



EPISODE 1

5 Shared Reading Mistakes to Avoid

You are listening to episode one: Shared reading mistakes to avoid.

Before I get into those five mistakes, let's talk a minute about what shared reading IS.

Shared reading is when a teacher and a group of students read an enlarged text *together*. This can be the whole class, it can be a small group--even in homeschooling you could do this one-on-one. The point is that there is *one* text, and you are reading it *together*. In a classroom it's big enough so that everyone can see it. They're usually seated together close on a rug or in a corner of the classroom.

Now that we know what shared reading IS, let's talk about its purpose. Here is a great quote from Allison Ryan of Learning at the Primary Pond. She says that "Shared reading helps students internalize reading strategies and prepares them for what's coming next by supporting them with texts that are a bit too hard for students to read on their own, but are still accessible with the teacher's help."

Shared reading is part of a balanced literacy model which includes four types of reading: we have read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Within those types of reading, we teach the five core elements of reading instruction, which are: phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary.

I like to add a sixth one which is: fix-up strategies. Those are what readers use when they're stuck on a word or when their reading doesn't make sense.

All right, are you ready? Let's start with mistake number one.

#1 The biggest mistake when it comes to shared reading is NOT doing it.

We know read aloud is important, we value guided reading or some kind of similar small group reading instruction, and, of course, we know our students need to read on their own to

become better readers, but shared reading feels like an extra that we don't have time to schedule. Actually, though, shared reading is an essential piece of the balanced literacy model and I'm going to explain that to you using a visual.

Let's imagine that you are standing and holding a ladder that each of your students needs to climb. The bottom of that ladder, where you're standing and holding tight, represents the greatest amount of support that you give to your students as readers. That bottom rung is going to be read aloud where you do basically all the work, right? You are reading to your students and they are listening. Certainly there will be discussion involved in that, but most of the work belongs to you.

The next rung is shared reading, in which you share a text that would otherwise be too difficult for most of your students to access on their own. They need this next rung, because it bridges the gap from read aloud to guided reading.

Guided reading is when you are teaching small groups of students at a similar reading level. It's teacher facilitated, but students are doing more of the work. You're serving more as a coach and your students are applying what you taught, modeled, and practiced in whole-class read aloud and shared reading lessons.

Then, of course, the final rung is independent reading—it's at the top. With independent reading, students have the least amount of support from you. You are out of the equation almost completely because, while you'll be meeting with them every week or two for independent reading conferences, they are on their own. They are reading books that match their interests and reading level and doing all the problem-solving independently.

Do you see how shared reading is such an important rung of that ladder? It provides text whose difficulty lies somewhat between the text that you read to the whole class with the read aloud and the text that they read during guided reading, which is at their instructional level. Here's something exciting: when you regularly do intentional, planned shared reading lessons, you will likely find that your students progress through reading levels faster, because they use what you've taught them in shared reading as they read harder and harder texts in guided reading.

Mistake #2 is actually the opposite of mistake #1.

Instead of not doing shared reading at all, some teachers **spend too much time on it**. This actually probably sounds like good news to you, because when do you ever hear in education to spend LESS time on something? It's always the opposite, right? You go to a conference about math and they tell you to teach math for two hours a day. You go to a reading conference and they tell you you must have a three hour literacy block for your students to become good readers. Meanwhile, you're supposed to teach grammar and handwriting and vocabulary and everything else and before you know it, you need twelve hours in your school day!

I have good news for you! Shared reading doesn't and **SHOULDN'T** take up a lot of your school day. In fact, I recommend just spending ten to fifteen minutes a day, three to five days a week on shared reading.

You want your students to look forward to shared reading. It should be an enjoyable and exciting part of your day. Here's a tip when it comes to shared reading: stop while it's still fun. If most of your students are starting to squirm and are no longer participating, either adjust your pace by talking less and engaging them more, or bring the lesson to a swift end.

Mistake #3 is choosing the wrong text for a shared reading lesson.

I'm going to be honest with you and tell you that this is the mistake I made most often as a primary grades teacher. Instead of choosing a text that allowed me to teach what my students needed to learn next, I kind of went about it backwards. I looked at the meager supply of big books that I had in my classroom and chose one I thought my students would enjoy. That's it. Instead of thinking about what they needed to know and choosing a text that matched, I chose a text and then tried to pick something out I could teach them. It's no surprise, then, that shared reading was not a strength of my reading block.

What I wish I knew then is that there are things you need to consider as you choose a shared reading text. Now, don't worry. This is not rocket science. You don't need to spend lots of time choosing a text, but you need to keep a few things in mind.

- Number one is to choose a text that is one to two levels higher than the average level of the student readers in your classroom.
- You'll also want to vary your text choices based on genre. I remember back when I was in college, and we talked about shared reading it was mostly about shared reading as something to practice and build fluency. We talked a lot about using poems and predictable books for shared reading, but we didn't talk a lot about promoting other genres in shared reading, like nonfiction texts. You certainly can and should use those predictable texts, those songs, those rhymes, but you can also use stories, and nonfiction text as well.
- You should also make sure the text is big enough for everyone to see. And if you heard that and thought, "Yeah, right, we only have a handful of big books and they are crazy expensive!" I have two words for you: document camera. Ask your administration for a document camera, or put it on your wish list so a generous parent can purchase one for you if this is not something that you have. If neither of these options works, this is something worth buying out of pocket because a document camera makes any text work for shared reading. It allows you to project any text on a larger board or screen so that everyone can see it. I also want to mention this: if you have a subscription to readinga-z.com (which, in my opinion, every teacher and homeschooler should have), check for projectable books, because they have books that are formatted so that when you project them, it just turns one page after the other. If you're doing this at home with your child, go ahead and use it on an iPad. In a classroom, you can easily project those texts for everyone to see.
- Something else to consider when choosing your shared reading text is to make sure it has features that allow your students to join in. If you're reading with very young children, like pre-k, and you're doing shared reading with them, you definitely want a predictable text with very few words on a page. As they get older, there are other things that you can consider, particularly stories that interest students, stories that allow for predicting, or higher-level comprehension.

