In Mrs. Wilson’s sixth-grade classroom the students begin their literacy block by watching a movie about a character named Hiccup, who struggles to become a brave warrior. Before the film starts, the students are given a graphic organizer about character development, and the teacher directs them to note Hiccup’s appearance, actions and reactions, speech, and thoughts—as well as what the other characters in the feature-length cartoon have to say about him. The students will compare Hiccup to a character in their self-selected novel. This focus lesson lasts about 20 minutes and then the students disperse to various activities. Most students begin to read independently. As they do, Mrs. Wilson meets with the fantasy group, six students who are concentrating on the works of Emily Rodda. Later, Mrs. Wilson will get to her humor group if the students can bear to put down *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2002).

Mr. Rodriguez is teaching the topic of weather to his second graders. The students have been keeping weather charts recording temperature, precipitation, and wind speed. The teacher and the students generate a list of weather conditions on the board—rain, high winds, dark clouds, fog, and sunshine. Next, he asks students to develop a list of questions they have about weather because they have been focusing on the strategy of self-questioning. He wants the students to ask questions before, during, and after reading. Most want to discuss severe weather conditions and to know whether hurricanes and tornadoes can happen where they live in New York State. Mr. Rodriguez then introduces a series of trade books about severe weather to the students but asks them where else they might learn about weather. The whole class immediately suggests that they look on the Internet.

Ms. Fogel’s fourth graders sit quietly while she reviews the learning center rotations for the day. She wants to see her yellow group first
while the other students read in the classroom library or complete worksheets from the basal on cause and effect, reference sources, and synonyms/antonyms. Other students will develop a story in the writing center or partner-read to build their oral reading fluency. When the yellow group meets with the teacher they are supposed to bring their leveled book, Animals on the Move, from their basal program. She begins by previewing the illustrations in the book and reminds the students to complete their concept map about migration. While the students read the story with their partners, the teacher asks a few factual questions and helps them complete the cause-and-effect worksheet.

All of these teachers are working to develop their students’ reading comprehension. Each is working from a different framework and a different set of instructional beliefs. Mrs. Wilson is committed to a literature-based framework, Mr. Rodriguez is focusing much of his energy on inquiry and the reading of nonfiction, while Ms. Fogel is working with the new basal program purchased by her school district. In this chapter we discuss the common elements that underlie each of these frameworks and consider the roles that knowledge acquisition, strategies use, metacognition, and motivation play in them. We discuss the practical application of research when we describe how to develop comprehension in three dominant instructional frameworks: literature (Chapters 5 and 6), information and inquiry (Chapters 7 and 8), and basal reading programs (Chapters 9 and 10).

**GOALS FOR THIS CHAPTER**

- Describe theories of comprehension instruction from teaching individual strategies to teacher- and student-guided discussion.
- Discuss close reading as a goal for comprehension instruction.
- Explore comprehension strategies as a tool for knowledge development.
- Explain a model of comprehension instruction that integrates strategies, knowledge, motivation, and metacognition—the gradual release of responsibility model in context.

**THEORIES OF COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION**

Since the 1980s the standard model of comprehension instruction has been the gradual release of responsibility model (GRRM). First outlined by Pearson and Gallagher (1983), the model consists of several interrelated
instructional phases. In Figure 3.1 we have reproduced a recent version (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Duke et al., 2011). The GRRM begins with the teacher doing all the work of explaining and modeling how to comprehend. This is the direct explanation part of the model (Duffy, 2009). Gradually the teacher brings the students into the act. They begin to do the thinking; they try out the tasks. The teacher is an active participant who helps the students to implement the tasks especially when they go off track. This part of the model is called guided practice, because the teacher is acting as a guide, scaffolding the process. Scaffolding consists of anything that the teacher might do to help the students—ask a question, provide a hint, give directions, or model the task again. Eventually, as the students’ skill improves, the teacher’s role diminishes, and the students are able to conduct the task independently.

The preceding paragraph is purposefully incomplete because we explained the process of teaching reading comprehension and purposefully ignored the content of this instruction. We did not tell you that a teacher could teach a strategy, multiple strategies, and other components of the good comprehender model through the GRRM. When the GRRM first burst

on the scene in the mid-1980s, research in comprehension focused mainly on the teaching of individual strategies, such as finding the main idea (Bau- 
mann, 1984), summarizing (Taylor & Beach, 1984), and making inferences (Dewitz, Carr, & Patberg, 1987). Obviously the model had merit because all of these studies produced gains in the students’ ability to use the compre- 
hension strategies and increased their reading ability.

**Multiple Strategies Instruction**

Good readers, however, do not plod along using one strategy at a time. The good comprehender model that we developed in Chapter 1 explicitly states that readers orchestrate a number of strategies as they work to construct meaning. So researchers began to design comprehension instruction in terms of teaching multiple strategies, which could be taught using a pro- 
cess of gradual release. The most prominent of these multiple strategies 
approaches are reciprocal teaching (RT; Palincsar & Brown, 1984), collabora- 
tive strategic reading (CSR; Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; Klingner 
& Vaughn, 1999), and transactional strategies instruction (TSI; Pressley et 

**Reciprocal Teaching**

This instructional approach was developed as a means of fostering reading comprehension and comprehension monitoring. RT begins with the teacher introducing and modeling four strategies—self-questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. After a portion of the text is read, the teacher asks questions, clarifies difficult words or phrases, summarizes, and makes predictions. Next, one of the students leads the group using the same four strategies. The teacher scaffolds the student’s attempt, helping him or her formulate questions and summaries and intervening to keep the discussion on track. The role of leader then shifts to the other students in the small group. Every time the students meet they take on more of the responsibility for reading and running the group.

