

## FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month



(Developed by Glass, C. & Zygouris-Coe, V., 2006)

### Rationale:

Teacher: All right, who can tell me about the selection you read last night?

Students: Deafening silence, eyes look to the floor, fingers flick through the pages of the textbook.

Teacher: Did you read your assignment?

Students: Yea I read it!!! Me too... I even read it twice...I didn't understand it!

Does this sound like your classroom? Many students read the words on the page, but somehow miss understanding and thinking about what they are reading. In the 21st century, students will have access to more information than any other students before them. They must learn to locate, assess, and use this information wisely. Today's students must not only read the words on the page and understand them, but they must also think critically about the information they are reading. The idea of thinking while reading has to be made visible; teachers must model and demonstrate for students how to think while reading. As students gain independence, teacher support should fade.

The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) engages students in a step-by-step process that guides students through understanding and thinking about text. DR-TA also promotes active comprehension. This metacognitive strategy teaches students to acquire and activate their own purposes for reading and develops their reading and thinking processes. During DR-TA, readers are encouraged to review what they know about a topic, make predictions about what they will learn, and follow through with an evaluation of what they actually learned as well as how their assertions pertained to what they read. DR-TA extends learning to high-order thought processes and is useful for processing all types of text (Tankersley, 2005). Some of the higher order thinking skills that DR-TA requires students to use include: making connections between interrelated elements of text, justifying their thought process and logical conclusions, and inferring meaning from the text. The skills can be practiced and refined to set the pathway toward independent reading and foster learner responsibility (Richardson & Morgan, 1997).

In addition to building comprehension strategies, DR-TA is a useful tool for teachers to model accurate and appropriate reading skills (Richardson & Morgan, 1997). The prediction component especially encourages active reading and serves as a way for the reader to get involved and interested in the text. Making predictions about the text can help improve understanding (Richardson & Morgan) as well as help clear up any misconceptions about the topic (Billmeyer & Barton, 1998). Janice Almasi (2003), in her book *Teaching Strategic Processes in Reading*, asserts that the DR-TA, especially making predictions, helps students focus their attention on the text and encourages active reading.

Not only is DR-TA an excellent method to introduce students to active reading for everyday text materials, but researchers have also found DR-TA to have an impact on readers' abilities in other areas. Richardson and Morgan (1997) assert that if correct practice of DR-TA is implemented school-wide, this technique can help set the stage for a sturdy foundation in "study-reading." This will become a useful skill to have as students' progress through grades and text becomes more demanding.

The purpose of DR-TA is:

- To encourage readers to be more aware of the strategies they use to interpret text.
- To help students understand the reading process.
- To develop prediction skills.
- To stimulate thinking and develop hypotheses about text which aid interpretation and comprehension.
- To increase understanding of the purposes and effects of the structures and features of particular text.
- To increase curiosity about particular texts and text-types.
- To encourage students to listen to the opinions of others and modify their own in light of additional information.

If used effectively, DR-TA has the potential to equip students with the abilities to determine purposes for reading; extract,

comprehend, and assimilate information; examine reading materials based on purposes for reading; and make decisions based upon information gleaned from reading. The DR-TA can help students read, think, understand, and remember what they have read.

## How to Use the Strategy:

The DR-TA is designed to guide students through the process of reading text. Questions are asked and answered, and predictions are made and tested throughout the reading. Additionally, new questions and predictions are formulated as the students progress through the text.

To introduce the strategy, the teacher gives examples of how to make predictions. A preview of the section to be read is given by having students read the title and make predictions. Independent thinking is encouraged as prior knowledge is incorporated into the predictions. All student predictions should be recorded by the teacher, even those that will later prove to be inaccurate. Misconceptions are clarified by the reader through interaction with the text and in post-reading discussions. After reading small selections, the teacher prompts the students with questions about specific information. It is important for the teacher not to interrupt too often. The amount of reading is adjusted depending on the purpose and difficulty of the text. The reading is broken into small sections, giving the students time to think about and process information. The teacher makes sure students can identify and understand important vocabulary. Words are explained in context. As the reading continues, questions are answered and predictions are confirmed, revised, or rejected. The predicting-reading-proving cycle continues throughout the reading. Predictions made at the beginning of the lesson should be revisited at the end of the lesson. This review offers a comprehension check. Questions such as, "Were you correct?" and, "What do you think now?" help students examine the proof of their predictions.

