CHAPTER 2

Reading Aloud, Independent Reading, and Response in the Classroom

It was Kitten's first full moon. When she saw it, she thought, there's a little bowl of milk in the sky. And she wanted it.

—KEVIN HENKES, *Kitten's First Full Moon* (2004, unpaged)

Not so long ago, before she could even speak words, Trixie went on an errand with her daddy. . . .

—MO WILLEMS, *Knuffle Bunny* (2004, unpaged)

She wasn't always a bad kitty. She used to be a good kitty, until one day. . . .

—NICK BRUEL, *Bad Kitty* (2005, unpaged)

Wabi Sabi was a cat who lived in Kyoto, Japan. One day, visitors from another country asked Wabi Sabi's master what her name meant. It had never occurred to her before that Wabi Sabi was anything more than her name. Wabi Sabi watched as her master drew breath through her teeth, shook her head, and said, "That's hard to explain."

—MARK REIBSTEIN, *Wabi Sabi* (2008, unpaged)

"Cluck, cluck," the thing rumbled in a deep voice. "Is that thing talking to us?" said Fred. I looked around the small playground. Fred, Sam, and I stood at one end against a chain-link fence. A very large, white, feathered thing stood next to the swing set at the other end. It had yellow, scaly legs as big as baseball bats, little red eyes, and a dog collar.

—JON SCIESZKA, *Summer Reading Is Killing Me* (1998, 73 pages)

If an experienced reader had read you any of these opening sentences from books, how could you not want to continue? Would it be possible not to encourage the reader to keep reading to discover what Kitten learns about the moon, or what happens on Trixie's errand, or why the kitten is bad, or what Wabi Sabi means, or what really is on the playground? Even as an adult I am drawn into these books just through their

opening sentences. I know that children will want the reader to continue, not being satisfied until the end is reached.

This wanting to hear more is the magic that comes from reading aloud to students. Students have the opportunity to imagine a wealth of experiences through the support of a more experienced reader. And some very fortunate children are able to share in an enchanted reading moment where "the story is read aloud, but unfettered by anything before, during, or after that resembles a skills or strategy lesson" (Cooper, 2009, p. 178). Cooper writes further that perhaps the strength of the read-aloud, when not connected to a comprehension strategy, has attracted little attention because its direct relationship to comprehension has not been evident in current research. She further hypothesizes that read-alouds have drifted from classrooms because universities are cutting children's literature classes, where teachers and future teachers learn about the value of the read-aloud as they learn about children's books.

As a teacher, even if you are convinced that reading aloud is important to students, you are most likely preoccupied by the expectations for children to develop reading competencies (visit any state standard list to view the numerous expectations) and the dismal awareness that there is little time for reading aloud in today's assessment-driven classrooms. Because of these dominant worries, I first discuss ways to find opportunities for reading aloud and independent reading before delving into the benefits of reading aloud and independent reading. I doubt that you would care about the benefits if you believe you don't have time for these reading activities. For this planning, I ask you to write down your daily schedule and to think about daily block transitions and activities that students might accomplish independently, like writing in a journal.

I based this planning on a typical elementary schoolday that starts at 9:00 A.M. and ends at 3:00 P.M. I assumed that most teachers have a mandated 90-minute literacy block, a writing block, literacy intervention time, a math block, a science and social studies block, and specials. Because districts and states vary on special classes, I planned one half-hour daily block for these. In some classrooms, teachers may have an hour of special classes one day and no special class the next. In others, teachers only have music and technology specials or art and physical education or some other combination of specials. I also planned 45 minutes for lunch and one 15-minute recess. As you go over the schedule template in Figure 2.1, think about your own circumstances and revise accordingly. The goal of this exercise is to find time for a read-aloud and independent reading. Read-alouds require a separate block of time, whereas independent reading can be a part of other literacy blocks, as an activity completed while the teacher works with small groups of students.

In this simple example, 15 minutes were found for a stand-alone, daily read-aloud. What is important is that the period repeats at the same time each day so that students understand and are prepared for this routine in their instructional day, and no time is lost in getting ready. The key to finding even this much time is that transitions have to be tight and all preparation for teaching must be accomplished before students are present. If reading aloud is planned for right after recess, the allocated time needs to be a bit

9:00–9:15 A.M.	Greeting. Children independently read while the teacher completes tasks like attendance. This practice is best supported if students have browsing boxes of books or a personally selected book on their desk or table space.
9:15–10:45 A.M.	Literacy Block. Students independently read as others work with the teacher during guided reading time. Students might read leveled text tied to their core program and then other text that relates to the theme of study or freely chosen text.
10:45–11:00 A.M.	Recess
11:00–11:30 A.M.	Literacy Intervention. Typically during interventions for students there is direct instruction, often guided by a program. For children at grade level or above, the teacher has more freedom of the instructional content. For these children, reading aloud with an independent reading follow-up is appropriate.
11:30–12:00 P.M.	Writing Block. The teacher can often include a read-aloud for modeling a writing strategy or skill.
12:00–12:45 P.M.	Lunch and Recess
12:45–1:15 P.M.	Special Class
1:15–2:15 P.M.	Math. Periodically, the teacher includes a read-aloud tied to a math concept.
2:15–2:30 P.M.	Read-Aloud
2:30–3:00 P.M.	Social Studies or Science (taught on a rotating basis). As with the math block, the teacher includes a read-aloud tied to a specific content.

FIGURE 2.1. Sample daily schedule.

longer because students usually require a few moments to settle down before they can listen and observe.

In my experience, motivated teachers have found creative ways to build in a daily-read aloud. In one school, having found it impossible to fit in a daily read-aloud, teachers chose to extend their day a bit. Because the majority of children in their school qualified for the free and reduced breakfast programs, teachers took advantage of this time and read aloud while children ate breakfast in the cafeteria. A different teacher read daily, typically the teacher who was scheduled to supervise breakfast. For most teachers, this meant a twice-a-month commitment and did not lengthen their teachers' workday. In a variation, teachers at another school had children collect their breakfast and come back to their classrooms to eat while their teacher read to them. These smaller groups allowed for increased student discussion. In my visits, teachers were enthusiastic about the before-school reading; it was a nice transition to the schoolday and, because it took place before the traditional day began, they felt freer to just enjoy books with their students.

Another way to build bridges and strengthen more formal literacy instruction and the read-aloud is through connections to a theme shared in a core reading program. This primes students for the read-aloud because background knowledge has already begun to be developed during previous literacy instruction. For instance, if the core reading theme is friendship and the teacher organizes a read-aloud with books about friendship, the earlier instruction is enhanced. This strategy is certainly applicable to informational text as well where background has been developed in earlier reading events (Barone & Youngs, 2008a, 2008b). For example, one program has a theme of challenges, which is particularly appropriate as a foundation for exploration of biographies or informational books about weather or health.

