

Teaching for Synthesis of Informational Texts With Read-Alouds

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Science, social science, math, and other subject-area texts are sometimes complex, but assessment-driven instructional approaches can help young readers connect with the content and deepen their comprehension of new information.

The big idea is that WE NEED TO USE WATER MORE WISELY. Some people get one gallon of water everyday [sic]. They also have to walk to get their water. All we have to do is turn on the faucet. (written reflection, Katie, third grade; all student names are pseudonyms)

Katie was writing in response to a whole-class read-aloud of the informational text *One Well: The Story of Water on Earth* (Strauss, 2007), which was led by the teacher, Cate (second author). Cate spent two days reading aloud this text, which focuses on the increased demands for this limited natural resource and offers a compelling message about conservation. During this time, the 21 third graders did not fidget or look at the clock, did not glance out the window, did not try to distract their peers. Instead, they sat on the carpet mesmerized, comparing what they thought they knew about water with new facts presented in the text.

As they listened to and chatted about the text, the students' understanding of water evolved. When the read-aloud was over, each student had developed a new lens with which to view the world. In other words, the students were engaged in synthesis. Katie's written response is evidence of this kind of thinking.

Cate's third-grade class was involved in our (Sunday and Cate's) yearlong study of research-based

practices for teaching students how to "leverage deeper understanding" (Keene, 2008, p. 5) of informational texts. In particular, we were studying the influence of reading informational texts aloud to students on a regular basis and nurturing their synthesis of the content in these texts through written and sketched responses. We chose to focus on these texts because of the growing awareness that informational literacy is a key factor in successful participation in society (Keene, 2008; Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002).

The last decade has seen an explosion of appealing informational texts geared toward young children, making informational texts more accessible than ever before. Comprehension of informational texts that include numerous text features and multiple text structures and that cover a wide variety of topics is more cognitively demanding than comprehension of fiction, thus creating an urgent need for well-defined instruction (Block & Duffy, 2008).

The purpose of this article is to describe the assessment-driven instruction that facilitated Cate's students' increased understanding of informational texts. After describing the context for this study, we highlight key instructional practices including explicit instruction on synthesizing, interactive read-alouds, and think-aloud minilessons.

Study Context

The site for this inquiry is a small midwestern city that is also home to a large state university. The racial makeup of the 21 students is 54.2% white, 28.4% African American, 2.9% Latino, 14% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.5% Native American. One third of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Sunday is a literacy professor, and Cate was a third-grade teacher at the school at the time of the

study. We engaged in an exploration during the 2007–2008 school year. From September to May, Sunday visited Cate’s classroom at least once a month to coteach and collect data.

In September, we began with two informal assessments of students’ written responses following independent reading and a read-aloud, respectively. Based on what we learned from the assessments, we then engaged in reading aloud informational texts at least once every other week and asking the students to write and sketch in response to

these texts. The time spent reading aloud each text and then responding occurred during two 45-minute periods. In May, we concluded with two assessments similar to those given in September.

We used qualitative methods to collect and analyze the data sources, which included copies of students’ written and sketched responses, lesson transcripts, and extensive field notes. We analyzed all student responses regularly, looking for patterns in the content (as described later in this article) to determine our next steps for instruction. At the conclusion of the study, we used all of the data sources to create a narrative that documented the teaching and learning that occurred.

Why Focus on Synthesizing?

Synthesizing while reading is critical to understanding the big ideas in informational texts (Block & Duffy, 2008). When students engage in synthesizing, they move from simply recalling the facts in the text to considering how the author’s compilation of these facts conveys a big idea.

During our study, the students’ instructional needs related to synthesizing were revealed to us early in the year when we observed how they wrote about the informational texts they read independently. That is, while the students recalled some facts from the texts, they did not describe and elaborate on the big ideas in these texts. In other words, they did not synthesize.

To understand the content of the students’ responses, we gave two informal assessments in September. The first asked the students to write or sketch what they were thinking about or learning

PAUSE AND PONDER

- How do you currently use high-quality informational books in your classroom?
- How do you use ongoing assessment to determine whether your students are thinking deeply about informational texts?
- How do you teach for synthesis of informational texts?

while reading independently. We then analyzed their responses, looking for patterns of content, and noticed that students did the following:

- Wrote facts stated directly in the text
- Shared facts from the text and included some personal response
- Sketched pictures and wrote labels
- Copied from the text
- Wrote in response to pictures and captions in the text

These responses reveal that students were not writing in response to the text as a whole—that is, there was not a synthesis of ideas. Instead they were writing in response to chunks of the text—for example, particular facts, pictures, and captions—or they just shared facts or copied directly from the text.

It is important to think about the details of the text and perhaps write in response to specific details. For deeper comprehension, however, we wanted the students to respond to the whole text, to include big ideas relevant to the overall meaning of the text, and to support the development of their ideas with details from the text (Keene & Zimmermann, 2007).

