

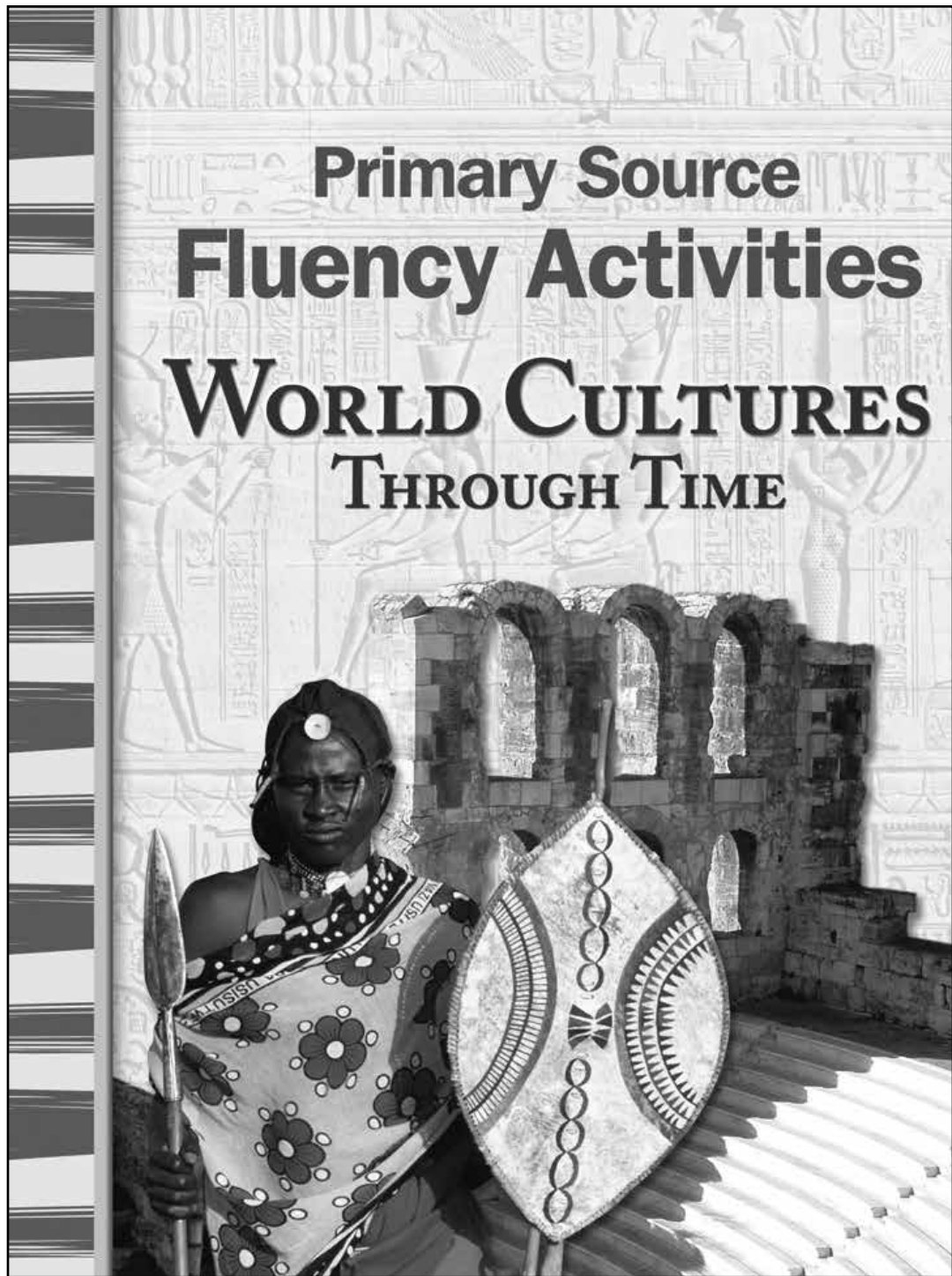


Primary Source Fluency Activities

World Cultures Through Time

Introduction by Dr. Timothy Rasinski





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Introduction to Teaching Fluency

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski
Kent State University

Why This Book?

This book was developed in response to the need we have heard from teachers for good texts for teaching reading fluency within the content areas. Within the past several years, reading fluency has become recognized as an essential element in elementary and middle grade reading programs (National Reading Panel, 2001). Readers who are fluent are better able to comprehend what they read—they decode words so effortlessly that they can devote their cognitive resources to the all-important task of comprehension instead of bogging themselves down in working to decode words they confront in their reading. They can also construct meaning (comprehension) by reading with appropriate expression and phrasing.

