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## *A Progression of Skills: Fluency*

### If a student ...

Needs general support with fluency at any developmental level.

Reads word by word and is ready to practice reading in longer phrases.

Reads in phrases and is ready to attend more closely to ending punctuation (and not insert ending punctuation that isn't there).

Attends to ending punctuation (periods, exclamation marks, question marks) and is ready to attend more closely to midsentence punctuation (commas, dashes, parentheses) and special text (italics, bold).

Reads in longer phrases, informed by midsentence and ending punctuation and is ready to consider meaningful context to influence expression and place emphasis on appropriate words.

### Then you might teach ...

**4.1 Reread for Fluency**

**4.2 Warm Up and Transfer**

**4.3 Coach Your Partner's Fluency**

**4.4 Act It Out to Smooth It Out**

**4.5 Listen to Yourself, Catch the Choppiness, Reread**

**4.6 Find a Good Pace: Fluent, Not Fast**

**4.7 Read in Your Head Like You Read Aloud**

**4.8 Scoop Up Words to Read in Phrases**

**4.9 Warm Up with Phrases**

**4.10 Read to the End of the Line**

**4.11 Drum the Poem to Find the Rhythm**

**4.12 Mind the Ending Punctuation**

**4.13 Snap to the Next Line**

**4.14 Let the Commas Be Your Guide**

**4.15 Attend to Extra Information: Parentheses and Em Dashes**

**4.16 Read with Emphasis: Bold, Italics, Underline, All Caps**

**4.17 Read with Emphasis: Infer from Context**

**4.18 Use a "This Is Interesting" Voice**

**4.19 Use a Character's Voice for the Words Inside Quotation Marks**

**4.20 Read It How the Author Tells You (Tags)**

**4.21 Make Your Voice Match the Feeling**

**4.22 Make Your Voice Match the Meaning and Genre**

**4.23 Be Your Own Director with Plays and Scripts**

**4.24 Find the Pauses in Poetry**

**4.25 Let the Rhyme Be Your Guide**

## 4.4 Act It Out to Smooth It Out

### Skills

- self-monitoring
- phrasing
- expression
- emphasis

### Progression

Needs general support with fluency at any developmental level.



### Research Link

Multiple studies have shown that instructional strategies that encourage reading as performance (for example, reader's theater) have a positive impact on students' reading fluency, combining authentic, repeated readings with an emphasis on meaningful expression (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Mraz et al., 2013; Young & Rasinski, 2018; Young, Valadez, & Gandara, 2016).

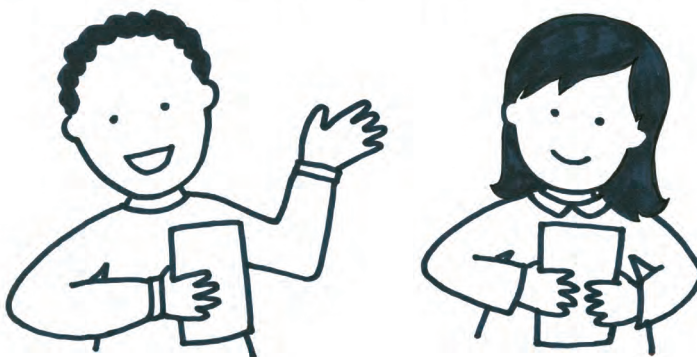
**Strategy** Choose a book (or a play or script) to read with your partner that has two characters in conversation. Decide who will take on each role. Read your part using all you know about smooth and expressive reading, so you sound and act like the characters you're portraying. Reread to rehearse and improve your performance, just as actors do!

**Teaching Tip** Books in Mo Willems' Elephant and Piggie series are great choices for practicing this strategy. The books focus mostly on two characters, and most of the text is dialogue captured in speech bubbles. Because early chapter books like Saadia Faruqi's Yasmin series often have scenes of dialogue involving small numbers of characters, they are also good choices for practice. If you don't already have baskets of plays and scripts in your classroom library, consider creating one! There are many sites online with scripts to print for free, including those on Tim Rasinski's website ([www.timrasinski.com](http://www.timrasinski.com)). For a more advanced strategy leaning on the reader's theater research, see Strategy 4.23.