RT has proven to be successful. The approach has been applied at the primary level up through junior college with various forms of implementa- 
tion (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Hacker & Tenant, 2002). The students who have participated in RT have demonstrated strong comprehension gains on tests developed by the researchers and somewhat lesser gains on standard- 
ized tests. RT can become too procedural. In the wrong hands the imple- 
mentation of the strategies can take on more importance than the ideas in the text. The teacher and the students can become so intent on asking a question or developing a summary that they neglect the content of the
passage. Hacker and Tenant demonstrated that a variety of implementations, whole-class discussion, small-group discussion, and a combination of both lead to success.

**Collaborative Strategic Reading**

An adaptation of RT, CSR (Klingner et al., 1998; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999) added some strategies and structured the students’ independent work. The four basic RT strategies were modified to include the following:

- Preview the text, use brainstorming to activate knowledge, and make predictions.
- Monitor comprehension through a *click* and *clunk* activity. One student is responsible for noting when ideas make sense (click) and another when they do not (clunk).
- Getting the gist. The students identify the main ideas by asking themselves questions like “Who or what is this about?”
- Wrap-up. The students review important ideas and then generate questions.

Some of the work in CSR is done in a whole group, but the bulk is conducted in cooperative, small groups borrowing some ideas from literature circles (Daniels, 1996). Each student is assigned a role (leader, clunk expert, click expert, gist, announcer), cue cards, and learning logs to help them remember how to use the strategies. CSR has been shown to improve students’ comprehension especially when it has been implemented within social studies instruction (Klingner et al., 1998).

**Transactional Strategies Instruction**

TSI (Pressley et al., 1992) is the most comprehensive of the multiple strategies approaches. TSI softened some of the edges of RT, and increased its flexibility. Pressley and his university and public school colleagues expanded the set of cognitive strategies and added an emphasis on interpretative, collaborative discussion. That is, students used a coordinated set of strategies as they engaged in more fluid and lively discussions of texts.

The results of TSI are quite impressive. The second graders who received the instruction improved their reading comprehension and their word recognition significantly over a comparison group (R. Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996). Additional studies by C. Collins (1991) and V. Anderson (1992) showed that students in the upper grades made substantial improvements on standardized tests. The TSI students also talked
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more cogently about the reading process and realized that successful reading involved more than decoding and practice. More recently, a study using TSI with informational texts found that a multiple strategies approach had more impact on students’ learning than teaching single strategies spread out over time (Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, 2005).

In RT, CSR, and TSI, the teachers and students follow the GRRM. The content of comprehension instruction is a repertoire of strategies. The composition of this repertoire differs from one approach to another, but all share a metacognitive focus and the need to synthesize what has been read. TSI is the most different of the three having the strongest focus on interpretation and discussion.

The three approaches also differ in how the teacher hands off the responsibility for strategy use to the students. In RT, the teacher executes the release by giving the students the task of leading the discussion with the teacher providing support and guidance. As the students develop more skill, the teacher does less. Hacker and Tenant (2002) demonstrated that with no loss in effectiveness, some roles like summarizing could be completed in a whole-class setting, while others could be conducted with a partner. The partners then come together to create a small group. In CSR, the release of responsibility is achieved by giving students specific roles. If your job is to ask the questions, a role card guides you through that part of the activity. In TSI the release of responsibility is accomplished in small reading groups where an extended discussion emphasizes the use of reading strategies. Unlike RT, the script of following just four strategies is not fixed, but teachers and students employ strategies as needed to solve comprehension problems. Over time, some teachers try to limit their impact on students’ thinking by transferring to the students the task of leading the discussions. The GRRM also means that, with practice, the explicit teaching of strategies is phased out, giving way to longer episodes of rich talk in which strategies are seamlessly woven into discussion. In effect, the overarching goal of TSI is to teach comprehension strategies just long enough to help students construct solid interpretations during discussion.

Discussion and the Development of Comprehension

The most current wave of comprehension instruction research stresses the important role of discussion (Wilkinson & Son, 2011). An engaging, interactive classroom discussion shares many of the attributes of TSI, but without the explicit emphasis on strategies. In a classroom discussion, students have the opportunity to make their views known, consider alternative perspectives proposed by their peers, and reconcile these viewpoints. By hearing and considering different points of view students can reach high levels of
thinking. Through discussion, students’ literal and inferential comprehension grows, and sometimes critical thinking or reasoning (Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009). It appears that discussion has its greatest benefits for average and below-average readers because many strong readers do not need help in understanding texts (Murphy et al., 2009), but they do need assistance with critical, analytic thinking (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001).

To describe a discussion we need to consider four attributes—the stance, the interpretative authority, the control over turn taking, and the control over topic. The concept of stance refers to Rosenblatt’s (1937/1978) distinction between aesthetic and efferent reading (see Chapter 1). We can also add a third stance, becoming a critical and analytic reader, but most discussions adopt a mixture of stances. The second factor, interpretative authority, refers to whose voice counts most. In many classrooms, the teacher asks all the questions and acknowledges who is correct. This interactional exchange is known as a recitation. In other classrooms the teachers and students share interpretative authority. Often the teacher controls the topic and the flow of discussion, whereas in other contexts, control is shared between the teacher and the students. Finally, in some discussions the teacher controls the turn taking, and in others students join in whenever they want, without needing to raise their hand for recognition. Figure 3.2 (derived from Chinn et al., 2001) takes the four types of discussion that are topics in our book and lists the attributes of each and the chapters in which these explanations can be found.

