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Grade

4

Building Fluency

Through Practice & Performance

Written and Compiled by
Timothy Rasinski and Lorraine Griffith

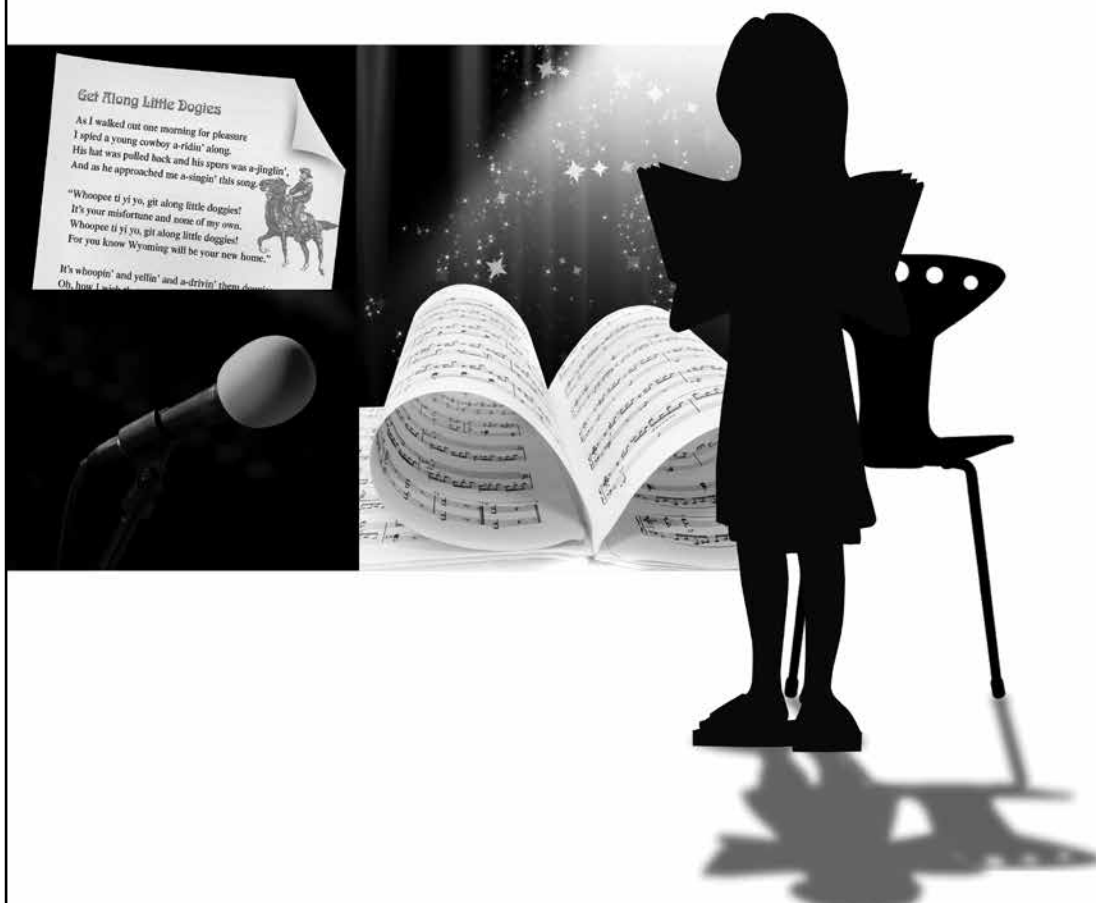


- Poems
- Songs
- Reader's Theater
- Monologues
- And more . . .

Grade 4

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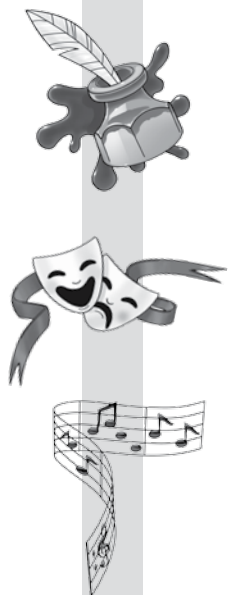
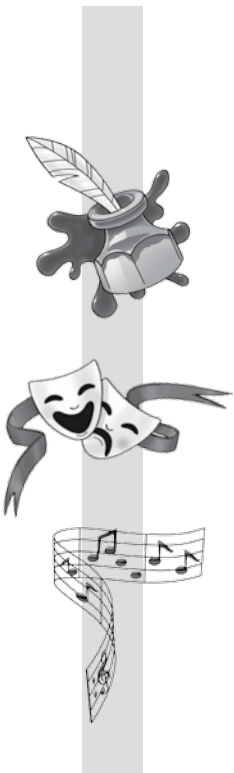