WHY READING ALOUD IS IMPORTANT

Reading aloud has many advocates. Among the most passionate, vocal, and eloquent are Mem Fox, Jim Trelease, Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds:

Mem Fox

> The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn't achieved by the book alone, nor by the adult who's reading aloud—it's the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony. (2008, p. 10)
>
> Reading aloud and talking about what we're reading sharpens children's brains. It helps develop their ability to concentrate at length, to solve problems logically, and to express themselves more easily and clearly. The stories they hear provide them with witty phrases, new sentences, and words of subtle meaning. (2008, pp. 15–16)

Jim Trelease

> Whenever I visited a classroom, I'd save some time at the end to talk about reading. I'd begin by asking, "What have you read lately? Anybody read any good books lately?" To my dismay, I discovered they weren't reading much at all. I slowly began to notice one difference. There were isolated classrooms in which kids were reading—reading a ton. . . . In every one of the turned-on classrooms, the teacher read to the class on a regular basis. (2006, p. xxi)
>
> We read aloud to children for all the same reasons we talk with children: to reassure, to entertain, to bond, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, to inspire. But in reading aloud, we also:
>
> - Condition the child's brain to associate reading with pleasure;
> - Create background knowledge;
> - Build vocabulary; and
> - Provide a reading role model. (2006, p. 4)

Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds

> Reading aloud is also meant to promote pleasure and enjoyment—to bring joy to life in school. (2007, p. 8)

> Reading aloud also gives children the opportunity to take up ways of thinking about a story that can deepen their understanding. Sometimes a comment by the teacher or another student following a selection read aloud can illuminate meaning for all. (2007, p. 10)

The words of these writers are important for encouragement and are worthwhile to return to for inspiration on days when finding time to read aloud just didn't happen.

Children reap vast rewards through read-alouds, concisely summarized as follows. Reading aloud:

1. Increases test scores (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Kersten, Apol, & Pagtaray-Ching, 2007; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003)
2. Promotes positive emotional connections between books and readers (Butler, 1975; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Esquith, 2007; Fox, 2008; Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Trelease, 2006)
3. Extends a child's attention span (Fox, 2008; Trelease, 2006)
4. Expands vocabulary knowledge (Fox, 2008; Hancock, 2000; Trelease, 2006)
5. Provides rich, language models (Barone & Xu, 2008; Gunning, 2010; Trelease, 2006)
6. Expands literal, inferential, and critical comprehension (Gunning, 2010; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Sumara, 2002; Tompkins, 2010; Wolf, 2004)
7. Builds connections to other books, life, and world events (Peterson & Eeds, 2007; White, 1956; Wolf, 2004; Wolf & Heath, 1992)
8. Widens children's imagination (Cooper, 2009; Wolf, 2004; Wolf & Heath, 1992)
9. Creates lifelong readers (Butler, 1975; Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Trelease, 2006)
10. Develops and creates background knowledge (Fox, 2008; Trelease, 2006)
11. Builds a community of learners (Esquith, 2007; Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie, 2004; Johnson & Giorgis, 2007; Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003; Wolf, 2004)
12. Develops students' reading engagement (Hancock, 2000; Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Tunnell & Jacobs, 2008; Wilhelm, 2008)
13. Supports developing knowledge of authors, illustrators, titles, literary genres, and text structures (Barone & Youngs, 2008a, 2008b; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003; Wolf, 2004)
14. Promotes research skills (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Gunning, 2010; Hancock, 2000; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003)
15. Models that books are valued possessions (Cochran-Smith, 1984)

16. Affords opportunities for conversation centered on text and illustration (Barone & Youngs, 2008a, 2008b; Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003; Wilhelm, 2008)
17. Increases students' interest in independent reading (Esquith, 2007; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003)
18. Offers models for writing (Hancock, 2000; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003; Tompkins, 2010)
19. Builds fluency through listening to fluent models (Bandré, Colabucci, Parsons, & Son, 2007; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003)
20. Refines self-identity (Sumara, 2002)

These benefits are realized through the process of reading aloud enriched with student discussion or other forms of response. They should help teachers relax a bit, because they validate that reading to students honors the literacy expectations that are part of their curriculum.

Reading Fiction Aloud

Most adults remember those moments when their teacher read aloud to them. For many, it was the best part of the schoolday where they could escape to some exotic location, share in funny events, or wonder why a character did what he or she did (Bandré et al., 2007). Students were often unaware that when their teacher read aloud, they were learning. In these circumstances teachers introduced a book, most often fiction, and then read it from the beginning to the end on successive days. Sometimes students were encouraged to chat about the book as it was read, and other times they were to remain quiet until the end of the reading event.

Typically, the fiction read-aloud is guided through the selection of a good book that might be related to a theme that is being explored or just one that the teacher feels will be valuable or enjoyable for students to hear. The teacher might share his or her thinking as the book is read; for example, "I am confused. What is happening here?" She or he might then reread and engage in a discussion to clarify the plot. The teacher may stop reading at other times to allow room for students to make connections or to pose questions (Manning, 2005). In some classrooms, students return to follow-up the read-aloud by writing or drawing in a read-aloud journal. Through this process, students have a record of their feelings or ideas as they worked through a book or poem (Manning, 2005).

Gunning (2010) offers teachers a few suggestions to prepare for a read-aloud. Of primary importance is designating a location in the classroom for read-alouds. It may be that students join the teacher on the carpet in an area near the classroom library or remain at their desks or tables. Typically, teachers of younger children have them move to the carpet, where they can sit together. This practice is less common in intermediate classrooms. Teale's (2008) research showed that students sitting closest to the teacher reaped the most benefit during a read-aloud, so it is important to periodically change

seating places, so that all children have equal opportunities to sit close to the teacher. Placement is also important to consider when students remain at their desks or tables during read-aloud. The teacher could vary his or her location during reading to accommodate all students.

Prior to the read-aloud, it is important for the teacher to read the book selected. By previewing, a teacher can determine whether the book is appropriate for the class and can anticipate where reading can stop in order to engage students in discussion. Also, by knowing the story in advance, the teacher can evoke emotion in his or her voice to correspond with the action (i.e., reading with excitement or reading quietly and calmly).

When the read-aloud begins, the teacher starts by sharing the cover (front and back), peritextual elements like the front and back pages, dedication, and information about the author/illustrator. Some of these elements may be missing if the teacher is using a paperback copy of a picturebook. When reading a picturebook, it is important that students see the pages as the text is read. This showing of text and illustration is less important in novels, unless they qualify as graphic novels where illustrations are equally important. If the illustrations are very complex, the teacher may want to place the book on a projector so that students can see the details as the book is read. It is vital that books that are read be available for students' independent reading so that they can spend more time on their own with text or illustrations. Teachers may even choose to reread texts as students gain deeper comprehension on each subsequent reading, as discussed in Chapter 1.

