

From *Text Savvy*, by Sarah Daunis and  
Maria Cassiani Iams

## The Structure of Weekly Shared Reading

---

Keeping consistent with Heard's ten- to fifteen-minute time frame for the poem of the week, building upon Bloom's idea of scaffolded instruction, and maximizing Cambourne's conditions for learning in reading, weekly shared reading became part of the upper-grade curriculum at PS59. The drastic difference in my students' understanding of poetry was quite convincing that more practice with sophisticated texts was necessary for upper-grade readers as they strengthened and solidified their reading skills. After recognizing the five essential reading skills (further explained in Chapter 2) that proficient readers integrate while reading, I set up a five-day systematic way to discuss texts within and across genres. The cyclical structure of weekly shared reading enabled me to provide sufficient time for students to practice a variety of reading strategies in a supportive environment, to assess students' reading skills, and to plan for future instruction.

Alongside my reading and writing workshops, weekly shared reading became valued as an important part of my day. From the get-go, I explained to my students that this added structure would allow us to slow things down, to take the time to join in a shared conversation, to think deeply about a handful of texts. Since my students were already familiar with the idea of a mentor text, this new structure was not that foreign to them. While the idea of staying with a text five days and looking at it in five different ways was new, the foundation of our classroom community was one that valued thinking deeply about our reading and writing work. Therefore, weekly shared reading perfectly supported those goals and was readily accepted by my students.

### *A Week at a Glance*

During the week, I focus on one of the five essential reading skills each day, modeling a very specific reading strategy to build that skill. Every week, I focus on the same five reading skills; the reading strategies modeled and practiced vary from week to week.

**Table 2 Weekly Shared Reading: A Week at a Glance**

Day of Week	Reading Skill	Examples of Reading Strategies That Support the Skill
Monday <i>Having a First Glance</i>	Previewing the text and having expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• previewing text</li> <li>• scanning page and pointing out features</li> <li>• defining genre</li> <li>• confirming genre after text is read</li> <li>• setting expectations for the text</li> <li>• setting a purpose for reading</li> </ul>
Tuesday <i>Doing a Double Take</i>	Locating oneself in the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thinking, "What do I know about this topic already?"</li> <li>• thinking, "What might be new information for me?"</li> <li>• explaining, "These connections help me understand the text because . . ."</li> <li>• explaining, "These questions help me understand the text because . . ."</li> <li>• reading and thinking, "What is the text mostly about?"</li> <li>• reading and thinking, "What information is important and what information is interesting?"</li> </ul>
Wednesday <i>Filling in the Picture</i>	Envisioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creating a movie in your mind</li> <li>• thinking about what you see in your mind's eye</li> <li>• creating graphic organizers you can see in your head</li> <li>• reading and "filling" information</li> <li>• sketching a picture or diagram</li> </ul>
Thursday <i>Digging Deeper</i>	Inferring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thinking about the big ideas in a text</li> <li>• thinking about the moral or lesson of a story</li> <li>• paying close attention while reading to detect the author's tone and slant</li> <li>• identifying the author's perspective</li> </ul>
Friday <i>Getting the Big Picture</i>	Synthesizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading and thinking, "What do I know <i>now</i> about this topic? Where is the evidence to support my thinking?"</li> <li>• reading and thinking, "How has my thinking changed? How have I revised my thinking?"</li> <li>• stating what the text is mostly about</li> <li>• having ideas about the text as a whole</li> <li>• preparing for accountable conversation</li> </ul>

**Table 3 The Structure of Weekly Shared Reading**

<b>What the Students Are Doing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sitting on the rug in the meeting area next to their reading partners</li><li>• looking at text on the overhead (or enlarged text)</li><li>• listening as the teacher reads the text out loud</li><li>• listening as the teacher models and encourages use of specific strategies to build essential reading skills</li><li>• practicing reading strategies with the enlarged text</li><li>• turning to talk to their reading partners</li></ul>
<b>What the Teacher Is Doing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• modeling the habits and behaviors of a fluent reader</li><li>• identifying one or two aspects of the text that support the strategy being taught</li><li>• encouraging students to practice the strategy with her</li><li>• assessing on the run</li><li>• listening in on partnership conversation</li></ul>
<b>Materials/Time Frame</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10-15 minutes per day, five days a week</li><li>• teacher-selected texts in a variety of genres—enlarged or on the overhead</li><li>• shared reading text is copied for students and placed in weekly shared reading folders, so students can refer to the text and use it as a resource</li><li>• in fifth grade, students use a shared reading notebook to jot down their thinking before, during, and after weekly shared reading</li><li>• anecdotal notes for assessing on the run</li></ul>

The content of weekly shared reading focuses on teaching and practicing reading strategies to build the five essential reading skills that proficient readers consistently utilize. The structure of weekly shared reading follows the existing and comfortable structure of any shared reading instruction.