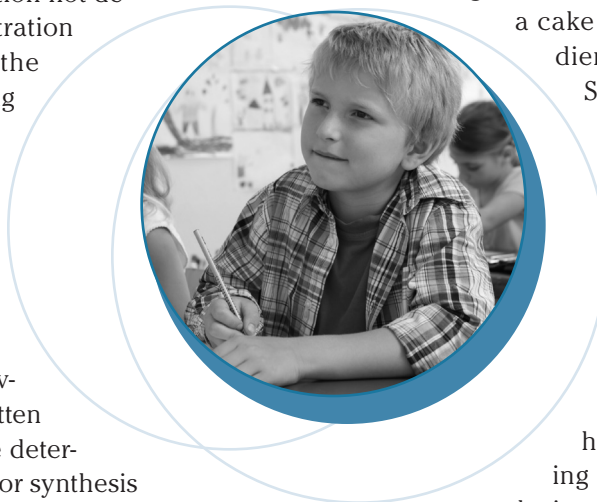
The second assessment asked students to respond in writing to a read-aloud. For this particular read-aloud, we read *Grandma Elephant’s in Charge* (M. Jenkins, 2003) and then asked the students to explain or sketch the author’s big idea using the following prompt: “What was the author’s big idea? What did the author want you to know?”

As we sorted the responses into groups, we wrote a few words about the content of a particular group’s responses on a sticky note—for example, “stated big idea and elaborated” and “shared facts directly stated in the text with no indication of big idea.” This method helped highlight the different content students were including, as well as particular students we would want to confer with during instruction. The following categories of responses emerged:

- Identification of the big idea (“Grandma is the leader.”) with some elaboration (“should not mess with her”)

- Identification of the big idea only (“I learned that Grandma is in charge.”)
- Connection of the big idea to contexts beyond the book (“Grandma is always in charge even if you’re not an elephant.”)
- Statement of facts only from the text (“Elephants can run 25 miles per hour.”)
- Statement of facts along with personal responses (“I thought it was cool that the elephants can suck salt.”)
- Listing of questions (“How come the grandma is in charge?” and “How come they live in Africa?”)
- Response to information not described in text (illustration of an elephant and the written label “blowing water”)
- Illustration of an elephant

Overall, our assessment revealed that, with prompting, only 5 out of 21 students revealed some level of synthesis in their written responses. As a result, we determined the need to teach for synthesis of key ideas while reading, as well as for articulation of synthesis in students’ written responses.



Instructional Approaches for Extending Students’ Thinking

Using three particular instructional approaches regularly over time, the majority of the students began to develop their ability to articulate a synthesis of ideas in their written responses. These approaches were explicit instruction on synthesizing, interactive read-alouds, and think-aloud minilessons. The effect of these approaches was revealed in our ongoing assessment of students’ written responses.

Explicit Instruction on Synthesizing

After assessing the students’ responses to *Grandma Elephant’s in Charge*, we considered research on the benefits of explicit instruction and, in October, developed a lesson to make visible the mental

process of synthesis (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996; Duffy, 2002; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The lesson included four parts: (1) an explanation of synthesis, (2) shared reading and discussion of students’ written responses, (3) read-aloud of new text, and (4) assessment of independent writing.

Explanation of Synthesis. Sunday began the lesson with the analogy of baking a cake (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). As students listed aloud ingredients to make a cake, Sunday sketched images of the ingredients on the dry-erase board (see Figure 1). Then she explained to the students that when you mix the ingredients and then bake them, you get a cake or a “synthesis of the ingredients.” To reinforce this point, Sunday sketched a baked cake to the right of the ingredient sketches.

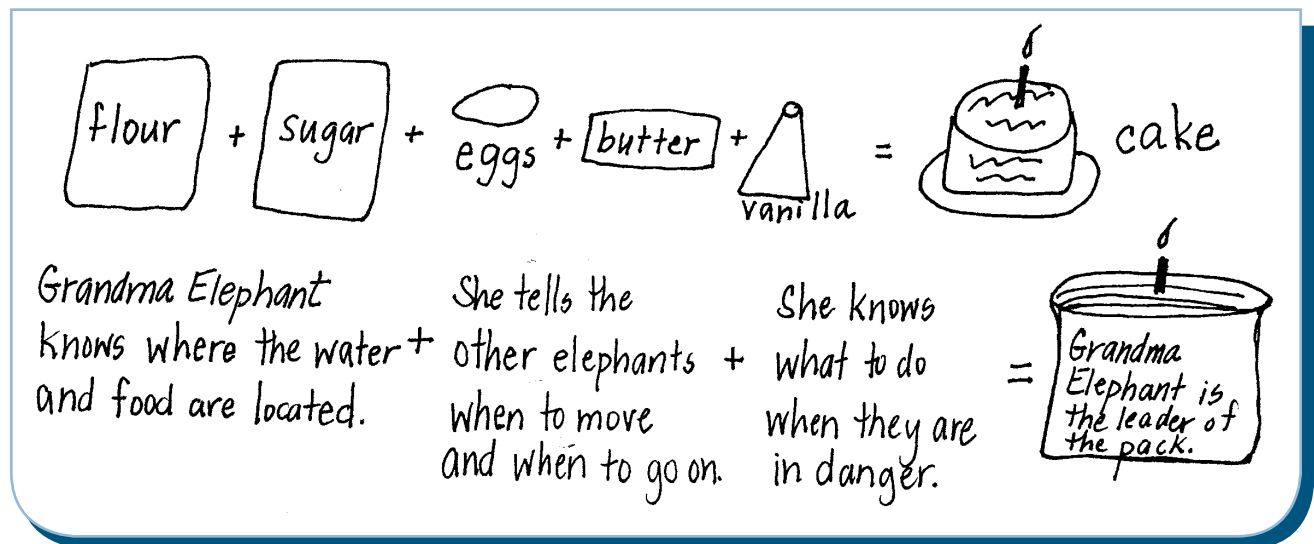
Wanting to show the students how to use the cake baking analogy to synthesize the information in *Grandma Elephant’s in Charge*, Sunday engaged them in reviewing what they had learned from the text, listing the facts they learned under the ingredient sketches on the board.