A teacher may ask students to predict, based on the book cover, what might happen and then again at stopping points along the way; however, he or she may want to break from this routine and pause in reading to allow more open student response. On the basis of my classroom observations, I find that student engagement is high when the teacher allows them to share with partners or small groups in this more open-ended way. Serafini and Ladd (2008) call this an interpretive space where students have opportunities to become "active constructors of meaning and forced to deal with the openness and indeterminacies of the written and visual representations included in picturebooks" (p. 6). Often when the conversation comes to a close, the teacher just shares a few comments he or she heard rather than calling on individual students to share. Once the reading is complete, the teacher does not want to just close the book and move to the next instructional event. This is a time when children can reflect on what they heard or saw. They may ask the teacher to turn to a specific page so that they can once again consider it. They may chat about a character and what the result of an action was. They may want to reconsider all of the illustrations to better understand the artist's craft. If there is time, students might write or draw their ideas in a read-aloud journal and then they can discuss their ideas with other students.

For variety in read-alouds, the teacher may ask the librarian or principal to read a favorite book to students or, as a variation, use a read-aloud from an online source. The Storyline Online website (*www.storylineonline.net*) has read-alouds by actors and authors, such as Pamela Reed reading *Stellaluna* (Cannon, 1997) or Sean Astin reading *A Bad Case of Stripes* (Shannon, 2004). Tumble Book Library (*www.tumblebooks.com*), a

division of the New York Public Library, has an expert narrator who reads aloud many popular children's books that are perfect for students to listen to independently. Unfortunately, Reading Rainbow (*pbskids.org*) has been discontinued. At this site hundreds of children's books were read aloud. The read alouds are now available in a DVD set.

Reading Informational Text Aloud

Nonfiction read alouds, like those for fiction, require the teacher to establish a comfortable place to read, preread the selection, and offer opportunities for student conversation. Young (2009) makes several additional recommendations for reading aloud informational text:

- *Cover to cover.* These books are high quality and are appreciated as works of literature. They may tie to a unit of study and their content extends understanding, or they may be a genre focus, like biography, and should be read cover to cover. *Theodore* (Keating, 2006), a picturebook biography, is a good example. The author has Theodore Roosevelt tell about his life by talking directly to the reader—for example: "My mother named me Theodore, but everyone remembers me as Teddy" (unpaged).

- *Chapter or excerpt.* This sharing is noted as "bits and pieces" (Moss, 2003, p. 61) where the teacher shares specific parts of text that is targeted to student learning. For instance, the teacher may read just a short section from a Lincoln biography clarifying his childhood. Another reason for sharing just a small piece of text is to motivate students to read the rest of the book or to prepare them for a different text on the same topic. An example of a book that would best be read in pieces is *Something Out of Nothing: Marie Curie and Radium* (McClafferty, 2006). The book begins by exploring the early life of Marie Curie with photos of her and her siblings. This bit of reading provides enough interest for students to pursue this book on their own.

- *Participatory.* Students may read part of the text. This works especially well with diaries or dialogue. The *My America* series offers the opportunity for students to read journal entries from children. For example, using *A Perfect Place: Joshua's Oregon Trail Diary* (Hermes, 2002), a student might read just one or two of Joshua's journal entries describing his experience, with the teacher continuing the reading thereafter.

- *Captions.* The teacher skims through the book highlighting illustrations, photos, maps, and captions. This kind of reading gives students a preview of the content of the text. *Komodo Dragons* (Reeder, 2005) is a perfect vehicle to share illustrations and captions because they are found on every page.

- *Reference material.* The teacher highlights the table of contents, index, or glossary of a book. For example, the teacher might have children select a term from the glossary and then move to where it is explained in text, thus modeling how a glossary supports meaning. *Komodo Dragons* (Reeder, 2005) is a good example because it allows teachers to share the table of contents, glossary, and index.

• *Modeling informational text features.* A teacher may just read the sidebars, headings, or captions or identify different type fonts to model how they contribute to nonfiction. Morley's (1995) *How Would You Survive as an Ancient Egyptian?* serves as an example of a book where teachers can share sidebars and headings, and point out a wide variety of font formats. Each page contains multiple sidebars and captions.

Combining Genres in Read-Alouds

Teachers might consider a themed approach to read-aloud events (Gunning, 2010). For instance, on one day the teacher might read an informational book about dragons like *Komodo Dragons*. On other days, the teacher may select from the following genres that target real or imaginary dragons (see Figure 2.2). By grouping texts in this way, students come to understand the differences between fiction and informational text and the genres related to each.

In this set, students study Komodo dragons and other animals and compare them with fictional dragons. They also explore fictional tales of dragons, an immigration story in *The Dragon's Child: A Story of Angel Island*, stories about Chinese New Year, and poetry in *The Dragons are Singing Tonight*. The books range in complexity from simple (*Komodo Dragons* and *The Knight and the Dragon*) to complex (*The Dragon's Eye* and *The Dragon's Child: A Story of Angel Island*).

Name of Book	**Author (year)**
Informational Text	
Komodo Dragons	Tracey Reeder (2005)
Behold . . . the Dragons	Gail Gibbons (1999)
Your Safari Dragons: In Search of the Real Komodo Dragon	Daniel White (2005)
Real-Life Dragons	Matt Doeden (2008)
Reign of the Sea Dragons	Sneed Collard (2008)
Fiction	
A Dragon's Birth	Terry Reschke (2005)
The Dragon New Year: A Chinese Legend	David Buchard (1999)
The Knight and the Dragon	Tomie dePaola (1998)
The Dragon's Eye	Dugald Steer (2006)
Day of the Dragon King	Mary Pope Osborne (1999)
The Book of Dragons	Michael Hague (2005)
The Dragon's Child: A Story of Angel Island	Laurence Yep (2008)
The Dragons are Singing Tonight	Jack Prelutsky (1993)

FIGURE 2.2. Dragon text set.

Teachers might also decide to partner two books together: fiction and information, poetry and information, and so on. For instance, *Flotsam* (Wiesner, 2006), a fiction book, centered on a camera that floats to the beach and *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Movement* (Burns, 2007), an informational book about trash and ocean movement, partner nicely. Another pairing is MacLachlan and Charest's (2006) book of dog poems, *Once I Ate a Pie*, showcasing dog behavior from a dog's point of view and *Good Dog! Kids Teach Kids about Dog Behavior and Training* (Pang & Louie, 2008). These genre pairings help students learn about genres and how they complement one another; and are easier for teachers to compile than a whole text set.