### *Text Selection for Weekly Shared Reading*

As I plan for weekly shared reading in my classroom, I am committed to providing opportunities to practice reading strategies and build reading skills with a variety of genres. At the beginning of the school

year, when I don't know my readers as well, I set up a monthly cycle of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and "other." The other consists of the more unique genres of text, such as menus, maps, charts or tables, and flyers. As I get to know my readers, my monthly cycle of shared reading text might change, based on my readers' needs. Different from mentor texts that are used during reading and writing workshops to highlight a genre-specific technique within a unit of study, these texts are designed to push the boundaries of a reading unit of study. I pick texts based on the overarching needs of my students *as readers*. In planning weekly shared reading with third-grade colleagues, our assessment of the students revealed that our third graders needed more reading skill and strategy practice on short narrative and nonnarrative nonfiction. The "other" during a few monthly cycles became another nonfiction text in an effort to support these third-grade readers.

As I model the strategies of a proficient reader, I remind students that I often go back to my favorite books again and again. I talk about how I pick up on details previously unnoticed or how I deepen my understanding of myself with each reread. Furthermore, I model the value of returning to a text when I do not understand, demonstrating how important it is to make sense of my reading. Therefore, it has been very easy for my students to understand why I would pick one text and stick with it for the entire week—my students know that smart readers can and should return to the same text again and again.

I find the short texts for weekly shared reading in various places—pages from the books in my classroom, snippets of magazine articles, and even good test-preparation materials. I select a text that is either on or slightly above the average reading level in my classroom; because I'm the one doing the fluent reading of the text, my students can engage in the meaning making and thinking. Regardless, the texts I use during weekly shared reading mimic the more sophisticated texts that my upper-grade readers encounter throughout the school year.

Before I just slap a shared text on the overhead, I really examine it and think about it. Depending on the strategies I want to highlight, a potential short text may or may not be the most ideal one to use in weekly shared reading. Just as I am thoughtful about the read-aloud books I choose, I am also thoughtful and purposeful about the weekly shared reading texts I present.

# Text Savvy, by

Sarah Daunis  
and Maria Cassiani Iams

Heinemann 2007

## *Day One: First Glance*

On Monday, I gathered the students at the meeting area and directed their eyes to the overhead screen.

"Today, we are going to look at a new text. We are going to be looking at it as readers. Every time readers look at a text, they think about what genre it is and what expectations they have for the text," I said.

I turned on the overhead, showing the students a page from a math test. "This text doesn't look familiar to me. It doesn't look like a page from a story. It doesn't look like nonfiction . . . Turn and talk to your partner: what genre do you think this text is?"

I listened in to students' conversations.

"I think it is realistic fiction. It looks like content from the blurb," said Cedric.

"It looks like a math problem," Charlie said.

"What makes this genre look like a math problem?" I asked.

"It looks like a pattern. We had something like this for homework once," Ariana said.

"I see the word *answer*" Sam said.

Figure 7-2 The sample question: item 28

**28** Luis counts the total number of ducks swimming on a pond each day. On Monday, he counts 1 duck. On Tuesday, he counts 2 ducks. On Wednesday, he counts 4 ducks. On Thursday, he counts 8 ducks.

**Part A**  
If the pattern continues, how many ducks will Luis count on Saturday?  
**Show your work.**

Answer \_\_\_\_\_ ducks

**Part B**  
On the lines below, describe the pattern you used to find your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Page 6 Book 2 Sample Test 2005

"I see *Part A* and *Part B*," Danyil said.

"So, now that we know it is a math problem, what are we expecting to have in it? Turn and talk to your partner," I said.

I then listened in to conversations.

"I can expect a story—a story problem," said Cedric.

"There will be a situation," John said.

"Numbers," Reem said.

"Numbers and words," Theoren said.

"Writing. The lines make me think I have to write there," Sam said.

"Great thinking, readers. Now we are going to read it," I said. "I came across a situation and numbers. Hmm . . . we didn't say, 'Question.' I see a question, 'How many ducks will Luis count on Saturday?' So, whenever you look at a math problem, you can expect a situation, numbers, or something you have to work with. Tomorrow, we are going to focus on what information we need to know and what we don't need to know. Great work today."