She added plus signs between each fact and an equal sign at the end of the list, which led to another cake sketch. Inside the cake sketch, Sunday wrote, “The grandmother elephant is the leader of the pack.” She shared that by thinking about how all of the facts they learned helped them understand the author’s big idea, the students had engaged in synthesizing the ideas in the text.

Shared Reading and Discussion of Students’ Written Responses.

Examination of student responses makes the process of synthesis concrete, so in preparation for the next part of this lesson, Sunday chose four student responses to *Grandma Elephant’s in Charge* for instructional purposes. (Sunday approached each student privately to request permission to share the response with the class; all four students agreed.) With a continued focus on extending students’ understanding of synthesis, Sunday displayed each student’s response on an overhead

Figure 1
Sunday's Sketch of the Cake Baking Analogy



projector so the entire class could discuss how their peers had approached the assignment, noting both strengths and areas for growth.

One of the responses Sunday chose to display was from Mark, a student reading and writing at grade level. On the first assessment, Mark only listed facts from the text. On the second assessment, Mark began with a statement about the big idea: “I think the most important thing about the story was about Gramandma [*sic*] and that you should not mess with her.” He continued by listing facts from the text, similar to his initial assessment: “And a father elepeant [*sic*] can way [*sic*] up to 6 tons. And he goes to live on his own and rome [*sic*] around. And the Grandma is the leader of the pack. Elepants [*sic*] live in Africa.” With the exception of the statement about the grandmother elephant being the leader, the list of facts is disjointed. Despite this, the response does illustrate synthesis and provides a model for students, clarifying what they need to consider when synthesizing their ideas in writing. During the discussion of this response, Sunday highlighted the strengths and underlined the language that indicated synthesis.

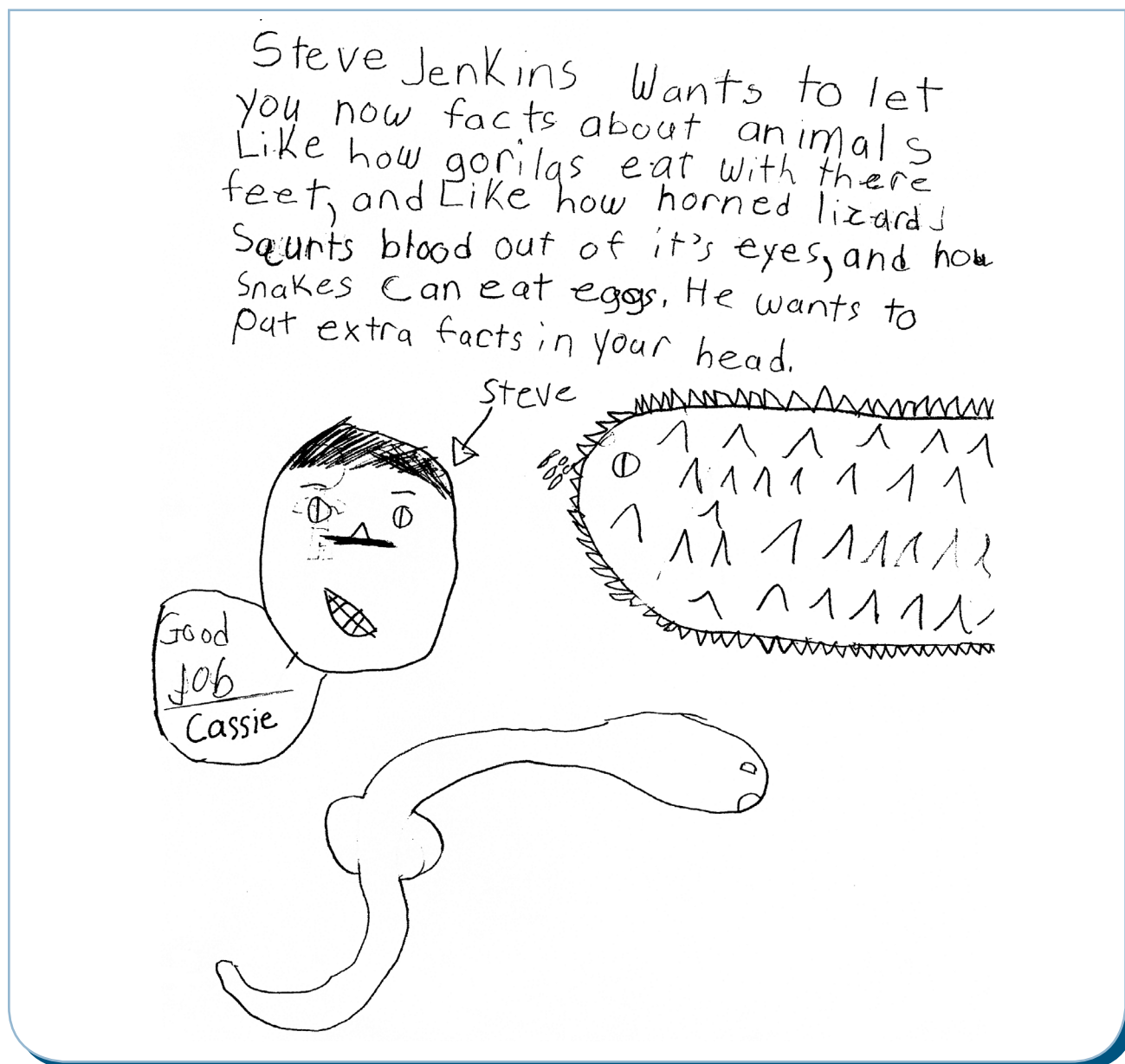
Read-Aloud of New Text. Following the discussion of these responses, Sunday introduced a new book, *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* (S. Jenkins,