Readers develop fluency through guided practice and repeated readings—reading a text selection several times to the point where it can be expressed meaningfully—with appropriate expression and phrasing. Readers who engage in regular repeated readings, under the guidance and assistance of a teacher or other coach, improve their word recognition, reading rate, comprehension, and overall reading proficiency.

Students will find the texts in this book interesting and sometimes challenging. Students will especially want to practice the texts if you provide regular opportunities for them to perform the texts for their classmates, parents, and other audiences.

So, have fun with these passages. Read them with your students and read them again. Be assured that if you regularly have your students read and perform the texts in this book, you will go a long way to develop fluent readers who are able to decode words effortlessly and construct meaning through their interpretations of texts.

How to Use This Book

The texts in this book are meant to be read, reread, and performed. If students do this, they will develop as fluent readers, improving their ability to recognize words accurately and effortlessly, and reading with meaningful expression and phrasing. However, you, the teachers, are the most important part in developing instruction that uses these texts. In this section, we recommend ways in which you can use the texts with your students.

Introduction to Teaching Fluency (cont.)

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski

Scheduling and Practice

The texts should be read repeatedly over several days. We recommend that you introduce one text at a time and practice it over the next three, four, or five days, depending on how quickly your students develop mastery over them. Write the text you are going to read on chart paper or put it on an overhead transparency.

Have the students read the text several times each day. They should read it a few times at the beginning of each day, read it several times during various breaks in the day, and read it multiple times at the end of each day.

Make two copies of the text for each student. Have students keep one copy at school in their “fluency folders.” The other copy can be sent home for students to continue practicing with their families. Communicate to families the importance of children continuing to practice the text at home with their parents and other family members.

Coaching Your Students

A key ingredient to repeated reading is the coaching that comes from a teacher. As your students practice reading the target text each week—alone, in small groups, or as an entire class—be sure to provide positive feedback about their reading. Help them develop a sense for reading the text in such a way that it conveys the meaning that the author attempts to convey or the meaning that the reader may wish to convey. Through oral interpretation of a text, readers can express joy, sadness, anger, surprise, or any of a variety of emotions. Help students learn to use their reading to convey this level of meaning.

Teachers do this by listening from time to time as students read, and coaching them in the various aspects of oral interpretation. You may wish to suggest that students emphasize certain words, insert dramatic pauses, read a bit faster in one place, or slow down in other parts of the text. And, of course, lavish praise on students’ best efforts to convey a sense of meaning through their reading. Although it may take a while for students to learn to develop this sense of “voice” in their reading, in the long run, it will lead to more engaged and fluent reading and higher levels of comprehension.

Introduction to Teaching Fluency (cont.)

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski

Word Study

Although the goal of the passages in this book is to develop fluent and meaningful oral reading, the practicing of passages should also provide opportunities to develop students' vocabulary and word decoding skills. Students may practice a passage repeatedly to the point where it is largely memorized. At this point, students may not be looking closely at the words in the text. By continually drawing attention to interesting and important words in the text, you can help students maintain their focus and develop an ongoing fascination with words.

After reading a passage several times through, ask students to choose words from the passage that they think are interesting or important. Put these words on a word wall, or ask students to add them to their personal word banks. Talk about the words—their meanings and spellings. Help students develop a deepened appreciation for these words. Encourage students to use these words in their oral and written language. You might, for example, ask students to use some of the words in their daily journal entries.

Once a list of words has been added to a classroom word wall or students' word banks, play various games with the words. One of our favorites is “word bingo.” Here, students are given a card containing a 3 x 3, 4 x 4, or 5 x 5 grid. In each box, students randomly write words from the word wall or bank. The teacher then calls out words or sentences that contain the target words or definitions of the target words. Students find the words on their cards and cover them with markers. Once a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line of words is covered, a student calls “Bingo” and wins the game.

Have students sort the chosen words along a variety of dimensions—by syllable; part of speech; presence of a certain phonics feature, such as long vowel sound or a consonant blend; or by meaning (e.g., words that express how a person can feel and words that don't). Through sorting-and-categorizing activities, students get repeated exposure to words, examining the words differently with each sort.

No matter how you do it, make examining selected words from the passages part of your regular instructional routine for these fluency texts. The time spent in word study will most definitely improve students' overall fluency.

