

The Challenges of Comprehension: A Blueprint

Activity Handout

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| Blueprint for Comprehension Instruction | |
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| Critical understandings of text | What do you want students to know and understand after reading the text? What are the critical concepts and understandings, big ideas you want your students to acquire? |
| Purpose for reading text | How will you introduce the text or reading initially and each day? What will you tell students the purpose of the lesson is (each day, overall)? |
| Text Reading: Vocabulary | Which words will your students need to know, are worth knowing? Which ones will you intentionally target and directly teach? Which will you incidentally on purpose teach? How, when? Which words will you purposefully discuss, incorporate into expressive language activities? How and when will you teach and foster the use of independent word learning strategies? Is there figurative language that requires explanation? |
| Language structures (phrases, clauses, sentence comprehension) | Are there phrases, clauses, sentence structures that may be difficult for your students? How and when will you directly teach sentence comprehension? How and when will you teach students to work with these? How will you facilitate the integration of ideas e.g. the use of cohesive ideas and connectives? How and when will you teach students to work with these? |
| Schema & text structure | What background knowledge/schema is critical to understanding the text? How and when will you teach students to access, build and integrate knowledge with the text? How is the text organized? How and when will you directly teach students the purpose, features and signal words of different genre? How will you teach students to use the structure to understand purpose, organize and express understanding? |
| Levels of understanding (surface, text, mental model) | How will you teach students the strategies and activities (questions) that facilitate student construction of different levels of understanding, to respond to literal and inferential questions before, during and after reading? How will you support the construction of a mental model of the text? |
| Expression of understanding | What strategies and activities will you use to have students demonstrate understanding at different levels of understanding during and after reading? How will you support their expression of understanding? |

Before, During, After
Comprehension Monitoring

1. Language Systems

Phonology

Morphology

Semantics

Syntax

Pragmatics

Discourse

Orthography

2. Reading comprehension...

3. Any changes to your mental model of the comprehension construct?

4. Reading Assignment

Stalin: A Brutal Legacy Uncovered
Mike Kubric, 2016
www.CommonLit.org

The Rise of Stalin

Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, one of history's greatest tyrants, died in March 1953. He had ruled over the 140 million people of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) for almost 30 years, and he passed away at night, alone, in his dacha—country house—without a last word to be recorded for posterity.

His obituary, delivered three years later by Nikita Khrushchev, one of Stalin's closest collaborators and most fervent lackeys, had the spellbound audience of almost 2,000 delegates to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The oration, officially titled "On the Cult of

Personality and Its Consequences,” lasted from midnight to 4 a.m., and included 61 specific charges of Stalin’s atrocities and blunders.

As Khrushchev informed the closed session of the Party apparatchiks, his report—which has entered history as the “Secret Speech”—was based on research by a special commission of senior leaders of the Communist Party. It covered primarily only one part of Stalin’s murderous record: the peak years of his savage “Great Purge” in the mid- and late 1930s, a massacre that wiped out a whole generation of Bolsheviks, the Party’s oldest and most faithful members.

Khrushchev, who went on to become the Soviet prime minister, said next to nothing about the rest of Stalin’s victims, who have been estimated at more than 20 million.

Stalin’s genocidal record was the product of a ruthless, steely personality hardened by searing hardships in his youth: first, brutal beatings by his alcoholic, dirt-poor father; and later, several rounds of imprisonment and exile—from which he often escaped—following his expulsion from a Russian Orthodox seminary for fomenting a strike of railroad workers. For the 20-year-old Stalin, an outstanding student with top marks in Bible and Church studies, the strike was the first step on a new road—a career of rebellion, crime, and radical politics that eventually made him the unquestioned boss of the Communist Party and of 140 million people in the Soviet Union.