2003). In this text, Jenkins uses a question–answer text structure to describe how various animals use specific body parts such as noses, ears, and tails. The big idea is that different animals use different body parts for different purposes. After a prereading discussion to provide an overview of the book, Sunday shared the following purpose for listening: “While you’re listening, think about the facts, or ingredients, in the text. Think about how they blend together, and how what you know and understand about a topic is transformed, like a baked cake. When you do this, you’re thinking about the author’s message to you.”

Assessment of Independent Writing. After the read-aloud, the students wrote and sketched in response to the text, focusing specifically on its purpose. Our assessment of the entries revealed a developing understanding by the majority of the students of what it means to synthesize. We detail two student responses, Cassie’s and Maddie’s, to demonstrate the change in understanding that most of the students revealed. Keep in mind that in their responses to *Grandma Elephant’s in Charge*, both Cassie and Maddie each wrote one fact.

After this lesson, Cassie’s written response (see Figure 2) to *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* included a general statement about the author’s big

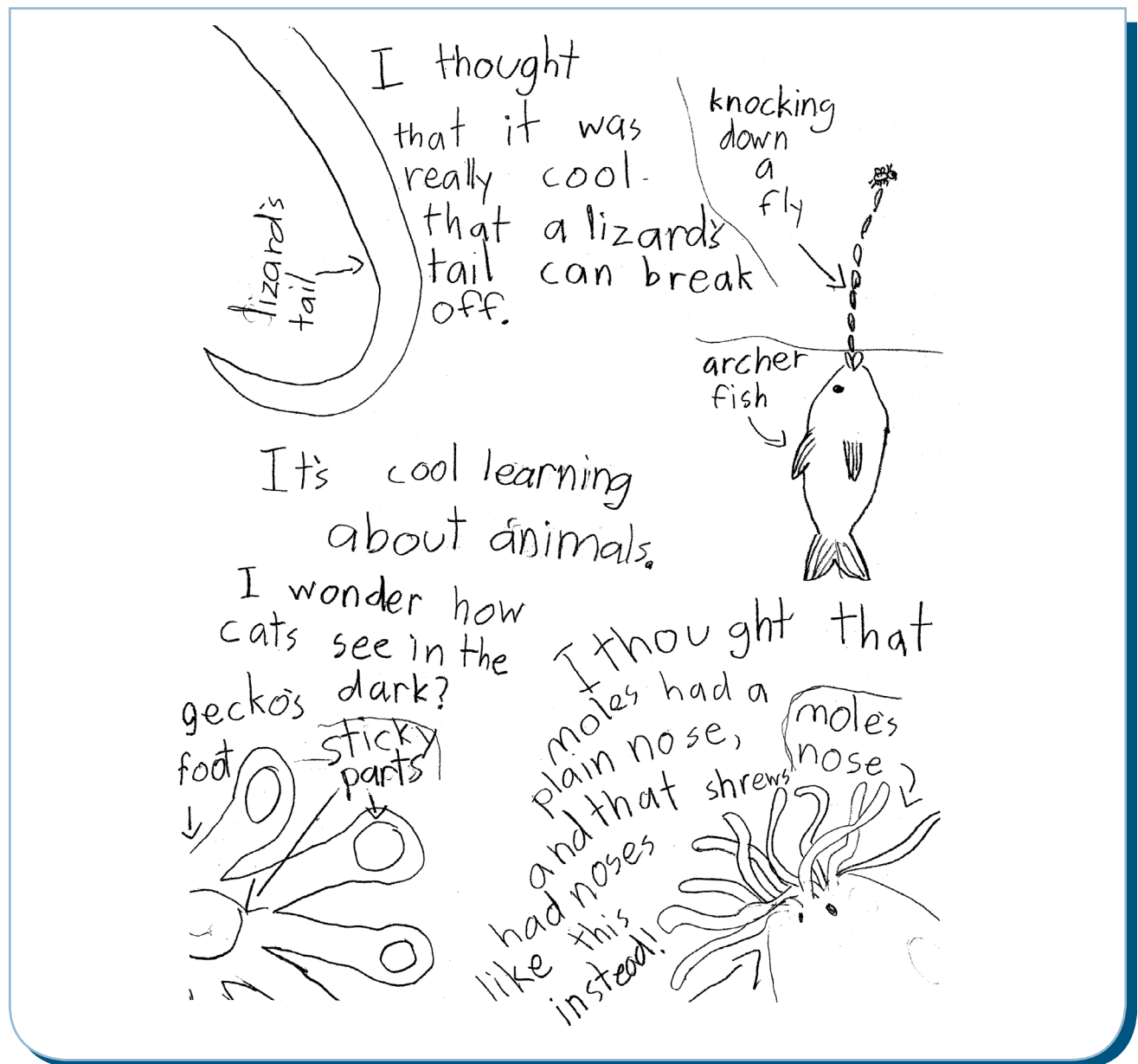
Figure 2
Cassie's Response to *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* (S. Jenkins, 2003)