Introduction to Teaching Fluency (cont.)

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski

Performance

After several days of practice, arrange a special time for the students to perform the text, as well as other ones practiced from previous days. This performance time can range from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. Find a special person (such as the principal) to listen to your students perform. You may also want to invite a neighboring class, parents, or community members. Have the students perform the targeted text as a group. Later you can have individuals or groups of students perform the text again, as well as other texts that have been practiced previously.

As an alternative to having your students perform for a group that comes to your room, you may also want to send your students to visit other adults and students on campus and perform for them. Principals, school secretaries, custodians, playground aides, and visitors to the campus are usually great audiences for students' readings. Tape recording and video taping your students' readings is another way to create a performance opportunity.

Regardless of how you do it, it is important that you create the opportunity for your students to perform for an audience. The magic of the performance will give students the motivation to want to practice their assigned texts.

Performance Not Memorization

Remember that the key to developing fluency is guided oral and silent reading practice. Students become more fluent when they read the texts repeatedly. Reading requires students to actually see the words in the texts. Thus, it is important that you do not require students to memorize the texts they are practicing and performing. Memorization leads students away from visually examining the words. Although students may want to try to memorize the texts, the instructional emphasis needs to be on reading with expression so that an audience will enjoy the students' oral renderings of the texts. Keep students' eyes on the texts whenever possible.

One of the most important things we can do to promote proficient and fluent reading is to have students practice reading meaningful passages with a purpose—to perform them. This program provides students with just those opportunities to create meaning with their voices as well as the wonderful words in these primary sources.

How to Use This Product

General Information

This book contains reader's theater scripts, proverbs, poems, stories, fables, book excerpts, and songs. Activities for each lesson teach important fluency strategies as well as an understanding of world cultures through time. Some lessons also contain primary source photographs. These photographs help students understand the changes and developments that have occurred over time.

Depending on the reading levels of your students, you may find some of these pieces too difficult to use at the beginning of the year. Instead, focus on the pieces that have a lower reading level. This book is set up to help your students be successful and fluent readers. Instead of just reading the text once and moving on, the students practice and reread the pieces in preparation for authentic presentations. That way, not only does their fluency grow through careful repetition, but as the class discusses the pieces, the students' comprehension improves as well.

Side Trips

In addition to the regular fluency lessons, scattered throughout this book are optional Side Trips—opportunities for students to read more, learn more, or apply a variety of thinking skills to tasks related to the topics. These are intended to supplement and extend the lessons.

Presentations

One of the most important aspects of these lessons are the presentation pieces. The author and editors of this book have tried to provide you with plenty of ideas. If the idea suggested for a certain piece will not work for your classroom situation, flip through the book and look for other suggestions that might be suitable. The key is that you have the students practice reading the pieces for authentic reasons. If the end presentations are always just to their own classes, students will quickly lose interest. Once they have lost interest in the performance, they will not work as hard at perfecting their fluency. You will not see much growth in your students if they feel that all their practice is for nothing.

Instead, be creative and fun as you plan these presentations. Invite different guests, such as parents or administrators in to watch the presentations. Performing for other classes will give students the experiences that they need. Other classes make great audiences if the content is something they are also studying.

How to Use This Product *(cont.)*

Presentations *(cont.)*

If you have a hard time finding people to whom your class can present, try to tie the presentations into celebrations or holidays. Some possible times to hold presentations might include Presidents' Day, the beginning of spring, Memorial Day, Flag Day, the first day of summer, Father's Day, Labor Day, the beginning of autumn, Thanksgiving, and the first day of winter. Do not forget about celebrations that take place over whole months. Some of these include Black History Month, American Indian Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and Women's History Month.

Finally, try to tie your presentations into schoolwide events. For example, you could have your students add to the school's morning announcements. Or, you could present one of the selections as part of a multicultural celebration, literacy day, or arts festival. Consider teaming with other teachers or grade levels to hold a Poetry Celebration or Storytellers Celebration. Remember, your students' fluency will only improve if you make the performances important and authentic.

