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# **Strategic Reading in U.S. History**

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## Preface

Helping students become purposeful readers of history requires thoughtful teaching. While it may be easier to read aloud or summarize texts for students, these practices do not create the type of strategic reading necessary for independent learning.

Teachers have three places where they may instruct and intervene if comprehension breaks down in the reading process: before students read, while they are reading, or after they have read. This before, during, and after sequence is referred to as The Scaffolded Reading Experience (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2001) and is rooted in the notion of scaffolding. The before reading, during reading, and after reading distinction reminds teachers that reading instruction takes place at multiple points; that is, reading instruction is not merely an assessment to monitor comprehension at the conclusion of a chapter. This division also helps students recognize that reading is an active, ongoing process. The lessons in this curriculum kit build on the Scaffolded Reading Experience structure, offering suggestions for instruction to scaffold comprehension before, during, and after reading.

Rather than focusing on the teaching techniques or activities, we'd like to stress that the goal of all the lessons in this kit is to help students develop and use reading strategies. We make an important distinction between what a reader does to comprehend text and what a teacher can do to enhance students' reading comprehension. We list the student reading behavior/skill desired as a **reader strategy**—something they can and will use by themselves. When comprehension breaks down, students will hopefully be able to implement a plan or strategy to restore their own comprehension. For example, when reading a textbook selection about a particular era in history, if a student realizes that he or she does not understand a given term, strategies to use might include going back and rereading the section in the textbook on that term or looking the term up in the glossary. These reader strategies remain relatively stable over a variety of text genres.

A **teacher technique** is what a teacher does to engage students when helping them learn strategies and read texts. Unlike reader strategies, which are stable and relatively few in

number, teaching techniques are numerous and vary from teacher to teacher. A teaching technique serves as a model for engaging students and demonstrating a particular reading strategy. As students become able read and comprehend independently, teachers will gradually phase out the technique.

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## **Introduction**

Social studies teachers throughout the United States face the collective problem of what to do when students can't read their classroom assignments. Some educators like to use the simplistic catch-all phrase "every teacher is a reading teacher," but that does nothing to solve the problem. Teachers of social studies are readers, but not necessarily reading teachers.

This highly useful reading/content PowerPoint kit can keep teachers on their pacing plans and also help to equip students with additional skills for a specific type of reading which is social studies-based. In addition, the skills this kit teaches students can transfer to other subjects and translate into greater overall success for your students.

### **How can a teacher check for student understanding?**

Throughout this kit, teachers can make regular, informal checks for understanding. By asking key questions, teachers can determine if students understand the specific content and reading skills being taught. This type of observational assessment can help teachers decide if additional review is necessary.

### **How can this program be used throughout the year?**

This kit's flexibility allows teachers to plug the various skills-based lessons into any part of their history/social studies curriculum. Helping students to draw meaning from the written word is an ongoing process that needs to be taught over and over again. Fortunately, students can learn and practice these skills while studying any type of history curriculum content.

### **How can the posters be used to help students with their reading?**

The posters that come with this kit serve to reinforce key skills that the program continually stresses. When teachers see a student struggling with content and/or

vocabulary, it can be helpful to point out the appropriate poster as a reminder of the attack skills needed to unlock meaning.

### **How can I use the PowerPoint most effectively?**

Rather than acting as single, linear presentation, the PowerPoint slides included in this kit have been broken up so that only a few (actually, anywhere from one to five) correspond to each individual lesson. In other words, you won't be showing the entire PowerPoint to the class in one sitting; instead, you'll only show a slide or two at a time depending on the lesson you choose to teach. You have the choice of showing the PowerPoint slides with a computer/LCD projector combination, using them to make transparencies for an overhead projector, or printing them out for reproduction as blackline masters for student handouts.

### **Implementation ideas**

The beginning of the semester—before you start in with specific social studies curriculum content—is a good time to introduce this program. If you choose to devote the time to it, you could use the first few days of the semester to complete the entire kit. If you feel your students can handle it, you may even want to go through the entire PowerPoint presentation in order to preview what you plan to spend more time doing in depth during the rest of the semester. You can then reintroduce the sections one concept/idea at a time during the course of the semester. The posters will help remind your students about key skills they constantly need to work on throughout the year. You should continue to remind them of the particular reading skills they've learned from this kit when your students tackle new social studies content. If you can make a concerted effort to combine content and reading skills, your students should be better able to increase their reading comprehension and content retention.