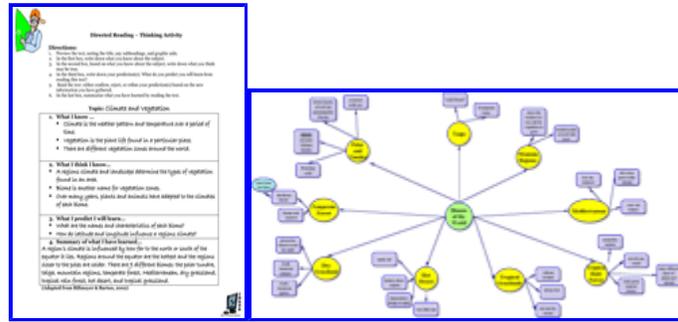
### Steps to completing a DR-TA

1. **Prediction** - Students reflect on what they think will be covered in the text. This step helps students set a purpose for reading. Begin by scanning the title, chapter headings, illustrations, and other explanatory materials. Have students make predictions on what they think the reading will be about.
2. **Read** - The teacher should divide the reading up into sections. This is usually a few paragraphs or pages. Students read the first section of text.
3. **Confirmation** - During this step, students engage in a discussion about what they have read. Initially, the teacher will lead this discussion by asking thought provoking or reflective types of questions. It is at this stage that students will either-confirm, reject, or refine their predictions and justify their ideas with reference to the text. Students then make new predictions.
4. The cycle of steps 1-3 continues until the text is read.

A graphic organizer can be used to hold students thinking as they use the DR-TA strategy. Below is an example of a graphic organizer that can be used and examples from elementary and secondary levels.

(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of the DR-TA worksheet.)

(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of a sample elementary DR-TA worksheet.)



(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of a sample secondary DR-TA worksheet.)

## Adaptations:

### Directed Listening-Thinking Activity

The *Directed Listening-Thinking Activity* is an adaptation of DL-TA and can hone students' abilities to comprehend text. The DL-TA is used to engage students in text which is above their independent and/or instructional reading level. The DL-TA develops critical reading skills and metacognition.

1. The teacher reads the title to the students and asks what the text might be about. The teacher then records the predictions on a chart or blackboard.
2. The teacher reads the first paragraph or the first section of text. The students are then asked to confirm, reject, or modify their predictions. Ask students if they still think the same as they did earlier.
3. Continue through the text – predicting, reading, confirming/rejecting/modifying, and discussing with students.
4. After reading the text, the teacher focuses on specific skill development and vocabulary. Students are invited to focus on words and phrases that puzzle or intrigue them.

### No Book DR-TA (McIntosh & Bear, 1993)

The *No Book DR-TA* can be used in whole group, small group, or a combination of the two. Before passing out textbooks, post the steps for completing the *No Book DR-TA* for the students to see.

1. List everything that you can think of that might be in a book on this subject.
2. Put items listed above into groups.
3. Give each group a name and arrange them as a table of contents.
4. Write the book. Write as much about each topic as you can. Try to summarize what each section will be about.

This activity is helpful in determining the students' needs for instruction. It can be done at the end of the quarter, semester, or class. The table of contents will be much more detailed.

### Table of Contents DR-TA (McIntosh & Bear, 1993)

Using the *Table of Contents DR-TA*, students carefully examine the table of contents, then think about what they already know and develop expectations about what will be covered in the chapter. Students also generate ideas for sources of information if they feel they do not have enough background knowledge. This DR-TA can be done individually or in groups.