Reader's Theater

Throughout the lessons in this book, you will find numerous reader's theater scripts. This is an exciting and easy method of providing students with the opportunity to practice fluency leading to a performance. Because reader's theater minimizes the use of props, sets, costumes, and memorization, it is an easy way to present a play in the classroom. Students read from a book or prepared script using their voices to bring text to life. Reader's theater has the following characteristics:

1. The script is always read and never memorized.
2. Readers may be characters or narrators, or they may switch back and forth.
3. The readers may sit, stand, or do both, but they do not have to perform any other actions.
4. Readers use only eye contact, facial expressions, and vocal expression to express emotion.
5. Scripts may be from books, songs, poems, letters, etc. They can be performed directly from the original material or adapted specifically for the reader's theater performance.
6. Musical accompaniment or soundtracks may be used but are not necessary.
7. Very simple props may be used, especially with younger children, to help the audience identify the roles played by the readers.
8. Practice for the reader's theater should consist of coached repeated readings that lead to a smooth, fluent presentation.

How to Use This Product (cont.)

Introduction to Teaching Fluency

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski
Kent State University

Why This Book?

This book was developed in response to the need we have heard from teachers for good texts for teaching reading fluency within the content areas. Within the past several years, reading fluency has become recognized as an essential element in elementary and middle grade reading programs (National Reading Panel, 2001). Readers who are fluent are better able to comprehend what they read—they decode words so effortlessly that they can devote their cognitive resources to the all-important task of comprehension instead of bogging themselves down in working to decode words they confront in their reading. They can also construct meaning (comprehension) by reading with appropriate expression and phrasing.

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The texts in this book are meant to be read, reread, and performed. If students do this, they will develop as fluent readers, improving their ability to recognize words accurately and effortlessly, and reading with meaningful expression and phrasing. However, you, the teachers, are the most important part in developing instruction that uses these texts. In this section, we recommend ways in which you can use the texts with your students.

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Introduction Written by Dr. Timothy Rasinski

- In a survey conducted by the National Reading Panel, fluency was determined to be one of the five research-based components of reading. Dr. Timothy Rasinski from Kent State University is an expert on teaching students to become fluent readers. His book *The Fluent Reader* is an excellent resource of oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension.

How to Use This Book

- Dr. Rasinski's introduction contains important information and ideas of how to use this book with your readers.

Objective

- A fluency objective is included for each lesson. This objective tells you which fluency strategy will be practiced within the lesson. See pages 13–14 for descriptions of the fluency strategies used within this book.

Fluency Suggestions and Activities

- These steps in the lesson plan describe how to introduce the piece to your students. Suggestions for ways to practice and perform the piece are also provided for your use. Remember that authentic performances are very important to ensure successful fluency for your readers.

Ancient Rome Lesson Plans

"The Coliseum" by Edgar Allan Poe

Baltimore Saturday Visitor, October 26, 1835

Objective

- ✓ Students will participate in a "line-a-child" choral reading activity to practice and perform reading a poem fluently, with emphasis on natural flow.

Preparation

- ✓ Make copies of *Reading Verse: "The Coliseum"* (page 138), *Using Synonyms to Simplify* (page 139), and *"Chunking" for Fluency* (page 140) for each student.
- ✓ For optional use, copy *"The Coliseum" by Edgar Allan Poe* (page 137) for students and/or the audience.

Fluency Suggestions and Activities

✓ Help students analyze the text and read with comprehension and fluency; present the historical background and practice the vocabulary on the following page before studying the fluency activity.

1. Distribute copies of *Reading Verse: "The Coliseum"* (page 138). Tell students that the stanzas at the top of the page are two out of six that make up the entire poem. (Poe's writing is challenging; therefore students are being asked to handle only two of the stanzas.) Ask students to follow along as you read the stanzas aloud. For the first time, read line by line, pausing slightly at the end of each line. Ask students if it was easy to understand. You will likely observe many puzzled looks.
2. Next read aloud the middle section of the page, which explains a trick for reading verse—chunking. Tell students that chunking means grouping parts of text into phrases that contain complete ideas. Have students look at the "chunked" rewrite of the stanzas at the bottom of the page, where they have been separated into ideas rather than lines. For the second reading, direct students to listen as you read the chunks. Ask them if their understanding of the poem improved. Finally, for the third reading, have students look back up at the poem written in lines. Have students follow along as you read the poem again, but this time in chunks.
3. Ask for volunteers or assign reading parts by chunks rather than by lines or stanzas. Have the selected students highlight their assigned chunks. Direct students to practice reading their parts using the chunks at the bottom. Then have them underline or highlight their chunk—no more and no less—in the stanzas at the top. Tell them to practice again reading from the poem but chunking the ideas.
4. Let students invite parents or other guests to the presentation of the poem. Explain that it will be done in Reading Relay form. This means everyone must be alert and ready to read their chunks when it is their turn. For practice, supply a small object to pass to the next person as a signal to read—just like a baton in a relay race.