These various types of discussions do not represent a complete break from multiple strategies instruction; rather, we view them as an unbroken continuum. As teacher and students move from multiple strategies instruction to discussion, the strategies become less important and the ideas in the text become more important. While students may be engaged in strategic thinking their comments often do not carry a strategy label, and the teacher rarely says, “Good inference, Bill,” or “Can you summarize, Marge?” As we show, this focus on content and ideas is critical to developing strategic readers.

**CLOSE READING**

The CCSS want all students to engage in close reading of text “to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it: cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text” (NGA & CCSS, 2010, p. 10). For many, close reading is a new term, but not a new concept. We have all engaged in close reading.
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After that last thunderstorm toppled the large oak tree into your garage, you engaged in a close reading of your insurance policy to see if you were covered. In college you read your biology text closely to determine the exact role of mitochondria in the cell’s nucleus. When you read in Shakespeare’s Henry VI, Part 2, “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers” you had to decide if that was a literal statement of intent or a figurative way of considering a society that was less constrained by endless petty rules. Close reading is a very purposeful style of reading, one that asks the reader to delve into the text, analyze it, determine the important ideas, and consider how the author’s choice of structure and language facilitated his or her purpose. It also often requires multiple readings of a text and considerable discussion.

Close reading has its origins in the literary criticism of I. A. Richards who developed the field of literary criticism in the 1920s. Richards and his colleague, C. K. Ogden, argued in their New Criticism that a literary work be considered in its own right free from preconceived biases, beliefs,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Approach</th>
<th>Stance</th>
<th>Interpretative Authority</th>
<th>Control over Turns</th>
<th>Control over Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature circles; book clubs (Chapters 6 and 10)</td>
<td>Primarily aesthetic, partly efferent</td>
<td>Held by students</td>
<td>Controlled by students</td>
<td>Controlled by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning the author (Chapter 10)</td>
<td>Primarily efferent, but some critical/ analytic</td>
<td>Shared by teacher and students, but students are expected to do more</td>
<td>Controlled by the teacher</td>
<td>Shared by teacher and students, but teacher exerts control through questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional strategies instruction (Chapter 8)</td>
<td>Efferent, aesthetic, and critical/analytic</td>
<td>Shared by teacher and students, but shifting to students</td>
<td>Shared by teacher and students</td>
<td>Shared by teacher and students, but over time the students exert more control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative reasoning (Chapter 10)</td>
<td>Primarily critical/ analytic</td>
<td>Students are completely responsible for the positions they take</td>
<td>Students are free to speak whenever they want, but teacher can exert control through questioning</td>
<td>Shared by students and teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 3.2.** Profile of key attributes during different approaches to discussion.
and prior knowledge. He had his university students read and interpret poems without knowing when they were written and who wrote them. This allowed Richards to probe how students interpreted the text itself and how they considered the vocabulary, figurative language, symbolism, and structure of the text.

Richards’ works stand in contrast to the reader response theories of Louise Rosenblatt (1937, 1978) discussed in Chapter 1. Rosenblatt believed that each reader brings his or her background knowledge, beliefs, and experiences to a text and creates his or her own interpretations. In the transaction between the reader and the text different experiences and insights occur for each reader. To Rosenblatt there is no one correct reading of a text, while to Richards there is only one correct reading. Rosenblatt also advanced the view that there were different types of reading or stances that exist on a continuum. In the aesthetic stance the reader reads for the experience and enjoyment of reading, while in the efferent stance the reader reads to learn. The CCSS, however, are pushing the efferent stance and diminishing the value of aesthetic reading, while we maintain that both stances are equally important—reading is both a search for ideas and meaning and joyful experience.

The CCSS are emphasizing close reading because they object to instructional practices that diminish the efforts and the initiative of the reader. “Preteaching” or frontloading the students with too much background information makes it unnecessary for the students to grapple with the text’s meaning. Not every text requires a picture walk, but comprehension does require knowledge and teachers must build what students lack. When students struggle and teachers quickly provide their interpretation of the text, students do not have to think hard or reread to develop their own understanding. Instead, teachers should turn students back to the text and guide them to understand the author’s language. Reading at times requires hard thinking. When teachers focus too much on the students’ personal response to the text, the students miss the wonder of the author’s language, structure, and stylistic skills.

Close reading is not literal comprehension. As we will develop in this chapter and others, reading always requires making inferences. We infer the pronoun–noun connections, cause-and-effect relationships. We infer character traits, motives, and feeling. And we infer main ideas and themes. All of these inferences require prior knowledge. Try a close reading of quantum theory and you will quickly appreciate the vital importance of prior knowledge. Close reading simply says don’t preteach knowledge that the students can construct for themselves.

Many of the instructional practices in our book are completely consistent with close reading, but some are deliberately not. The interpretative
discussions of TSI (R. Brown et al., 1996) require a close examination of the text. The queries of questioning the author, text-dependent questions in CCSS jargon, demand a close reading of the text and an interrogation of the author (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997). Collaborative reasoning of Anderson and his colleagues (R. C. Anderson, 1998) requires a close reading of the text, and a consideration of evidence and reasoning to support interpretations. Many of the dialogues in Chapters 6 and 8 show the teacher returning the students to the text to explore the author’s purpose and language. We do believe there is a place for the aesthetic response. Not all reading requires a close reading, and advocating so would undermine the pleasure that many students derive from reading J. K. Rowling, Rick Riordan, Jeff Kinney, and Roald Dahl. Literature circles, book clubs, and independent reading encourage the aesthetic response. Comprehension strategies, our next topic, are tools for helping the reader engage in close reading.

