

Scaffolding Reading Comprehension: Applying What We Know

Informational Text Example

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Comprehension – “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading” (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p.11).

Scaffolding Reading Comprehension in the Elementary Grades

The amount and type of scaffolding is dependent upon the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading.

Before Reading

- Teach the pronunciation of difficult to read words.
- Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words.
- Teach or activate any necessary background knowledge.
- Preview the article.

During Reading

- Utilize passage reading procedures that provide adequate reading practice.
- Ask appropriate questions during passage reading.
- When necessary, scaffold higher order questions by first asking literal questions.
- Teach strategies that can be applied to passage reading.

After Reading

- Use graphic organizers to help students summarize critical points of article.
- Engage students in a discussion.
- Have students answer written questions.
- Provide engaging vocabulary practice.
- Have students write summaries of what they have read.

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Weekly Reader Article

Follow the Leader

A group of sandhill cranes made their first flight last fall by learning to follow the leader. But their leader was not another crane. The birds followed a scientist who flew a small airplane.

Sandhill Cranes Soar South

Eleven sandhill cranes flew from Wisconsin to Florida last fall. The birds followed a scientist flying a small airplane on the 39-day trip.

Each fall, cranes travel from cold areas, like Wisconsin, to warm areas, like Florida. Baby cranes learn from their parents how to make the trip. But these cranes learned to follow scientists.

When the sandhill cranes hatched, the first thing they saw was a group of scientists dressed to look like adult cranes. The scientists fed the chicks. The chicks thought the scientists were their mothers.

Then the scientists trained the young birds to follow an airplane. The scientists played a tape of the noise that planes make. They also played sounds adult sandhill cranes make. So the cranes learned to trust and follow people in planes.

Cranes Helping Cranes

By flying to Florida, 11 sandhill cranes were helping their cousins, the whooping cranes. Many sandhill cranes live in the United States. But few whooping cranes live here anymore.

Only one group of whooping cranes knows how to migrate, or travel, from the North to the South. Scientists hope to teach other whooping cranes to migrate. More cranes may survive if they can learn to travel back and forth.

Next year, scientists will train whooping cranes to migrate the same way they trained sandhill cranes.

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Before: Teach or activate any necessary background knowledge.

These birds are Sandhill Cranes.



In the fall, sandhill cranes fly south to warmer places.



These are whooping cranes. There are fewer and fewer whooping cranes in the United States.

Before: Teach the pronunciation of difficult to read words.

Tell students the pronunciation of words if the words are irregular or difficult to decode.

group

area

science

scientist

learn

learned

Guide students in using decoding strategies.

crane

cranes

sandhill cranes

whooping cranes

tape

migrate

hope

follow

following

fly

flying

train

trained

survive

travel

airplane

Wisconsin

Florida

trust

noise

Before: Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words.

Select 4 words from this list for robust vocabulary instruction. Select words that are: 1) unknown, 2) critical to passage understanding, 3) useful in the future, and 4) more difficult to obtain (abstract, no known synonym).

cranes

whooping cranes

sandhill cranes

airplane

travel

migrate

scientist

flying

survive

learned

thought

followed

trained

young

Utilize student-friendly explanations.

| Word | Dictionary Definition | Student-Friendly Explanation |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| train trained | Teach a particular skill or type of behavior through practice and instruction over a period of time. | When you teach an animal to do something, you train the animal. |
| travel traveled | Make a journey typically of some length or abroad. | When a person or an animal goes from one place to another, they travel . The word travel is usually used when the person or animal goes a long distance. |
| migrate migrated | Move from one region or habitat to another especially regularly according to the seasons. | When birds or other animals move from one place to another at a certain time each year, they migrate . |
| survive survived | Continue to live or exist, especially in spite of danger or hardship. | When people or animals don't die when things are very bad, they survive . |

Provide robust, explicit vocabulary instruction.

Example A.

1. Introduce the word.

*This word is **travel**. What word?*

2. Present a student-friendly explanation.

*When a person or an animal goes from one place to another, they **travel**. So when a person or an animal goes from one place to another place they _____. The word travel is usually used when the person or animal goes a long distance.*

3. Illustrate the word with examples.

If you went from Oregon to Minnesota in an airplane, you would _____.

If you drove from New York to Boston in a car, you would _____.

4. Check students' understanding.

(Deep processing question.)

Why might a family travel to another city? Tell your partner. (The teacher calls on an individual.)

(Generate examples.)

Tell your partner some place that you and your family have traveled to. (Teacher monitors.)

Example B.