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Foreword

By Timothy Rasinski

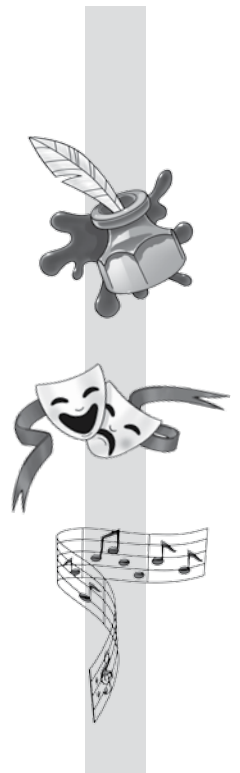
We are so glad you have chosen this book. As an elementary teacher or a teacher working with children who struggle to learn, reading is central to your curriculum. This book provides you with a wealth of materials for developing a key but often neglected aspect of the elementary reading curriculum—reading fluency. This book also gives you the materials to make reading a fun, engaging, varied, and authentic activity for your students.

Fluency consists of two critical components: automaticity in word recognition and expressive or prosodic reading (Rasinski 2003). Automaticity refers to the ability to read words in text so effortlessly that readers can direct their limited cognitive resources away from word recognition and use those resources for what really matters in reading—making meaning or comprehension. Expressive or prosodic reading refers to the melodic part of reading in which the readers create meaning with their voices (in silent or oral reading). The meaning in a text is not only carried by the words, but also by the way in which the words are read—with expression, appropriate phrasing and varied pace, emphasis on particular words, through dramatic pauses, and more.

In most current fluency programs, automaticity is the primary aim (Rasinski 2006). Readers are asked to repeatedly read a great deal of informational text with the emphasis on reading it quickly because reading rate is a measure of automaticity. Prosodic reading is generally given second-tier status at best in such programs. Informational text does not lend itself easily to expressive reading, and reading a text quickly does not allow much opportunity for students to work using expression while reading.

Our approach to fluency, the one deeply embedded in this book, acknowledges that guided repeated reading, or rehearsal, is key to the development of automaticity. However, the aim of rehearsal should not only be speed (reading rate will increase through practice with or without explicit instruction in or emphasis on speed-reading); rather, the emphasis of the rehearsal is to bring the author's voice to life. This is prosody or expressive reading. In order to do this, you need texts that have a strong sense of voice. That is what this book consists of—passages of a variety of genres that have voice and are meant to be read orally, usually performed for an audience. To deliver a satisfying performance, readers need to read with accuracy, automaticity, and meaningful expression.

This book is, at its core, a collection of poems, songs, scripts, and other materials appropriate for young readers that tend to be strongly connected to our cultural heritage. Thus, the materials in this book offer you a wonderful opportunity to develop the cultural literacy and cultural appreciation that define who we are as an English-speaking people. Moreover, the diversity of genres in this book, going beyond the narratives and informational texts that currently tend to dominate elementary reading curricula, provides you with a much richer and varied palette of texts from which to create your overall reading program (Rasinski, in press).

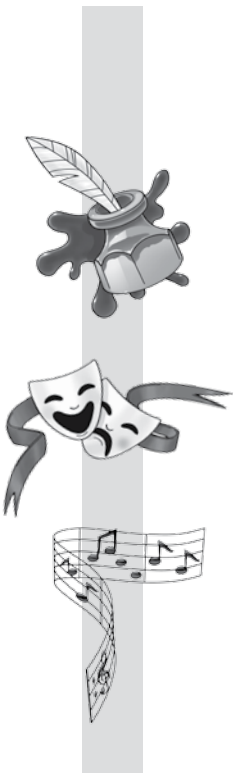


Foreword (cont.)

We provide suggestions in the following section on how to use the passages in the book. However, the actual use of this wonderful material is really up to you. We suggest that you select passages that are relevant to what you may be studying or that are related to current events or dates. Assign selections to individuals or groups of students. Feel free to assign the same passage to more than one individual or group. Allow students to practice or rehearse the passages, with a focus on reading the selection orally with appropriate expression and meaning. Given the importance of repeated readings, we feel that the rehearsal time should take several days. While students rehearse, be sure to model expressive reading, listen, provide formative feedback and encouragement to students, and arrange a time for students to perform their selections to the rest of the class or another audience.