STRATEGY INSTRUCTION: A TOOL FOR KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

When we developed our good comprehender model in Chapter 1, we stressed the importance of knowledge, strategies, metacognition, and motivation. By focusing exclusively on the strategies of the comprehension process, some educators have neglected the important roles of knowledge and motivation. Many popular books have unduly focused attention on strategies at the expense of knowledge and motivation. We should not teach skills for the sake of skills, nor strategies for the sake of strategies. Strategies must be tools that are employed within a real-learning context where readers build knowledge or engage with literature.

There is a definite link between strategy use and knowledge; unfortunately the relationship between the two is not totally clear. Let’s take two instances both supported by research. First is a middle-grade student who is reading a history chapter about the Civil War. We can guess that this reading task is difficult for this student who knows little about the Civil War. He has to read closely, stop often, and use headings and subheadings to search for information. He is slowly putting the ideas together to form a model of the text.

Another student in the same class has a depth of knowledge. His parents are Civil War buffs and they have taken their children to battlefields and reenactments across the South. His rich knowledge makes reading easier: he does not need to use as many fix-up strategies, and his ability to infer and evaluate is enhanced (Bråten & Samuelstuen, 2004). Strategies may be more necessary when the reader’s knowledge base is slim, but others argue
that a deep knowledge base enables the reader to think more flexibly and strategically (Bråten & Samuelstuen, 2004). Strategies use does play a role in reading comprehension, but only after taking into account a student’s word-recognition skills, general verbal ability, and prior knowledge (Cain, Oakhill, Barnes, & Bryant, 2001).

Making strategies the tool of building knowledge was the goal of two research efforts—concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004) and in-depth expanded application of science (IDEAS; Romance & Vitale, 2001). In both research programs, comprehension strategies instruction was situated within science instruction to build content knowledge, improve strategic thinking, and, in the case of CORI, to boost students’ motivation. CORI includes strategies like activating prior knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, and organizing information graphically. In a series of studies, Guthrie and his colleagues reported that CORI improved reading comprehension abilities significantly compared to more traditional approaches of comprehension strategies instruction (see Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007). The IDEAS program (Romance & Vitale, 2001) also embedded reading and language arts instruction within science instruction. In a series of studies, Romance and Vitale (2001) demonstrated that students achieved greater comprehension when strategy instruction is embedded in science learning compared to more traditional methods. In these approaches, as with TSI, the strategies served as tools to support the important work of building knowledge and learning concepts. Thus, the goal of comprehension instruction did not end with just teaching the tools.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

Because comprehension requires knowledge, strategies, metacognition, and motivation we have redesigned the GRRM and situated it within a real context: reading literature and informational texts for enjoyment and learning, and in our case, doing so within different instructional frameworks. We changed the model because comprehension instruction must be more than the explicit explanation of strategies and carefully guided reading. Teachers must integrate comprehension strategies instruction in a meaningful context that provides the motivation to learn. Figure 3.3 presents our revised version of the GRRM. For shorthand, we refer to our model as the gradual release of responsibility model in context (GRRM-C).

Our revised GRRM-C begins with a content to be explored and real texts to be read. The teacher begins the process with more knowledge than
the students and he or she activates and builds the students’ knowledge. Together the teacher and the students set a purpose for the reading. The beginning of the GRRM-C shares much in common with the prereading stages of the directed reading activity (Betts, 1946) or the scaffolded reading experience (SRE; Graves & Graves, 2003). During this prereading phase (knowledge activation/motivation) the teacher develops the students’ knowledge, introduces and explains vocabulary necessary for comprehension, previews the text, and sets a purpose for reading.

Consider a group of fifth graders getting ready to read a chapter on the Civil War. The teacher might begin by asking children to brainstorm what they know, really an informal assessment, but also a knowledge activation and motivation activity. Then the teacher might show a segment of Ken Burns’s (1990) PBS television special about life in the North and the South just prior to the war, adding information to a graphic organizer, which is a knowledge development activity. Next, the teacher explains specific vocabulary words—secession, slavery, states’ rights, and so forth.

When we move into the middle, larger phase of the model (strategy instruction/knowledge development) the teacher and the students are
working on building knowledge and using comprehension strategies to do so. As students read, they employ strategies to find important ideas, make inferences, and summarize what they are learning. The teacher essentially moves to parallel tracks, at times learning about the Civil War and at other times helping the students to employ comprehension and metacognitive strategies. For a lesson or two the content takes a backseat to the strategies. The teacher allocates a few lessons to explain and model the use of comprehension strategies; as the students gain expertise in the use of the strategies, the teacher helps less. The strategies are used to solve the comprehension problems that arise while reading and learning. The teacher’s role now shifts to supporting the students as they read; it is a shared responsibility. Over time the use of strategies and the building of knowledge becomes more and more the responsibility of the students.

In the last phase of the process (knowledge integration) the students consolidate what they have learned. They may complete a graphic organizer, write about what they have read, or develop a multimedia project. The teacher is still providing assistance; we do not assume that the student/learner is ever free from the need for support. The amount of support any group of students will need depends on their comprehension ability, their level of knowledge, and the difficulty of the text. Also, additional support is required as the teacher continues to deepen students’ existing knowledge, metacognition, motivation, and strategies use.

**Direct Explanation of Strategies**

In our GRRM-C, the teacher explains the strategies, models their use, and thinks aloud while he or she does so. The teacher is the expert who explains how to read strategically. Gerald Duffy and his colleagues developed specific criteria for direct and explicit explanations of comprehension strategies (Duffy et al., 1986). Duffy et al.’s work stresses the importance of providing students with declarative knowledge, what they will learn to do; procedural knowledge, how they should implement the strategies, the thinking process; and conditional knowledge, why strategies are important and when to use them. When referring to this kind of direct teaching in the remainder of this book, we prefer the term direct explanation because we feel the term is more self-evident. A direct explanation lesson should meet the following criteria and you will find examples of these lessons in Chapter 6 (making inferences), Chapter 8 (self-questioning), and Chapter 10 (determining importance and summarizing).

