

How to Read Aloud

- Read aloud as a salesperson: choose several new books from the library and share excerpts from each, so that the youngsters will want to read them on their own.
- Read aloud as a traveller: share stories and information from other cultures, other places, other times. Let readers meet words and expressions from England, Australia, Sri Lanka, and translations from other languages.
- Read aloud as an expert: choose texts that are unfamiliar to the readers, more difficult than they might be able to manage on their own, so that their ear-print continues to be challenged.
- Read aloud as a researcher: use the content of different subjects as resources for sharing excerpts, anecdotes, observations, and reflections from newspapers, articles, and additional resources that you and the students find.
- Read aloud as a bard: chant and sing the poems and ballads of the past and present, and ask the youngsters to join in the refrains.
- Read aloud as a storyteller: retell a story that you know well or want to learn. Freed from the printed text, you can move and gesture, and alter your voice to bring the text alive.
- Read aloud as an actor: choose a role in a script or a readers' theatre selection, and model passionate and energetic voices.
- Read aloud as an editor: select revised and completed writings from the youngsters, practise them, and share them in a public reading, adding significance to their words with your careful reading.
- Read aloud as a lover of print texts: choose things from your own life to read to the kids—a column from the newspaper, bits from a course you're taking, a letter from a friend who lives far away, an excerpt from a book you loved as a child, the picture book you once read to your son or daughter.

Forty years ago I began teaching literature and drama in a school with twenty classes on a rotary system, where one group after another would appear in my classroom every forty minutes—eight classes a day. I found hope and strength in story, stumbling, as it were, into “storying for a living.” To involve students (and to save my life) I began to explore all the ways and means of having the children work with stories. The students were retelling them, reading them aloud, writing from them, dramatizing them, arguing about them, finding other stories like them, other versions, other authors, and telling each other their own personal stories.

The stories came in all shapes and sizes (life stories, novels, tales, home stories, gossip, retellings, legends, picture books, poems, scripts, advertisements). I had not yet acquired much understanding of why storying was so important for children, but it worked in my classroom and so I continued.

Over the years, the understanding of storying has increased dramatically, and now we are able to be selective and adventuresome in handling narrative with young people. Since I moved into working with teachers in both in-service and pre-service courses, story has retained its place at the centre of my work. Now we have dozens of books by informed authorities on why story matters, why we should help children engage in “storying.” As well, we can now find stories of all kinds inside and outside the curriculum.

Educator Wayne Booth says that who we are is best shown by the stories we can tell, and who we can become is best determined by the stories we can learn to tell. The classroom is a village of stories and storymakers. The teacher, as well as the students, belongs to it; we, too, have stories to tell.