The guided or reading practice that is part of the rehearsal process is essential to students' reading development. Research has shown that guided rehearsal leads to substantial improvements in students' reading fluency and comprehension (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler 2002; Dowhower 1987, 1994; Kuhn & Stahl 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman 2003; Samuels 1979). With *Building Fluency Through Practice and Performance*, students are exposed to authentic and meaningful material, and they have the chance to perform for an authentic audience. Through this process, students learn greater content, appreciate genres beyond narration (stories) and exposition (informational texts), and develop a sense of confidence in themselves as readers and learners that is essential to their ultimate success in school and in life (Griffith & Rainski 2004).

This book provides you with a way to make learning to read authentic and engaging for your students and yourself. Perhaps you can remember reciting poetry, singing songs, putting on plays, and giving other oral performances from your own school experience. You may not have realized that all the fun you were having was also helping to develop your reading ability! Have fun with reading. Appreciate this wonderful language of ours—a language that often needs to be practiced, performed, and heard to be fully appreciated.



Introduction

How to Use This Book

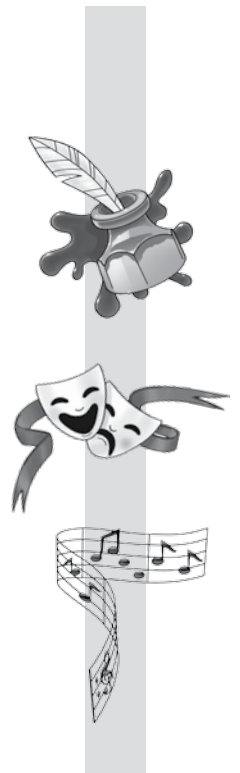
The texts in this book are engaging and enjoyable. Students will want to read, reread, and perform these texts. As they do, they will develop into fluent readers, improving their abilities to recognize words accurately and effortlessly, and read with meaningful expression and phrasing. However, you, the teacher, are the most important part in developing instruction that includes these texts.

The texts need to be read repeatedly or rehearsed over several days. Introduce one text at a time and practice it over two to five days, depending on how quickly your students develop fluent mastery. Write the text you are going to teach on chart paper or project it on an overhead transparency or in a *PowerPoint* presentation. Read the text with your students several times a day. Read it at the beginning of each day; read it during various breaks in the day; and read it at the end of each day. Encourage the students to read, rehearse, and perform their passages in a variety of ways—solos, duos, trios, quartets, whole group, choral, alternating lines, and more.

Make two copies of the text for each student. Have the students keep one copy at school in a “fluency folder.” The other copy can be sent home with the students so that they can continue practicing the text with their families. Communicate to families the importance of repeated practice at school and at home.

The various sections (Poems and Rhymes, Song Lyrics, Monologues, and Reader’s Theater) are not presented in reading-level order. However, the pieces within each section have been sequenced from easiest to most difficult. We encourage you to stretch your students by challenging them to read passages that may seem difficult for them on initial reading. Students can often handle material that is more challenging if they have the opportunity to rehearse the passage and be guided in their rehearsal by you and other students in the class.

It is important to note, as you select texts from this book, that many traditional versions of texts have been altered and appear in various forms. The version in this book may not have the exact wording with which you are familiar. In this case, enjoy the exposure to another version of the traditional text, or feel free to type the words to the version you know, and allow your students to perform that version.



Introduction (cont.)

Modeling Fluent Reading

Before asking your students to read a text, especially a difficult passage, read it to them and ask them to follow along silently on their copies. Ask them to listen to the way in which you use your voice to add meaning to the text. For those passages that require more than one reader, ask a fellow teacher, the school principal, an aide, a parent, or another student or students to take on the other parts of the passage.

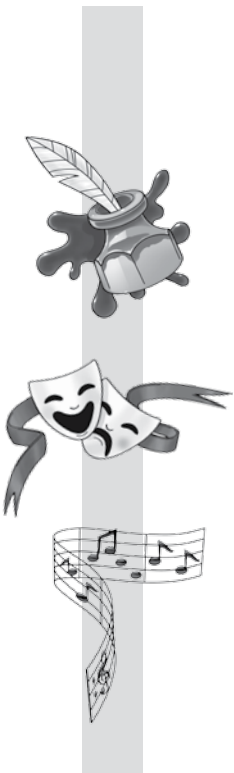
It is critical that students develop the idea that fluency is reading with expression and meaning—not just reading fast. The most powerful way to instill this idea in students is to have them hear fluent readings by their teacher and other readers. After the readings, talk with your students about how you added to the meaning of the passage with your voice—getting louder or softer, raising and lowering your voice, reading slower and faster in various parts of the text, emphasizing words and phrases, and taking dramatic pauses.