Finally, Hartman and Hartman (1993) offer teachers a variety of ways to compile text sets, summarized as follows:

- *Companion texts*. A collection of books to supplement a set of texts (e.g., the *Shiloh* series by Naylor).
- *Complementary texts*. Books centered on a single topic, like the dragon text set listed in Figure 2.2.
- *Synoptic texts*. Books that focus on a single idea, story, or event (e.g., books about President Lincoln).
- *Disruptive texts*. A collection of books that share conflicting or alternative views about a topic, idea, or story (e.g., books about the Civil War).
- *Rereading texts*. A collection of books students reread to gain deeper meaning.

HOW TO CHOOSE BOOKS

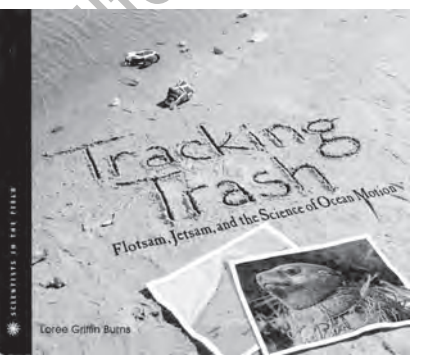
Choosing fiction and informational text to read aloud involves many decisions for teachers. First, the books need to be ones that students will enjoy and understand. It is also beneficial to select books tied to a current curricular theme so that each book builds upon the other and connects to important content expectations. Moreover, teachers want to select from various genres within fiction, such as mystery, folktales, or poetry, and within informational texts, such as biography, photo essays, or memoirs.

Choosing informational books to read aloud requires additional guidelines to the general ones recommended for fiction. As Moss (2003) indicates, in most circumstances, teachers choose informational text that matches curriculum topics or provides support for student reports. She suggests that teachers extend this thinking because many students, like adults, see informational text as pleasure reading. With this added reason for informational text, it then regularly appears in the classroom library or is displayed in the room for student selection, and not necessarily only selected based on current curriculum topics.

Additionally, teachers' selection of informational text books should be based on several criteria (Moss, 2003). First, teachers should consider the *authority* of the author. Is the author an expert or has the author worked with experts on a topic? Second, is the information *accurate and up to date*? In most current nonfiction, authors list experts,

books, or websites to support the accuracy of their information. A vivid example of information being up to date comes from the recent astronomy discoveries regarding Pluto. Older books do not present this new information and can thus be misleading to students. Third, the *appropriateness* of the book for the student audience must be considered. Books that talk down to students are never appropriate. They should also include information that is interesting to novice learners. Fourth, the book must be *artistic*. Readers should experience quality in text and illustration. Fifth, the *author's voice* should be clear and demonstrate a passion about the text.

Teachers may be gasping right now if they believe this process of selecting informational text is laborious and difficult. Most of the selection process requires skimming and is not time intensive. More careful reading might be required to ensure accuracy of information, especially if the text is long. In the following, I describe my book selection process for informational text using the book *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Movement* (Burns, 2007) as a model.



In this process, I first checked the authority of the author. Loree Burns has her PhD in medicine from the University of Massachusetts Medical School. I am thinking that she has a doctorate but not in oceanography, so is she an expert on this topic? In the author information provided, I discover that Burns made several research trips to the Pacific Coast for this book and worked closely with renown American oceanographer Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer, chronicling the development of his research program. I then check the book's references. Burns suggests books that students might enjoy and websites to explore and provides her reference materials and names of experts who helped her. *Tracking Trash* has also won the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award for nonfiction. On the basis of all this information, I conclude that Burns has author authority. With a publication date of 2007 I feel confident that the book is up to date and accurate. Also, the book's topic, ocean movement, is a fairly stable, constant branch of science. Burns assumes her reader is sophisticated and interested in wave movement and currents. She begins the book from a historical perspective, sharing Benjamin Franklin's interest in finding the fastest routes from Europe to the American colonies and his discussions with ship captains from whom he learned that traveling from West to East was faster than the reverse. Burns uses Franklin, a figure familiar to students, and his real-life question as an entry to the book, thus appealing to students. Her chapters also build upon each other, with the reader positioned as a scientific detective. *Tracking Trash* is appealing not only for its topic but for its numerous visuals: photographs showing trash (often toys or shoes) and where it washed up and of scientists working and newspaper clippings. The text lends itself perfectly to be read in bits and pieces so that students can absorb smaller portions of information rather than being overwhelmed.

Although this selection process may seem laborious, I accomplished it quickly by scanning the author information, reading a few snippets of text, and skimming the book to note visual support. Importantly, this book will not be read on just one day; it will be returned to on numerous occasions. Students will explore this book independently as well, so the time spent evaluating it was worthwhile. Moreover, once this process is complete for a book, it can be used in subsequent years without the selection process, unless, of course, scientific changes have occurred in the meantime, rendering the book outdated.

There are many sources to help teachers with book selection, and the good news is these sources are, for the most part, updated yearly. Some sources for book selection follow:

1. *School library or local library.* Most librarians are familiar with children's books and can make valuable recommendations for read-alouds.
2. *Classroom library.* Most teachers have created student libraries that serve as a source for read-alouds. They can also borrow books from neighboring teachers.
3. *Local bookstores.* Although the number of independent children's bookstores are dwindling, the owners of these stores are often very knowledgeable and can recommend the perfect books for read-alouds, helping teachers tailor their book selection. Larger bookstore chains are also familiar with read-aloud choices, although much of their inventory targets consumers, so caution is urged.
4. *The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease. This book, now in its sixth edition, offers support for reading aloud and recommendations for more than 1,000 books.
5. *The Best Children's Books of the Year (2009 edition).* This book, published yearly by the Children's Book Committee from Bank Street College of Education, is a reliable source that groups books by age and topic (e.g., Life in a New Land).
6. *National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE; *www.ncte.org*). In its bimonthly journal *Language Arts*, NCTE highlights quality children's books along with book reviews.
7. *International Reading Association* (IRA; *www.reading.org*). IRA publishes yearly lists of children's, teachers', and parents' book choices. Each issue of its journal *The Reading Teacher* features quality children's books with reviews.
8. *Book Links* (*www.ala.org*). *Book Links* is a quarterly supplement to the American Library Association's *Booklist* subscription magazine. Each issue is filled with wonderful literature, text sets, and creative ideas for bringing literature into the classroom.
9. *The Horn Book Magazine* (*www.hbook.com*). This journal is focused on children's and young adult literature with articles and reviews.
10. *Children's Book Council* (*www.cbcbooks.org*). This website maintains a database of children's choice book award winners grouped by grade level as well as award-winning authors and illustrators. Reading lists for science and social studies are also available.