### Prompts

- Read it again to practice.
- Use your voice to show how the character would say that.
- Now that you've acted it out once, think about what might change the next time you act it out together.
- You sounded just like the character!

Act it out to  
Smooth it out



## 4.17 *Read with Emphasis: Infer from Context*

**Strategy** If there is no special text treatment to tell you which word(s) in a sentence to emphasize, think about the context. Does it suggest emphasis? If it does, think about how where you place emphasis impacts the meaning. If your inferred emphasis doesn't match the meaning, reread emphasizing a different word (or words).

**Lesson Language** *The word or words you do or don't emphasize can impact the meaning of a sentence. For example, consider a short sentence like "This is my house." Depending on how you read it, it can mean different things.*

*"This is my house." (A simple declarative statement with no emphasis)*

*"**This** is my house." (It's this one, not that one)*

*"This is **my** house." (It's mine, not yours or someone else's)*

*"This is my **house**." (I'm not talking about any other place)*

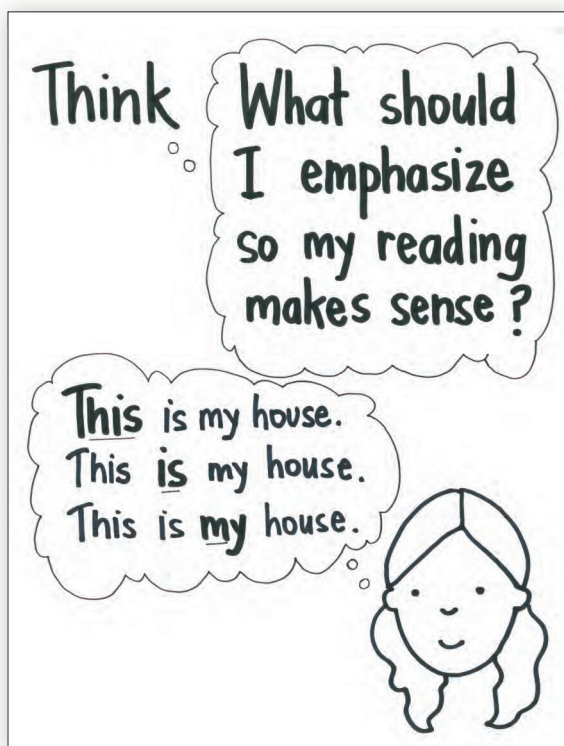
*Sometimes, based on context, it makes sense to emphasize a word even if there is no special text treatment to guide you. How do you know when you need to add emphasis? You look for the meaning to suggest it. For example, if you found this sentence in this context:*

As we walked down the street, I told my new best friend that I couldn't wait until I could show her my room. "This is it! This is my house."

*How would you read it? Would you add emphasis? If so, on which word? If the way you read it the first time doesn't match what you're understanding in the text so far, try emphasizing a different word.*

### Prompts

- Do you think any words in this sentence need emphasis?
- When you emphasize that word in the sentence, how does it impact the meaning?
- Based on the context, which word should you emphasize in this sentence?
- When you stress that word, it means \_\_. Do you think that fits with the context?



### Skills

- expression
- emphasis
- self-monitoring
- inferring

### Progression

Reads in longer phrases, informed by midsentence and ending punctuation and is ready to consider meaningful context to influence expression and place emphasis on appropriate words.



### Research Link

As a number of scholars have highlighted, written text does not contain many prosodic cues, so readers need to rely on context and comprehension to decide on appropriate pitch, stress, emphasis, and pauses (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008; Schreiber, 1991).



