

Radio Reading

Radio reading (Greene, 1979; Opitz & Rasinski, 2008; Searfoss, 1975) is another form of repeated reading. It was developed as a more authentic and collaborative alternative to round robin reading, the archaic form of small-group instruction where the teacher chooses students to read aloud “on the spot” from an assigned text, without the benefit of practice. Round robin readings are often disfluent, inexpressive, uninspired, and filled with word recognition errors. Performances like these do little for the group’s enjoyment of reading and even less for the reader’s confidence in himself or herself. And since round robin reading is practiced regularly in many classrooms, the poor oral reading it engenders too often finds its way into other components of the literacy program such as guided reading.

In radio reading, as in round robin reading, groups of four to six students read aloud an assigned text. The difference is that the parts to be read are assigned the day before. (See Figure 4.5 on pages 100–101 for step-by-step guidelines on implementing radio reading.) I prefer to use passages from texts that the group has already read silently because students are familiar with the meaning and outcome of the text and can plan their presentation accordingly. If you use an unfamiliar text, be sure to provide students with a detailed overview of it before carrying out radio reading. When you use radio reading, ask students to think of themselves as radio or television announcers. They will need to practice the text in order to use their oral reading voice to convey meaning to the audience. Inform students that they will be performing the passage and asking questions about it.

When assigning parts, use good judgment based on what you know about your students as readers. Assign the longest or most challenging parts to those most able to handle them. You might also want to give a mini-lesson on the importance of reading with meaningful expression, just as radio and television announcers do. Emphasize that the only way to be able to read with good expression is through practice.

Ask each student to prepare two questions about his or her part—one literal (i.e., finding the answer requires the reader to look “right there” in the text) and one inferential (i.e., finding the answer requires the reader to “think and search” the text, using the information from the text, as well as his or her own background knowledge). Here are examples of each type of question:

Literal/“right there”: What was the name of the main character in my reading?

Inferential/“think and search”: Why did people dislike this character? What did he do, say, or stand for that made people hate him?

Once you've assigned a part to each student, have him or her practice reading it aloud and repeatedly. Provide class time for individual practice and cooperative repeated reading, which is explained on pages 103–104. Students can also practice their reading and develop their questions at home.

On the next day, have students gather in their groups and present their readings one by one, in the appropriate order according to the text. I sometimes ask students to come to the front of the group, stand tall, and read to the group as if they were giving a formal presentation. On other occasions, I have students simply read from their seats or choose a place from which they would like to read.

Ask students to read as expressively and meaningfully as possible, as if they were professional announcers. I find that a faux microphone on a stand or an old radio is a good prop for reminding students of that point. If a student miscalls a word, give him or her an opportunity to correct it. If the student can't, you (not the other students) should provide the correct word and ask him or her to continue, thus minimizing the disruption. The student may also call on you for help with particular words or phrases. Again, supply the word or phrase and urge the student to continue reading. As in paired reading, you may wish to make note of words that give students difficulty. Those words can be the focus of a quick mini-lesson after the radio reading session. The students who are not reading should either read along silently (a form of assisted reading) in the book or listen attentively with their books closed.

After all students have presented their parts, have them ask their literal and inferential questions in a follow-up discussion. Encourage students to elaborate on questions and responses, and find quotes from the text that illustrate or justify their points. Questions you might ask students to help them elaborate include the following:

- That's an interesting question. How did you come up with it?
- Tell us more about this character. Does he remind you of anyone you know or have read about?
- Can you find a section from the passage that gives us clues to answer that question?
- What do you think was the most interesting quote from today's reading? Why do you think so?
- How does this story compare with the one we read last week?

After the discussion, ask students to summarize the reading, their oral presentations, and what they need to work on in their oral reading and comprehension skills and strategies for their next radio reading session.

Teaching Tip: Record Radio Readings

Tape-record radio readings so that students can analyze them later. Save the very best recordings and play them as a model for future reading groups that are assigned the same text. Then, those groups can try to outperform the recorded performance!

Figure 4.5

Radio Reading: A Quick Guide

The Day Before Radio Reading

1. Choose a passage from your regular guided reading program, basal reader, or a trade book that is long enough to be read by four to six students. Choose a selection that has already been read silently, or, if the selection has not been read previously, give students a detailed overview of the selection.
2. Provide students with a mini-lesson on the importance of reading aloud with expression and meaning, using radio and television announcers as examples of people who do it well.
3. Assign parts of the passage to students. Give the most challenging parts to students who are best able to handle them. Assignments do not need to be equal in length.

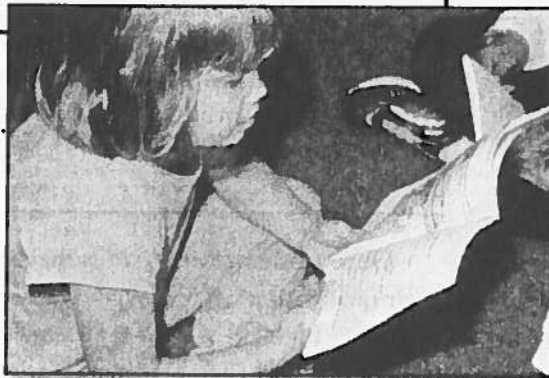
4. Have students practice reading their parts orally, alone or with others, in school and at home.
5. Ask each student to develop two questions about his or her part: a literal, fact-based question, and an inferential question that requires students to use information from the text and their background knowledge to arrive at an answer.

The Day of Radio Reading

1. Remind students about the need to read with expression and meaning.
2. Provide props such as a microphone or radio to lend authenticity to the experience.
3. Have students read their assigned parts orally in the proper order.
4. If students encounter problems in their reading, provide help or allow them to call on you for help. Deal with the difficulty quickly to minimize disruption. (Remind students not to call out words that another student is having difficulty with. You will provide that assistance.)
5. After all the readings are complete, have students discuss the entire passage using the questions they prepared the day before.
6. At the end of the discussion, have students summarize the story, critique their reading, and make suggestions for the next radio reading.

Say It Like the Character

Oral reading fluency means more than reading accurately and quickly. It also involves reading with expression as a way to get at the text's meaning. In *Say It Like the Character* (Opitz & Rasinski, 2008), students get "inside" characters from books by reading monologues and dialogues orally. Listeners must make inferences about the characters



Students practice passages to improve their ability to read them with expression and meaning.

The **Fluent** READER

Oral & Silent Reading Strategies for Building
Fluency, Word Recognition & Comprehension

Timothy V. Rasinski

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