1. Introduce the word.

*This word is **migrate**. What word?*

2. Present a student-friendly explanation.

*When birds or other animals move from one place to another at a certain time each year, they **migrate**. So if birds move to a new place in the winter or spring, we say that the birds migrate.*

3. Illustrate the word with examples.



These birds are moving to a warmer place for the winter months. These birds _____.



These wildebeests in Africa are moving to a new place so that they can find water and grass. Wildebeests _____.

4. Check students' understanding.

(Deep processing question.)

Why might birds migrate? Tell your partner. (The teacher calls on an individual.)

Example C.

1. Introduce the word.

*This word is **survive**. What word?*

2. Present a student-friendly explanation.

*When people or animals don't die when things are very bad, they **survive**.*

3. Illustrate the word with examples.



Look at the people on this river. It is very dangerous. However, the people don't get hurt or die, they _____.

Check students' understanding.
(Examples and non-examples.)

Get ready to tell me if this group would survive.

If the winter was very cold and all food was buried under the snow, would whooping cranes survive? Why not?

If whooping cranes had plenty of food and the weather was warm, would they survive? Why?

(Deep Processing Questions)

If a rabbit was being chased by a coyote, what could the rabbit do to survive?

Before: Preview the article.

Warm-Up

Before you read a chapter or a section of a chapter in your science, social studies, or health book, Warm-up. Get an idea of the chapter's content by previewing these parts.

BEGINNING

- ***Title***
- ***Introduction***

MIDDLE

- ***Headings***
- ***Subheadings***

END

- ***Summary***
- ***Questions***

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During: Ask appropriate questions during passage reading.

During: When necessary, scaffold higher order questions by first asking literal questions.

A group of sandhill cranes made their first flight last fall by learning to follow the leader. But their leader was not another crane. The birds followed a scientist who flew a small airplane.

What group of animals is this article about?

What did the sandhill cranes follow?

Do birds usually follow airplanes? Why not?

Let's see what was done so that the cranes would follow the airplane.

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Eleven sandhill cranes flew from Wisconsin to Florida last fall. The birds followed a scientist flying a small airplane on the 39-day trip.

Each fall, cranes travel from cold areas, like Wisconsin, to warm areas, like Florida. Baby cranes learn from their parents how to make the trip. But these cranes learned to follow scientists.

When the sandhill cranes hatched, the first thing they saw was a group of scientists dressed to look like adult cranes. The scientists fed the chicks. The chicks thought the scientists were their mothers.

Then the scientists trained the young birds to follow an airplane. The scientists played a tape of the noise that planes make. They also played sounds adult sandhill cranes make. So the cranes learned to trust and follow people in planes.

When the baby cranes were born, who did they first see?

Who fed the baby cranes?

Who did the baby cranes think were their mothers?

Why did the baby cranes follow the airplane?

Cranes Helping Cranes

By flying to Florida, 11 sandhill cranes were helping their cousins, the whooping cranes. Many sandhill cranes live in the United States. But few whooping cranes live here anymore.

Only one group of whooping cranes knows how to migrate, or travel, from the North to the South. Scientists hope to teach other whooping cranes to migrate. More cranes may survive if they can learn to travel back and forth.

Next year, scientists will train whooping cranes to migrate the same way they trained sandhill cranes.

Are there many whooping cranes?

Do all whooping cranes migrate?

If the scientists were able to get the sandhill cranes to follow the airplane and migrate, how might that help the whooping cranes?

