



Shared Reading

by REGIE ROUTMAN



In shared reading, an expert—usually the teacher—reads aloud an engaging text while students view the text and read along. Shared Reading Experience was originally developed by Don Holdaway, renowned New Zealand educator, when he was teaching indigenous with multi-age learners of varying abilities within one classroom, and sought to replicate the home “bedtime story experience,” with its close-up intimacy and focus on enjoyment. Using enlarged texts of high-impact literature, originally handwritten and illustrated, and later produced commercially as “Big Books,” the scaffolding that the shared reading provided made it possible for all students to see, hear, and discuss the same intriguing text. Shared reading is an equitable, powerful teaching move that allows all students to access quality texts they may not yet be able to read on their own.

Tips for Meaningful Shared Reading Across the Curriculum

- **Use class-authored, shared writing texts** based on relevant and familiar experiences, vocabulary, and content, which are always easiest for students to read— especially true for English language learners.
- **Ensure the text is easily visible to all**—on a chart (from a shared writing), in an enlarged book, as a projection on a whiteboard or screen, or as a word-processed, paper copy for each learner.
- **Let students know they are expected to track the print and follow along** (reading aloud or silently) as the teacher reads aloud the text and, also, that shared reading will help make them stronger, more fluent readers.
- **Use two 5" x 7" blank index cards** to gradually expose the text, word by word, phrase by phrase, or line by line. (For exposing one word at a time for emerging readers, use a second card placed slightly above the first one to gradually uncover the text in each line as you read it aloud.)
- **Keep the focus on enjoying and understanding the whole text** before moving on to any instructional strategies and word work.
- **Assess as you go** by having another student lead a second or third shared reading, which frees the teacher to observe all students and intervene or support students as needed. and support students as needed.

Regie Routman, 2021, and adapted from *Literacy Essentials* (Stenhouse, 2018) and *Teaching Essentials* (Heinemann, 2008)