Over the course of ten minutes, I was able to introduce the students to this new genre—the math test. I encouraged the students to participate in this investigatory work, to realize that they already knew a lot about this genre. The students are eased into this work, are given a chance to dip their feet in. In the course of ten minutes, the kids identified what a math test can look like. We now had a list: math tests have situations, numbers, sections, questions, and lines. Instead of telling them the elements of the genre, I supported them in figuring it out.

### *Day Two: Doing a Double Take*

On Tuesday, to help students locate themselves in this math problem, I focused on the reading strategy of determining importance in a text. (This genre lends itself to separating the important information from the extraneous information.) I invited the students to the rug and began: "Readers, yesterday when we took a first glance at this text, we focused on its genre and our expectations as a reader. We decided it was a math problem and that we expect to get information from it to solve the problem. We saw that there are words, numbers, a work section, and lines for writing. So, now we know we have a purpose for reading this problem—to solve it. Readers always ask themselves, 'Why am I reading this?'"

"Today we are going to focus on what information is important and what is not so important, knowing that our reason for reading it is to solve the problem. When readers find important information, they mark up the text. Sometimes they underline text, sometimes they put a star. Watch me as I start reading" I read, "Luis counts the total number of ducks swimming on a pond each day. On Monday,

he counts one duck.' Hmm . . . 'Monday,' 'one duck,' that's important. I am going to underline *Monday* and *one duck*."

I kept reading, "'On Tuesday, he counts two ducks . . . Hmm . . . 'Tuesday,' two ducks.'" I underlined *Tuesday* and *two ducks*.

Helena raised her hand. "I notice that on Monday there's one duck. On Tuesday, there are two. The number doubles."

"I notice you're looking at it as a mathematician," I acknowledged before returning to my reading and underlining. "Wednesday equals four ducks. Thursday equals eight ducks," I said as I underlined both. "So as readers, it looks like we are noticing a pattern. That's really important. OK, now it's your turn. Look at the rest of the page—Part A and Part B. What are you going to mark up? Turn and talk to your partner." I started to move around the classroom, listening to conversations.

"A lot of you said to underline *Saturday*. This is all going to help us solve the problem. What else is important?"

"*If the pattern continues* (in Part A)," said Stephanie.

"*Describe the pattern* (in Part B). You wouldn't know what to write for this section without the information," Sloan said.

"Great," I said, "because we set a purpose for reading we (1) know to continue the pattern to Saturday and (2) know to describe the pattern. Knowing the important information helps us know what our work is as a reader and a mathematician. Tomorrow, we are going to work on visualizing the problem. Great work today readers!"

I encouraged the students to focus on the math problem as readers first and foremost, and modeled how to determine and note important information needed to solve the problem. Depending upon the need, the teacher's involvement and level of instruction will change. On Monday, I had more of a supporting role. I asked guiding questions, but the students really owned the conversation. On Tuesday, though, I chose to spend a lot more time on instruction.

### *Day Three: Filling in the Picture*

For Wednesday, Jennifer and I decided to focus on a different reading skill—envisioning the story problem. Jennifer knew that traditionally this skill had been challenging for her students and was curious to see how they would fare during this lesson. Since she wanted her students to quickly sketch the situation, she provided each student



with a copy of the text and passed out clipboards and pencils. She asked me to lead one more day before she took the reins.

I began, "Readers, I know you are ready to switch hats and to solve this problem like a mathematician. But we still have work to do as readers. Today's work is going to be visualizing the story problem. This will help us understand what's going on in the story. When we read our fiction books, we picture the story in our mind. Most of our books don't have a lot of pictures, so we have to visualize what's happening in our mind. This work can be done in math as well.

"Today, we are going to visualize this math story problem and sketch the images we see in our mind. One strategy I like to use when I picture something in my mind is a quick sketch. So, as I am reading, I am going to quickly sketch the details of the problem."

Then I started reading and slowly modeling. I wrote:

<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>
X	XX

"I didn't draw ducks because that would take too long. One X means one duck. It is easier to record this way. Now it's your turn. I am going to continue reading the problem, and you can quickly sketch how it will continue." I read and the kids sketched. I circled around to see the kids' work.

I then shared their thinking on the overhead.

<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>
XXXX	XXXX
	XXXX

"I like to set up quick sketches in a way that's easy for me; I know four plus four equals eight.

"Let's continue to visualize the ducks and how they change day by day." I kept reading. "So, we have to continue the pattern and think about how many you'll have on Friday. Hmmm . . . continue to quickly sketch the pattern for Friday." I walked around and observed.