## *A Progression of Skills: Comprehending Theme*

### **If a student ...**

Can understand a story on a literal level using book-specific language and is ready to infer a lesson, often from a moment in the book, or understand morals (as in fables) that are explicitly stated.

Is ready to understand theme as a concept inferred from synthesizing details across a section or the whole text and then articulated as a single word or phrase (e.g., friendships, love, fitting in).

Is able to infer theme(s) as a single word or phrase and is ready to elaborate or provide commentary to articulate theme(s) as statements, and infer multiple themes based on different plotlines, perspectives, and so on.

Is ready to identify symbols and motifs that connect to theme(s) and use prior knowledge to interpret their meaning(s).

Can identify theme(s), and is ready to analyze thematic elements within one text and/or across texts.

### **Then you might teach ...**

**7.1 Think About the Moral of the Story**

**7.2 Give Advice to the Character**

**7.3 Look Up to Characters**

**7.4 Learn from Character Changes**

**7.5 Notice How Characters Respond**

**7.6 Pay Attention to “Aha Moments”**

**7.7 Notice When Wise Characters Teach**

**7.8 Connect Texts to Texts to Find Lessons**

**7.9 Find Different Lessons Within a Series**

**7.10 Find Theme Hints in Blurbs**

**7.11 Label a Theme (as a Concept/Idea)**

**7.12 Distinguish Between Plot Events and Theme(s)**

**7.13 Find a Story’s Theme(s) by Focusing on Character**

**7.14 Find Theme Hints in Titles**

**7.15 Identify Social Issues**

**7.16 Say More About a Theme**

**7.17 Say More About Social Issues, and Take Action**

**7.18 Consider Last Words**

**7.19 Find Different Themes in Different Plotlines**

**7.20 Consider Characters’ Identities for Different Perspectives on Themes**

**7.21 React to What’s Unfair**

**7.22 Recognize Objects as Symbols**

**7.23 Draw from Your Symbol Bank**

**7.24 Look for Symbolism in Setting**

**7.25 Analyze the Development of Theme**

**7.26 Connect Texts to Analyze Theme**

**7.27 Analyze Satire**



## 7.11 Label a Theme (as a Concept/Idea)

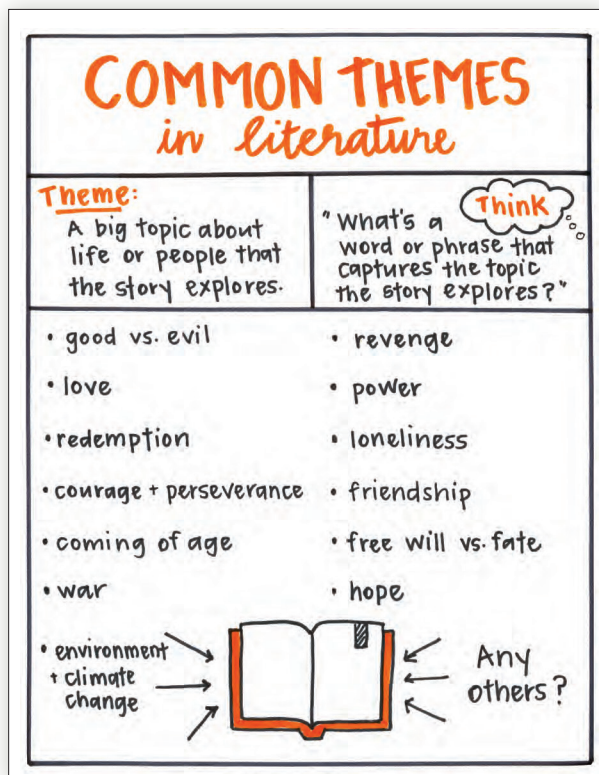
**Strategy** Think back to the events of the story you've read so far, quickly summarizing or stating the gist of the events. Then, think, "What's a word or short phrase that captures a theme (as a concept/idea) this story explores?" Use the list of common themes to help.