11. *www.carolhurst.com*. This children's literature site publishes free newsletters about children's books and is a source for book collections organized by theme or curricular area.

Teachers might also consider awards given for children's books as a basis for selection. Some of the more prominent awards are as follows:

- Jane Addams Book Award (*home.igc.org/~japa/jacba/index_jacba.html*): honors books that promote peace and social justice.
- Hans Christian Andersen Award (*www.ibby.org/index.php?id=273*): recognizes authors and illustrators who have made a lasting contribution to children's literature.
- Mildred Batchelder Award (*www.ala.org*): recognizes books that were first published in a foreign country and then in the United States.
- Boston Globe–Horn Book Award (*www.hbook.org*): recognizes one book in each of the following categories: fiction, nonfiction, and illustration.
- Randolph Caldecott Medal (*www.ala.org*): recognizes the work of illustrators.
- International Reading Association Children's Book Award (*www.reading.org*): recognizes excellence in three categories: young children's books; older children's books; and nonfiction.
- Ezra Jack Keats New Writers Award (*www.ezra-jack-keats.org/bookawards/index.html*): honors a new writer or illustrator, one who has six or fewer published children's books.
- Coretta Scott King Award (*aalbc.com/books/related.htm*): honors excellence among African American authors and illustrators.
- National Council of Teachers of English Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children (*www.ncte.org*): awarded every 3 years to an American poet for his or her entire body of work.
- John Newbery Medal (*www.ala.org*): awarded yearly to an author of children's books.
- Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children (*www.ncte.org*): awarded yearly for outstanding nonfiction for children.
- Scott O'Dell Historical Fiction Award (*www.scottodell.com/odellaward.html*): recognizes outstanding books of historical fiction written by a U.S. citizen.
- Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award (*www.education.txstate.edu/departments/Tomas-Rivera-Book-Award-Project-Link.html*): granted to a book, fiction or nonfiction, that depicts the Mexican American experience.
- Robert Sibert Informational Book Award (*www.ala.org*): honors the author and illustrator of an outstanding informational book.
- Laura Ingalls Wilder Award (*www.ala.org*): awarded every 2 years to an author or illustrator for his or her contribution to children's literature over numerous years.

Although all of the previous suggestions for choosing books can be valuable, perhaps the best way is for teachers to be avid readers of children's books themselves (Miller, 2009). For some teachers, reading children's books may be a way to reignite their own thirst for reading. Surprising as it may be, Applegate and Applegate's (2004) research discovered that 54% of preservice teachers were unenthusiastic readers, not a very positive sign if teachers are to inspire students themselves. Whether you qualify as an enthusiastic or unenthusiastic reader, the best way to learn about children's books is to commit to reading at least 15 minutes everyday; read books recommended by students; read children's books that are recommended by others, like the International Reading Association; record what you read in a notebook; and reflect on the book, including your likes and dislikes.

There are multiple supports to help teachers locate books for read-aloud and other instructional classroom events. Rather than building a collection of read-alouds independently, teachers may want to collaborate. Rather than engaging in this process alone, it would be much more meaningful to visit the library or bookstore with colleagues, discussing books and make choices together.

INDEPENDENT READING

Independent reading allows students to choose their own books and read at their own pace. Miller (2009) writes, "Reading is not an add-on to the class. It is the cornerstone. The books we are reading and what we notice and wonder about our books feeds all of the instruction and learning in the class" (p. 50). Her words highlight the centrality of independent reading to foster reading development. Opportunities to read independently support students in multiple ways:

- Students gain practice in using the skills and strategies taught by their teachers and become better readers (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003).
- Independent reading provide authentic literacy experiences where students can select their own books.
- Students learn to select texts (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009).
- Independent reading enhances motivation for readers (Gambrell, 2009).
- Students become lifelong readers (Tompkins, 2010).

Even with these strengths of independent reading, some teachers may still view it as a supplement to reading instruction. Gunning (2008) argues that there is no core reading program that provides sufficient fiction and informational material for students to fully develop literacy. Although the research on independent reading is robust in its support of literacy gains, it also indicates that students are spending less time reading in their classrooms and at home (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Gambrell (1984) observed that first graders actually read for about 3 minutes per day and second and third graders about 5 minutes per day. More recently, Brenner, Hiebert, and Tompkins

(2009) noted that third graders spend about 18 minutes per day really reading. Important to this research is that the amount of time reading on the Internet and composing e-mail or text messages was not included, so the time reported may not accurately reflect reading opportunities. This amount of time spent reading begs the question as to whether it is sufficient practice for novice readers to develop proficiency.

If, as a teacher, you believe as I do that these reported times for independent reading are not sufficient to develop engaged readers, the next question is, what can teachers do to increase these times? Teachers might first consider the value of choice in independent reading, a critical element in developing motivation to read. Choice is the central theme in the book *Moxy Maxwell Does Not Love Stuart Little* (Gifford, 2008) and makes for a great read-aloud. In this story, Moxy has been assigned to read *Stuart Little* over the summer and knows there will be a quiz on it the first day of school. The whole book is about avoiding reading *Stuart Little*. Using humor, it emphasizes the importance of readers' choice and that students like to make book choice decisions, at least sometimes. *Moxy Maxwell* could serve as a discussion starter about choice and the importance of independent reading. Students will also have much to say about quizzes after reading and their influence on how a reader reads. Get ready for lots of feedback from students!

Rather than allowing students free choice, some teachers preselect a group of books from which students can choose, narrowing options but allowing students to read books that are somewhat related. This preselection might push students to choose a genre or an author they have not previously read. When I was in Mr. Bussoni's fifth-grade classroom (Barone, 2006), I observed this process in action. He preselected five books for independent reading: *Saving Shiloh* (Naylor, 1999), *Skitterbrain* (Brown, 1992), *Cousins* (Hamilton, 1992), *The Black Pearl* (O'Dell, 1996), and *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher* (Covill, 1991). Mr. Bussoni gave a short talk on each book, where he shared the author, other books by the author, an approximate reading level, and the book's genre. Once the book talks were concluded, students previewed each book during the day and signed up for their first and second choices. The next day students entered their classroom to find a copy of their first or second choice at their desks for independent reading and a contract for reading their choice book with other students. The contract suggested the chapters they should read and an approximate time to complete them. Students were encouraged to talk daily with other students reading the same book and to record ideas in a notebook. Students, even those who were reluctant readers, were excited to begin reading and checked out what all of their friends were reading before they opened their books.