"I see lots of numbers here for Friday." I read from the story problem again. "On Monday, one; on Tuesday, two; on Wednesday, four. So,

the numbers don't go in order. Hmmmm . . . I'm visualizing the ducks. There are more ducks each day. How many were there on Friday?"

"Sixteen because 1 plus 1 is 2 and 2 plus 2 is 4 and 4 plus 4 is 8 and 8 plus 8 is 16," Charlie said.

"So, they are doubling. Now, do a quick sketch for Saturday," I said. Kids began sketching. I walked around.

"Reem, what's happening every day? It's doubling, so you have two, four, eight, and sixteen. What would come next?" I asked as I conferred with Reem.

I noticed kids were using X's and tallies. "What do you do to extend the pattern? *Extend* means continue."

"You double sixteen," Ariana said.

I noticed Danyil had continued to Sunday. "Do you extend the pattern to Sunday?"

"No!" said the kids.

"Right . . . if I go back to the important information, it stops at Saturday," I said. "So, readers, when you are reading a math problem, you need to visualize and read what you have to do to solve the problem. Tomorrow, we are going to look at Part B, and Friday you will do all the math work. Good work today, third graders!"

By modeling all of the thinking work that needed to be done before even attempting to solve a problem, I let the students know that the expectation was to *slow it down*. I showed them all of the reading work that needed to be done before they approached this problem as mathematicians. Week after week, the kids learn that regardless of what the genre is, they should take the time to really soak it in before reacting.

### *Day Four: Digging Deeper*

One of the process standards in mathematics proposes that students make connections between problems, strategies used in problems, and problems and real life. This work suggests that students infer and think beyond the text when they read a story problem. On Thursday, Jennifer took on the task of modeling this challenging work.

"Readers, yesterday we left off on Part A of the text. We worked to visualize the story problem and used a quick sketch to fill in the picture. This has put us in a good position to solve this problem. But

we still have important reading work to do. Today we're going to look at Part B, reading carefully and thinking beyond the text," Jennifer said.

"Part B states: 'On the lines below, describe the pattern you used to find your answer.' A few days ago, it was pointed out that 'describe the pattern' was an important part of the text to remember. I have it marked right here on the page!

"When I read, 'describe the pattern,'" Jennifer continued, "I need to think beyond this particular text to other times when I have described a pattern. This is math work I've done before. Turn and talk—when have you done this math work before?"

Jennifer listened in to partnership conversations. Many students were talking about geometric patterns they had extended and could describe.

"Eyes up! Many of you talked about the geometric patterns you created with pattern blocks and described those patterns like 'blue rhombus, two green triangles, one yellow hexagon, and back to the blue rhombus . . .' You can use the same language to describe a numerical pattern like the one here with the ducks. When readers read a text, they are always thinking beyond the text, trying to relate the information they are reading to information they already know. The clues in the text help them make this connection. So, the clues in this text, 'describe the pattern,' allowed us to think beyond this text and recall times when we've described patterns."

"So," said Jennifer, "can you turn and talk with a partner and describe this pattern using the numbers in the problem?"

"The numbers of ducks double every day," Ariana said.

"On the first day, there's one duck, then on the second day, there are two ducks, et cetera," Danyil said.

"Readers, I heard you using very precise mathematical terms to describe this pattern. Just like you can describe a geometric pattern, you can describe a numerical pattern. Good readers always think beyond the text to deepen their understanding of the text itself, and today we did that by thinking of connections to other math problems where we've done the same kind of work," said Jennifer.

As Jennifer listened to partnership conversations, she heard many of her students talking about geometric patterns they had extended and could describe. This seemed natural; third graders can picture concrete geometric shapes and colors more so than numbers.

Demystifying terminology used on the test by reminding students that they have already done work like this before can empower students and build their testing confidence.

### *Day Five: Getting the Big Picture*

On Friday, Jennifer wanted to slowly release ownership of the text to the students. In contrast to the beginning of the week, when I was providing more scaffolding to support student understanding by modeling and demonstrating, Jennifer now offered her students “lean prompts” and guided them through the synthesizing process with their partners. She wanted to confirm that her readers fully understood this story problem before they tried to answer it mathematically. She gently guided them in synthesizing the text, ensuring that they understood all the separate parts of the text *and* the text as a whole.

“Readers,” Jennifer began, “before we put on our mathematician hats, we need to check in with ourselves to make sure that we understand all parts of the text *and* what the whole text is mostly about.”