**Lesson Language** *One way to think of theme is as a concept, or idea, about life or people that the story explores. Themes can help us label and organize our thinking, like sorting similar objects into buckets. They help us think about the so what of any one book and also make connections between books (for example, both of these books are about friendship). A few common themes show up again and again in books, and as a starting place, you could consider if any of those themes are explored in the text you're reading.*

**Teaching Tip** A quick Google search for "common themes in literature" will yield lots of possibilities like the ones you see on this chart. Include ones you think your students are most likely to understand and find in the books they are reading. If you introduce them individually and with examples, students will be more likely to see them in other texts.

### Prompts

- Say the gist of the story. Now say, "So what about it?"
- Check the list of common themes. Think about whether any of those relate to the story.
- Yes, a story can have more than one theme.
- Think, "What's a word or phrase that names something this story is really about?"



### Skills

- inferring
- determining importance
- synthesizing

### Progression

Is ready to understand theme as a concept inferred from synthesizing details across a section or the whole text and then articulated as a single word or phrase (e.g., friendships, love, fitting in).



### Research Link

Work by Lehr (1988, 1991) indicates that students as young as five and six are able to identify and match stories by theme (e.g., friendship, courage), before they are able to name the theme itself. The ability to verbalize the similarities between stories improves with age, particularly with wide exposure to literature.

## 7.26 Connect Texts to Analyze Theme

### Skills

- synthesizing
- analyzing

### Progression

Can identify theme(s), and is ready to analyze thematic elements within one text and/or across texts.



### Research Link

In a review of research on “multiple source use” when analyzing literature, Bloome and colleagues (2018) highlight that readers must construct accurate mental models of both stories to make comparisons between them. They found that using multiple texts may improve a student’s understanding of each text.

**Strategy** Identify two books that have a similar theme. Ask yourself, “How does the theme develop in similar ways in each book? How does it develop differently?”

**Teaching Tip** See Strategy 7.8 in this chapter for a way for children to connect stories with similar lessons and Strategy 7.25 to help students to analyze theme in a single story. This strategy is more sophisticated as it asks readers to do both: compare *and* analyze. For example, you might compare themes in *New Kid* (Craft, 2019) and *Merci Suárez Changes Gears* (Medina, 2018). In both books, the main characters (Jordan and Merci) struggle in a school environment that feels culturally different from their home and community, they must navigate between two worlds, and they work to stay true to themselves. However, Jordan’s challenges have more to do with race, whereas Merci’s are more about class. You might also consider how each character’s home environment and families help or hinder them as they navigate two worlds. This comparative analysis allows readers to articulate unique ideas more precisely from each text and consider author’s craft in the development of the themes.

### Prompts

- What other books does this one remind you of? Why?
- What are a few themes in this book? What book(s) also explore one of those themes?
- Compare how the authors of each book explore this theme in ways that are unique.
- Remember, when you analyze a theme’s development you’re breaking it into parts—chronologically, or by story element, for example.

**Connect Texts to Analyze Theme**

*New Kid* by Jerry Craft  
*Merci Suarez Changes Gears* by Meg Medina

**Theme:** Navigating life between two worlds and working to stay true to self.

**Now your turn...**

- Think about two books you've read with a similar theme.
- Compare the theme in each book:
  - Any similarities?
  - Any differences?
- How did the author of each book develop the theme across the story?





## ***A Progression of Skills: Comprehending Vocabulary and Figurative Language***

### **If a student ...**

Skips over or ignores unfamiliar words and needs support to self-monitor and approach word learning with consciousness and curiosity.

Is aware when a word is unfamiliar and is ready to learn to infer a gist or definition from prior knowledge and/or sentence-level context.

Is able to use context and prior knowledge to infer and is ready to learn to analyze word parts and apply a knowledge of grammar, morphology, and/or etymology.

Is confidently and independently using a variety of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words and is ready to supplement word learning using outside resources.