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Ancient Rome Lesson Plans

"The Coliseum" by Edgar Allan Poe (cont.)

History Connection

The Colosseum (also known as the Coliseum) is Rome's most famous and still-standing wonder. Its construction began under Emperor Vespasian in A.D. 72 and was completed by his son, Titus, in the 80s. The Colosseum was huge. The base took up the equivalent of six acres and could hold the whole population of a town—as many as 50,000 people—much like our football stadiums now. It was used for entertainment, which at that time was primarily gladiatorial combat. The citizens would sometimes spend the whole day there watching sports, which usually involved fighting to the death. The emperor had his own entrance and his own private box seat. The building was designed to handle crowds efficiently. With many exits, the entire audience could empty the building in a matter of minutes. The Colosseum was in continual use until A.D. 217, when it was damaged by fire after being struck by lightning.

Far from Rome in time and distance—the late 1800s in Baltimore, Maryland—a writer, literary critic, and accomplished poet named Edgar Allan Poe wrote a poem about his impressions of the ruins of the Roman Colosseum. Rather than a description of the building, Poe's words capture the feeling of what it once was and is now. One thing is more: Poe includes a line referring to the ivory coach on which Caesar sat, but this was how he was imagining the past, not how it really was, because the Colosseum was built after Julius Caesar's death in 44 A.C.

Vocabulary Connection

Reading in verse can be challenging in itself, but even more so when there are unfamiliar terms. It is helpful to skim the piece first to identify possible words that may cause confusion. For the two verses selected for this activity, 17 words have been identified as potentially troublesome. One approach to reducing the confusion is to simplify these words with synonyms. Give students *Using Synonyms to Simplify* (page 139). Here students will see the terms highlighted in the context of the verse and then choose appropriate synonyms for the selected words. You may want to complete this page as a class before reading the poem aloud.

Answer Key (page 139): 1. old 2. shine 3. noble 4. thought 5. display 6. journey 7. stories 8. you 9. changed 10. your 11. magnificence 12. watch 13. shadowy 14. grass 15. weed 16. sat 17. make

Extension Ideas

- Invite students to write a poem or description of the Coliseum, or of another place that elicits a feeling of awe for them.
- Challenge your advanced readers to check out some of Edgar Allan Poe's other poetry, such as his classics "The Raven" or "The Bells."

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History Connection

- Each text in this book relates to world cultures. Information in each lesson gives you the historical context of the people and places of the time period.

Vocabulary Connection

- Vocabulary words have been chosen and defined for your use. Introduce the words to your students and have them define the words or simply record the definitions on the board for student reference.

Extension Ideas

- Extension ideas are given for each lesson. These ideas are usually fun, challenging, and interesting.

How to Use This Product (cont.)

Primary Sources

- For each lesson, a copy of at least one primary source is provided. These texts are ideal for developing an understanding of world cultures through time. The teacher can make copies of this page, or use it to create an overhead transparency.

Ancient Rome *Reproducibles*

Name _____

“The Coliseum” by Edgar Allan Poe

As it appeared in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*, October 26, 1833

Lone amphitheatre! Grey Coliseum!
Type of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!
At length, at length—after so many days
Of weary pilgrimage, and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of love that in thee lie.)
I kneel, an altered, and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory.

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls;
Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,
A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat;
Here, where the dames of Rome their yellow hair
Way’d to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle.
Here, where on ivory couch the Caesar sate,
On bed of moss lies glowing the foul adder.
—Edgar Allan Poe, 1833

Here, where on golden throne the monarch loft’d,
Gleesd spectre-like unto his marble home,
Lit by the wan light of the horned moon,
The swift and silent lizard of the stones.

These crumbling walls; these lettering acadies,
These mouldering phrens; these sad, and blackest
shafts;
These vague entablatures; this broken floor;
These shattered cornices; this wreck; this ruin;
These stones, alas!—these grey stones—are they all;
All of the great and the colossal left
By the corvive hours to fete and morn’?

“Not all,”—the echoes answer me; “not all;
Prophetic sounds, and loud, arise forever
From us, and from all rain, unto the sea,
As in old days from Mammon to the sun.
We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule
With a despotic sway all giant minds.
We are not dead!—we patric stones,
Not all our power is gone; not all our Fame;
Not all the magic of our high renown;
Not all the wonders that encircle us;
Not all the mysteries that in us lie;
Not all the memories that hang upon,
And cling around about us now and ever,
And clothe us in a robe of more than glory.”