idea ("Steve Jenkins wants to let you now facts about animals"), details from the text that support her point ("Like how gorilas eat with there feet"), and a restatement of her point ("He wants to put extra facts in your head"). Cassie's sketch of author Steve Jenkins (identified by a label) and the speech bubble with the words "Good job, Cassie" reveal her awareness during reading of the presence of the author and his purpose.

Similar to Cassie, Maddie demonstrated her understanding of facts learned from the text and included details that reveal important steps toward synthesizing, although not a complete synthesis of the ideas in the text (see Figure 3). The statement "I thought that moles had a plain nose, and that shrews had noses like this instead" reveals how Maddie compared new information with her prior knowledge. She was interpreting the text. The statement

Figure 3
Maddie's Response to *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* (S. Jenkins, 2003)



"I thought that it was really cool that a lizard's tail can break off" exhibits how Maddie considered and categorized a new fact. The question "I wonder how cats see in the dark?" reveals a potentially deeper understanding of the author's message, as cats are not included in the text. Maddie was thinking about the author's message beyond the text, contemplating the idea that animals have features that serve different purposes. The combination of details in

this response reveals thinking beyond literal understanding of facts in the text and movement toward synthesis.

Both Cassie's and Maddie's responses reveal development in their understanding about synthesis. As aforementioned, each of their responses to *Grandma Elephant's in Charge* included a response to one fact in the book. In response to *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*, Cassie synthesized the facts in the

text and an understanding of the big idea of the text as a whole, and Maddie moved toward synthesis of the ideas in the text. This was the objective of our lesson. Although all student responses were not as strong as Cassie's and Maddie's responses, the majority showed clear evidence of a shift in the students' responses.

Interactive Read-Alouds

The benefits of reading aloud informational texts include the following:

- Boosting students' comprehension (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004; Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008)
- Developing students' familiarity with the sound of informational text, which aids in independent reading and writing of similar text (Denyer & Florio-Ruane, 1998)
- Increasing students' background knowledge in the content areas (McMahon & Raphael, 1997), as well as their vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Santoro et al., 2008)



In addition, Sipe (1998) argued that teachers expand these benefits by using read-aloud time for observation, discussion, and instruction. Based on our understanding of the research, a core component of our instruction with informational texts was reading aloud in an interactive style.

When we began reading aloud texts to the students in September, they sat quietly and listened; we did most of the talking. Over time, this changed.

When Sunday observed Cate's read-aloud of *Icebergs and Glaciers* (Simon, 1999) in January, she wrote in her field notes about how the students would not stop talking. Prior to this read-aloud, Cate intentionally thought about how to make the ideas in the text accessible to the students. What follows are descriptions of the ways in which she interactively engaged the students in discussing this text during the read-aloud.

While reading aloud, Cate stopped to make a text-to-text connection. For example, when Cate read, "Perhaps the place you live now was once covered with ice" (Simon, 1999, n.p.), she reminded the students of the science text they had read earlier in the year about glaciers forming the prairie. The students also made these connections. For example, when Simon compares a glacier to the size of the Empire State Building, two students made comments about other books in which the authors had used the Empire State Building in relation to size.

Cate also made connections to concepts learned during other subjects. For example, Cate read aloud a section of the text on how the majority of icebergs are underwater. She paused and then said, "Remember the math lesson we did on fractions last week? I wonder if thinking about that would help us visualize what seven eighths of a glacier being underwater looks like?" When the students nodded in response, Cate continued, "So if you have a whole pie and you divide it into eight pieces, seven of those pieces would be the part of the glacier that would be underwater and only one of those pieces would be the part of the glacier you see sticking out." There was an audible response of "Whoa!" from many of the students.

In addition to facilitating different types of connections in a conversational way, Cate demonstrated self-monitoring for content they were not understanding with prompts like "Hmmm...did you get that?" and "Let's reread that." She encouraged them to think aloud about their own questions. For example, after the discussion about the glaciers being underwater, Cate read the following text selection:

The icebergs in the photo are eighty to one hundred feet high and several miles long. Each is a floating island of ice. The largest iceberg ever measured was about two hundred miles long and sixty miles wide. That's bigger than the state of Vermont or the country of Belgium. (Simon, 1999, n.p.)