- Identify the strategy and discuss its purpose.
- Provide a clear explanation of the mental process underlying the
strategy, including the text features and clues that support the strategy.

- Explain how the strategy will help the reader and when it should be used.
- Model the strategy and think aloud until the students no longer need the support.

Students do not require as much teacher-stand-up-in-front-of-the-class explicit explanation as you might think. In one comprehensive look at RT (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) the researchers found minimal differences between an approach to RT that began with four to six explicit strategy lessons and another approach that plunged students right into dialogue in which strategies instruction was interwoven (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). Other researchers found that the dialogue of TSI produced greater results with second graders than did explicit instruction with one strategy at a time (Reutzel et al., 2005). We would argue that one or two clearly articulated lessons on strategies may be necessary but then students should be moved quickly into dialogue, where guided practice occurs. The amount of direct and explicit instruction also can vary with different students and strategies. Introducing third graders to the task of determining importance with informational text can be quite challenging, but focusing on making inferences with a gifted group of sixth graders will take minimal instruction, if any.

One of the most confounding problems in strategy instruction is the lack of consensus on the process that underlies each of the major strategies. “How strategies should be taught is not easily derived from the research . . . what goes on under a strategy label is not consistent from study to study” (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009, p. 221). For example, the experts concur that summarizing what you read will help improve comprehension, but how best to teach summarizing is open to debate because the process of constructing a summary varies from one study to another. In one study students were taught to delete details and redundant information, categorize details (plum, apple, orange = fruit), search for main ideas or topic sentences, and finally, if needed, generate their main idea (A. L. Brown & Day, 1983). What was left is integrated into a summary. In another study students read sections of a text and then generated a one-sentence summary statement (Taylor & Beach, 1984). These one-sentence statements were combined into an overall summary. In Chapter 10, where we focus on a biography, we have chosen the text structure approach to summarizing (Taylor & Beach, 1984) because it is more consistent with our goals than the more rule-governed approach of Brown and Day. Each time we introduce a strategy we discuss why we chose that specific approach.
**Guiding the Discussion and the Learning**

Guided reading is that phase of comprehension instruction where the teacher acts as a guide to develop the students’ thinking and understanding. At the outset we want to make it clear that guided reading is more than just asking questions. It is not a gentle inquisition but more often resembles a grand conversation (Eeds & Wells, 1989). The problem that all teachers face is how to guide the discussion to build comprehension of the text at hand, develop knowledge, and promote students’ thinking so that their comprehension abilities transfer to other texts.

The goals are achieved through scaffolding, “a process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 91). A teacher has a number of tools that can be used to scaffold the students’ comprehension:

- Graphic organizers, and even Post-it notes, can guide students’ learning; they provide a place to record thinking, ask questions, or record key ideas. These response forms and notes remind students to use strategies and attend to what they are learning. (We tackle graphic organizers in Chapter 10.)

- Collaborative learning, in which partners or small groups assist one another, supports the use of strategies and students’ learning. When two students work together to develop questions or write a summary, they assist each other with comprehension and learning.

- Moment-to-moment verbal support and teacher modeling provide hints and redirection when comprehension breaks down. The questions, comments, directives, and modeling of the teacher forms the bulk of what we refer to as scaffolding.

- Reduce the complexity of the task and the text. Students can contribute to the common instructional goal, but in different ways, often reading easier text.

Guided reading should take place during small-group discussions led by the teacher or by the students with teacher assistance. Evidence suggests that effective teachers spend more time in small-group instruction than do ineffective teachers (Taylor et al., 2000). Carol Connor and her colleagues demonstrate that these effective teachers tailor the small-group experience to the needs of students. Struggling readers need more time with the teacher while strong readers require less (Connor, Jakobsons, Crowe, & Meadows, 2009). Activities like book clubs (McMahon & Raphael, 1997) and literature
circles (Daniels, 1996) are ideal for stronger readers who need less teacher support, thereby freeing the teacher to work with other students who need additional support.

While the nature of the dialogues in guided reading is open to debate, there are some necessary elements in all discussions. These include:

- Asking questions that elicit a high level of thinking.
- Encouraging students to elaborate on their responses.
- Supporting, acknowledging their ideas, and elaborating on them.
- Fostering connections among ideas.
- Prompting explanations that employ evidence from the text (Goldenberg & Patthey-Chaves, 1995; Murphy et al., 2009).

We review several studies that examine the process of leading a teacher-guided discussion, but remember there are other discussion formats like literature circles (Daniels, 1996) or collaborative reasoning (Chinn et al., 2001) where the students assume more control. In a recent study, McKeown et al. (2009) compared a content approach to a strategies approach for guided comprehension lessons. In the content approach, questioning the author (QtA; Beck et al., 1997), the teacher had the students read a portion of the text and then stopped them to discuss the selection. QtA rests on the premise that the author is fallible and the reader must inquire critically. The discussion is initiated with general questions: “What is the author trying to tell us?” and “What is this passage about?” The students then talk about the passage, and the teacher encourages additional comments from other students. If the students miss major ideas, the teacher directs them to reexamine the text. Sometimes students are asked to connect one idea in a passage to another through queries like “How does this connect with what the author told us before?” or “Why do you think the author tells us this now?” Some evaluative queries are asked, such as “Did the author explain this clearly?” and “Does this make sense with what the author told us before?” At all times the discussion focuses on the ideas in the passage. QtA is a close reading of the text.

