

What is a Fluent Reader?

A fluent reader is	A fluent reader is not
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The History Teacher

By Billy Collins

Trying to protect his students' innocence
He told them the Ice Age was really just
The Chilly Age, a period of a million years
When everyone had to wear sweaters.






And the Stone Age became the Gravel Age,
Named after the long driveways of the time.

The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more
Than an outbreak of questions such as
“How far is it from here to Madrid?”
“What do you call the matador's hat?”






The War of the Roses took place in a garden,
And the Enola Gay dropped one tiny atom
on Japan.

The children would leave his classroom
For the playground to torment the weak
And the smart,
Mussing up their hair and breaking their glasses,
While he gathered up his notes and walked home
Past flower beds and white picket fences,
Wondering if they would believe that soldiers
In the Boer War told long, rambling stories
Designed to make the enemy nod off.

Listening to Reading

-  When was the last time that someone read aloud to you?
-  What was most pleasurable about listening to the oral reading of the poem?
-  How did the oral presentation of the poem prepare you to read it silently?
-  How is the experience of listening to a text being read different from reading it silently?
-  What could you read aloud to students in your class?

How Reading Aloud Benefits Students

-  Students who see others enjoying the process of reading come to understand that reading is a pleasurable experience. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) says that an aesthetic or affective response is essential to the reading experience. Some adult learners have rarely, if ever, experienced the power of the written word, and one way to support such an experience is by allowing them the opportunity to listen to a proficient reader.
-  Students who hear oral reading are motivated to read more widely and at higher levels, even outside of class. When teachers take the time to read to students, they demonstrate the importance of reading and students are encouraged to read on their own. “A large international study conducted by Postlethwaite and Ross found that when teachers encouraged their students to read, they realized higher student achievement in reading” (Rasinski, pgs. 20, 21). These researchers discovered a “direct relationship between encouragement, motivation, and reading achievement” (pg. 21).
-  Students who witness fluent reading learn how to become fluent readers. They come to understand through the teacher’s modeling that reading aloud means reading with expression that enhances the meaning. Many students, especially those who have not had many experiences of listening to text being read aloud, think that good reading is simply accurate word decoding. They need demonstrations of how good readers use intonation, expression, and emotion to convey meaning.
-  Students need to be exposed to multiple genres, and teachers who read aloud can use this opportunity to share genres that students may not choose themselves.
-  Students can vicariously explore sophisticated words and text structures by listening to them being read aloud. Teachers can present materials far above students’ reading levels, an especially important practice to meet adult learners’ intellectual needs. Such an experience “provides rich language stimulation by exposing students to more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structure” (Rasinski, p. 21).

Bibliography of Sources for Read-Alouds with Adult Learners

Absolutely Amazing Five-Minute Mysteries by Kenneth Weber

Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner

Guys Write for Guys Read: Boys' Favorite Authors Write about Being Boys
edited by Jon Scieszka

Imponderables: Why do Dogs Have Wet Noses; When Do Fish Sleep? Why do Clocks Run Clockwise? By David Feldman

Mama Makes Up Her Mind and Other Dangers of Southern Living by Bailey White

MicroFiction: An Anthology of Really Short Stories edited by Jerome Stern

Word Myths: Debunking Linguistic Urban Legends by David Wilton

Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems by Billy Collins

(see Young Adults' Choices published annually in the November issue of the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy (published by the International Reading Association) www.reading.org. for lists of popular young adult novels)

Magazine short-takes, such as at the front and back of *Time* or *Newsweek*

From *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

By Zora Neale Hurston

Janie fooled around outside awhile to try and think it wasn't so. If she didn't see the sickness in his face she could imagine it wasn't really happening. Well, she thought, that big old dawg with the hatred in his eyes had killed her after all. She wished she had slipped off that cow-tail and drowned then and there and been done. But to kill her through Tea Cake was too much to bear. Tea Cake, the son of Evening Sun, had to die for loving her. She looked hard at the sky for a long time. Somewhere up there beyond blue ether's bosom sat He.