Is able to understand and/or figure out the meanings of words and is ready to consider words within a larger context and analyze an author's word choice for a deeper understanding and interpretation.

### **Then you might teach ...**

**11.1 Be Word Conscious and Curious**

**11.2 Say It Out Loud**

**11.3 Monitor for Sound-Alikes**

**11.4 Mine Your Memory**

**11.5 Insert a Synonym**

**11.6 Use Part of Speech as a Clue**

**11.7 Consider Topic-Specific Meanings**

**11.8 Look to See If It's Right There in the Sentence!**

**11.9 Consider Sentence Structure**

**11.10 Consider Cohesion and Conjunctions**

**11.11 Use Individual Words to Figure Out Compound Words**

**11.12 Look for Word Part Clues: Prefixes and Suffixes**

**11.13 Look for Word Part Clues: Roots and Bases**

**11.14 Get Help from Cognates**

**11.15 Use a Reference and Explain It**

**11.16 Look It Up Within an E-Book**

**11.17 Phone a Friend**

**11.18 Read Up a Ladder**

**11.19 Listen or Watch to Learn**

**11.20 Use Mood as a Clue to Meaning**

**11.21 Stick to Your Story**

**11.22 Consider the Type of Figurative Language**

**11.23 Picture It**

**11.24 Be Alert to Word Choice**

## 11.7 Consider Topic-Specific Meanings

**Strategy** When you come to a word you know, but it isn't making sense, it may be because it's being used in a topic-specific way that's new to you. Think about the topic you're reading about and the specific context where the word is used, and see if that helps you figure out how the familiar word is being used in a different way.

**Lesson Language** *You know that the same word can do different jobs in a sentence and that this changes the meaning of the word—you can dress yourself for school or wear a dress to a party. But sometimes a word means something completely different even when it's doing the same job in a sentence because it has a different topic-specific meaning. For example:*

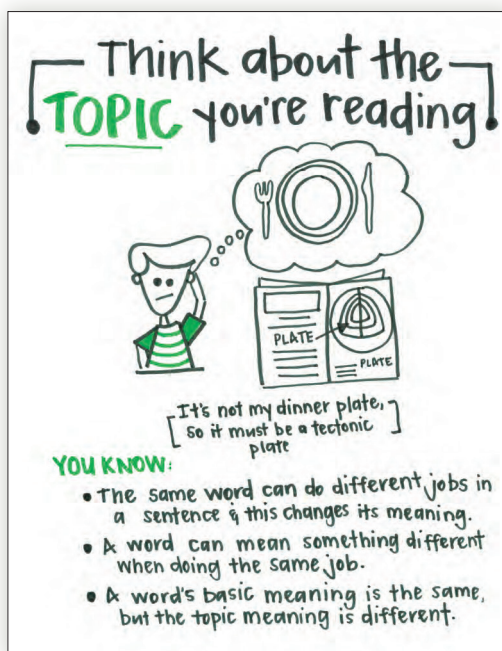
- A trunk if you're reading about trees and a trunk if you're reading about luggage (not to mention a trunk if you are reading about elephants!)
- Running if you're reading about a car's motor and running if you're reading about sports
- Blue if it describes the color of your walls and blue if it describes the way you're feeling

*Other times, a word's most basic meaning is the same, but the topic-specific meaning can be very different.*

- A shuttle that carries astronauts is different than a shuttle to the rental cars at the airport. They both move people, but one's a spaceship and the other is a bus.
- A plate in your kitchen is different than a plate in the earth's crust. They're both flat, but one's a round piece of paper, plastic, or ceramic small enough to hold, the other is a piece of the outer layer of the earth so big that it can fit an entire continent.
- An adaptation in biology is different than an adaptation in theater. They're both changes, but one is a new structure or feature that has evolved in a living thing and the other is a new movie or a play based on a book.

