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Dowhower suggests that we teach texts by dividing the reading into cycles. I often refer to her lesson plan format as Stop and Think.

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KAREN  
HAAG**

## 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.

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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?

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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.

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### 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 pages or stanzas xx silently. 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.

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.

## B. Cycle 2 and beyond:

Establish purpose.

Read silently pages or stanzas *xx*.

Discuss/work the story.

Repeat cycle as needed.

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- 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.

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## III. Post reading: 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.

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## IV. Evaluation of Teaching: 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?