In other classrooms, teachers may require students to read from specific genres during the year. They may have all students select from one genre and read a selection during a specified period of time. Or they may just share a list of genres and allow stu-

dents to self-select throughout the year. Another way to organize independent reading is to have students select a book that represents a theme for instruction. In this case, all students would read books about self-identity or the wilderness, for example. Both of these structures allow for student discussion across books as students; they could discuss a genre or how each character understood him- or herself. Teachers might have students explore numerous books by one author or illustrator to learn more deeply about the individual who has crafted them. As is easily seen, there is a multitude of ways to organize book selection while still offering students choice.

After books are selected, teachers need to find time for independent reading. Again, this does not need to be separate time, although that would be ideal. Rather, students can read independently when they are not working in small, guided reading groups with the teacher. It needs to be made clear to students that they are expected to read when the teacher is working with others. Teachers must also be careful that the books for independent reading are within the reading capabilities of independent readers so that students can successfully read them. Suggestions for meeting the reading abilities of students are shared later in this chapter.

A well-stocked library supports student independent reading. Teachers can borrow books and magazines from the school or community library for student reading as they develop their own classroom libraries. Teachers will also want a display area where they place books related to a theme of study. If teachers choose to read aloud the books shared about dragons, for instance, they would also display other dragon books and those read aloud for student independent reading. Students love to reread the book the teacher just read aloud to the class because they can understand the story or information and can read successfully. Displaying books, especially for younger readers, makes them appealing to choose from. In addition to print media, teachers will want to make online reading accessible to students by having sites or specific books bookmarked for easy access.

Teachers sometimes worry about management issues related to independent reading: Did the students really read? Although teachers have numerous ways to guarantee this, I have observed that teachers who ask students to record the books they read independently and write entries into a journal have the most success. Later in the year, students can return to these notebooks to determine the genre or the author/illustrator they prefer. The teacher might nudge them to experience other genres or authors/illustrators to build their reading repertoire. Students can also reflect on the comments they write or draw about books and learn about themselves as readers. For example, do they always write about the plot, or are they interested in how the book makes them feel?

Another way to ensure that students are actually reading is to have one-on-one conversations (Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008). Teachers might find time to chat with a student between guided reading groups. Although these conversations may seem arbitrary, they are carefully documented so that teachers know they have met with each student in the room. If teachers find that this transitional time for conversations is not very satisfactory for more in-depth discussion, they might decide to schedule one fewer guided reading group each day. During the time that was previously set aside for guided

reading, they can chat with multiple students individually about their reading. These conversations allow teachers to notice what is most important to a student as he or she reads, whether the student is using previously taught comprehension strategies, what the student notices about an author or illustrator, and whether the student is personally enjoying the reading.

These conversations around reading, although they may appear to be easy, take practice. In order to foster students' critical thinking, teachers need to move away from the standard question-and-answer format—Who are the characters? What was the most exciting part? What facts did you learn?—and focus on questions that encourage conversation: What did you notice while you read? How do you think the character felt? Students take leadership in these conversations by sharing ideas or emotions that evolved from their reading. Through this type of conversation, teachers demonstrate that they are interested in their students' comments by responding to their ideas and serving as builders of meaning (Hassett & Curwood, 2009). For example, a student shares from his reading of *A Dog's Life* (Martin, 2005): "I hated the way people treated Squirrel. You would think that if they took him to be their pet they would at least feed him." The teacher responds: "I wondered if he would ever find a family that was nice to him. Some even started off nice, and then they just left him. I think I felt as lonely as he did when he lived in the woods." From these initial comments, the conversation continued and both teacher and student shared their feelings and thoughts.

A second issue with independent reading is the need for books that students can successfully independently read. Children in classrooms with no books matched for their reading level will engage in pretend reading or will select books but never open them. Teachers need a variety of books that range from easy to difficult for student choice. They can also include magazines and Internet sites to expand the traditional resources available. Teachers can also make books on CD available; students can listen to these until they develop sufficient skills to read independently. In intermediate classrooms, picturebooks must be valued as much as longer, more difficult text, so that struggling students are not embarrassed by their book choices. The result of these careful choices by teachers is that there is always a wide range of reading materials for students to select from.

RESPONDING TO LITERATURE

Reader response happens as a person is read to or reads independently. Response is grounded in the belief that reading is an active process, with meaning being constructed continuously through intellectual and emotional connections. Three components influence response: the reader, the literature, and the context for response (Galda, 1988; Hancock, 2000). For example, the reader may be a student, who listens to a book read by the teacher, and is asked to respond freely in a journal. The reader brings to the text all previous experiences with reading, academic learning, personal experience, and so on. For instance, in order for a reader to understand a fractured version of a fairytale, he

or she must understand the original version. If not, a child interprets a fractured version as though it has no literary tradition. A child who never heard about Little Red Riding Hood will not appreciate the variant *Into the Forest* (Browne, 2004). The child most likely will not recognize that a boy is going into the forest and he has a red jacket, similar but different from the original, and any of the other subtle visual connections to other fairytales within the text.

The second part of this response triad is the literature. If children have only listened to or read fiction, then an informational reading event might prove difficult for them to understand. Genre, text structure, literary elements such as a writer's style, and the content of text all influence the reader.

The last component of the triad is the context. Teachers may expect students to respond in a certain way, for instance, providing a summary of what they read. If this is the regular expectation, children in this classroom will find it difficult to respond in other ways, because they have not been officially sanctioned as appropriate in the classroom. In classrooms where diversity of response is routine, students will be free to respond in ways they find appropriate to the text. A second aspect of context to consider is students' family backgrounds. For instance, religious beliefs might influence the way a child responds. For example, Jacob, whose family was very spiritual, wrote about the use of the word *underwear* in a book: "I don't think the author should use that word. It seemed wrong to read it in a book." Jacob abandoned this book because he was uncomfortable reading it and reconciling his personal religious beliefs.

Most teachers have become familiar with responding to literature through the work of Rosenblatt (1938, 2005). Rosenblatt identified two primary ways of responding to text: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent responding is more focused on understanding ideas or facts. Aesthetic responding is more concerned with emotional or artistic response. Important to this division of response is that most readers engage in both while reading. Readers engaged with informational text may appreciate the writer's style while acquiring information, or those engaged with fiction may wonder about details of the setting as they are appreciating the plot. Previous reading experiences and personal experience influence the way readers respond to a book. An addition to the ways of responding to text described by Rosenblatt includes critical response (Pearson, 2008). Critical response allows readers to challenge a text by considering the representation of a character, an event or issue, or the author's purpose.