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Fluency Texts

- The fluency texts provided are designed to be read and reread to promote fluency. The texts differ in strategy, but most are designed for students to work together in small groups or as a whole class. There are also reader’s theater scripts for the students to perform.

Ancient Rome *Reproducibles*

Name _____

Reading Verse: “The Coliseum”

Selected stanzas from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Coliseum”

(Stanza 1)
Lone amphitheatre! Grey Coliseum!
Type of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!
At length, at length—after so many days
Of weary pilgrimage, and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of love that in thee lie.)
I kneel, an altered, and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory.

(Stanza 3)
Here, where a hero fell, a column falls;
Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,
A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat;
Here, where the dames of Rome their yellow hair
Way’d to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle.
Here, where on ivory couch the Caesar sate,
On bed of moss lies glowing the foul adder.
—Edgar Allan Poe, 1833

The trick to reading verse is to ignore the individual line breaks and instead read the poem in meaningful chunks that sound natural. Here are the two verses rewritten in natural chunks. Try reading the verses this way to see how they make more sense. Your teacher will assign individual students chunks to practice and then perform later in a Reading Relay form. This is like relay tag, only with reading! If you are assigned a chunk (C1–C7), highlight your part below.

C1: Lone amphitheatre!
C2: Grey Coliseum!
C3: Type of the antique Rome!
C4: Rich reliquary of lofty contemplation left to Time by buried centuries of pomp and power!
C5: At length, at length—after so many days of weary pilgrimage, and burning thirst, (thirst for the springs of love that in thee lie.) I kneel—an altered and an humble man—amid thy shadows, and so drink within my very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory.
C6: Here, where a hero fell, a column falls.
C7: Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold, a midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat.
C8: Here, where the dames of Rome their yellow hair way’d to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle.
C9: Here, where on ivory couch the Caesar sate on bed of moss, lies glowing the foul adder.

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Fluency Evaluations

- At the end of some lessons, there are Fluency Evaluations. Students can listen to a tape-recording of their performance and complete the forms. This is a great way for students to evaluate their own fluency.

China and Confucianism *Reproducibles*

Student Name _____

Fluency Evaluation

Passage: _____

Smooth Reading: _____

Reading Rates: _____

Accuracy: _____

Expression: _____

Student’s Comments: _____

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Fluency Strategy Descriptions

Below are brief descriptions of the fluency strategies taught through the lessons in this book. These descriptions provide teachers with basic information about the strategies before beginning the lessons.

Antiphonal Reading/Divided Reading

In this version of choral reading, the text is divided, and assigned sections are read by students or groups of students.

Call and Response/Refrain

Call and response is a type of choral reading. One student reads a portion, and then the class or a group responds by reading the next portion in unison. When the response portion is repetition of the same text, it is called a refrain.

Choral Reading

In choral reading, groups of students read the same text aloud together, rather than single students reading while the others just listen. This engages students in the reading and increases reading time by all students.

Cumulative Choral Reading

In this strategy, a single student begins reading. Then others join in along the way, so that by the end everyone is reading in unison. This can also be done in reverse.

General Oral Reading/Supported Reading

Here, the focus is just on engaging students to read aloud, with or without extra support.

Oral Preview

Oral preview involves having students hear how the text should sound when reading fluently, before they attempt to read it themselves. This strategy is especially helpful for students who are English Language Learners or who need more support. It is used in conjunction with other strategies.

Paired Reading/Dialogue

These strategies involve two readers sharing the presentation of the text. In paired reading, this can be two students, a student and an adult, a student and an older student, or a student and teacher. In its pure form, this strategy involves pairing a more proficient reader with a less proficient one, so that the stronger one can support the other.

Poem for Two Voices

A poem, verse, or song is divided to be read orally by two voices. Those voices can be individuals or groups. Some lines or parts may be read in unison.

Fluency Strategy Descriptions (cont.)

Radio Reading

The twist in this strategy is to have students read orally as if on the radio. Providing props, such as microphones, increases the students' awareness of their tone, diction, volume, etc. Radio reading can be done by individuals, pairs, or groups.

Reader's Theater

With this method, the text is read in the form of a script. It is like a play, but with some important differences. Although the students practice for the performance, they read their lines, instead of memorizing them. There may be simple props, but there are no costumes, sets, or action. The script may have a few parts, many parts, and even parts read by all participants.