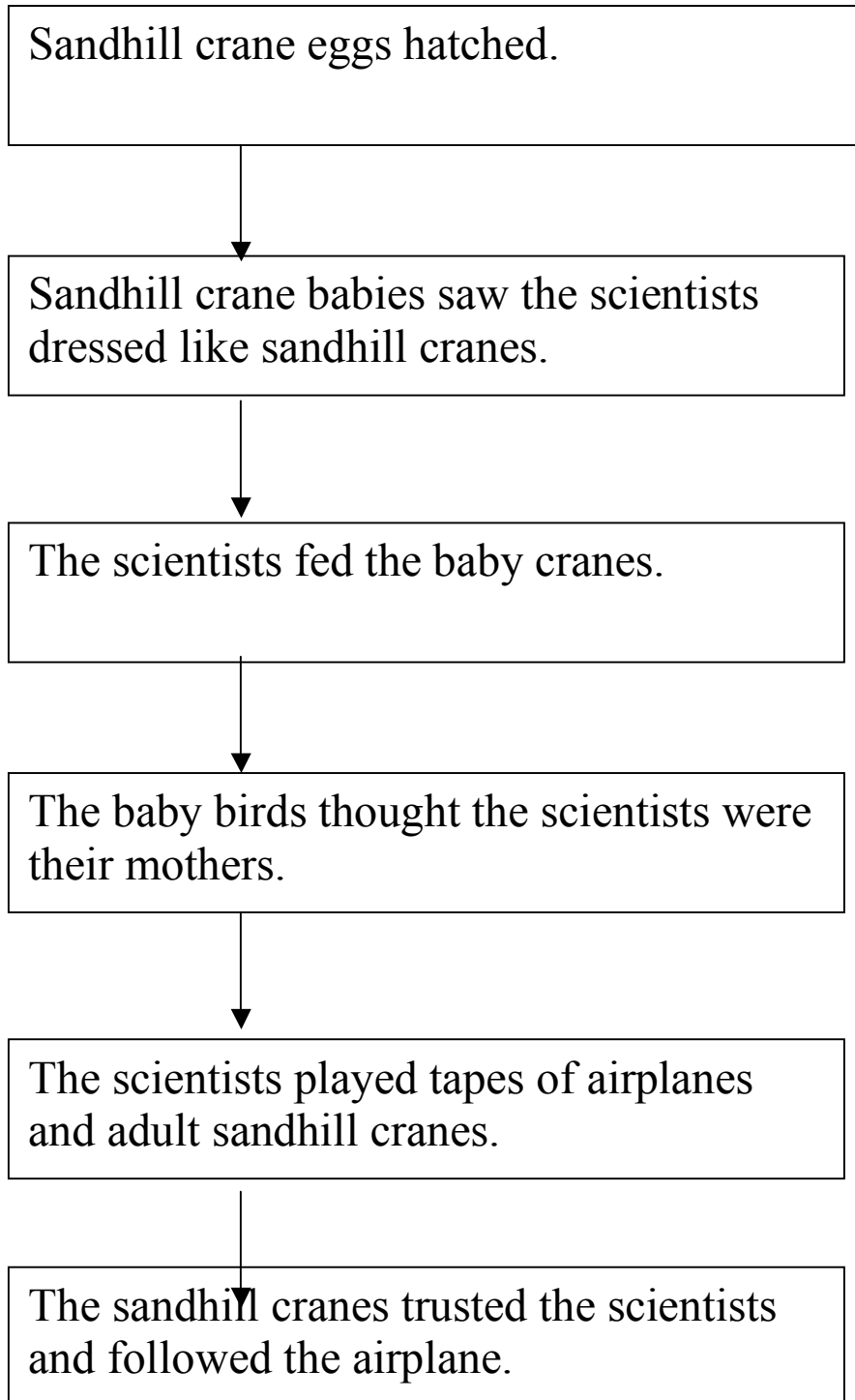
During: Teach strategies that can be applied to passage reading.

Paragraph Shrinking

- 1. Name the who or what.**
(The main person, animal, or thing.)
- 2. Tell the most important thing about the who or what.**
- 3. Say the main idea in 10 words or less.**

(From the PALS program by Fuchs, Mathes, and Fuchs)

After: Use graphic organizers to help students summarize critical points of article.



After: Have students answer written questions.

- Teach students to change the question into part of the answer and write the partial answer down.
- For each written question, have students determine if the answer is : In the book OR In my head. Guide students in applying the QAR strategy.

QUESTION ANSWER RELATIONSHIPS

4 Types of Questions

In the Book QAR's

Right There

The answer is in the text, usually easy to find. The words used to make up the question and words used to answer the questions are ***Right There*** in the same sentence.

Think and Search (Pulling it Together)

The answer is in the selection, but you need to put together different pieces of information to find it. Words for the answer are not found in the same sentence. They come from different places in the selection.

In My Head QAR's

Author and You

The answer is not in the story. You need to think about what ***you*** already know, what the ***author*** tells you in the text, and how it fits together.

On My Own

The answer is not in the selection. You can even answer the question without reading the selection. You need to use your own experience.

(Raphael, 1986)

After Reading: Have students write summaries of what they have read.

Option #1: Have students complete a paragraph summary frame.

Scientists taught _____ cranes to migrate by following an airplane to a warmer place. When the baby sandhill cranes were born, the first thing they saw were _____ dressed as _____ . The babies thought the scientists were their _____. The scientists _____ the baby cranes, made noises like adult sandhill cranes, and got the little sandhill cranes familiar with _____ sounds. Soon the sandhill cranes _____ the scientists and were willing to follow their airplane. This same process will be used to save _____, an endangered group of birds.

Option #2: Teach students a strategy for summarizing an informational article.

- List -** Make a list of important details.
- Cross-out -** Cross out any unnecessary or weak details.
- Connect -** Connect ideas that could go together in one sentence.
- Number -** Number the details in the order that they will appear in the paragraph.

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