Guidelines and Resources for Increasing Literacy

In order for students to become more critical consumers of what they read, they need to think and talk about the content, as well as remember and do something meaningful with the information. The following strategies are not at all an exhaustive list, but they are each effective in helping students become more critical, independent readers.

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Close Reading of text involves multiple readings of a short piece of high-quality text over multiple lessons. This practice is for all students in all content areas, even those who struggle with reading.	For Close Reading, teachers can implement the following practices:
	● Have students read the selected text independently.
	● Direct students to write notes as they read (using cognitive markers, writing on post-its, etc.).
	● Ask the students to listen while others (teacher or students) read aloud.
	● Have students answer text dependent questions:
	  ○ Focus on specific vocabulary words found in context.
	  ○ Concentrate on key passages that require students to return to the text for evidenced-based answers.
	    ▪ Note that sometimes students are tempted to simply read and then entertain their own musings that emerge from the reading, however focused or random they might be.
	    ▪ It is important for students to reflect on what they are reading, but in the context of what the author is saying. Maintaining evidence-based responses takes some practice, but will transform students into more critical readers and thinkers.
	  ○ Investigate specific complex sentences for deeper interpretation-- Why did the author write the sentence that specific way? How does the meaning change if a sentence is reordered or a word is replaced with a synonym?
		A Primer on Close Reading
		
		Close Reading Video "Letter From Birmingham Jail"
		
		Close Reading Exemplars and the Common Core
		
		Close Reading Video Demonstrations
		
		Close Reading Lessons and Tools

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	- Involve students in small group and class discussions anchored on the selected text. Revisit the text through specific filters (e.g., form, tone, imagery, rhetorical devices). - Summarize the main take-away points in the text as a class or in small groups. - Provide opportunities for students to critique the author's reasoning and choices. - Assign worthwhile, culminating writing activities about the text, requiring students to cite from the text within the body of their compositions (blogs, essays, letters, etc.).	
Reciprocal Teaching encourages students to talk through their own thinking as they are reading a text in order to better comprehend it. The students **predict** before reading and then check their predictions afterward, **question** what they don't understand or what seems puzzling or interesting during the course of reading,	- Students need time to practice predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing individually before they engage in a full reciprocal teaching activity. Early in the year, model how to do each of these components of reciprocal teaching with sample texts and have the students practice individually and in small groups. - Note that the order of the four components of reciprocal teaching — predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing — is flexible depending on the text being used and the objectives for the exercise. - Remember that the goal in reciprocal teaching is for students to generate the questions, predictions, clarifications, and summaries, so avoid taking charge of this process. The teacher is the activator and monitor. - Some teachers use queue cards to assign students different tasks under the four components. Students can work individually, in groups, as a whole class, etc. For example, you might arrange students in groups of four, assigning each member of the group to be a summarizer, questioner,	Reciprocal Teaching from West Virginia

Reciprocal Teaching from Reading Quest

Reciprocal Teaching Prompt Cards

Reciprocal Teaching from Reading Rockets |

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clarify unknown ideas or words during the reading, and **summarize** at certain points as they read.	clarifier, or predictor. It is important that students rotate these parts so they practice interacting with text from a variety of perspectives. ○ The **summarizer** will review important ideas up to a certain point in the text or the whole text depending on the length of the piece. ○ The **questioner** identifies confusing parts, makes connections to prior knowledge, considers the motivations of actors in the text, etc. ○ The **clarifier** tries to address the confusing parts and other questions just posed as well as asks further questions. ○ The **predictor** makes text-supported guesses at what might happen next or checks what the text actually contains against what was predicted before reading the text.	[Hands On Reciprocal Teaching](#)

Text-dependent Questions ask students to return to the text and to explore it more deeply in order to provide a response. This practice encourages students to provide evidence-based responses rather than their unsubstantiated opinions.	● The objective of text-dependent questions is to encourage students to use both implicit and explicit information in the text to formulate a response. Students need to examine what the author states and what the author implies in order to determine their answers to these questions.
	● Text-dependent questioning strategies are often divided into **six types of questions**, but not all types will apply to every text:
	  ○ **General Understanding Questions:** Questions that focus on general understanding ask students to summarize or hone in on the gist of a text. They ask students questions such as
	    ▪ "What is the main idea of this article?"
	    ▪ "What solution does the author provide for the problem?"
	    ▪ "Where in the article does the author state her reasons for her position?"
	    ▪ "What words indicate the main idea of this passage?"
	    ▪ "What part of this story tells its message for the reader?"
	  ○ **Key Details Questions**: Questions that focus on key details often
		[Text-Dependent Questions from Illinois State Education](#)
		