Ronald Sima

California State University, Northridge



# Chapter 1: Knowing the Purpose(s) for Reading

## Teacher Page

### Overview:

Lessons 1 and 2 allow students to practice determining the purpose for their reading.

Generally, academic reading has at least one of the following purposes:

- Discussion: Students should focus on “why” and relationships between ideas.
- Multiple-Choice Test: Students should focus on “who,” “what,” and “when,” as well as on key terms, chapter timelines, and outlines. They also need to remember to review any graphs or charts in a chapter.
- Essay Test: Students should focus on broad concepts to discover “why” and “how.”
- Presentation: Students should focus on “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how” in broad ways, concentrating only on the main ideas and most important facts. They should not spend too much time on small details.
- “Be Familiar With”: If the purpose of the reading is to “be familiar with the text,” skimming or a quick read will do. Students should then be able to summarize the main points of the reading in two or three sentences.

PowerPoint slide 1 provides an overview of these five purposes.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Differentiate between explicit and implicit information
- Describe different purposes of reading

# Lesson 1: Establishing the Purpose for Reading (ERT)

## Teacher Page

ERT, which stands for “Everybody Reads To,” is a simple technique that can help teachers establish a purpose for reading and model the behavior for students.

### Procedure:

1. Go over PowerPoint slide 1 with the class and discuss the different purposes for reading.
2. Select a small amount of text (one to two pages of text from a textbook, a single primary source, or a short chapter from a fiction text) for students to read.
3. Establish the purpose(s) for reading by directing students to read to find something stated explicitly in the text and to infer something from the facts in the text. For example, to prepare students for reading the section about pirates (on the student activity page), a teacher might ask students to:
  - Read to find out why business owners hired pirates.
  - Read to figure out the long-term effects of piracy on coastal economics.
4. You can apply this technique to multiple texts in order to help students achieve a broader analysis of a topic or concept. For example, before reading multiple sources (e.g., a textbook, primary sources, and fictional sources) centered on the colonial trade, you could establish the following broad purposes for reading:
  - Everybody reads to find out what challenges the colonists faced when establishing trade with other countries.
  - Everybody reads to figure out if the colonists had “free trade” with other countries.
5. By establishing the purposes for reading, you model for students how to focus on the most important aspects of the text. With appropriate modeling, you can also turn ERT over to your students. For example, you can provide objectives

for the unit of study then have students practice setting a purpose for reading. Afterwards, give students feedback on how well their purposes matched the objectives.

6. Have the class complete the student activity page.

**Wrap-Up:**

In addition to reviewing the activity page, ask students to examine a new text selection and describe possible purposes for reading. Asking students to “think aloud” about reading for a purpose can help you identify continuing areas of difficulty that may require further teacher modeling.

## Lesson 1: Establishing the Purpose for Reading (ERT)

### Student Activity Page

#### Directions:

1. Read the following textbook excerpt on colonial trading to find out why business owners hired pirates.
2. Read to figure out the long-term effects of piracy on coastal economics.

#### Piracy

Piracy flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries. Since the colonies received their supplies via ships, they struggled to protect and control shipping routes. Each colony conducted trade independently, and businesses worked to protect their own interests—sometimes at the expense of others. Individual business owners often hired “privateers” to damage and seize the goods of rival traders. Though piracy was punishable by hanging, many men still found it attractive as a way to get rich quickly.

Among the more infamous pirates was Blackbeard, whose real name was believed to be Edward Teach. Blackbeard earned his name because of his unkempt, waist-long beard that he decorated with bits of bone and even burning candles. He made his reputation by seizing hundreds of ships and killing many ship owners up and down the southeastern coast of America and the Caribbean during the early 1700s.

Even some women seized the opportunity to make money through piracy. Anne Bonny was one such pirate. She ran away with another pirate, Calico Jack (named for his boldly striped pants), and joined his crew disguised as a man. She was captured and about to be hung when she claimed to be pregnant (she was not). The authorities refused to hang a pregnant woman and Anne received a reprieve; afterward, she disappeared from the historical record.