- You also want to make sure the text is worth reading again and again, because that's what we do during shared reading--we revisit the same text several times over the course of a week. You might choose a story line that your students can relate to, or nonfiction material that interests them. Then, again, if you're teaching those very young students especially, you might want to choose a text that has a refrain that they can chime in on over and over again. Basically... choose a good book that will engage your students.
- Finally, make sure the text allows you to teach what your students need to learn next.

This is a segue into **mistake #4: Not using shared reading to its full potential.**

I talked about that a little while ago, how when I was in college and we talked about shared reading, we mostly talked about it as being used to build fluency and excitement around books. We didn't talk a lot about all the things you can do with shared reading. I thought that shared reading was when the teacher read the text with the students, focusing almost exclusively on fluency. I did not understand that you can use shared reading to teach all the skills that students will need they grow as readers and the skills they will use in those guided reading lessons, right? The next rung of the ladder.

Remember, you are bridging that gap from read aloud to guided reading. Ask yourself: "What skills do my students need to be successful in guided reading?" Or, put another way, "What have I noticed in my guided reading lessons that my students are struggling with?" Address those skills in your shared reading lessons.

Those skills are going to vary, of course, depending on the level of your students, but here are some ideas:

- If you're working with very young kids, pre-K and K, you're going to be working on concepts of print like: turning the pages; reading from left to right; knowing the difference between words, letters, sentences; things like voice to print matching, where every word I say matches a word on the page.

- Eventually, you'll be teaching them things like phonological and phonemic awareness such as letter sounds, identifying rhyming words, or breaking words apart into syllables.
- When you choose the right book, shared reading can be excellent for teaching phonics skills. You may have a book that has a lot of CVC words that your students can sound out. Or, it may have slightly more difficult skills, such as CVCE words or long vowel patterns or even word endings.
- You can teach fluency with shared reading, of course, because you're reading the text over and over again, so you'll teach things like reading at a good rate, reading accurately, reading with proper expression, noticing punctuation as you read.
- Shared reading is also an ideal time to focus on sight words, because you'll be seeing those words over and over again.
- Then, of course, you can build comprehension by talking about the text; asking meaningful, open ended questions; and coming back to that text each day of the week.

As you start doing shared reading, or, if you're already doing it, as you start using it more intentionally, you're going to start to see all these teaching possibilities jump out of the text. It does take practice, though. It takes practice seeing quality lessons, then creating them on your own as you start to gradually read a text in any old place and say, "Wow, this would be perfect for shared reading!" Then, taking it back to your classroom and getting it ready to use with your document camera.

If you need ideas for what to teach during a shared reading lesson, for example, specific ways to build fluency or comprehension, I have a blog series all about shared reading on themeasuredmom.com and you can find that by going to themeasuredmom.com/sharedreading. I will provide a link to that series in the show notes. That series will show you specific things that you can do to build fluency, comprehension, and phonics skills during shared reading.

We are on mistake #5: Letting shared reading get stale.

The good news is shared reading does not have to be boring even for your advanced readers, because there are so many things you can do to liven it up.

Here are some examples:

- You can use highlighter tape, wikki stix, sticky notes--things like that--to draw attention to sight words, phonics patterns, or punctuation.
- You can play educated guessing games by covering up words and helping your students figure out by using context clues or by revealing small parts of the word.
- You can take learning OUT of the book. By that, I mean you start with a book, and then you teach a skill and take it out of the book by doing a separate activity. So, if you are reading a book that features a lot of silent e words, you could read it and then go back to that page, highlight that word with silent e, and then have your students work in pairs to do a word sort of CVC words and CVCE words. You see that you're using the text as a starting point, and then you're isolating that skill and practicing it, and then returning to the text again.
- Something else you can do is, when your students are familiar with the story, is to write the events on sentence strips, mix them up, and have them help you put those in order on a pocket chart.
- To challenge your more advanced students, you could cover words in the story that maybe by the end of the week everybody knows what they are, and then challenge them to think of a different word that means the same thing and that will work in its place, and then read the revised text together.
- You can mix up how you read the text. Sometimes, you'll read it chorally, where you and the students read it together. Remember that they are chiming in as they can--some of the students will not be able to read every word, but they read as much as they can. You

can do echo reading, where you read a page and they say it after you. That's a great way for them to practice fluency, especially for those children who cannot read every single word. You can do fill-in-the-blank reading, where you read and then stop, and they read the next word.

- Another way to keep shared reading from getting stale is to do an interesting comprehension follow-up activity on the final day. Some teachers have their students act out the story, or use puppets to retell the story, or even, together in a shared writing lesson, write a different version of the story. There are many, many things that you can do to keep a single book interesting, but don't ever feel pressure to use a book for too long. If you've used a book for three days and you feel that you've used it up, that's totally fine. Switch to a new book the next day or resume shared reading the following week.

I hope that this episode has helped you think about shared reading in a little bit of a different way. If you'd like to learn more about shared reading, there are several things you can do. If you are a member of The Measured Mom Plus, you can log into your account and check out the mini-course on shared reading. I will provide the link to that mini-course in the show notes.

Everyone is invited to read my free blog series about shared reading at themeasuredmom.com/sharedreading, and finally, be sure to tune in to the next episode of Triple R Teaching, because I'm going to be answering common questions about shared reading.

To get all of these links, you can find the show notes for this episode at: themeasuredmom.com/podcast1

Thanks for listening, and I'll talk to you again soon!