Keys to Fluent Reading

Fluency Element	Definition	Instructional Practices that support fluency element
Phrasing		
Punctuation		
Prosody		
Practice		

Phrasing

Fluent readers must have the ability to chunk text into syntactically appropriate units, usually phrases. Often, meaning lies in the text's phrases, not necessarily in individual words. Readers that read "word-by-word" don't have the ability to phrase appropriately, even though they have the ability to decode. Although readers are able to appropriately phrase in oral communication, they are often unable to transfer that skill to reading. Readers must be able to infer phrase boundaries. When disfluent readers tackle a new piece of text, they are unable to employ the necessary skills that mark phrase boundaries. By practicing oral reading, the reader learns appropriate phrasing in written text. Repeated reading is especially helpful with this skill.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag

**I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United
States of America and to the republic for which
it stands one nation under God with liberty and
justice for all.**

“Changing Channels”

By Ethelbert Miller

My father and I have pillows behind our backs the television is on but we talk without looking at each other it is better this way easier for my father to find words which interrupt his breath like commercials it is one of those strange moments when our small apartment in the Bronx is empty my sister is on a date with a boy she can't bring home my brother is at church lighting candles and saying prayers which will not lengthen his life my mother is selecting lamb chops over pork in a nearby store and the price has nothing to do with our health now is the time my father has a good job in the post office and this miracle of rest is what we share while watching old movies that offer no resemblance to who we are

“Changing Channels” (with Punctuation)

By Ethelbert Miller

My father and I have pillows behind our backs. The television is on, but we talk without looking at each other. It is better this way, easier for my father to find words which interrupt his breath like commercials. It is one of those strange moments when our small apartment in the Bronx is empty. My sister is on a date with a boy she can't bring home. My brother is at church lighting candles and saying prayers which will not lengthen his life. My mother is selecting lamb chops over pork in a nearby store and the price has nothing to do with our health. Now is the time my father has a good job in the post office and this miracle of rest is what we share while watching old movies that offer no resemblance to who we are.





Rate

A student's reading rate is based upon the number of words he or she reads correctly per minute. This can be tricky, because some students may read quickly and yet not comprehend. If that is the case, then the student's problems are more closely associated with comprehension, not fluency. In fact, it is possible that reading too rapidly may interfere with comprehension. Remember that reading fluency is generally assessed through oral reading because we assume that oral reading is an indicator of silent reading ability. Because reading is a process that occurs in the reader's head, it is often difficult to accurately pinpoint where in the process of reading a reader is having difficulties.

One way to assess rate is to administer a One-Minute Reading Probe. Students should work in pairs to help each other assess their fluency progress.

- Choose a passage on the student's reading level (85 to 95 percent word recognition)
- Ask the student to read orally for one minute while another person marks any errors on a copy of the passage.
- Stop the student at the end of one minute.
- Count the number of words read correctly.
- Do a One-Minute Reading Probe once a week. Have the student keep track of his progress.

Adapted Version of NAEP's* Oral Reading Fluency Scale

-  **Level 1:** Reads primarily in a word-by-word fashion. Occasional two-words and three-word phrases may occur, but these are infrequent. Author's meaningful syntax is generally not preserved. Passage is read without expression or intonation. Reading seems labored and difficult.
-  **Level 2:** Reads primarily in two-word phrases with occasional three-or-four-word phrases. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may be awkward and unrelated to the larger context of the sentence or passage. Passage is read with little or inappropriate expression or intonation.
-  **Level 3:** Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrases. Some smaller phrases may be present. Most of the phrasing is appropriate and preserves the author's syntax. Some of the text is read with appropriate expression and intonation.
-  **Level 4:** Reads primarily in longer, meaningful phrases. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from the text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure or meaning of the passage. The reading preserves the author's syntax. Most of the text is read with appropriate expression and intonation. A sense of ease is present in the readers' oral presentation.

Students should be asked to read passages at and below their assigned grade placement.

Ratings of 3 and 4 indicate fluent reading. Ratings of 1 and 2 indicate that the student has not achieved a minimal level of fluency for the grade level at which the passage is written.

**NAEP is an acronym for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, an ongoing program sponsored by the United States Department of Education, that periodically evaluates students' educational achievement in a variety of curricular areas, including reading.*

Taken from Rasinski, T. *The Fluent Reader* (2003). Figure 8-7,
Adapted Version of NAEP's Oral Reading Scale

Scott Turlow on the Death Penalty

In order to lessen the seeming randomness with which some defendants end up on death row, we proposed that the twenty different eligibility criteria for capital punishment in Illinois be trimmed to five: multiple murders, murder of a cop or firefighter, murder in a prison, murder aimed at hindering the justice system, and murder involving torture. One could argue in perpetuity about which classes of murder should or should not be included, but we were unanimous that eligibility factors needed to be reduced. The list approved by a Commission majority reiterated to a great extent the original statute passed in 1977, with one major exception: felony-murder, which was the avenue that brought Chris Thomas and a number of other less worthy cases to death row, would be crossed off the list.