Reading in High School: Strategies for Teaching Comprehension in Secondary School Content Area Classrooms

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Just Read, Florida! Leadership Conference
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Based on

• Chapter to be published soon:

• Slides available at [www.umich.edu/~moje](http://www.umich.edu/~moje)
What is the main idea?
Comprehend This . . .

Emergency Quota Act of 1921

AN ACT
To limit the immigration of aliens into the United States. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled...

Sec. 2. (a) That the number of aliens of any nationality who may be admitted under the immigration laws to the United States in any fiscal year shall be limited to 3 per centum of the number of foreign born persons of such nationality resident in the United States as determined by the United States census of 1910.
• What makes this text easy to read?

• What makes this text difficult to read?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>1,251,402</td>
<td>1,221,283</td>
<td>1,135,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1,871,509</td>
<td>1,352,251</td>
<td>1,037,234</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2,784,894</td>
<td>2,311,237</td>
<td>1,686,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,887</td>
<td>1,343,125</td>
<td>1,610,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>937,884</td>
<td>1,139,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>48,557</td>
<td>65,923</td>
<td>102,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Total Entering U.S.</td>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>430,001</td>
<td>38,471</td>
<td>3,913</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>805,228</td>
<td>51,142</td>
<td>32,793</td>
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<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>309,556</td>
<td>25,153</td>
<td>12,244</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>522,919</td>
<td>45,759</td>
<td>16,082</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>706,896</td>
<td>59,490</td>
<td>13,173</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>294,314</td>
<td>27,172</td>
<td>1,566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>304,488</td>
<td>25,528</td>
<td>1,596</td>
<td>8,253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
That the number of aliens of any nationality who may be admitted under the immigration laws to the United States in any fiscal year shall be limited to 3 per centum of the number of foreign born persons of such nationality resident in the United States as determined by the United States census of 1910. This provision shall not apply to the following, and they shall not be counted in reckoning any of the percentage limits provided in this Act . . .

- Knowledge
  - Semantic
  - Mathematical
  - Historical
  - Geographical
  - Discursive
  - Pragmatic
Understanding this text also depends on . . .

- Recognition that one should get information, ideas, perspectives from texts
- Recognition that texts can be questioned
- Knowledge of how to access relevant information
- Ability to make sense of relevant information
Understanding this text depends on more than just the knowledge and skills the reader brings to the text . . .

It also depends on the intersection of reader experiences, knowledge, and interest, with the demands of the text and your goals of instruction.
Model of Literate Practice

Text structure, vocabulary, print style and font, discourse, genre, register, motivating features

Word knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, linguistic/textual knowledge, strategy use, inference-making abilities, motivation, identity

Environment, purpose, social relations, cultural norms, relationships, motivating features, identities (e.g., schools, families, peer groups, academic content areas)

Broader Context

Comprehension

Context

Reader

Text
Building on Students’ Backgrounds, Knowledge, and Interest
Possibilities

• Students’
  - high engagement in topic
  - opinions
  - rich experience base
  - rich youth culture vocabulary
  - interest in challenging immigration law

Challenges

• Students’
  - lack of engagement in text
  - self-interested perspectives
  - lack of broad and deep knowledge
  - lack of technical vocabulary
  - lack of critical literacy skills
Some Practices and Strategies for Building Necessary Knowledge and Skills
Content-Area Literacy Teaching Practices vs. Strategies

- Literacy Teaching Practices
  - are routines or habits that match what people do in your discipline
  - provide a framework for thinking
  - provide organization for instruction

- Literacy Teaching Strategies are
  - tools for helping youth learn reading and writing skills
  - chosen based on the purpose of the lesson, the demands of the text, and the needs of your students
Purpose Setting

• Free writing
• Advanced organizers
• Prediction activities (preview guides; anticipation/reaction guides)
• K-W-L
• Images
Whole-Group Knowledge Building

- Read texts together
- Talk about the texts (think alouds)
- Make texts visible (make words visible)
- Defining words; interpreting nuanced meanings
- Reading charts and tables
Sonnets.

I.

The New Colossus. Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightening, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Emma Lazarus, 1883.
(Written in aid of Bartholdi Pedestal Fund)
Questioning

• Pressing for understanding
• Turning to texts
• Specific feedback
Visualization

• Read texts aloud and ask students to visualize and to describe or to draw what they hear
• Have students illustrate the main points of the text (great assessment tool, as well)
• Provide images to build visualization skills
Summarization

- Synthesize across texts
  - “Coming back around”
- Refer back to texts
  - To ideas or concepts
  - To key actors, events, or findings
  - To procedures
  - To words or phrases
  - To images
• The following classes shall be excluded from admission to the United States ... All idiots, insane persons, epileptics, and persons who have been insane within five years previously; paupers; persons likely to become a public charge; professional beggars; persons afflicted with a loathsome or with a dangerous contagious disease; persons who have been convicted of a felony or other crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.

• “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free,” The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

• Lazarus, 1883

---32 Stat. 1214, sec. 2 of 1903 US Statutes at Large
Summing Things Up
What Does Comprehension Instruction Require of Us?

• Knowledge of students’ interests, knowledge, and skills
  - Relationships with students and knowledge of students/community
  - Ability to maintain student engagement

• Disciplinary knowledge
  - Facts
  - Discursive styles
What Does Comprehension Instruction Require of Us?

• Knowledge of how to build relevant knowledge and skills for finding and interpreting information

• Knowledge of how to support reasoned critique
  - . . . While acknowledging passionate beliefs
For more information . . .

www.umich.edu/~moje