

Balanced Literacy Re-envisioned

1. Combine read-aloud and shared reading into a shared interactive read-aloud that gives students access to the text by distributing copies or projecting it. Seeing the author's words this way will support more text-based thinking and talk while you read the text aloud.
2. Hand over the responsibility of making meaning in that read-aloud directly to students, by setting them up to problem solve rather than watch you solve problems. This way they can experience for themselves the whole range of problems readers must deal with to deeply understand a text, while developing a vision of what that thinking looks, sounds, and feels like.
3. Instead of launching independent reading with a minilesson where you demonstrate a strategy or skill, remind students of what they've already done and experienced in the read-aloud and invite them to deliberately try to do that same work in their independent books. This acknowledges that it's far easier to transfer and apply something you've already done than something you've just watched and heard.
4. Based on how individual students handle (or don't) the problems they face in the read-aloud and their independent books, form flexible, needs-based small groups that offer students more time to practice solving particular kinds of problems in accessible texts that pose those problems.
5. During independent reading conferences, observe and listen carefully to students to get a sense of how deeply they're reading and how much they're taking away from the read-aloud and small-group work. Then offer a teaching point based on what you've observed and heard, rather than impose a predetermined agenda.

A Schema for Analysis

How Does <i>This</i>	Verb	<i>That?</i>
Word	Connect with	Story
Line	Develop	Article
Detail	Add to	Argument
Sentence	Affect	Poem
Paragraph(s)	Contribute to	Theme
Part	Relate to	Main/Central Idea
Section	Describe	Author's Message
Stanza	Impact	Author's Claim
Evidence	Capture	Problem
Setting	Express	Structure
Character Trait	Convey	Plot
Action	Reflect	Character
Event	Suggest	Point of View
Reason	Show	Counter Claim
Fact	Demonstrate	Setting
Structure	Explain	Section
Poetic Device	Support	Paragraph
Point of View	Inform	Stanza
Illustration	Reveal	Tone
Chart	Rebut	Structure
Graph	Suggest	Point of View
Tone	Illustrate	Reason

Small Group Transcript

Vicki: I brought you together today because I want us to have a chance to practice something that readers need to do, especially as they start reading harder books. Sometimes a writer doesn't come right out and tell us exactly what's happening. They expect their readers to figure out what's going on by paying close attention to the details the writer gives them. We're going to do that today with a few pages from a book called *No More Monsters for Me!* and after each page we're going to share our ideas about what we think is going on and why. So here are some pages of the book. Do we want to read silently, take turns or have me read it?

Veronica: Take turns.

Vicki: Okay, Veronica, do you want to start us off?

Veronica: [Reads the first page, with Vicki helping pronounce Minneapolis Simpkin]

Vicki: So what do we think is going on?

Anthony: The little girl and her mom are fighting.

Vicki: How did you figure that out?

Anthony: Because it says they yelled.

Vicki: Do we know why they're fighting?

Billy: The girl's a troublemaker.

Vicki: What made you say that?

Billy: Because she's yelling back at her mom and she shouldn't do that.

Vicki: Okay, you're right, she could be a troublemaker and that could be why they're fighting. Does anyone else have other ideas?

Amira: Maybe because of this [pointing to the words Minneapolis Simpkin]

Vicki: Hmm. Minneapolis Simpkin. Do we have any idea what that is?

Veronica: Maybe it's what the mom's cooking and her mom doesn't want to give her any yet."

Heidi: Or maybe it's the little girl's name.

Vicki: I'm pretty sure Veronica got her idea from the picture, right Veronica? But Heidi can you tell us what made you think that?

Heidi: Well, the mom's talking her, so that could be her name.

Billy: That's too weird.

Vicki: What about the rest of you? Anthony, Amira? [Anthony & Amira shrug] So let's go on to the next page then and see if we get any more clues that can help us figure out why they're fighting and what Minneapolis Simpkin means.

Anthony: [Reads next page spread]

Billy: See, she is a troublemaker. I think she wanted to go outside after dark and her mom said no. And now she's really gonna get in trouble because there might be some older kids hiding in the bushes who aren't nice or maybe she'll be stopped by a policeman and she's, like, only seven years old.

Vicki: I think, Billy, that what you just did was think about what you know can happen when you go outside by yourself after dark to get an idea about why they were fighting and what might happen next. But is there anything in the words that give us a clue either to your idea or other ideas?

Amira: [Pointing to the line with the word pet] The girl might want a pet and her mom says no."

Heidi: Yeah, and that could be why her mom said "Not even a tadpole."

Vicki: Interesting. We now have two ideas about why they're fighting. Veronica, Anthony, what do you think?

Veronica: I think she wants a pet.

Anthony: I think maybe Billy's right and she's gonna get into trouble.

Vicki: So let's keep reading and see what we learn next.

Amira: [Reads next page spread]

Vicki: There're those funny words again. We thought it could be whatever the mom was cooking or it could be the girl's name. What do we think now?

Veronica: I don't think it's what the mom was cooking anymore. But maybe it's like an expression. You know, like "Oh my gosh."

Vicki: That's an interesting idea. What do the rest of you think?

Anthony: Yeah, that's possible.

Vicki: Okay, let's read our last page for today and see whether we can finally figure out what Minneapolis Simpkin means and what the fight is about.

Heidi: [Reads next page spread and a few of the students say “ah” when she reads the line “Mom never said no to a monster.”]

Vicki: So I heard lots of you say ah. Why did you say that?

Anthony: They were fighting about a pet. Right here it says “Mom never said no to a monster.”

Vicki: Billy, do you agree, too?

Billy: Yeah, but she still shouldn’t go outside at night by herself. And that’s her name, Minneapolis Simpkin.

Vicki: How did you figure that out?

Billy: Because it wouldn’t make sense if she said ‘Oh my gosh’ will help you.

Vicki: So you tried our other idea out and it didn’t really make sense here. Does thinking it’s her name make sense in every case?

[The students go back to the text and all agree that it does]

Billy: But it’s still a weird name.

Vicki: You’re right, it is strange, which is why we weren’t all sure. I know you, Heidi, thought it could be her name right at the beginning because her mom was talking to her and she said her name, just like I said your name, Heidi, when I was talking to you. So that’s one thing we can remember: that sometimes writers don’t come right out and tell us what a character’s name is but they slip it into a line of dialogue and we have to figure that out.

But you also did a lot of other amazing work. You kept reading forward looking for clues that would help us figure out something we weren’t sure about, and you all kept on revising your thinking every time you read a new page and heard something new. That’s exactly what readers do. They keep adding on and revising their understanding as they read.

And so last question, Billy. At first you thought Minneapolis Simpkin was a troublemaker. Do you still think so or have you revised your ideas about her?

Billy: Well, she may be a troublemaker but she’s also nice because she hugged the monster.

Veronica: And she’s helpful.

Heidi: And caring.

Vicki: So it sounds like a couple of you revised our ideas about her, too. Let’s remember to keep revising and adding on to our ideas whenever we read in order to figure what the writer might not tell us directly.