McKeown and her colleagues (2009) contrasted this content approach to a strategies approach. In the strategies approach the teacher periodically stopped the students’ reading to focus on problems in the text and helped them select and apply strategies to solve these problems. The researchers developed their own strategies approach, validated by experts, rather than employing one of the known, researched approaches like RT (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) or TSI (R. Brown et al., 1996). In the strategies approach, the teacher initiated the discussion by having the students focus on problems in the text and then asked the students what strategy might be used to solve
the problem. At other times in the discussion the teacher commented on
students’ use of a given strategy (e.g., “I like the inference you just made”),
or asked them to use a given strategy (“Who can clarify what we just
read?”). The results of the study confirmed that the content approach led to
greater comprehension than did the strategies approach, with these effects
transferring to passages that students read without teacher support. Since
the results of this study were not straightforward, we examine yet another
approach to better understand what constitutes a strong, guided reading
lesson.

In Figure 3.4 we present dialogues for three approaches—a strategy
approach, a content approach (QtA), and RT. In both the content approach
and the strategy approach, the students read a story titled “The Fun They
Had” (Asimov, 2005), taken from the McKeown et al. (2009) study. In the
story two children, living in the year 2157, come across a book for the first
time; they wonder just how it works. In the RT excerpt (Palincsar & Brown,
1984), the five students and the teacher discuss a nonfiction article on the
history of salt. In RT the students take turns leading the discussion. The
students in this dialogue have been practicing RT for 13 days.

What can we conclude from these three dialogues? In both the content
and the RT approaches, the students and teacher spend more time actually
discussing the content of the passage than in the strategy approach. Even
though RT has a specific goal of having students learn to use four strategies,
they still persistently discuss the main ideas and details of the salt article.
All of the teacher’s statements reflect how well the students understand the
content. In the content approach the students grapple with details of the
story, specifically the setting. In the strategy approach the focus is on the
strategies, or on the process of asking the students to use a specific strategy,
or labeling the student’s comments as an example of using a strategy (“You
made an inference”).

How the teacher directs or supports the dialogue also differs across the
three examples. In the content approach the teacher begins the discussion
by asking the students “What is going on here?” In effect, the discussion
begins with a summary without ever using the word summary. Strategies
are used but are not labeled. The students’ comments are long and clearly
ideas are being put together. In the RT approach the students also sum-
marize, and ask questions and predict, but the students and the teacher
label the strategies. It appears that there is nothing inherently wrong with
using strategy labels and there may be something good about it. A strategy
label—summarizing, predicting—may help remind the students that there
is a process they can follow. For example, asking students to summarize a
portion of a story may help them recall that this kind of summary has to
contain a setting, characters, an event, and a reaction.
FIGURE 3.4. Three types of guided reading.
One part of the comprehension process is sometimes neglected in all three of these dialogues; that is, the need to make connections among phrases and sentences within the passage to build cohesion. This process coincides with the construction phase of comprehension that we presented in Chapter 1 as part of the construction–integration model. QtA promotes these connections when the teacher asks, “How is that connected to what we already read?” Although not all readers have difficulty with this basic aspect of comprehension, a teacher must be aware of the potential problem and be ready to address it. Consider the passage that was used to elicit the discussion for the McKeown study (McKeown et al., 2009), the story by Asimov (2005).

Marie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 2157, she wrote, “Today Tommy found a real book!”

It was a very old book. Marie’s grandfather once said that when he was a little boy his grandfather told him that there was a time when all stories were printed on paper.

They turned the pages, which were yellow and crinkly, and it was awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving the way they were supposed to—on a screen, you know. (p. 27)

One thing that makes this short passage difficult to comprehend is the pronoun–noun relationships. A second occurs because the author takes the reader back multiple generations, a time–sequence link. The reader must sort out whose grandfather is being discussed. Then comes the phrase “They turned the pages . . . .”, and the reader must connect the word they to Marie and Tommy. These comprehension problems might become apparent when the students are asked to retell the passage. If students do have these problems, the teacher can ask students about these relationships: “In the last paragraph, who is the author describing when he uses the word they? How can we figure out who ‘they’ are?” Since texts present comprehension problems for readers, like the ones described above, successful teaching depends upon careful planning and close reading.

Planning Guided Discussions

Planning guided comprehension is challenging. It demands selecting texts thoughtfully and then reading closely to determine potential comprehension problems. Without a thorough understanding of the text and its potential problems, teachers will not formulate the right questions and will not understand why students’ comprehension is impaired. In fact, some teachers do not anticipate stumbling blocks that might trip students up when
reading. A recent study of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers found that 85% of teachers were unable to analyze a text and determine when and why students might have comprehension difficulties (Kucan, Hapgood, & Palincsar, 2011). These teachers believed that comprehension problems stemmed primarily from vocabulary difficulties or weak text features—headings, bold print, and subheadings. These teachers were unaware of what makes a text coherent, what makes the “ideas hang together in a meaningful and organized manner” (Graesser, McNamara, & Louwerse, 2003, p. 83).

Planning comprehension instruction begins with selecting texts. Text selection should be guided by a few key principles:

1. The teacher, the students, and sometimes both can select the texts.
2. Texts should be selected because they contribute to the content goal of the lesson. So, if your class is learning about mysteries, select good books of that genre.
3. Select texts that students can read at their instructional level: a level where the students read with 90% accuracy or better.
4. Select texts where there is a match between the clarity of the text’s structure and the comprehension ability of the students.
5. Select texts where there is some cognitive challenge, something to think about. A text that is so bland, without any challenge or voice, will not engage the reader; nor will it provide students the opportunity to think strategically or critically.