A second influential voice on the topic of response is that of Iser (1978). His work focused on the gaps in literature and how the reader fills them. The first gaps are easily completed by the reader because they are based on real life. For example, the reader assumes that a character has two eyes, a nose, and so on. The reader also assumes that the author will share any unusual characteristics, such as a monster with one eye. The second gap is purposely left by the writer to stimulate reader participation. This gap may be difficult for some readers to complete because they lack sufficient background knowledge. For instance, in *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999), the reader has to know about segregation in the 1930s in a northern state. Without this knowledge, the reader will struggle with creating meaning. The third gap stimulates a reader's imagination. In *Holes*, Sachar (1998) tells readers directly that he has left gaps for them to complete—"You will have to

fill in the holes yourself" (p. 231)—such as what happened to Stanley after he returned home with jewels and papers that were redeemed for a sizable sum of money. This gap is easier to complete because the readers are free to use their imagination to complete it.

Iser's work (1978) helps teachers recognize how the reader completes the text and how the text needs the reader to make meaning. In some cases the gaps are filled by common experience or the imagination. However, for gaps that require background knowledge, such as knowledge of a historical event, the teacher is critical in helping a student fill in these gaps when this knowledge is not internally held.

Physical

Physical response to books just happens. When children are scared, they may cover their eyes or gasp. When a book has a pleasant ending, they smile; with a sad ending, they cry. When I was reading *The Witches* (Dahl, 1983b) to a group of young children, they backed away *quickly*, after I read the following text from the introduction. I think students were surprised when I laughed as they moved away from me.

> In fairy-tales, witches always wear silly black hats and black cloaks, and they ride on broomsticks.
>
> But this is not a fairy-tale. This is about REAL WITCHES. . . .
>
> For all you know, a witch might be living next door to you right now.
>
> Or she might be the woman with the bright eye who sat opposite you on the bus this morning.
>
> She might be the lady with the dazzling smile who offered you a sweet from a white paper bag in the street before lunch.
>
> She might even—and this will make you jump—she might even be your lovely school-teacher who is reading these words to you at this very moment. Look carefully at that teacher. Perhaps she is smiling at the absurdity of such a suggestion. Don't let that put you off. It could be part of her cleverness. (Dahl, 1983b, pp. 7–10)

As a teacher, I knew they were hooked in the first few pages of this book just by their movement. Although teachers don't have to require physical response, watching children while reading aloud reveals their emotional response to the text.

Oral

Conversation surrounding reading allows students to share what they think or feel about a text and to extend meaning as they learn from the comments of others. Peterson and

Eeds (2007) called these "grand conversations." These conversations often move from commenting about a character or event to sharing puzzles about the text: "Why did the illustrator use dark colors?" or "When Alex did that, it reminded me of when my big brother . . . ." Nystrand (1997) observed that teachers' questions and discussion technique influence how students respond to books. He noted that asking open-ended questions or just providing discussion space allows students the freedom to negotiate meaning with other students, resulting in more sophisticated understanding. Some sample questions or stems to encourage discussion might include:

I think . . .
I notice . . .
I wonder . . .
My opinion is . . .
How is this story or informational text similar to others we have read?
How is this character, setting, or plot making you feel? (Just ask about one of these.)
What are you learning?

What is tricky about conversation is for teachers to just participate instead of asking a series of questions, even if they are open ended. Moving from the role of question giver to participant can take practice. Teachers can shift to the role of participant by allowing students to talk to partners or in a small group and then visiting or listening to each pair or group. Just making this small change helps teachers shift away from being the presenter of questions to inquisitive readers.

The following is a conversation from Mr. Bussoni's class as he was reading aloud *Sounder* (Armstrong, 1969). It is clear that Mr. Bussoni has mastered the art of listening to students rather than asking them to respond to a series of questions. There is not one question posed by the teacher in this short exchange; he just allowed space for student response.

STUDENT 1: He is reading about a school he wants to go to.

STUDENT 2: He crosses the street because he is afraid of people, White people.

STUDENT 3: It is a school for Whites.

STUDENT 4: African Americans can't go there.

STUDENT 5: He lives in the South. I think they had schools for White kids and for Black kids.

Students continued the discussion about schools being segregated, and then Mr. Bussoni began reading, pausing along the way to allow for additional student comments. At the end of the read-aloud, he asked students to think about what was important. He let students think for a bit, and then they shared with partners before being transitioned to the next learning event.

Not all conversations happen during a whole-class read-aloud. When students are organized into small groups by book choice, there are opportunities for conversations as well. I listened in as a group of fifth graders talked about the book *Oh, Brother* (Wilson, 1989). These students sat near each other as they read silently, and every so often a student offered a question or comment that spurred conversation.

STUDENT 1: This is the same as my family. My brothers treat me like he does.

STUDENT 2: They talk back to their parents.

STUDENT 3: My sister took money out of my dad's wallet and she got into big trouble.

STUDENT 4: Andrew might steal from Alex.

STUDENT 5: When the mom talks to them they kind of listen, but when the dad talks they stop.

STUDENT 6: I think the dad hollers at them.

STUDENT 7: I think they worry about their mom. Maybe they are scared of her.

The students returned to reading, but frequently interrupted themselves for these brief but valuable conversations.

Students deepen their comprehension and appreciation of a book by chatting about it. Conversation about books can center on text, illustrations, or their interaction. Students reading informational text might chat about interesting ideas or facts they have just discovered.

Written

Written response involves students writing in a journal before, during, or after reading. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) offer a simple way to support written response: Encourage readers to "leave tracks of their thinking" (p. 19). Adult readers do this when they write down ideas to remember, questions, or connections to text in the margins of their books. Often children are not able to write in their books, but sticky notes can work well. These notes serve as a vehicle for discussion or just as a way for students to learn about themselves as readers.

Written response, can also include writing in a literature response journal, a simple notebook. A structure for a journal could be a page where a student lists the books he or she read, a page for books the student wants to read, and pages for response. Teachers may just expect students to write an entry each day in their journal after they complete reading (Barone, 1990; Hancock, 2000). If teachers respond to a student's ideas in writing, the journal becomes a dialogue journal, where the teacher and student converse about a book. They might chat about the plot and what they think will happen, or they might write about a character and why they like or dislike him or her. Students can also engage in this dialogic writing with another student, where they respond to each other's

entries. The following is an example of an entry in Mary's literature response journal about *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?* (Fritz, 1976).

> Mary: Ben didn't know what to do for a living so he tried different things. He was really smart. His dad wanted him to work with his brother publishing, but Ben didn't like the job.
>
> Teacher: Ben really tried lots of jobs before he found the perfect one. I wonder what his dad is thinking about him now that he didn't want to be in publishing.

The entry serves as a vehicle for the student to write about what was most important in reading and for the teacher to respond to the student and nudge her to deeper understanding.