Repeated Reading

Rather than being called upon to orally read unfamiliar text, repeated reading gives students chance to get to know the text before being asked to perform it. The opportunity to practice increases both willingness and proficiency with regard to oral reading. This method is incorporated into all of the lessons in this book.

Fluency Strategy Chart

Lesson Title	Choral Reading					General Oral Reading/Supported Reading	Reader's Theater	Repeated Reading
	Call and Response/Cumulative Reading	Antiphonal and Divided Reading/Refrain	Radio Reading/Oral Preview	Poem for Two or More Voices	Paired Reading/Dialogue			
Mesopotamia/Babylonia								
A Sumerian Poem		X						X
A Description of Mesopotamia					X			X
The Code of Hammurabi	X				X	X		X
Ten Babylonian Proverbs						X		X
Side Trip: Seven Wonders of the Ancient World			X					X
Ancient Egypt								
The Shipwrecked Sailor							X	X
Hymn to the Nile	X							X
Side Trip: History of Plumbing in Egypt						X		X
Herodotus's Description of Mummification						X		X
Exodus from Egypt	X							X
Ancient Greece								
Ancient Greek Olympics							X	X
Aesop's Fables						X		X
Plato and Socrates					X			X
Alexander the Great							X	X
Side Trip: Homer and the <i>Odyssey</i>				X				X
India, Hinduism, and Buddhism								
Arrian's Description of India			X			X		X
Side Trip: Reflection on Society					X			X
One Law There Is	X							X
Buddha and His Teachings		X						X
Tales from Ancient India						X		X

Fluency Strategy Chart *(cont.)*

Material for Student Reading	Choral Reading					General Oral Reading/Supported Reading	Reader's Theater	Repeated Reading
	Call and Response/Cumulative Reading	Antiphonal and Divided Reading/Refrain	Radio Reading/Oral Preview	Poem for Two or More Voices	Paired Reading/Dialogue			
China and Confucianism								
San Zi Jing (Three Character Classic)								x
Side Trip: Lun Yu—The Analects of Confucius						x		x
Marco Polo's City of Heaven		x			x			x
An Old Chinese Poem				x				x
Side Trip: When I Went to School in China						x		x
Side Trip: Try Your Hand at Chinese								
Ancient Rome								
Julius Caesar	x	x						x
"The Coliseum" by Edgar Allan Poe				x				x
The Last Day of Pompeii							x	x
Sub-Saharan Africa								
Ibn Battuta's Travels to Mali			x					x
I Was Taken from My Village and Sold!						x		x
The Magic Flyswatter: A Hero Tale of the Congo							x	x
The Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs								
The Mystery of the Mayas					x	x		x
Side Trip: The Mayan Numeral System								
The Incas of Peru		x						x
Sacred Songs of the Aztec	x			x				
Side Trip 1: Legends of Foundation of Mexico								
Side Trip 2: Before and After the Conquest								x

A Sumerian Poem

Objective

- ✓ Students will participate in a cooperative choral reading activity that focuses on mood and tone in order to enhance expressive reading skills.

Preparation

- ✓ Makes copies of the world map (pages 188–189) for each student.
- ✓ Make a transparency of *A Sumerian Poem for Divided Reading* (page 19).
- ✓ Copy *A Sumerian Poem for Divided Reading* (page 19) and *Checking Out* (page 20) for each student.

Fluency Suggestions and Activities

To help students analyze the text and read with comprehension and fluency, present the historical background and preteach the vocabulary on the following page before starting the fluency activity.

1. Ask students to locate Iraq on their maps. Tell them to help each other until everyone finds it. Next, have students find the location of Mesopotamia, and then specifically Sumer.
2. Project the transparency of the poem. Use a blank sheet of paper to block out all but the first stanza. Ask students to follow along as you read aloud. Be sure to read the poem with appropriate expression and fluency. Follow by asking students to comment on the mood and content of the text. Ask what clues the author gives about the cause of his feelings and which words set the tone. Continue in this same manner, demonstrating fluent reading and discussing the remaining stanzas.
3. When the entire poem has been read once and appears in its entirety on the screen, ask a volunteer to reread aloud the first stanza, but make it sound happy. Ask another student to read the second stanza as if a robot were reciting it. Continue through in this manner with each stanza being read in a different style.
4. Have the poem read aloud a third time with volunteers using the correct expression and pausing. Finally, for the fourth reading ask students to reread the whole poem in “silent voice,” which means hearing themselves read it aloud in their heads.
5. Distribute copies of *Checking Out* (page 20). Have students complete it to self-check their comprehension of the poem. Note: If they answer all the questions correctly, students will get the answer, “The dude was dying.”
6. Distribute copies of *A Sumerian Poem for Divided Reading* (page 19). Divide the class into six groups and assign each group a stanza. Then direct students to practice reading their stanzas until they can read them aloud fluently. Tell them to prepare for a presentation in which they read their stanzas in unison or take turns reading one line each.
7. On presentation day, ask one of your students to act out the role of the writer and pantomime the feelings and emotions expressed as the stanzas are read. If you like, invite the student to be wrapped in a white sheet and reclining while the poem is read.