At this point, Maddie's hand shot up and she thought aloud, "When they measure the icebergs, are they measuring all the way down or just from the water up?" In this case, the question could not be answered after rereading, so Cate told Maddie, "That's a good question to ask. We might need to read other books to find out."

Cate also encouraged examination and discussion of pictures in the text. In one picture, two people

are standing and tied together by a rope, deep in a crevasse in the glacier. The students were full of questions such as “Why are they tied together?” Cate responded, “They had to be tied together in case someone falls. The other person can pull them back up.” The students were in agreement that this was a dangerous thing to do.

Cate spent two days reading aloud *Icebergs and Glaciers* (about 30 minutes daily), and then asked the students to write responses on the second day (an additional 40 minutes). When we read students’ written responses to *Icebergs and Glaciers*, we noticed the inclusion of facts that had been part of the class discussions with Cate. For example, Maddie sketched a picture of a tiny person (labeled as herself) next to a much larger iceberg and wrote, “This is what I think I would look like next to an iceberg.” Carolyn’s response included a question for the reader of her response about whether they knew seven eighths of an iceberg is underwater. Her question reveals her understanding of the physical attributes of icebergs—one big idea in Simon’s book.

Mike included an important idea in the book—“to not get in the glaciers”—and his sketch of a person trapped in a crevasse in the glacier possibly reveals his understanding of a big idea that glaciers can be a dangerous place. Based on our assessment, we concluded that the interactive read-aloud, along with the ongoing focus on informational texts, contributes to the ability to retain facts and ideas, which is helpful when synthesizing ideas.

Think-Aloud Minilessons

By January, students’ written responses revealed that most were capable of identifying the author’s big idea. At the same time, we noticed they needed additional instruction on providing details from the text to support their ideas. In developing lesson plans, we considered theory on the importance of nurturing children’s cognitive processes through social interaction with proficient readers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Children need the opportunity to engage with their teachers in discussing what readers do to make meaning and what writers do to convey meaning as a way to take on this kind of strategic thinking. A teacher think-aloud is a key instructional approach in facilitating this kind of understanding (Brown et al., 1996; Walker, 2005). During a think-aloud, the teacher opens a window into his or her mind so students can

see and hear how a proficient reader first determines what is important while synthesizing and then composes a written response that reveals synthesis.

Planning for the Minilesson. In January, we developed a specific minilesson on thinking aloud. We chose three passages from *Almost Gone: The World’s Rarest Animals* (S. Jenkins, 2006), which the students had previously heard read aloud and responded to in writing. In preparation, Cate read the passages carefully and planned for what she would think aloud. She also planned to use samples of student responses to highlight strengths and areas for growth. Cate chose four responses that represented a range of ability levels as far as listening and responding, but each response had strengths worth sharing with the class. She also asked each student if when she shared the response, she could engage the other students in talking about how the response could have been extended to reveal deeper thinking; each student agreed.

Implementing the Minilesson. Cate started the minilesson (approximately 20 minutes total) by praising the class as a whole for their synthesis. She focused next on the instructional objective by saying the following:

I want you to go a little deeper. I made some copies of some of your responses. We’re going to look at them, and, as a group, we’re going to discuss how could this person take it [their thinking] a little deeper. These [responses] are good and what we’re going to do is make them better and stronger.

She then placed a transparency of Thomas’s response on the overhead and led a shared reading of the student’s response: “Dear Mrs. Gerard, I think Steve Jenkins wanted us to stop killing all these rare animals!!!” Cate thought aloud: “Is Thomas on track?” Several students responded in the affirmative, to which Cate responded, “I agree. He’s on track. One of the reasons that Steve Jenkins wrote this book is because people are responsible for killing these animals. So let’s take it one step further and talk about ‘How do you know?’”

Cate wrote the question on the transparency of Thomas’s response. Then she displayed a passage of the text about the Indian crocodile from *Almost Gone* on the overhead projector, read aloud, and thought aloud about the details in the text that supported Thomas’s point. During her think-aloud, Cate said,

When I read “Some people believe that the nose of this crocodile has medicinal properties,” I realized that this would be one reason why people in India might kill this crocodile—for medicine. Then I kept reading, and when I read, “there were only about 100 left,” I realized that this is a huge problem! I thought to myself that it was a good move for the Indian government to protect the crocodile over 30 years ago or else they would all be gone by now. This section of Jenkins’s book made me realize how hunting might devastate a population of animals and that one way we can protect animals is to ban hunting them.

At different points during this think-aloud, Cate underlined important phrases in the displayed text: *medicinal properties, it has been protected from hunters, 100 left, several thousand*. Cate used a similar procedure to examine two more passages. Using prompts, she also began to encourage the students to think aloud—for example, “What are details in the text your peers might have included to support their thinking?”

As previously mentioned, this instructional approach allows students to see and hear the process a proficient reader goes through in determining what details support his or her thinking. By sharing what she was thinking while reading and underlining the specific details she would use to support her thinking, Cate opened a window into her mind for the students. After the minilesson, Cate reread excerpts from the book to the students, and then asked them to rewrite their responses.

