



Content-Area Reading, Distilled*

*Distilled (di-stild') adj. 4. Separated or extracted essence

Why content-area reading is critical ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It involves authentic research, authentic reading.• It mirrors the kinds of reading historians, scientists, designers, economists, and other content career people do.• It is an opportunity to organize information, draw necessary conclusions, and use those conclusions to make decisions.• It builds vocabulary in a natural, realistic, meaningful way.• It promotes curiosity and life-long learning.• It provides opportunities to write purposefully in real-life, authentic contexts.
What content area reading instruction IS ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using texts that are engaging, meaningful, authentic, current, and in many cases interdisciplinary, so students are able to make cross-curricular connections• Providing students a variety of sources and voices on a topic, guiding them to construct their own understanding of the information• Meeting all learners where they are, and helping them move forward, using text• Maintaining high expectations• Modeling aloud the thinking processes that good readers use• Providing explicit instruction on what effective readers do before, during, and after reading• Using graphic organizers that are developed to match the structure of the text assigned• Assigning tasks that check for understanding rather than merely recall• Using texts of varying genres and lengths in order to explore and extend understanding of a topic or theme• Using the kinds of informational, expository, persuasive texts that adults really read (essays, newspaper articles, primary sources, journals, reviews, commentaries, opinion pieces, technical writing, etc.)• Asking students to collaborate in not only the reading of texts, but also the thinking, the discussing, the writing about texts• Provoking student inquiry by valuing and pursuing open-ended questions• Providing opportunities for students to engage with the content before, during, and after reading
What it is <u>NOT</u> ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using a one-size-fits-all assignment• Assigning “comprehension” questions at the end of the chapter• Asking students to read silently by themselves• Expecting students to read on their own, then complete tasks at the end of the reading• Focusing on “right” answers about the text• Having the teacher or fellow students read the text aloud for the class, while the class listens silently• Just reading textbooks in any given subject area

Best practices for content-area reading ...
Before reading—Practices that prepare students to read: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activate prior or build background knowledge of the content with other print or non-print media, allowing students to make or build personal connections to the content• Show students how smart readers think using think alouds• Develop an authentic purpose for reading by activating student questions, beliefs, and predictions about the reading• Provide explicit content vocabulary instruction for key terms necessary to understanding the text
During reading—Practices that help students make meaning: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scaffold instruction; then pull back support as students can “fly solo.”• Use organizers and other tools or structures that<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Help students visual what is happening in the text (“seeing” the experiment, the event, the conflict, etc.)○ Encourage questions about the topic as they are reading○ Help them make inferences from the content, going beyond the information, extending their thinking
After reading—Practices that ask students to reflect & integrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create experiences that require inferencing, synthesizing, and other higher order thinking skills• Ask students to revisit their brainstorming, connections, and predictions done prior to the reading• Create multiple opportunities for students to work together to interact with the text and deepen their understanding of the topics presented
Alternatives to “Read this for homework ...”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chunk the reading, with discussion and/or meaningful tasks at each juncture• Jigsaw the text so each member in a group is responsible for a smaller section• Assign excerpts from the text rather than the entire text for some readers• Assign multiple texts and tasks, differentiated for readers’ abilities, interests, readiness, then provide opportunities for each group to share information and insights with others• Provide “text sets,” offering students voice and choice about what they read and how they respond to their reading• Prepare graphic organizers suited for the text type, structure/organization, and task• Assign “reciprocal teaching” roles to readers in a group, with individual tasks helping the group to make meaning of the text (predict, clarify, question, and summarize)• z
Resources: Daniels and Zemelman (2004). <i>Subjects matter. Every teacher’s guide to content-area reading.</i> Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Harvey (1998). <i>Nonfiction matters. Reading, writing, and research in grades 3-8.</i> Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers. Rick Wormeli (2007). <i>Differentiation: From Planning to Practice, Grades 6 -12.</i> Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers and Westerville, Ohio: National Middle School Association.