

# The Secondary Reading Strategy

## Curriculum Design

### Text selection – resistant texts (those which pose a barrier for readers)

*Students need to wrestle with specific types of challenges posed by a rich array of challenging texts.*

- **Archaic** text – students need to practise reading older texts in a steady, intentional and incremental way (e.g. pre-19<sup>th</sup> century supplementary texts and poetry embedded in SOL/Shakespeare)
- **Non-linear** time sequence (Private Peaceful)
- **Complexity of narrator** (Wonder, Bus 57)
- **Complexity of story** - plot and symbolism (Animal Farm)
- **Resistant** text ( am Malala)
- **Non-fiction** texts are in themselves resistant (texts like Boy/Survival)

*Reading texts are mapped for systematic exposure over time e.g. approaching an archaic text in Y7 allows students to build the skill to tackle an even more difficult archaic text later in their academic career.*

### Other curriculum fundamentals

#### Increasing exposure to challenging texts

**Supplementary texts** (non-fiction articles/ historical sources) and **poetry** are linked thematically to the primary reading text to increase student exposure and increase absorption rate (makes it easier for students to access and understand).

#### Wider curriculum

**Enrichment/experience** is thematically linked to the SRS unit and is designed to increase engagement and offer students a balanced, enriched and varied English curriculum. This is an added opportunity for students to foster their spoken language or performance skills and can help to bring new meaning to their primary SRS text.

#### Support opportunities

A writing and reading preparation 'unit' to slow students to prepare for the Common Assessment.

## Intellectual Preparation

### Planning to the 4 VITALS

- OUTCOME
- ANNOTATE
- VOCAB
- QUESTIONS

Devising outcome question around which your lesson (or MTP/LTP) is built.

Annotating and preparing the teaching text to prioritise the key areas to focus on or which 'read type' to use

Selecting vocabulary that might prove challenging for your pupils and can be 'pre-loaded' to remove this reading barrier

Devising questions which will elevate/enhance student understanding

### Planning check-ins

Planning Check-ins can be used as a tool for establishing subject specific CPD opportunities and to support the intellectual preparation of key extracts.

*QRI is backwards planned from outcome and then the reading pathway is systematically designed to allow students to meet the outcome and for optimal comprehension. The pathway will not always be the same, but reading and writing will always be considered. Writing opportunities will be formative, summative and developmental.*

## Reading to Maximise Understanding

### A key part of the SRS is in the development of close reading skills:

*End goal: instil in students the ability to wrestle with the most demanding texts, interpret them independently, and understand why and how they mean what they do.*

### What is close reading?

‘Close reading is the methodical breakdown of the language and structure of a complex passage to establish and analyse its meaning. Teaching students to do it requires layered reading and asking sequenced, text-dependent questions; and it should end whenever possible with mastery expressed through writing.’ [Doug Lemov](#)

### Two ways to bring close reading into your classroom:

- a close reading lesson (select a passage of substantive length)
- a close reading ‘burst’ (when a line or two needs greater focus)

### Why is close reading important?

1. Close reading helps defend against “gist” readings – interpretations and discussions that are ‘based on’ the text, but not grounded in a comprehensive understanding of it.
2. Close reading develops ‘language sense’ – it develops in students an ‘ear’ for word, syntax, rhythm and structure that is applicable across texts.
3. Close reading leads to better comprehension and retention of knowledge

### Types of read (the process of reading and rereading is a form of problem solving)

Pupils need to learn to (to be taught to) re-read strategically:

- Continuous read – read for broad context and make general observations about narrative voice before going back to unpack complexities, nuances, and thorny syntax.
- Line-by-line read – read + question. Pauses for discussion and analysis are frequent; stop and paraphrase the argument every few sentences. Don’t need to stop after every single line but intellectual preparation would identify where is appropriate, and pupil responses in lesson will further hone this.
- Leapfrog read – follows an image, phrase, or idea through a passage
- The ‘click’ to focus on pronunciation of a tricky or low-frequency word

## Questioning

*Questioning during the read can also be adapted to shape pupils’ focus and build their skills at decoding, exploring and analysing information.*

### Text-dependent, exploratory questions to help unpick meaning:

Explaining the vocabulary in a passage certainly matters, but there’s more to understanding words and phrases than that. Pupils must learn to probe and understand how words and phrases relate to each other – what they mean in a specific instance, and how their meaning changes with the situation.

### Word Level Questions

- A referent question:

Asks what a word, often a pronoun, refers to (“Who are ‘they’ and what are ‘they’ doing?”).

- A denotation question:

Asks the meaning of a specific word or phrase (“What are ‘\_\_\_\_\_’?”)

- Explanation questions

Asks what a word or phrase means in the setting (“What does the phrase -----seem to mean in this setting? How might the sentence read without the word/phrase?”)

- Word pattern questions

Asks about a pattern that exists (or sometimes broken) by repeated words, and how this pattern contributes to meaning (“Why is-----repeated? What, effect?”)

- Connotation question

Asks about the implied meaning of words based on their associated meanings or tone (“Where do we normally read about\_\_\_\_\_?”)

- Figurative/literal meaning question

Asks students to clarify figurative meaning, often by comparing it to a potential literal interpretation (“Explain why the writer may describe the \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ - give one literal and one figurative reason”)

- Sensitivity analysis

Asks a reader how the text would read differently if the author had chosen a different word in a specific place (“\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ - same meaning?”)

