Model 3

A

- 1 The fish that Hans caught was strange because it had a flat head, no tail and no eyes.
- 2 Axel dreamed of finding lizards or whales or birds that lived on the Earth millions of years ago.
- 3 The Professor tied a pickaxe to the end of a long rope and threw it into the sea.
- 4 They were surprised because there were marks on the pickaxe. A monster had bitten into the iron of the pickaxe.

B

- 1 When the Professor pulled up the pickaxe that was tied to the rope, he found marks on the pickaxe.
- 2 Axel awakened suddenly because the raft had been lifted out of the water by a huge sea monster (that threw them into the air).

Model 4

A

- 1 Along the shore of the sea Axel found the bones of extinct animals.
- 2 They didn't lower the sail because the Professor wanted the storm to take them away (and move them quickly).
- 3 Axel forgot the dangers of their journey when they found the initials "A.S." craved in the rock to guide them.
- 4 When Axel saw the huge fountain of water, he wanted to sail as far away as possible.

B

- 1 Axel's gun would probably be useless against the sea monsters.
 - 2 The sea monsters did not attack the explorers. Instead, they attacked each other.
-

Model 5

A

- 1 The letters A.S. stand for Arne Saknussemm.
- 2 Axel saw trees that were the colour of sand. They had no lower branches. And he saw giant animals called mammoths.
- 3 The Professor realised they were in the middle of an active volcano when the needle of the compass was going from north to south, and from east to west.
- 4 The heat was unbearable and he lost consciousness.

B

- 1 The sea monsters' fight lasted for two or three hours.
 - 2 When the explorers saw the huge fountain of water, the Professor wanted to sail straight ahead.
-

Model 6

A

- 1 They realised they were in Italy when the boy could answer them only in Italian.
- 2 He dreamed that he was in a volcano and it exploded. That happened in the end, but he did not die in the explosion.
- 3 They were thrown out of the famous volcano of Stromboli.
- 4 They had started their journey in the cold country of Iceland and ended in the warm country of Italy.

B

- 1 The huge dark shape in the sea was as high as a mountain and at least two kilometres long.
- 2 A geyser is a fountain of hot water and steam.

Stations the three travelers underwent inside Sneffels