Early Career in the Communist Party

At the start of the 20th century, during the dying years of the Russian monarchy, Stalin was an unlikely candidate for reaching the top of the greasy pole of the underground Communist party. He was a native of Georgia, one of the 15 republics that later made up the Soviet Union; he spoke Russian with a thick accent; he was notorious for his vulgarity, crude anti-Semitism and rudeness; and his physique was marred by a short build, a pockmarked face, and a crippled left arm. But what he lacked in polish and good looks, Stalin more than made up for with his remorseless drive, brutality, and ruthless disregard for anyone—including his closest and oldest collaborators—but himself. Little is known for sure about how Stalin became a member of the Communist Party’s central organ, the Politburo, during the years preceding the February 1917 overthrow of Czar Nicholas II. Historians believe that the young Georgian was organizing bank robberies to finance the Party’s underground work, and his high rank was an award for being jailed or exiled by Okhrana, the czarist security police

Stalinism

Collectivization and famines

In 1928, as part of his first five-year plan—an all-out effort that was supposed to dramatically increase Soviet food and industrial production—Stalin ordered the seizure and collectivization of all agricultural land. The huge farms, called kolchozes and sovchozes, were worked by the now-landless muzhiks, and were made responsible for ridiculously high deliveries of food to feed the workers in the rapidly built factories. The program, which Edward Crankshaw, a British expert on the Soviet Union, called a “wholesale application of terror to the countryside,” was a total failure. Instead of increasing the food supply, the collective farms produced meager

harvests and tried to meet their quotas by reducing the country's livestock by a half. The resulting famines and shortages lasted for years and starved to death an estimated 6 million to 11 million peasants.

5. Academic language is

- a. -Language of higher education
- b. -Language of everyday conversation
- c. -Language needed by students to do the work in school

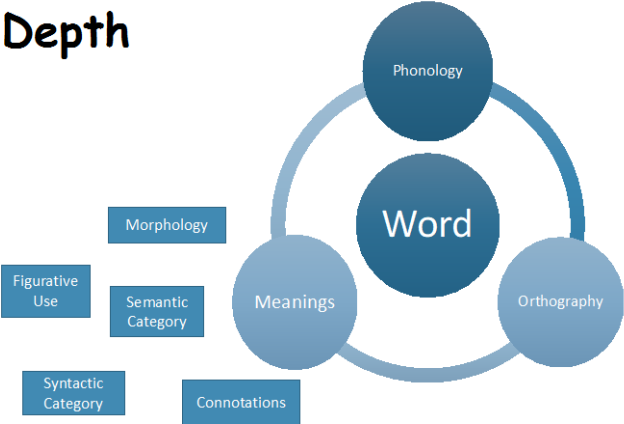
6. Define vocabulary

7. Quick Read

- a. *Breadth* of vocabulary usually refers to the size of an individual's mental lexicon. It denotes how many words a learner *recognizes* or knows at a certain level (Nation, 2001). Breadth does not specifically address how well each of these words is known.
- b. *Depth* refers to the *richness* of word knowledge that the individual possesses about known words thus it is the measure of how well an individual knows a word. Depth is not an all-or-none concept. As depth of word knowledge increases, words can be used more flexibly, and their meaning can be readily appreciated and accessed within multiple contexts (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Beck et al., 2002; Stahl, 1998).
- c. *Fluency* refers to the rate at which the individual *accesses* the meaning of a word. As word meanings become reinforced through varied experiences and it deepens, the time it takes to access word meanings decreases thus influencing reading proficiency (Wolf, Miller, & Donnelly, 2000).

8.

Depth



9. Stalin: A Brutal Legacy Uncovered

| Intentional | Incidental | Independent Word Learning Strategy |
|-------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| | | |

10. Routine

- Listen (teacher says the target word, discuss structure).
- Repeat (student echoes the word).
- Define (teacher explains in everyday language).
- Use (teacher provides an example, students provide an example).
- See, say, write... (Teacher writes the word, students say and write, discuss structure/parts of speech).

11. Function

| Questions | Part of Speech |
|---|----------------|
| who, what or whose? | |
| who or what? | |
| is or was doing? | |
| which one, how many, what kind? | |
| when, where, how, why? | |
| what's the relationship between the words before and after? | |
| what's connected or needs to be glued together? | |
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12. Connectives

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13. Background Knowledge

| | |
|------------|----------|
| Activating | Building |
|------------|----------|

| | |
|---|--|
| Anticipation guides Questioning K-W-L Webs, diagrams Connection to other texts Related vocabulary Study guides/organizers Journaling | |
|---|--|

14. Inference

One of Stalin's striking characteristics was his fear for his life.

| My question ?? | It says | I know | So I think... |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|---------------|
| Why was Stalin so fearful? | | | |