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**Sincerely,  
Karen Haag**

Sarah Dowhower created a comprehension framework that works as a lesson template for teaching each of the proficient reader strategies. In this lesson, students learn to summarize as they read the picture book and poem, *Edward the Emu* by Sheena Knowles. As suggested by Dowhower, I divided the reading into cycles ahead of time. I stop with the students and we summarize each section. Their summaries improve as they read and work together as a group. At the end of the lesson, we reread the summaries to determine a theme - also suggested by Dowhower. The lesson is posted here as an example for teachers. You might want to try the lesson as well. A father reads the book to his daughter on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xhq-ck8uq4w>

### ***Edward the Emu Lesson Plan***

Comprehension Strategy Framework from *Reading Teacher*, April 1999,  
“Supporting a strategic stance in the classroom,” by Sarah L. Dowhower

#### ***I. Prereading: Enabling Activities***

A. **Assess/elicite prior knowledge:** Teacher determines with students what they already know about the topic, ideas, structure, or contents of the text to be read. Also, the teacher checks students’ knowledge of what a strategy is and if they have ever used the particular strategy targeted or others to increase their understanding of what they have read.

- *“Today we’re going to read a **poem called Edward the Emu.***
- *How is a poem **different** than a story? How is a poem the **same** as a story?*
- *How will I recognize that I am reading a poem?”*
- ***Number the stanzas.***

B. **Build background/ relate to prior knowledge:** Teacher and students build bridges from known to unknown through the use of questions, statements and activities. What do the students know that will help them understand the text and the new strategies introduced here?

- *Edward the Emu is a **zoo animal.***
- *Have you ever **visited a zoo?** Have you ever seen an **emu?***
- *What does **an emu look like?** (Show picture from the book.)*
- *Were you **excited about seeing the emu?** Why or why not?*
- *What **animal** did you like to see the **most?***
- *Have you ever thought about what **the animals feel** as they watch the visitors decide whether they want to visit them or not?*

C. **Focus attention on strategy:** Teacher establishes what comprehension strategy students are going to learn and why it will help the students. The teacher gives a model or brief description of how the strategy works.

- *The **poem we read** today will help you **focus on a strategy** I’d like you to learn while you are reading. It’s a good strategy to use whenever you read something.*
- *As you read I’d like you to **summarize** what you read **after each section.** I want you to think about the most important ideas, not the whole text, and to **write your ideas in the margin.***
- *Eventually, you will be able to summarize in your head, but for today I want you to practice by **writing down what you’re thinking** the most important ideas are.*
- *I want you to try to write a summary of each section **in as few words as possible.***

## II. Active Reading: Interaction Between Students, Teacher and Text

A. **Cycle 1: Establish a purpose for reading.** Reasons for reading the section are set by either the students or teacher or jointly.

Read **stanza 1 and 2** of *Edward the Emu*. Students should be encouraged to self-monitor, think about and react to what they're reading, and to use the strategy as well as other strategies they know to understand the reading.

- What is the **problem** Edward is having?
- What's the **most important idea** you get from reading the first 2 stanzas?
- **Record the idea** on your paper in the **right margin**. Start with "Edward . . ."

**Discuss/work the story.** Together students and teacher negotiate the meaning of the section. The teacher includes 1-2 open-ended questions for discussion, starting first with the purpose for reading. Utmost in the teacher's mind is working toward meaningful themes. The teacher also supports strategy construction by naming the strategy and showing how he/she uses it personally.

- What is the **purpose for reading** the first 2 stanzas? (To summarize the most important ideas)
- What do you think **the author is telling us here** and **what evidence** do you have to support your thinking? (Students should be led to understand that the most important idea is that the Emu is not happy with who he is and thinks that being someone else will bring him happiness.)

B. **Cycle 2 and beyond:**

- "Establish purpose.
- Read silently pages or stanzas xx.
- Discuss/work the story.
- Repeat cycle as needed."

**Stanzas 3-5:** Edward is happy as a seal until he hears a visitor talk about the lions.

**Stanzas 6-8:** Edward is happy as a lion until he hears a visitor say that snakes are the best.

**Stanzas 9-12:** Edward is happy as a snake until he hears a visitor say emus are the best.

**13- end:** Edward goes back to being an emu and finds happiness with Edwina.

C. **Final Discussion: Theme and Comprehension strategy.** Teacher includes 1-2 open-ended questions that get at the heart of the story (theme) and tie the discussion of the sections together. It is important for the students to explicitly discuss what strategy they learned, why it helped comprehension, and where they could use the strategy again in other texts, particularly in their independent reading. Encourage students to identify other comprehension and decoding strategies that they used as they read.

- What do you think the **author** is trying to tell us in the whole poem? Look back at your summaries and see if you see a pattern. (There's no place like home. Be happy with yourself.)
- Do you think that if the author were to write some more stanzas, **Edward would stay with Edwina**? What experiences did he have in the poem that leads you to think the way you do?
- **Vocabulary** that may give you some trouble: grand, gumption, clambered, basked, reside . . . others? Let's look at those words. Did you figure them out? How did you figure them out?
- Take a close look at the poem. Where does the author use **exclamation marks**? Why does she use them where she does? (She builds excitement more toward then end. She doesn't use them in the beginning.)
- What **words are repeated** in this poem? Why do you think the author repeats lines of the stanzas?

### ***III. Postreading: Independent Activities***

These activities are done after reading and working the text. They are done alone or in small groups without the teacher.

- A. **Recall of Content:** This may include the traditional answering of comprehension questions, sequencing the text parts, drawing a picture of an important episode.
- B. **Reader Response:** Students respond in some fashion to the text.
- C. **Extension of Text:** Students go beyond the text doing other reading, writing, listening, or speaking activities that are related, such as repeated reading, partner reading, taping the story, Readers Theater, or writing a new ending.
- D. **Strategy Use and Transfer:** Students practice the strategy with a new text.
- E. **Informal or Self-Assessment:** Students may retell the story or demonstrate comprehension of the text and strategy use in some way. Also, students might explain or evaluate how effectively they use certain strategies “on the run” by recording them and rating them as they read.

### ***IV. Evaluation of Teaching: Teacher's Reflection of Self***

- How clear were your explanations of the strategy?
- How well did you reinforce the strategy throughout the lesson?
- How well do you think the students understood the strategy and were able to apply it to their comprehension?
- In what ways did you support the use of other strategies?
- How well did the students do independently?
- How well were you able to construct the theme of the reading?