

# HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY TEACH READING

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Elizabeth M. Arwine

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2019 Printing

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Published by  
***Christian Liberty Press***  
502 West Euclid Avenue  
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004  
[www.christianlibertypress.com](http://www.christianlibertypress.com)

Written by Elizabeth M. Arwine  
Layout and editing by Edward J. Shewan  
Copyediting by Diane Olson  
Cover design and layout by Bob Fine  
Cover image copyright © Don Hammond, DesignPics, Inc.

ISBN 978-1-930367-81-4  
1-930367-81-3

Printed in the United States of America

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# Introduction

Reading instruction is quite possibly the most overlooked discipline in schools today. *Reading instruction* does not mean requiring students to work silently in workbooks or readers but rather, as the term “instruction” implies, an instructor is actually leading students by way of detailed guidance. It is unfortunate that so many educators today fail to recognize that the role of the reading teacher is more than just a passive exercise.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide parents and teachers with practical and proven teaching strategies so that they can pursue their task in a comprehensive manner. As previously stated, students need more than silent reading and an occasional drill sheet. Young people need to be taught how to get the most out of their reading in terms of pronunciation, comprehension, and vocabulary development. In this regard, the issues presented in this booklet will not focus upon the mechanics of how to sound out or decode words through phonics instruction, but rather, they will concentrate on how youngsters can become more proficient in their reading skills.

The attitude of reading instructors is critical to the success of each pupil. Whether the instructor is a parent or a classroom teacher, such a person is largely responsible for instilling into students a desire to read often and well. This not only means showing enthusiasm in the reading process, but taking the extra effort as a teacher to surround each child with excellent and uplifting reading materials, including the most important book of all—the Bible.

May Almighty God use the following information to better equip parent educators and classroom teachers to be of maximum help to students who need to become better readers.

*Michael J. McHugh  
Arlington Heights, Illinois, 2001*

# Developing Reading Comprehension

## INCREASING COMPREHENSION *DURING* READING

A good reader constantly thinks about what he is reading while he reads. If an active reader does not comprehend something, he stops and uses some kind of technique—such as *rereading*—until he is able to understand. It is important to teach your child techniques that will enable him to become an active reader.

### *The ARK Method*

If your child does not understand something when he is reading, he may use the **ARK Method** to help him become an active reader. The letters stand for three helpful techniques:

Ask for help.

Reread.

Keep reading.

1. **Ask for help:** A child should use this technique when a passage is extremely difficult to understand, and an adult may be able to help clarify.
2. **Reread:** A child should use this technique when he realizes that he may have been reading too quickly, or his mind may have wandered from the task. Furthermore, rereading simply makes an unfamiliar passage more familiar, therefore, increasing comprehension. Reading a passage of information a second time is often a sufficient means of overcoming difficulties of comprehension.
3. **Keep reading:** Oftentimes, an unclear word, sentence, or passage may become clear if the child simply keeps reading. The unclear portion may be defined, explained, or put into context in the upcoming text.

You can teach the **ARK Method** by modeling its three reading techniques using a portion of authentic text.

## Active Predicting

While reading fiction, a good reader often *predicts what will happen* next, and then reads to confirm. Teaching a child to actively predict in this way is simple and straightforward. While a child is reading either orally or silently, simply stop periodically to ask what he thinks will happen next. You may also discuss what events occurred in the story to help the child form that prediction. Soon, a child will acquire this “built-in predicting system” and begin to actively and logically predict and confirm on his own.

## IMPROVING COMPREHENSION *AFTER* READING

The following ideas may supplement any reading curriculum in the area of comprehension. These four strategies<sup>1</sup> should be used *after* a story or book is read.

- 1) **The Big Picture:** It is important that a child is able to demonstrate understanding of the “big picture” of a story or book. This means that he comprehends the major elements of the story, such as *setting, characters, conflict, and conflict resolution*. An older student may use the following diagram to help him understand these elements and visualize the “big picture” of a story or book.

**The Big Picture**

Title of Story \_\_\_\_\_

Climax \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Conflict:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Man Vs.**  
(man, nature, himself, society)

**Setting:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Main Characters:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Conflict Resolution:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. See the Appendix, pages 18–25, for reproducible worksheets for these strategies.

- 2) A **story frame** is another strategy that gives a child guidance in reporting the major elements of a story or book. It provides a framework for the child to summarize the story. “Story Frame 1” is a suitable guideline for primary aged children, while “Story Frame 2” is a suitable one for older children. You may want to adapt these frames for certain stories.

### Story Frame 1

The story, \_\_\_\_\_

takes place in \_\_\_\_\_

The main character is \_\_\_\_\_

The problem in the story begins when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Then, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Next, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The problem is solved when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

At the end of the story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Story Frame 2

The story, \_\_\_\_\_, by \_\_\_\_\_,

takes place in \_\_\_\_\_.

The main character is \_\_\_\_\_.

The main conflict occurs when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Then, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Next, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Finally, the conflict is resolved when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The story ends \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3) **Character Mapping:** Some stories and books place an emphasis on the transformation of the main character. Therefore, to really understand and appreciate the story, the child must comprehend the change in the character and the reasons for that change. The following diagram is a mapping worksheet that can help a child understand and analyze this transformation.

### Character Mapping

Title of Story \_\_\_\_\_

Character: \_\_\_\_\_

three or  
four words that  
describe this character  
at the beginning of the story:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Event #1**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Event #2**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

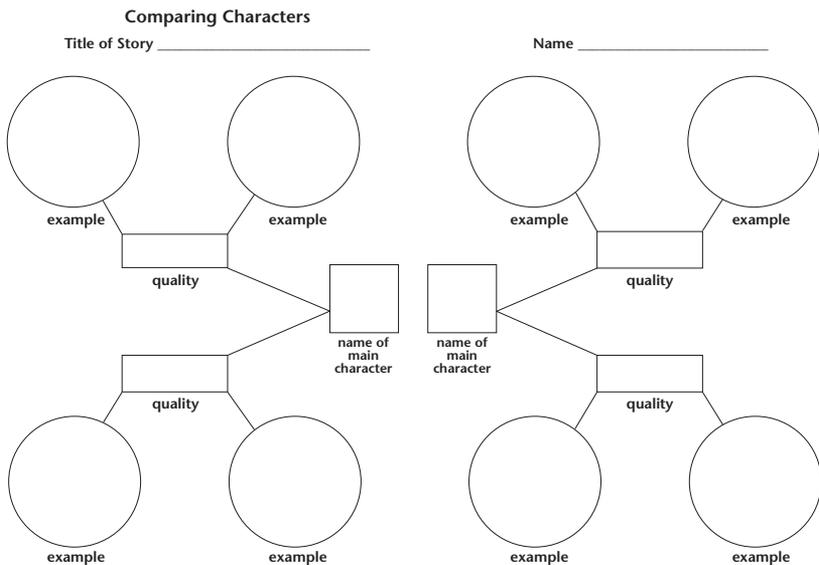
three or  
four words that  
describe this character  
at the end of the story:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did this  
character  
change for  
the better?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 4) **Comparing Characters:** In some stories and books the two main characters are very different. Analyzing them by identifying their traits and actions helps a child to get a clear picture of these characters. The following diagram is a work-sheet that helps children explore these differences.



An excellent follow-up activity for this strategy is to have the child write a paragraph about the main characters using the information he has mapped out on the worksheet.