Effective guided practice cannot be conducted on the fly; it must be planned. The first step in planning is to read the text closely. We recommend that you read it twice. The first time you read the text, your goal is simply to understand it on your own terms. The second reading is designed to examine the text closely to look for potential comprehension problems. You want to enter into the minds of your students and try to anticipate how they think and what might cause them difficulty. Your comprehension skills are so developed that you will often fail to note problems that will stump the average student in your class (Kucan et al., 2011). Examining the text from this text-processing perspective is critical to developing an effective guided lesson. Anticipating where the comprehension problems are likely to occur helps you to frame your questions and know when to stop and support your students.

In any guided comprehension lesson it is important to decide where and how often to stop and discuss the text. We do not advocate the basal practice of asking comprehension questions on each page of the text. Doing so is likely to disrupt comprehension. Instead, we suggest that you stop as infrequently as possible; the more of the text that the reader has inside his
or her head, the more likely he or she is to make connections among ideas and build a personal model (van den Broek & Kremer, 2000). It also is likely the younger and more inexperienced readers should stop less often so that their memory for each text segment is not disrupted. Better readers accommodate frequent interruptions to the reading process.

**Implementing Teacher-Guided Discussion**

A strong teacher-guided discussion encourages students to summarize what they have read and elaborate on their initial understanding. During the discussion the students should look for and solve text-processing problems, make inferences, generate questions, and work to understand the text. Even though the teacher is in the lead, the result is a discussion—and not oral assessment. When comprehension presents a problem, the teacher or one of the students can take the lead, modeling strategies to resolve the misunderstanding. These are our guidelines for teachers:

- *Summarize or paraphrase.* Ask the students to summarize what the text was about either at the beginning or end of reading—or both. This summary compels the students to put ideas together, serves as a metacognitive check, and reminds students to focus on the text and not just the strategies. This summary is useful because it gives you insight into what the students have comprehended, what they can express about their understanding, and whether any reteaching is in order. Plus, summarizing addresses the first standard in the CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010).

- *Solve problems.* Help the students with the difficult parts of the text. At all times the teacher should direct the students to look back into the text to either locate information or to justify an answer. This is a vital move for successful comprehension because it prevents students from relying on their prior knowledge when the information is in the text. Weak comprehenders overrely on prior knowledge and do not adequately attend to the text (Dewitz & Dewitz, 2003; Neuman, 1990).

- *Make inferences.* All texts are incomplete and the author counts on the readers to supply information that he or she only implied. There are many types of inferences. We infer cause and effect, themes, main ideas, and characters’ feelings, traits, and motives.

- *Standards.* In many schools, teacher-guided discussion must accommodate the specific standards of the district. It is useful to ask a few questions that address those standards. In a guided reading lesson you might ask a question about author’s purpose, fact or opinion, or cause and effect
because it gives students specific practice with the skills assessed at the end of the year.

**CLOSE READING**

The CCSS urge teachers and students to engage in close reading of the text. For practical purposes a close reading is a slightly more intense version of what we have been describing. A close read has the following characteristics (Fisher & Frey, 2012):

- The students read short passages, typically a few paragraphs, excerpted from a novel, news articles, textbook, or a short poem.
- A close reading requires a difficult text, complex ideas, something to chew over, and it can be conducted any time that a particular chunk of text is difficult and presents comprehension difficulties. A close reading demands hard thinking about words, phrases, and figurative language. In the guidelines for questioning the author, Beck and her colleagues (1997) suggest that even one complex sentence can be a target for close reading.
- Close reading typically requires multiple readings of the text with each reading taking the students deeper into the text. With each rereading of the text the students are able to apply a bit more knowledge to the text. Teachers can direct students to specific words, phrases, and sentences that present comprehension difficulty.
- In a close reading there is limited frontloading of prior knowledge. The teacher avoids telling students what they should be able to derive from reading the text. Yet, without prior knowledge comprehension is very difficult and at times impossible. Test this out by reading any book on quantum theory. The CCSS did not repeal the schema view of comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) nor does the knowledge that is necessary to drive the construction-integration process (Kintsch, 1998) become unnecessary during a close reading.
- During a close reading teachers ask text-dependent questions. The phrase “text dependent” is simply a new label for “Right There, Think and Search,” and “Author and Me” questions (Raphael, 1986). A text-dependent question is not an “On My Own” question that causes the reader to speculate or wonder. During a close reading the teachers also question and discuss specific words, phrases, and literary devices.
- During a close reading the students underline, highlight, and take
margin notes. They cite from the text to bolster their arguments, and the teacher frequently asks them to justify their answers from the text.

Because the CCSS hold considerable influence, there will be a push to engage all students in a close reading of the text. However, the overall impact of close reading on the development of reading comprehension is yet to be determined. Since close reading shares characteristics with QtA (Beck et al., 1997) and TSI (R. Brown et al., 1996), we can speculate that engaging students in close reading will improve their reading comprehension. When and how often students should read and discuss closely is an open question. It will require research to determine if close reading will build skill and motivation (S. Brown & Kappes, 2012).