Assessment of Independent Writing. When we assessed the students’ responses, we noticed their attempts to support their thinking with details from the text. For example, Nadia’s first response to *Almost Gone* included statements about the author’s purpose, as well as sketchings and captions of two animals described in the book, the Miami blue butterfly and the Assam rabbit. Although her response showed that she remembered two key details, it also lacked key information, specifically that these animals are in danger.

Nadia’s second response (see Figure 4) exhibited development of her ideas with statements such as “The author wants us to save some places for the animals,” which is described in the book. She then elaborated further with the statement, “We can save these animals such as the Miami Blue Butterfly by saving places for it to live, and saving the plants it eats.” She continued with three additional points about what

humans can do to save these animals (i.e., put an end to hunting, help Steve Jenkins, and stop global warming). In addition, her second sketch of the Miami blue butterfly included a more informative caption than the first sketch—“Miami Blue Butterfly, less than 50 left. (One in each state!)”—justifying her choice to draw this animal as a way to support her point.

Maleeka also reveals deeper thinking in her second response. Maleeka’s initial response included the following elements:

- A big idea—“He [Steve Jenkins] was telling us to stop killing the animals.”
- A fact from the text—“The Miami blue butterfly is fewer than 50 left.”
- A statement that reveals a misunderstanding of the text—“It live [*sic*] in Miami, Florida.”

While Maleeka identified the author’s message, the reader has to infer that “fewer than 50 left” is a result of this problem and may lead to extinction of this animal.

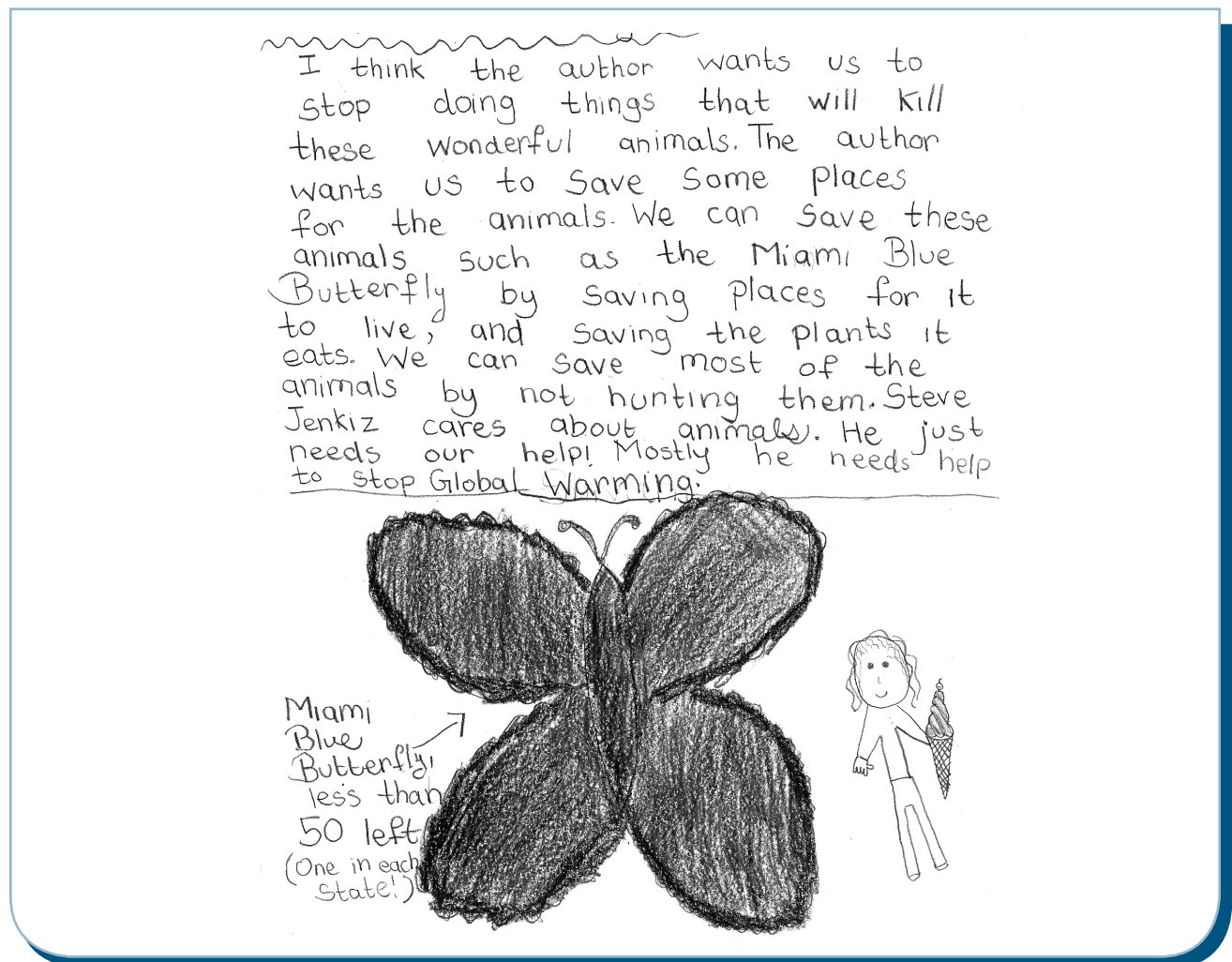
In her second response, Maleeka wrote more coherently than she did in the first. She began by stating the big idea, as she did in her first response. Next, however, she offered two sentences elaborating on how the Miami blue butterfly is an example of an endangered animal. She concluded by identifying Jenkins’s purpose (“Steve Jenkins is try [*sic*] to tell animals is [*sic*] almost gone”), as well as Jenkins’s audience with the word *us*, including herself and the reader of her response. Although she did not elaborate on her thinking in the detail that Nadia did, Maleeka’s second response is clearly more cohesive than her first, revealing an important potential shift toward demonstrating her synthesis of text in writing.

