



Fluency Practice

Lesson: How long is a Piece of String?

Fluency Performance with Comprehension Checks

Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension. It develops gradually, over time, through continual practice.

These students are presenting a fluency performance known as "Reader's Theatre."

At certain points, they pause to ask questions or to check for understanding. This format helps motivate the students to practice, and it also encourages interaction.

First, the teacher explains her expectations.

Gail: This group has been working so hard on their fluency, and they would like to do a performance for you, so let's have very good listening. Also, be ready, 'cause they're going to ask some questions.

Girl in blue turtleneck and vest: We would like to read a book to you called How Long is a Piece of String? Written by Kristen Atkins, illustrated by Pam (inaudible)..

Blonde girl in white t-shirt: Our purpose for the story is to see how long the piece of string is.

Boy in red turtleneck: We want you to know how long the piece of string is too.

Boy in black t-shirt: Be prepared for the interesting ending.

Boy in navy turtleneck: Watch for our expression and fluency, because we've been practicing.

Boy in red turtleneck: We are going to have a competition called "Guess the length of the piece of string". It's ten cents a guess. The money we raise from the competition will help us pay for a new running track".

Boy in red turtleneck: I am going to stop and check for understanding." (Hands go up.)
Danielle?

Danielle: (inaudible)

The students now describe how the main character is tempted to break the rules of the contest and measure the length of string.

Boy in black t-shirt: I kept looking at the jar and thinking, "I wonder how long the string is." I just couldn't stop looking at it. There was such a lot of tape wound around the top. In the kitchen drawer, I found a yardstick, a roll of tape, and some scissors.

Another student checks for understanding and then asks for a prediction.

Girl in blue vest and turtleneck: Mom was in the garden. I picked up the jar and looked at it. I wonder how long the string is. It started to unwind. I started to unwind the tape. It went around and around and around.

I'm going to stop and check for understanding.

Girl: Heather.

Heather: Um, the tape went around and around and around and around.

Girl: What do you think will happen next?

Boy in blue turtleneck: I wish I didn't know how long the string is. I wish I didn't know.

This student asks a question and then provides feedback.

Boy in blue turtleneck:

"I picked up the scissors and cut off some of the string.

Now I know how long it was."

How do you think he feels?

Boy in red turtleneck: ...beside the yardstick. I measured it. Now I know how long the string is, I thought.

Child: "I wonder if he feels sad because he measured the string and he wasn't supposed to."

Child: That is correct.

Gail: Let's give them a round of applause.

Excellent fluency practicing. Did you hear their fluency and expression? Very nicely done. Thank you.

Now the other half of the class either presents a story or explains their favorite comprehension strategy.

Gail: OK, boys and girls, you are today going to share your strategy - you're either sharing a strategy or you're sharing your story that you are reading with fluency. Go ahead.

Boy in dark blue shirt: I want to share a story that I (inaudible)

"I woke up and went downstairs and got dressed. I went outside and saw lots of snow. I made a snowman. I went up a hill and went skiing - snowboarding. Then I went skiing. I came inside and had hot chocolate. The end of the story.

This student describes his favorite comprehension strategies.

Boy in red fleece:

These are the five strategies I use if I don't get the word right. One, I stretch and read - if I don't get it right, I sound it out. If I don't get it right, I look at the pictures Then, if I don't get it right, I um, I , I, say it over and over, like was if I smush it together and break it apart, if that doesn't work , I call somebody for help.

Gail: Good strategy.

This student is reading from a book she has written herself.

Girl in red top:

I've been working on this book days and days, and I worked on it so hard, and I just made it.

Gail: So this is your rough copy that you're working on. Could you read a page or two for us?

Girl (nodding): My dog Pup. My dog Pup is called "bad dog". (tries to turn the page, but someone has stapled her book together) Someone stapled it.

Gail: You know, we could stop right there, That gives us a really good idea what the story's about.

Are you going to take it to final copy?

Girl nods.

Gail: ...or are you going to move on to a different story?

Girl: Move on.

This student is reading a book that describes the changing colors of leaves.

Jesse: Changing colors.

Changing colors. Green leaves, yellow leaves. Red leaves, orange leaves. Brown leaves of many colors. The end.

Gail: Good fluency with that, Jesse.

(Show boy with glasses hugging Gail:

This student is reading a story about a boy who planted a bean.

Gail: What are you doing, Jacob?

Jacob: I'm...doing...read...

Gail: Are you sharing a few pages from that story? Are you going to read fluently for us?

Jacob: Yeah.

Gail: OK. Let's hear it.

Jacob: Jasper. On Monday, Jasper found a bean. On Tuesday, he planted it. On Wednesday, he watered it. On Thursday, he dug it, and raked it and hosed it, and ... hose... hose. Then on Friday night, he pick up all the snails and slugs.

Gail: Excellent. Let's give Jacob a round of applause.

Good job. Good practicing.

This student reads fluently from a book that uses rhythm and repetition to make the reading task easier and more fun. It also features a surprise ending.

Boy: I'm going to practice fluency reading.

That's Dangerous.

Henry walked on the wall.

That's dangerous, said his mother.

But Henry didn't fall.

Henry walked across a bridge.

That's dangerous, said his mother.

But Henry didn't fall.

Henry walked along a branch.

That's dangerous, said his mother.

But Henry didn't fall.

Henry walked on the roof.

That's dangerous, said his mother.

But Henry didn't fall.

Henry walked along the sidewalk.

That's better, said his mother - but

That's dangerous, said his - said Henry.

Child: Why?

Gail: Why was that dangerous?

Boy: Because his mom - when he was walking on the sidewalk, his mother slipped on a piece of fallen apple.

Gail: Good checking for understanding. That's funny...that's funny! Round of applause...Thank you.