- Missing word analysis

Similar to above except it asks about words that are notably missing.

### **Sentence and line level questions**

- A paraphrase question:

Asks students to restate a line of text in simplified language.

- A key-line question:

Asks about the connotation and denotation of a key line of sentence- sometimes it asks what role it plays in a paragraph (“What does this sentence tell us probably happened between\_\_\_\_\_? Why would the writer keep important events hidden in the novel?”)

- A reference question:

Asks what a sentence refers to, especially whom characters are talking about, who spoke a certain line, or what event they are referring to (“Who is the character talking about?”)

- A sentence structure question:

Asks how the syntax of the sentence affects meaning (“Why does the writer repeat the phrase\_\_\_\_\_ at the beginning of each sentence?”)

- An allusion question:

Students analyse an indirect reference to another text e.g. Why Jonas in the Giver might be playing catch with an apple rather than a ball (Eve reference).

N.B: Figurative and pattern questions can be applied at sentence-level.

## Paragraph questions

- *A summary question:*

Asks students to distil the elements of a block of text and reduce it to the scope to its most important idea (“Summarise \_\_\_\_\_ to show the difference between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_”).

- *A delineation question:*

Similar to a targeted summary in that it asks students to trace the elements of an author’s argument or the sequence of events in a narrative (“Where and why does the writer discuss...?”)

- *A finite-evidence question:*

Ask students to track evidence comprehensively throughout a section of text (“Find the evidence in the passage that shows...”)

- *Paragraph function question*

Asks readers to consider the role paragraphs play in a text, or how paragraphs build on one another (“Look carefully at paragraphs 5 and 6: how has \_\_\_\_\_ shifted his use of pathos? Why is he making this shift?”)

- *Dramatic irony question*

Asks readers to identify and analyse the difference between their own knowledge about events within a text and that of characters or people described within the narrative (“What do we know in this paragraph that the character does not?”)

- *Extended metaphor or allegory questions*

Asks students to trace a metaphor across multiple lines of text (“What evidence is there in these passages of a relationship between the sun and the earth?”)

## Writing

“In reading class, writing is not simply an end product...it is a tool for critical thinking. Students need to be able to use writing to formulate and develop ideas.” Doug Lemov

Writing makes thinking permanent so should feature in every lesson.

### Stop and Jot

Stop and Jot gives students the opportunity to consolidate their own thoughts and can be used at any time during a lesson. Students can be asked to Stop and Jot before discussion so it’s clear what they know – then they can re-draft following discussion to show their progress. Stop and Jot it a great way for teachers to CFU.

### Exit/Entry tickets

Can be written at the end of the lesson to allow students to reflect on their learning from a lesson, or at the beginning to recall prior knowledge.

### Other possible longer writing tasks

- Written responses to the Big Question or to a smaller question focused just on a given section.
- Diary entries reflecting understanding of character and plot.
- Narrative, e.g. an ‘extra’ chapter or the writing of an alternative outcome for a section.
- Functional/transactional writing, e.g. letters relevant to the text, in character or about an issue raised in the text. Speeches, e.g. manifestos or persuasive pieces. Articles on elements of plot.

## Controlled Reading

The **Controlled Read** is planned for reading 'pace' and to avoid any **transaction cost** ('cost' or negative affect that occurs from delaying reading e.g. stopping mid-passage to ask a question). It incorporates students **reading aloud**, which helps them to develop their intonation/awareness of writer's craft, but also increases reading accountability ('cold-call'). Passivity during reading can stifle comprehension and create dependent readers - whereas the Controlled Read is designed to keep students on their toes. It is designed to be 'layered' up with other reading approaches. We get vocab, pronunciation, intonation from the 'continuous controlled' which sets students up for the read to follow.

Students may then partake in a 2<sup>nd</sup> read which allows for greater discussion/questioning etc.

## Vocabulary

"Give the definition and then wrestle with it.  
...Name it, apply it." Doug Lemov

### Two approaches to vocabulary instruction:

#### **Explicit instruction**

Examine selected words (1-3) closely/explicitly. Often explicit instruction allows students the opportunity the 'wrestle' or play with the word during 'active practice'.

#### **Implicit instruction**

Reinforce words encountered whilst reading. These can be 'dropped in' whilst reading with a student-friendly definition (6 to 7 words).

"Complement explicit instruction with implicit instruction...  
pronunciation is important in both." Doug Lemov

### Final SRS messages

Combining our approaches is key – choosing a pathway that fits the outcome question, text, students' needs. Getting students to 'attack' and 're-attack' the text systematically and thoughtfully. Always make sure writing forms an integral to reading instruction. Build a culture of reading well - allow these methods to form part of the classroom culture. Ultimately, we are preparing students to become independent, accountable readers, so backwards plan from this.

### Further tools which may support the SRS in the classroom

*This list is forever expanding as we develop and refine the approach. These tools are mechanisms for support and not the strategy itself.*

- Quiz Quiz Trade – students swap key words and definitions and quiz each other
- Silent Conversation – I notice, I question, I wonder with images or quotations.
- BBK – building background knowledge with a fact hunt or supplementary contextual read, or a starter such as quiz-quiz-trade, and pre-loading difficult vocabulary from today's lesson.
- Draw What You Hear

**See existing SRS glossaries for further details on suggested techniques.**

[Session 1 Training Glossary](#)

[Session 2 Training Glossary](#)