The shift in Nadia’s and Maleeka’s responses was characteristic of the majority of students’ written responses following the minilesson. As a result, we continued to plan and teach using this approach—shared reading and discussion of students’ responses, and shared reading of texts and engagement in think-alouds—through May.

Final Assessments

Our ongoing assessment of the students’ responses to the texts read aloud revealed that the majority of the students were synthesizing while reading or responding to the text—that is, thinking about the big ideas in

Figure 4
Nadia's Second Response to *Almost Gone* (S. Jenkins, 2006)



a whole text. In May, we analyzed the students' written responses to *One Well*. Eighteen students revealed thinking related to the big ideas in the text and elaborated on their thinking using details from the texts. The three remaining students only stated facts.

In addition, our assessment of written responses to texts read independently found that 20 students were synthesizing independently, or at least engaging in identifying the big idea and including some elaboration of their thinking. One student continued to state facts only. Based on our analysis of the students' responses at the beginning of the year, their responses in May indicated that the majority of the

students grew in their ability to synthesize the ideas relevant to the overall meaning of the text, develop their ideas with support from the text, and convey this thinking in writing.

Closing Thoughts

The focus of this inquiry was to see how we could use assessment-driven instruction to help facilitate students' understanding of informational texts. A limitation of this study is that we did not integrate data collected from other classroom experiences, such as targeted small-group lessons with instructional-level

informational texts. We also did not engage in an ongoing analysis of the sketches students included in their responses to consider how these sketches revealed their thinking and learning related to synthesizing ideas. Both of these points are worthy of future research.

This description of our engagement in the continuous teaching–learning cycle reveals how looking closely at students’ work can help teachers develop and implement lessons that highlight and build on students’ strengths. Essential to this work was continually asking ourselves the following questions:

- Where are our students now?
- Where do they need to go next?
- What should instruction look like to help them on this journey?
- How do we know they are learning?

The results of our endeavor demonstrate not only achievement on the part of the students but also the power of the teaching–learning cycle to engage students in thinking more deeply about informational texts.

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Take ACTION!

Begin by locating an informational text to read aloud to your students. Before you read aloud, ask them to think about why the author wrote the book and what they are learning from the book while you read.

After the read-aloud, ask the students to write and draw in response to the text. Analyze what they have written. Are they sharing miscellaneous facts from the text? Are they writing about the big ideas in the text? Are they writing about what they already know versus about the information in the text? Are they asking

questions? Or is their response incomprehensible?

As you read their entries, sort them into categories. This will give you an idea of the needs of students and objectives for follow-up lessons.

If your students need to work on synthesizing, then plan for another read-aloud. In advance, read the text on your own and think through the author’s big idea and supporting evidence. Consider the language you will use to articulate your thinking.

At the beginning of the lesson, state clearly what readers do when they synthesize and share the cake

baking analogy. Then as you read aloud to the students, think aloud about how you are synthesizing the information.

Afterward, engage in shared writing, using the cake baking analogy, to explain the author’s big idea and the details that support this idea. Ask the students to draw and write about the big idea as well; confer with individual students who seem hesitant. Continue assessing their responses and planning lessons that will deepen students’ synthesis of texts as well as their written responses.

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ReadWriteThink.org Lesson Plans

- "Guided Comprehension: Visualizing Using the Sketch-to-Stretch Strategy" by Sarah Dennis-Shaw
- "Reading and Writing About Pollution to Understand Cause and Effect" by Pauletta Clark

IRA Books

- *Children's Literature in the Reading Program: An Invitation to Read* edited by Deborah A. Wooten and Bernice E. Cullinan
- *Interactive Think-Aloud Lessons: 25 Surefire Ways to Engage Students and Improve Comprehension* by Lori Oczkus
- *Quality Comprehension: A Strategic Model of Reading Instruction Using Read-Along Guides, Grades 3–6* by Sandra K. Athans and Denise Ashe Devine

IRA Journal Articles

- "Introducing Science Concepts to Primary Students Through Read-Alouds: Interactions and Multiple Texts Make the Difference" by Natalie Heisey and Linda Kucan, *The Reading Teacher*, May 2010
- "Teaching Students to Comprehend Informational Text Through Rereading" by Laura R. Hedin and Greg Conderman, *The Reading Teacher*, April 2010

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