A Sumerian Poem (cont.)

History Connection

Mesopotamia is a term used to describe a large area of fertile valleys lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Here, “between the rivers,” sprang up some of the earliest civilizations. Today it is the country of Iraq. In the south of this region, in what is now parts of Kuwait and northern Saudi Arabia, a unique group of people thrived for more than 1,000 years. They lived in city-states. They had organized government and laws. They had human monarchs (kings) and spiritual deities (gods and goddesses). The area was called Sumer and the people, Sumerians. Perhaps most interesting of all, Sumerians developed a language unlike any other known to modern historians. Today the Sumerian language is preserved only on clay tablets written in cuneiform, which is a system of wedge-like strokes made with a reed. It resembles Egyptian hieroglyphics, but it is more abstract than picture writing. When the Assyrians and Babylonians later dominated the region, an alphabet based on syllables was developed. Cuneiform became extinct.

“Ludlul Bêl Nimeqi” was written on clay tablets in cuneiform in 1700 B.C. The poem contained at least 64 stanzas by an official of Nippur, the religious capital of Sumer. The author’s Sumerian name is Laluralim. He may have been one of the early kings of the region. Though 3,700 years old, the poem’s subject is one that is just as relevant and emotional today—the fear and helplessness of knowing one’s death is imminent.

Vocabulary Connection

Discuss unfamiliar vocabulary encountered in the text. Begin with these and then add any others you feel need to be reviewed or introduced. Discuss the words’ meanings and how they are used specifically in the context of the source.

- **uprightness**—moral and honorable behavior
- **oracle**—message believed to come from a god; prophecy
- **libation**—liquid, such as oil or wine, poured as a religious offering
- **seer, diviner**—someone who is able to see or predict the future
- **necromancer**—someone who communicates with the dead to influence the future
- **conjuror**—one who practices magic
- **transfixed**—immobilized by shock; pierced through with a weapon or object
- **asunder**—into parts or pieces

Extension Ideas

- Have students work individually or in pairs to rewrite one of the poem’s stanzas in simpler, modern language. Example: (Line 1) *I advanced in life, I attained to the allotted span: I got old and was running out of time . . .*
- The poem is untitled. Ask students to come up with a good title for it.

Name _____

A Sumerian Poem for Divided Reading

Excerpts from “Ludlul Bêl Nimeqi” (1700 B.C.)

By an official of Nippur who may have been an early king of Sumer

- R1:** I advanced in life, I attained to the allotted span
Wherever I turned there was evil, evil—
Oppression is increased, uprightness I see not.
I cried unto god, but he showed not his face.
- R2:** I prayed to my goddess, but she raised not her head.
The seer by his oracle did not discern the future
Nor did the enchanter with a libation illuminate my case
I consulted the necromancer, but he opened not my understanding.
The conjurer with his charms did not remove my ban.
- R3:** How deeds are reversed in the world!
I look behind, oppression encloses me
Like one who the sacrifice to god did not bring
And at meal-time did not invoke the goddess
Did not bow down his face, his offering was not seen;
- R4:** What in one's heart is contemptible, to one's god is good!
Who can understand the thoughts of the gods in heaven?
The counsel of god is full of destruction; who can understand?
Where may human beings learn the ways of God?
He who lives at evening is dead in the morning;
- R5:** With a whip he has beaten me; there is no protection;
With a staff he has transfixed me; the stench was terrible!
All day long the pursuer pursues me,
In the night watches he lets me breathe not a moment
Through torture my joints are torn asunder;
- R6:** The diviner has not improved the condition of my sickness—
The duration of my illness the seer could not state;
The god helped me not, my hand he took not;
The goddess pitied me not, she came not to my side
The coffin yawned; my heirs took my possessions.