### Prompts

- What meanings do you know for that word? Think of the topic you're reading about.
- How do you know it can't be that meaning in this context?
- What's another meaning that might make sense here?
- That's one meaning of the word, but does that make sense here?



### Skills

- activating prior knowledge
- self-monitoring
- inferring

### Progression

Is aware when a word is unfamiliar and is ready to learn to infer a gist or definition from prior knowledge and/or sentence-level context.



### Research Link

In a series of experiments, Klein and Murphy (2001) explored *polysemous words* (those with different, but related, meanings [e.g., paper, film, copy]) and *homonyms* (words with the same spelling but no related meaning [e.g., bank, right, tire]) and found evidence that these words are stored separately in memory. Readers can quickly access meaning if the word is used in a familiar sense, but comprehension is slowed when the word is used in an unfamiliar way.

## 11.9 Consider Sentence Structure

**Strategy** Sometimes the way a sentence is structured can help you figure out what an unfamiliar word means. First, identify the sentence structure. Then, ask yourself, “Does this mean these things are alike? Are they opposites? Does one cause the other?” Infer the meaning based on the relationship.

**Lesson Language** *I’m going to share a few sentences and think aloud about how I notice the way the information in the sentence fits together and how that helps me think about what a word might mean. It doesn’t always get me to an exact definition, but it gets me a sense of the word so that my overall comprehension isn’t interrupted.*

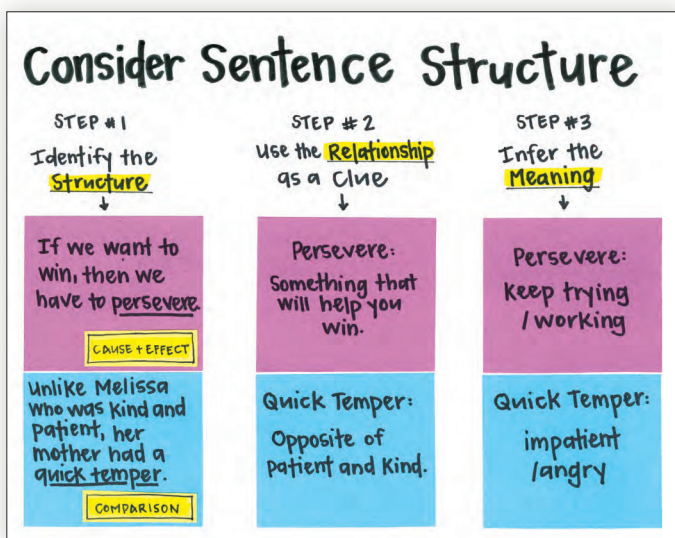
*“Unlike Melissa who was patient and kind, her mother had a quick temper.” In this sentence, Melissa and her mother are being compared. I understand what patient and kind mean, so “a quick temper” must mean the opposite of that since it says unlike.*

*“If we want to win, then we have to persevere.” This is an if-then or cause-effect sentence. So persevere means something that you have to do to win. Work hard? Keep going?*

*“Being in the mountains made her feel a sense of relaxation and tranquility, as if she didn’t have a care in the world.” The second part of the sentence gives more information. Relaxed goes with not having a care. So tranquility must mean something similar to relaxation.*

### Prompts

- Pause to figure out how the words in the sentence work together. What’s the relationship between the information?
- How would you describe the relationship between the information in the first part and the second part?
- Now that you paid attention to structure, can you figure out what this word might mean?



### Skills

- analyzing
- inferring

### Progression

Is aware when a word is unfamiliar and is ready to learn to infer a gist or definition from prior knowledge and/or sentence-level context.



### Research Link

According to research summarized by Kintsch and Mangalath (2011), word meanings are not stored ready-made in our memories—they only take on meaning in the interaction with their context. Consequently, meaning is constructed for a word every time that word is encountered. Signal words for different text structures can help strengthen networks of meanings among words, allowing for easier mental access the next time those words are encountered (Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995).