1. For each chapter, read the title and say to yourself or write, what you think will be presented.
2. Read the subheadings for each chapter. Ask yourself these questions about each subheading: (use words, phrases, or sentences to answer these questions)

- What do I know I know about this topic?
- What do I think I know?
- What do I predict to find out in this chapter?
- If I don't know anything about the topic, where could I go to find out?

3. Compare your ideas with at least one other person.

**Whole Book DR-TA** (McIntosh & Bear, 1993)

1. Read the title and say to yourself what you think it means.
2. Say to yourself what you think will be in this book.
3. Read the table of contents. For each item, say what you think it means and what you think will be in that section. In small groups, you may make a structured overview of the table of contents.
4. Repeat step 2.
5. Read the index and guess what the items are and why they are included.
6. Repeat step 2.
7. Read the introduction.
8. Repeat step 2.
9. Read the preface.
10. Repeat step 2.
11. Look through the pictures, graphs, and so forth. For each, say what you think it means and why it is there.
12. Repeat step 2.
13. Do the same for all other sections.
14. Close the book and spend a few minutes thinking about the book.

- Have you read other books related to these topics?
- What sections give you particular concern?
- What materials might the teacher expect you to know?
- Will it be easy to study from this text?
- Which section will be most helpful to you?

**Assessment:**

Teachers who practice DR-TA with their students stand to learn a great deal about each student's ideas, thought processes, values, prior knowledge, and reasoning skills (Tankersley, 2005). The DR-TA can be used to evaluate a student's language learning. Through the DR-TA students demonstrate their ability to:

- Use context as an aid in predicting
- Draw conclusions and predict outcomes
- Locate information
- Identify supporting information
- Respond to texts
- Explore issues and ideas beyond the text
- Discuss the effects of linguistic structures and features.

Assessment procedures that are embedded in instruction can provide accurate information about a students' progress. These assessments highlight students' instructional needs and their accomplishments. Informal classroom-based assessment of comprehension offers a fuller picture of readers, whose understandings are not always captured well by other assessments. Teachers can conference with students as they are reading and keep interview notes. Anecdotal records, of student reading behaviors, are another way of assessing students' use of the DR-TA. Having students use the think-aloud strategy while reading is another way of assessing students. Finally, students can respond in writing explaining the processes used during their reading of the text.

**Resources:****Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (English Learning Area)**

This Web site provides information such as what is DR-TA, what is its purpose, and how to use DR-TA with students.  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/english/DRTA.htm>

**Directed Reading-Thinking Lesson Plan**

This Web site provides a generic lesson plan for using the DR-TA strategy. The author has included questions the teacher can ask students to facilitate the use of DR-TA.  
<http://www.deafed.net/PublishedDocs/sub/961007k.htm>

**Just Read Now - Directed Reading-Thinking Activity**

This Web site provides steps for using DR-TA and additional resources to check out.  
<http://www.justreadnow.com/strategies/drta.htm>

**Presentation on the DR-TA Strategy**

This presentation provides information on how DR-TA can be used to monitor comprehension.  
<http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/summerworkshop/lewis/edlite-slide015.html>

**The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity: Now More Than Ever in View of Technological Developments**

This presentation on DR-TA was given at the ASU Reading Conference in 1998.

[http://www.ed.arizona.edu/Valmont/Stauffer\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.ed.arizona.edu/Valmont/Stauffer_files/frame.htm)

**A Directed Listening-Thinking Activity for the Tell-Tale Heart**

In this lesson, students participate in a Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DLTA), in which they listen to the story *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe read aloud and answer prediction questions at designated stopping points during the reading. Students then discuss and write a written response to the story at the conclusion of the lesson, in the form of either an acrostic poem or comic strip. This lesson works well at Halloween or at the beginning of a mystery unit.

[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=850](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=850)

**References:**

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Billmeyer, R., & Barton, M.L. (1998). *Teaching reading in the content areas: If not me, then who?* Aurora, CO: McREL.

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[forpd@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:forpd@mail.ucf.edu) | (866) 227-7261 (FL only)

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