For the fun of it, occasionally read a passage to your students disfluently—too fast, too slow, without expression, without phrasing, etc. It will not be long before students beg you to stop reading in that fashion. At that point, discuss with them what was wrong with the reading—even though you may not have made many errors, your lack of expression or fluency made for a less than satisfying reading of the text.

Coaching Your Students

Provide positive feedback as your students practice reading the target text each week: alone, in small groups, or as an entire class. Through oral interpretation of a text, readers can express joy, sadness, anger, surprise, or any variety of emotions.

Help students learn to convey emotion and meaning in their oral reading. You can do this by occasionally listening to 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, give lavish praise for students' best efforts to convey meaning through their reading. Although it may take a while for students to develop this sense of “voice” in their readings, in the long run it will lead to more engaged and fluent readings and higher levels of comprehension.



Introduction (cont.)

Word Study

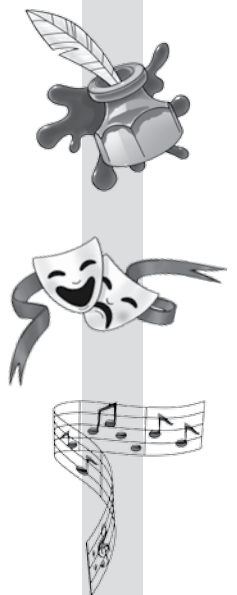
Although the aim of the fluency texts in this book is to develop fluent and meaningful oral reading of texts, practicing the passages also provides opportunities to develop students' vocabulary and word-decoding skills.

After reading a passage several times, ask the students to choose words from the passage that they think are interesting or that match a specific set of criteria you set forth, such as rhymes with *at* or *and*, sight words, or challenging but interesting words. Put these words on a word wall to which four to five new words are added daily, and ask the students to add them to their personal word banks. Talk about the meaning of each word and its spelling construction. Help the students to develop a deepened appreciation for these words, and encourage them to use them in their speech and writing. You might, for example, ask the students to use some of the chosen words in their daily journal entries. You could request that they create a silly sentence using some of the words. Most importantly, practice reading and chanting the words on the word wall several times each day.

Once a list of words has been added to your classroom word wall or students' word banks, play games with the words. A perennial favorite is Word Bingo. Give the students a card with a grid of 3 x 3, 4 x 4, or 5 x 5 boxes. In each box, the students randomly write a word from the word wall or bank. Then, you call out definitions of these words or sentences that contain the target words. The students must find the words on their cards and cover them with a marker. Once a student has covered a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line of words, he or she calls "Bingo" and wins the game. You can then stop the game or continue play until everyone has achieved the goal.

Have the students sort the words by different parameters such as number of syllables, parts of speech, phonics features such as long vowel sound or a consonant blend, or by meaning (such as words that express how a person can feel and words that do not). Through sorting and categorizing activities, students get repeated exposure to words and analyze them in different ways.

Help students expand their vocabularies with extended word-family instruction. Choose a word from the text, like *hat*, and brainstorm with students other words that belong to the same word family (e.g., *rat*, *bat*, *scat*, *cattle*, *chatter*). Once a list of family words is chosen, have students create short poems using the rhyming words. The poems can be used for further practice and performance. No matter how you do it, make the opportunity to examine select words from these fluency passages part of your regular instructional routine. The time spent in word study will be time well spent.



Introduction (cont.)

Inflection and Expression, Not Memorization

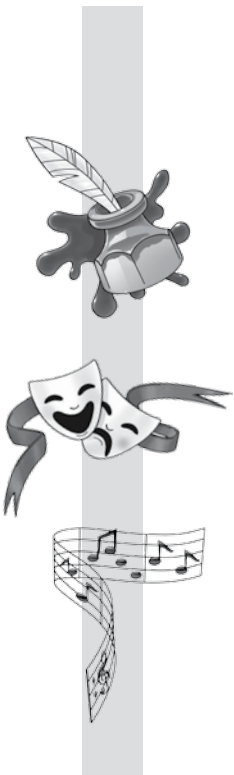
After several days of practice, arrange a special time of day for students to perform the texts. This performance time can range from five minutes to 30 minutes, depending on the number of texts to be read. Find a special person to listen to your students perform. You may also want to invite a neighboring class, parents, school personnel, senior citizens, or another group to come to your room to listen to your students read. Have the children perform the selected text as a group. Later, you can have individuals or groups of children perform the text again.

