



# Interactive Read-Alouds

*“Reading aloud, no matter the age, is the magic bullet for creating a life-long reader.”*

— Jim Trelease, author of *The Read-Aloud Handbook*

Few would disagree that reading aloud to young children is beneficial to early literacy development. However, it has become clear that reading aloud bestows the same benefits to students in upper grades — including middle school and high school.

Read-alouds are powerful. They motivate, excite, build background knowledge, support language acquisition, model fluent reading, build comprehension skills, support the development of thinking skills and introduce students to multiple genres of literature. Without fear of failure, listening to a good story allows students to imagine, wonder and question.

In as few as 15 to 20 minutes a day, out-of-school time practitioners can help students reap the benefits of exposure to all types of reading materials, particularly ones that are on and above their present levels of independent reading. Here are tips on how to facilitate read-aloud activities.

## Think Aloud

Reading aloud is most influential when it involves more than just reading the words. During an interactive read-aloud, the reader occasionally stops and poses an open-ended question, a thought, a wondering or a “think aloud.” These opportunities to connect text to real-life experiences and issues make stories come alive. The conversations and discussions that result significantly deepen comprehension.

## Turn and Talk

A simple way to provide frequent opportunities to engage in conversation is to stop reading and have students turn to another student and talk something through for a brief period of time. It’s important that students understand how to take turns and have equal talking time.

Open-ended questions help students to think critically and require more than a few words to answer. Listen in on paired conversations in Turn and Talk to keep conversations moving and take the pulse of student understanding of text. To keep student conversations on track, consider providing a structure for the discussion. For example:

First student: “When the book said \_\_\_\_\_, I was thinking \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.”

Partner: “I agree with you because \_\_\_\_\_.” or “I disagree with you because \_\_\_\_\_.”

## How to Conduct a Read-Aloud

- Read the material yourself before sharing with students.
- Mark text with potential spots to stop and pose a question, thought or think aloud.
- Include frequent opportunities for students to talk about texts. Use Turn and Talk or other partner and group discussion strategies.
- Set the stage before reading each day. Discuss what you read yesterday and what might happen next.
- Make the book come alive. Use expression and tone to layer meaning. Try voicing characters uniquely, and pausing to create suspense.

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## Interactive Read-Alouds

- Make the listening environment comfortable.
- Limit sessions to 20 minutes or less.

### Read-Aloud Tips

- Read aloud from a variety of genres: fiction, nonfiction, informational texts, poetry, popular and news magazines, newspapers, picture books and more.
- Find ways to connect characters, events, settings and other details to the lives of students.
- Make reading aloud routine. Schedule a time that fits in the daily routine of your program.
- Ask students to suggest read-aloud selections.

### Extension Activities

- Follow up on read-alouds with art or writing projects that use the readings as jumping-off points.
- Look for other books by favorite authors or on topics of special interest.
- Develop reader's theater scripts or plays to act out interesting or important scenes from texts.
- Build Literacy Mystery Boxes. These boxes hold items related to a story you'll read. For example, to help students predict what *Jumanji* by Chris Van Allsburg is about, you could include a game piece, a set of dice, a plastic lion, an umbrella and a plastic chimpanzee.

### Resources

[Reading Is Fundamental](#). This national organization promotes reading aloud. Find book lists and many other resources here.

[National Association for the Education of Young Children](#). Explore the [Literacy section](#) of this website for information and ideas about reading aloud.

[Reading Rockets](#). See the [Reading Aloud](#) page of this website for ideas about reading in your program, information from research and professional learning materials for practitioners.

Wadsworth, R. M. (2008). Using read alouds in today's classrooms. *Leadership Compass*, 5(3). Retrieved from

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