		[Text-Dependent Questions Resources from Achieve The Core](#)
		
		[Samples of Text-dependent Questions from Virginia](#)
		
		[Text-dependent Questions- Douglas](#)

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	have words such as *who, what, when, where, why*, or *how*. These types of questions ask students to address the essential specifics of the article and to notice the subtlety of the details and consider their meaning. They should direct students to focus on what is most important in understanding the overall text. For example, if an author is making an argument for using cell phones less for texting and more for talking, students need to consider what the author *states or implies* about the following: ▪ "According to the article, what are the shortcomings of texting? What are the benefits?" ▪ "Why were emoticons added to texting according to the author?" ▪ "What differences did the author highlight between talking to someone face to face versus writing out a message?" ▪ "When is it appropriate to send a text and when should someone pick up a phone according to the article?" ○ **Vocabulary and Text Structure**: As the title implies, these sorts of questions focus specifically on diction, syntax, denotation and connotation, dialogue, etc. Examining in detail the author's word choice or what is revealed by the words a specific character in story utters should help students understand a text on a deeper level. These types of questions might ask students the following: ▪ "Using the surrounding context, what do you think the word _____ means?" ▪ "Why does the narrator call himself *weird* rather than *unique*? What is the difference between the two words? Who in the story would be more likely to call the narrator *unique*?" ▪ "What do Scout Finch's first words in chapter one of *To Kill a Mockingbird* reveal about her and the story you are about to read?" ▪ "Why do you think the author provides an anecdote in the	[Fisher & Nancy Frey PDF](#) [Engaging the Adolescent Learner: Text-dependent Questions PDF](#)

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	beginning of the article before launching into his argument? Could the anecdote have appeared somewhere else in the article and had the same effect? ○ **Purpose**: Questions that focus on purpose require that students understand the genre they are reading as well as the use of narration. They need to be able to recognize the intent of the text-- whether it is meant to inform, entertain, persuade, etc. Also, when applicable, asking older students to determine whether or not an author is biased helps them see clearly the author's purpose. Examples of purpose questions include: ▪ "Is the author biased? What about the text or the author's background informs your answer?" ▪ "Is the author trying to persuade you or just inform you? How do you know?" ▪ "Is this short story meant to just be entertaining, or is the author trying to inform you about something? What in the text supports your answer?" ○ **Inferences**: Inference questions ask students to consider how parts of the text build to its whole. Students need to read the entire text in order to answer these questions and be able to consider the role the different parts of the text play. Unpacking the different parts of an argumentative text or analyzing the sequence of events and how they relate to each other and the overall story are tasks aligned with inference questioning. For example, consider the following questions: ▪ "What is the effect of first presenting all the myths surrounding the dangers of bees before the author makes his argument for the necessity of protecting bees?" ▪ How do the last paragraphs of *To Kill a Mockingbird* relate to the first and convey an overall theme of the book? ○ **Opinions, Arguments & Intertextual Connections**: These	

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	questions should be used only after students have thoroughly read and re-read a text well enough to form clear opinions about it. These questions generate thoughtful opinions. They should follow a discussion built on text-dependent questions so that students have thoroughly engaged with the text. For example, consider the following questions: ▪ "Did the author make a valid argument about energy conservation? Please explain your response using evidence from the text." ▪ "How does the argument of the second article relate to the first? Which argument is more valid? Please explain your response referring to textual evidence." ▪ "According to the story, what are the far-reaching dangers of excessive materialism? Cite textual evidence to substantiate your response." ▪ "How do the poems differ in their suggested approaches to dealing with loss? Support your comparison with textual evidence. Which approach do you find to be the most healing?"	
SQ3R and SQ4R are tried and true methods meant to help students read more effectively and retain what they have read.	● The **SQ3R** process will require teacher direction, modeling and discussion in the beginning, but through continued practice, students should start to use this method automatically in their research and independent reading. The five steps include: ○ **Survey**: Have students look over the text you are using, specifically the titles, subtitles, chapter headings, graphics, diagrams etc. to determine if the text seems to meet the needs of the assignment or task. ○ **Question**: Have students determine what questions they have about the subject and write them down. Likewise, have them consider	SQ3R from Mind Tools SQ3R Reading Method SQ3R chart generator