“So,” she continued, “let’s think about this part [*pointing to the first section of the text*] and say what it’s about in just a few words. Turn and talk with your partner.” Jen listened in to student conversations.

“Let’s look at Part A. What’s this about, in just a few words? Turn and talk.” Jennifer listened in to student conversations.

“And now, the last part, Part B. Again, turn and talk with your partner. What’s this section about?” Jennifer listened as the students talked.

“Now readers, take a step back from each of these parts, and let’s think about the text as a whole. What’s this *all* mostly about, in just a few words? Turn and talk.”

Jennifer noticed that her students could easily summarize the three parts of the text, but had a more difficult time synthesizing those parts together and thinking about the big ideas of the entire text. As Jennifer listened to partnership conversations, she led some students to generalize the bigger idea of the text, understanding and extending patterns. She shared this bigger idea with the entire group.

“So now readers, you have a very deep understanding of this math story problem, and you are ready to solve this problem with

your mathematician hats on! So, let’s make that transition, and using everything that you’ve learned this week about this problem, solve it accurately and completely.”

As the weekly shared reading session morphed into five-minute math, Jen knew that her students had definitely benefited from this introduction to the format and structure of the math test and would be better prepared to read story problems with deeper understanding.

## Appendix

### A Sampling of Texts\* Used During Weekly Shared Reading

---

#### Poetry

- Dakos, Kalli. 1995. "Call the Periods Call the Commas." *If You're Not Here, Please Raise Your Hand: Poems About School*. New York: Aladdin.
- Fleischman, Paul. 1988. *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*. New York: HarperTrophy.
- Greenfield, Eloise. 1978. *Honey, I Love*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Livingston, Myra Cohn. 1994. "Quiet." Ed. Lee Bennett Hopkins. *April Bubbles Chocolate*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- McLoughland, Beverly. 1990. "Surprise." Ed. Lee Bennett Hopkins. *Good Books, Good Times!* New York: HarperCollins.
- Merriam, Eve. 2006. "How to Eat a Poem." Ed. American Poetry and Literacy Project. *How to Eat a Poem: A Smorgasbord of Tasty and Delicious Poems for Young Readers*. Mineola, NY: Dover.
- Schenk de Regniers, Beatrice. 2005. "Keep a Poem in Your Pocket." Ed. Caroline Kennedy. *A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children*. New York: Hyperion.
- Worth, Valerie. 1994. *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

#### Nonfiction

- Davis, Kenneth C. 2003. *Don't Know Much About History: Everything You Need to Know About American History but Never Learned*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Dubowski, Cathy East. 1998. *Shark Attack!* New York: DK Publishing, Inc.
- Marshall, Sally. 2005. "A Childhood Without Crickets Isn't So Bad." *Newsweek* March 28. (May also be found at [www.newsweek.com](http://www.newsweek.com).)
- Mathematics Advantage, New York Grade 5 (practice test).

---

\*With the chapter books, I just pick out one section or one page.

New York State Testing Program. 2005. Grade 3: Mathematics. Book 2. Sample Test. New York: McGraw-Hill. [www.emsc.nysed.gov/3-8/math-sample/home.htm](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/3-8/math-sample/home.htm).

Polin, C. J. 2005. *The Story of Chocolate*. New York: DK.

fliers

graphs

interviews

*Kids Discover* articles

menus

*Time for Kids* articles

time lines

Stanley, Jerry. 1992. "Black Blizzard." *Scholastic Scope* v46.

### *Fiction*

Bunting, Eve. 1991. *Fly Away Home*. New York: Clarion.

Cleary, Beverly. 1981. *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*. New York: HarperCollins.

Cooney, Barbara. 1982. *Miss Rumphius*. New York: Viking Penguin.

Crews, Donald. 1992. *Shortcut*. New York: Greenwillow.

dePaola, Tomie. 1979. *Oliver Button Is a Sissy*. Orlando, FL: Voyager.

Gregory, Kristiana. 2002. *We Are Patriots: Hope's Revolutionary War Diary*. New York: Scholastic.

Griffin, Judith Berry. 1977. *Phoebe the Spy*. New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan.

Little, Jean. 1986. *Hey World, Here I Am!* Toronto: Kids Can.

Rylant, Cynthia. 1982. *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. Boston: E. P. Dutton.

———. 1985. "Spaghetti." *Every Living Thing*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

———. 1987. *Henry and Mudge*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

———. 1997. *Poppleton and Friends*. New York: Scholastic.

Sharma, Marjorie Weinman. 1977. *Nate the Great*. New York: Yearling.

Woodson, Jacqueline. 2001. *The Other Side*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.