**Student-Guided Discussions**

As students’ comprehension develops and their social skills improve they can begin to lead their own discussions, relying less on teacher guidance. The research confirms that classroom discussions enhance students’ comprehension and higher-level thinking and reasoning (Murphy et al., 2009). As many theorists proposed and as the research confirms, learning to think and reason improves through a dialogue with others as varying points of view and knowledge are brought to the text (Bakhtin, 1981; Piaget, 1928; Vygotsky, 1978). Depending on the goals, a teacher can employ a technique like literature circles (Short & Pierce, 1990; Daniels, 1996) or book clubs (McMahon & Raphael, 1992) to build an aesthetic or expressive response, or try collaborative reasoning (R. C. Anderson, Chinn, Waggoner, & Nguyen, 1998) focusing on critical/analytic thinking. The teacher-led approaches we presented in the previous section, including QtA (Beck et al., 1997) are more efferent in nature—stressing the important ideas in the text.

Janice Almasi (1995) documented that peer-led discussions developed comprehension as effectively, if not more so, than did teacher-led discussions. In the peer-led discussions the students tended to ask more questions, their responses were more elaborate, and the students tended to generate more text interpretations. Literature circles improve students’ ability to discuss books, employ strategies like predicting and questioning, raise comprehension, and heighten motivation to read independently (B. H. Davis, Resta, Davis, & Camacho, 2001; Marin, 1998). Book clubs have been shown to increase reading vocabulary and the use of metacognitive strategies like self-questioning and summarizing, TSI (R. Brown, 2008; Pressley et al., 1989). They start out as teacher guided and can transition to peer-led
talk that accommodates aesthetic, efferent, and critical/analytic discussions of text.

**Knowledge Expansion, Integration, and Application**

Our model of comprehension instruction situates the explanation and practice of reading strategies within a context where students are reading and writing for a purpose greater than strategies attainment. They are reading a novel to learn about important big ideas or themes, or reading nonfiction to expand their knowledge of the world. So while students are employing strategies, they are also working with their teachers (1) to consolidate, reorganize, and reflect upon what they are learning; or (2) to experience a text at a deeper level. Knowledge expansion, integration, and application can take place throughout the GRRM-C cycle. It does not happen only at the end.

Knowledge expansion can take many different forms. Students might be taking notes from a science text, or keeping a journal of their reactions to a novel. These notes and thoughts reflect their growing knowledge and insight. Students might create graphic representations, concept maps, or semantic maps to integrate these emerging ideas and represent them in a new way. To really know means to transform. Discussion promotes the development of knowledge as students share viewpoints and consider the arguments of others. We are now at the end of the GRRM-C cycle. At this point, students have built knowledge and become more strategic (in terms of cognition and metacognition) in their reading and thinking. Topical interest and motivation to read has propelled them through the cycle, and continues to spark their curiosity.

**Independent Reading**

Comprehension development continues when students read independently because wide reading of many texts and genres has been shown to improve comprehension (Kuhn, 2004; Schwanenflugel et al., 2006). We do not advocate traditional sustained silent reading where children read silently and the teacher acts as a model reading at his or her desk. This practice does not promote engaged reading and accountability because teachers do not monitor what the students are doing (Manning, Lewis, & Lewis, 2010). Kelly and Clausen-Grace (2006) recommend a procedure called R^5 where students read, relax, reflect, respond, and rap. Read and relax are the first step; the students read a book of their choice (teacher guidance is essential) and relax in any part of the room. Students reflect by keeping a reading log or writing in a personal response journal. Finally, students respond and rap by
sharing with a partner what they have read. Ray Reutzel and his colleagues (Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008) recommend regular reading conferences where teachers guide children’s book choices and conduct brief reading conferences where students discuss the main points of the book. This practice improves students’ fluency and recall.

**LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD**

As we documented in the first chapter, reading comprehension is a highly complex cognitive activity. It is impossible to explain and model exactly the kind of thinking that actually goes on during strategic reading. What teachers demonstrate in the classroom are instructional approximations of the real act (Resnick, 1987). At best, we can support students through explaining and modeling, asking questions to propel the reader to act, and even pointing out which ideas should be connected to make an inference or create a summary. However, teaching this kind of thinking does not ensure that students will be sufficiently motivated to apply it. That desire is fueled by a meaningful curriculum, interesting tasks, student choice, and the reader’s values, beliefs, and goals.

In this chapter we outlined some very successful instructional approaches—RT, CSR, QtA, and TSI. From these and other studies, we extracted the essentials of comprehension instruction as viewed through an augmented version of the GRRM, which incorporates the development of knowledge, motivation, metacognition, and strategy instruction. Comprehension instruction must be grounded in a rich and exciting context that provides interest and builds motivation. Strategies, both cognitive and metacognitive, are tools that serve two overarching goals—enjoyment and learning.

In Chapters 5 and 6 we apply these concepts of comprehension instruction to the reading of literature. In Chapters 7 and 8, we reintroduce them in the context of reading informational text. In Chapters 9 and 10, we observe how they function in a basal reading program. Up to this point, we largely have provided foundational information; in the following chapters, we apply these concepts to specific texts and students. However, before examining the teaching of knowledge, strategies use, metacognition, and motivation in three frameworks, we turn first to the topic of assessment in Chapter 4. Assessment is fundamental to effective teaching in all three instructional frameworks.
APPLICATIONS AND EXPLORATIONS

1. Select two texts you use often, one narrative and one informational, and analyze their text-processing problems. Imagine one of your weaker readers. What would cause him or her to have comprehension problems? Look beyond the obvious vocabulary problems and prior knowledge issues to explore where sentence structure, cohesive ties, and inferences must be made.

2. Observe a friend/colleague leading a small-group discussion. Note the type of questions that are asked, the sequencing of those questions, the responses given to students, and the types of provided support. Together, discuss the lesson and determine what makes it effective.

3. Read further about RT, CSR, and TSI. Identify the common elements that define their success.