

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

# Phrase-Cued Text

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(Developed

by Smith, L. & Zygouris-Coe, V., 2008)

**"The goal in fluency instruction is not fast reading, although that happens to be a by-product of the instruction, but fluent meaning-filled reading."**

~S. Jay Samuels

## Rationale:

Fluency is the ability to read text with automaticity, accuracy, and good prosody. Having prosody involves being able to chunk words into appropriate phrases of meaningful units based on the syntactic features of the text (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). As with fluency itself, having prosody aids students with achieving greater comprehension of text, the ultimate goal of reading.

The strategy of *phrase-cued text*, also known as phrased text, assists developing and struggling students with both their fluency and comprehension by focusing on one of the key areas of prosody known as juncture, or appropriate text phrasing (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Studies have shown that using phrased-cued texts can facilitate reading performance as it helps focus students on the phrasing and chunking of texts (Rasinski, 1994). In turn, students who have better phrasing while they read often increase their comprehension of the given text.

Phrase-cued text obviously enhances fluency, but how does it impact comprehension? One of the characteristics of a disfluent reader is that he/she reads word-by-word, focusing much on decoding (Rasinski, 2003). Decoding can become so difficult that the reader cannot easily process and understand the text. By using *phrasal units*, the phrase carries the meaning within the discourse. Comprehension increases as the student is able to process the chunked text.

## How to Use the Strategy:

Although the lack of word recognition abilities in students can lend itself to reading difficulties, poorly developed skills in the area of phrasing can also prevent students from fluent reading and comprehension of text.

### Before Using the Phrase-Cued Text Method

- Before beginning the strategy, explain to your students the importance of phrasing, or chunking, text into pieces that reflect the natural rhythm of discourse.
- Take time to model effective phrasing and don't forget to include some non-examples of good phrasing to remind them of the difference. Invite students to discuss the differences they hear between fluent and disfluent reading, especially focusing on phrasing (Rasinski, 1994).
- Use authentic text, no more than 100 to 250 words. Make a copy of the text and prepare it with the phrase marks/slash marks. One slash mark, "/" can be used between phrases. Two slash marks, "//", can be used between sentences (Rasinski, 1994).

### A Phrase-Cued Text Lesson

When delivering a short lesson, 10 to 15 minutes a day, on the phrased cued text strategy, remember to focus on either individual students or small groups who need assistance with comprehension and fluency. Content area teachers may also use this strategy to assist remedial students in need of fluency and comprehension assistance during classroom conference or lab time.

The following steps are based on Rasinski's work (Rasinski, 1994; Rasinski, 2003).

1. Make a copy of the text and prepare it with the phrase marks/slash marks and give each student a copy of the phrase-cued text.
2. Remind students of the importance of reading with prosody and phrasing, instead of reading word-by-word.

## Phrase-Cued Text

3. Explain the phrasing marks to students.
4. Read the text orally to the students.
5. Next, read the text orally with the students, emphasizing the phrases.
6. Have students read the text orally with a partner.
7. Discuss the students' reading of the text for the purpose of assessing their comprehension.
8. Discuss the content of the text.
9. On the following class session, provide students with a copy of the original text without the phrase marks and have students practice reading the text.

## Phrase-Cued Text Examples

## Language Arts or Social Studies Example

**It all hit me at once: / my fears about Mother; / the fever; / Bush Hill; / watching Grandfather die; / being scared, / alone, / and hungry. // I cried. / I cried a river / and poor Eliza did her best to comfort me. / The kinder her words, / the harder I cried. //**

~Laurie Halse Anderson's *Fever* 1793

## Science Text Example

**An asteroid is a chunk of rock and metal / that orbits the sun. // Too small to be called planets, / most asteroids are less than 1 km / about 0.6 mi) across. // The largest known asteroid, / Ceres, / is about 1000 km / (620 mi) in diameter. // Most of the asteroids / are located between the orbits / of Mars and Jupiter.**

~Harcourt Science, 2000

## Assessment:

Assessing the use of the phrase-cued text strategy can be done by observing students' oral reading. Allowing students time to practice this strategy, while also making sure they have the opportunity to discuss or answer questions about the text they are reading, will be key to increasing comprehension and fluency.

As prosody is a large part of the phrase-cued text strategy, the following checklist will assist you with assessing students' expression and phrasing.

Florida Online Reading Professional Development			
Phrasing Checklist for Expression and Prosody During Oral Reading Observations			
Student Name	Date		
Item	Yes	No	
1. Student placed vocal emphasis on appropriate words.			
2. Student applied higher or lower vocal tone level at all points in the text.			
3. Student's reflection reflected the correct punctuation in the text.			
4. In narrative text with dialogue, student used appropriate vocal tone to represent the characters' mental or emotional condition (e.g., surprise, fear, excitement, etc., disappointment).			
5. Student utilized punctuation to pause appropriately at phrase boundaries.			
6. Student utilized propositional phrases to pause appropriately at phrase boundaries.			
7. Student utilized subject-verb divisions to pause appropriately at phrase boundaries.			
8. Student utilized conjunctions to pause appropriately at phrase boundaries.			
Notes:			
Adapted from: Hudson, R., Lane, H. and Pullen, P. (2005). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? <i>The Reading Teacher</i> 58, (8): 702-14.			

## Resources:

### 12 Quick and Easy Fluency Lessons

[http://content.scholastic.com/content/collateral\\_resources/pdf/b/building\\_fluency\\_lessons.pdf](http://content.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/b/building_fluency_lessons.pdf)

Practice sessions are outlined in this document to use phase-cued text practice in the classroom. This is a great strategy for fluency instruction.

### Phrase-Cued Text Practice

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/LAImproveOralReadingSkillsWithPhraseCuedTextPractice2.htm>

A lesson is outlined from this link to use in the classroom with third graders. The objective of this lesson is to have students read with proper phrasing, intonation, and expression in a chunked text.

### Increasing Fluency

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/skill-builder/reading/48606.html?page=2>

Phase-cued reading can be used to improve prosody and to instruct students how to use phrases when reading. Classroom implication is also given through this link.

### Comprehensive Literacy Plan

[http://www.mcsk12.net/admin/tlapages/literacy\\_sec/documents/2005lit\\_plan\\_module2.pdf](http://www.mcsk12.net/admin/tlapages/literacy_sec/documents/2005lit_plan_module2.pdf)

This PDF document uses the phase-cued text for students to practice using syntactically and semantically reading in phrases. This is a great resource to have as it contains a plethora of information on literacy and classroom instruction.

## References:

Anders, L.H. (2000). *Fever 1773*. New York: Aladdin.

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

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