A variation on the form of an entry in a literature response journal is the double-entry draft (Barone, 1990). For this entry, a student copies an important piece of text on the left side of a paper, selecting a snippet that is meaningful to him or her. On the right side, the student explains why this text snippet was chosen. In the following example, Michael responds with a double-entry draft to *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin*?

	D. E. D.
Michael: Some people are blacksmiths	That reminds me of my dad. He used to be a blacksmith but now he does television. He likes television more than being a blacksmith.

> Teacher: I didn't know that your dad was a blacksmith like Ben Franklin. What did your dad like and not like about being a blacksmith?

The double-draft entry typically moves a student beyond literal comprehension to inferential and, in particular, to personal connections to the text, as is seen in Michael's response.

The previous examples have centered on traditional writing on paper. With technology, students can share their ideas or emotions about reading through book blogs, where they comment and other students respond and extend the conversation (Barone & Wright, 2008). Any of the ways that teachers engage students to write about their reading can certainly be accomplished with technology.

Artistic

Artistic responses for reading aloud and independent reading most often take the form of sketches. Students might draw a character or an event from the plot. Visual response might be a representation of an emotional response or a chart with important information (Hancock, 2000). Figure 2.3 shares an example of an artistic response from Elder, a

FIGURE 2.3. Elder's artistic response.

third grader, who was reading *Danny the Champion of the World* (Dahl, 1975). Elder was confused when he learned that Danny lived in a caravan, so he drew a sketch of what he thought Danny's caravan might look like to help with meaning.

In response to picturebooks, students may also want to draw using the media of an illustrator. Through this process, they gain a better understanding of how a particular medium contributes to the meaning of a text. They may also explore other visual elements like line, color, shape, and so on to experience the effects of each (Serafini & Giorgis, 2003).

All of the ways of responding in this chapter allow students to make decisions about their topics of conversation, writing, or visual response. They do not involve points or grades; rather, the focus is on engagement with books and reading. If teachers allow students these choices, they can learn about what their students find important or frustrating in text, what their students make connections to, and how emotionally connected students are to text. Additionally, through responding, students deepen their understanding of text and are more engaged with it.

ENGAGING STUDENTS

In the Responding to Literature section, I suggested ways that students can physically, orally, artistically, and in writing respond to reading. However, these suggestions did not touch on the practical concerns surrounding students reading independently. Perhaps fundamental to any discussion of independent work is that teachers have routines

in place for students. A read-aloud is planned for the same time each day so that students are aware of where they need to sit and how they are expected to behave. Once students understand these expectations they can more quickly prepare for the read-aloud and are more engaged. For independent reading additional routines are needed. For instance, students must know how to select books, when they can access them, and how many they may select at one time. Can they keep books at their desks, or must they return them to a central location? They need to have materials, like notebooks or paper, available and need to know how to access and put these materials away. Beyond these pragmatic concerns are those that center on the reading development of students, which are critical to consider if independent reading is to be successful.

1. *Varying reading levels.* Within a classroom students typically range in skill from novice readers, with below-grade-level expectations, to above-grade-level readers. This wide range necessitates a variety of reading materials be available for independent reading. The following are suggestions for meeting students' reading needs:
   a. Select books that are grouped thematically. If books are selected to meet an expectation of theme, simple to more complicated books can be offered to students. Struggling readers can participate as successfully as proficient readers because they can find a book they can read, talk about, and write about.
   b. When conducting author studies, select authors of picturebooks and novels so that all students can assess his or her books. Each book will contribute to learning about an author's craft.
   c. Read aloud books that may be difficult for some students to read independently. Once struggling readers have heard a book, they can more easily read it independently.
   d. With a specific topic selected (e.g., bugs, the Westward expansion), provide books at a variety of reading levels. As students read simple books, they build background knowledge so they can successfully engage with more complex ones.
   e. Add to the media for independent reading by including Internet text or appropriate websites and magazines. These more visual materials often appeal to struggling readers.
   f. Create a podcast or a CD of a book. Students who want to access more difficult text can have oral support. More proficient readers, parents, or teacher aides can create these recordings.
2. *Management issues for independent reading.* Teachers can have a simple chart to note when they have conferred with students. Figure 2.4 is an example. Each block has a student's name and a place to record the date and the book title. Based on this information, teachers can know when a student completes a book, continually chooses new books but never finishing one, or chooses books that are too difficult to read. These observations can be used to facilitate book selection for students so they can experience success with their reading.

John **Date** **Book**	Emily **Date** **Book**	Michael **Date** **Book**	Vanessa **Date** **Book**	Jared **Date** **Book**	Kendra **Date** **Book**

FIGURE 2.4. Conference chart.

Students can also be tasked with creating a record of their independent reading. A sample form appears in Figure 2.5.

This record of independent reading lets students note how long they are involved with a book and shows them the importance the teacher places on independent reading. Later they can refer to this list to note genres or authors or illustrators they prefer. Their notes are a record of their first thoughts about a book and can help them identify what they find most important in books or how they emotionally connect to text.

At the end of this chapter, it is time to take a few moments to reflect:

1. Think about your experiences either being read aloud to or when you are reading aloud. What do you see as the strengths of these experiences? What are the challenges?
2. How do you choose books to read aloud? What genres do you prefer?
3. Visit the website for the American Library Association (*www.ala.org*), and go to either the Caldecott Medal or the Newbery Medal award page. Choose one of the recent winners and a winner from the past. Go to the library and read each. What did you notice?

Name _____		
Date	**Book Read**	**Thoughts**

FIGURE 2.5. Record of independent reading.

4. What books do your students elect to read during independent reading? What genres or authors do they prefer? Are these books available to them?
5. How do your students respond to reading? Do they write and draw about their books? What do you notice about their responses?

RECOMMENDED READING

For readers who would like to know about some of the topics in this chapter, the following books and article provide additional information.

Reutzel, D. R., Jones, C., Fawson, P., & Smith, J. (2008). Scaffolded silent reading: A complement to guided repeated oral reading that works! *The Reading Teacher, 62*, 194–207.

This article shares strategies to make independent reading more effective for students.

Miller, D. (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reading in every child*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is written by a teacher and demonstrates how read-aloud and independent reading can be supported in a classroom. She offers practical suggestions to help teachers and provides numerous book suggestions.

Stead, T. (2009). *Good choice! Supporting independent reading and response K–6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

This book offers many practical suggestions to help teachers with independent reading and response activities. Stead provides numerous forms to help teachers.

Student Voices

Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1971)

"*Island of the Blue Dolphins* is a good book because of the adventure. Karana is all alone, and she finds food and shelter. She is brave, strong, and creative. She made a house all by herself. I wouldn't be able to do what she did because I am not used to doing things all by myself or being alone. I would be too afraid."—Gabrielle, a fourth grader