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	what they hope to gain from reading the text and what they are interested in learning. This will focus their attention to that end. ○ **Read**: While they are reading the text, encourage them to underline or highlight the answers to their questions, or record their thoughts on a mind map, in an illustration, or in whatever way helps them organize their thinking. ○ **Recall**: Students should be able to answer their own questions about the reading without going back to the text at this point. If not, they need to read and study some parts a bit more carefully in order to clarify what they may not have understood about the answers to their questions. ○ **Review**: Rereading the text, or notes, or both helps to review, but talking about what they read and learned is even better. Study groups or reading groups are excellent for this stage of the process. ● **SQ4R** is a variation of SQ3R. ○ **Survey** the text ○ Write the **Questions** for each segment of the text ○ **Read** the information in the text paragraph by paragraph ○ **Record** information through a form of note taking ○ **Recite** important information from the reading ○ **Review** the information learned	SQ4R from Gallaudet University
DR-TA (Directed Reading-Thinking Activity) is a reading method designed to not only move students through the reading of a text, but also focus	● **DR-TA** is an activity that works only in a classroom where the climate is safe for students to share ideas, even if they are incorrect. Establishing respectful and encouraging discussion rules is essential for students to share freely and learn from this process. ● DR-TA is accomplished with three steps: ○ **Sample the text**--At first, this step is a preview of the text where students consider the title and graphics to make a prediction. Then,	DR-TA from LPB.org DR-TA from Teacher Vision DR-TA from Reading Rockets

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students' attention on the purpose for reading. DR-TA activates prior knowledge while teaching students to think about what they are reading as they read. This method works in any content area and with fiction or nonfiction texts.	subtitles or topic sentences serve as a means to make the next predictions. ○ **Make a prediction**--Students make predictions based on the title (or subtitles, topic sentences, etc.) and the teacher records all of the predictions, even those that prove to be inaccurate. ○ **Read the text and reflect**-- Here students will determine the accuracy of their predictions as they move through the text. ● Note that the teacher guides this part of the process by breaking up the text into smaller sections, but the students make and check the predictions at each break. ● The post-reading discussion should clarify misconceptions ("How accurate were your initial predictions?" and "What do you think now?") and allow students to ultimately determine the purpose for reading ("Why did the author write this piece?" or "What are we supposed to learn from this selection?"). ● Ask open-ended questions to help students explore their ideas and guide them to use text-based responses.	
Literature Circles consist of small groups of students who are all reading the same book. They read and answer questions about their reading individually, but they gather together in class or on-line regularly to discuss what they are reading. The teacher is not part of the circle, but	● Literature circles can be conducted face-to-face or online via Google classroom or Blackboard or even a group email. ● In establishing the groups, consider students' interests and reading levels. You may want to have each group read different books, or have a few groups read the same book. (The ensuing discussions and conclusions may be interesting to compare between the different groups reading the same book.) ● You may also want to assign **roles** to the different members of the group to clarify their responsibility. The students may change roles each meeting. Some possible roles include: ○ The **discussion leader** creates a list of thoughtful open-ended questions for the group to discuss that meeting (Not just recall	How to Establish Literature Circles Literature Circle Role Sheets Literature Circle Models (including book clubs) Literature Circles from Ontario

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acts as an outside observer.	questions). ○ The **diction detective** finds interesting, funny, figurative words or phrases from that reading selection and presents them for the group to discuss. Why do you think the author said it this way? What makes this statement so funny? ○ The **bridge builder** looks for connections between events, characters and their motives, themes, etc. in the book, as well as connections to other texts, to self, adolescence, community, world, etc. ○ The **reporter** identifies and reports the key points from the reading assignment keeping track of plot events, cause and effect relationships, changes in the characters or plot shifts, the effect of the setting, etc. ○ The **artist** creates a graphic, flowchart, drawing, or other visual representation of the reading passage noting key points.	Overview of Literature Circles

Another Outstanding Resource for Using Literacy Strategies in Math and Science

"Using Literacy Strategies in Mathematics and Science Learning." *Adolescent Literacy in Perspective.* February 2009. http://ohiorc.org/orc_documents/ORC/Adlit/InPerspective/2009-02/in_perspective_2009-02.pdf

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