As an alternative to having people come to your room to see the performances, you may want to send students to visit other adults and children in the building and perform for them. Principals, school secretaries, and school visitors are great audiences for children's readings.

Tape-recording and videotaping your students' reading is another way to create a performance opportunity.

Regardless of how you accomplish 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 more motivation to want to practice their assigned texts.

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



Introduction (cont.)

Reader's Theater

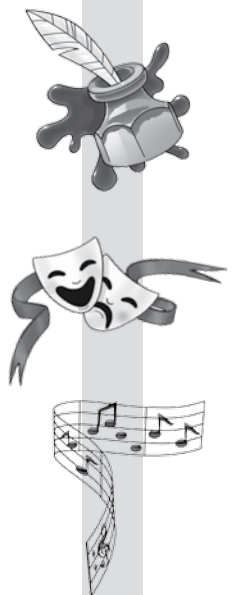
Reader's theater is an exciting and simple method of providing students with an opportunity to practice fluency leading up to a performance. Since reader's theater minimizes the use of props, sets, costumes, and memorization, it is an easy way to present a "play" in the classroom. Students read from scripts, using their voices to bring the texts to life. Practice for reader's theater should consist of guided repeated readings that lead to a smooth, fluent presentation.

In traditional dramas, the audience is ignored as it watches the characters perform. Reader's theater is a communication form that establishes contact with the audience. Reader's theater has the following characteristics:

- The audience has a copy of the passage so that it can follow along silently as the text is read by the performers.
- Readers use only the interpreter's tools to express emotion. These are eye contact, facial expressions, and vocal expression. The emphasis is on the vocal expressiveness.
- The script is always read; it is never memorized.
- Readers may be characters or narrators or switch back and forth into various characters and parts.
- The readers may sit, stand, or do both, but they do not have to perform any other actions.
- 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.
- Musical accompaniment or soundtracks may be used, but they are not necessary.
- Only simple props may be used, especially with younger children, to help the audience identify the parts.

Before assigning a reader's theater, read through all the parts. It will be apparent to you that some of the parts within a script are much easier than others. Assign the parts accordingly. If one part is especially easy, have one of your weakest readers read it to build up confidence. Another good way to support your struggling readers is to have them take a reader's theater role after it has already been performed smoothly several times by readers that are more adept.

Choral reading is an important component of learning to read fluently. Some of the reader's theater scripts call for "boys" and "girls." These parts are to be read orally by the boys as a choral group and the girls as a choral group. This supports the struggling reader by letting him or her see the text and lip-sync until feeling comfortable enough to participate.



Standards Correlations

Shell Educational Publishing is committed to producing educational materials that are research- and standards-based. In this effort we have correlated all of our products to the academic standards of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. You can print a correlation report customized for your state directly from our website at <http://www.shelleducation.com>.

Purpose and Intent of Standards

The No Child Left Behind legislation mandates that all states adopt academic standards that identify the skills students will learn in kindergarten through grade twelve. While many states had already adopted academic standards prior to NCLB, the legislation set requirements to ensure the standards were detailed and comprehensive.

Standards are designed to focus instruction and guide adoption of curricula. Standards are statements that describe the criteria necessary for students to meet specific academic goals. They define the knowledge, skills, and content students should acquire at each level. Standards are also used to develop standardized tests to evaluate students' academic progress.

In many states today, teachers are required to demonstrate how their lessons meet state standards. State standards are used in development of all of our products, so educators can be assured they meet the academic requirements of each state. Complete standards correlation reports for each state can be printed directly from our website as well.

How to Find Standards Correlations

To print a correlation report for this product visit our website at <http://www.shelleducation.com> and follow the on-screen directions. If you require assistance in printing correlation reports, please contact Customer Service at 1-877-777-3450.

Standards

The following standards are addressed as students practice and perform the texts in this book:

Language Arts

Adjusts speed of reading to suit purpose and difficulty of the material

Uses a variety of nonverbal communication skills (e.g., eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, posture)

Uses a variety of verbal communication skills (e.g., projection, tone, volume, rate, articulation, pace, phrasing)

Theater

Uses variations of locomotor and non locomotor movement and vocal pitch, tempo, and tone for different characters

