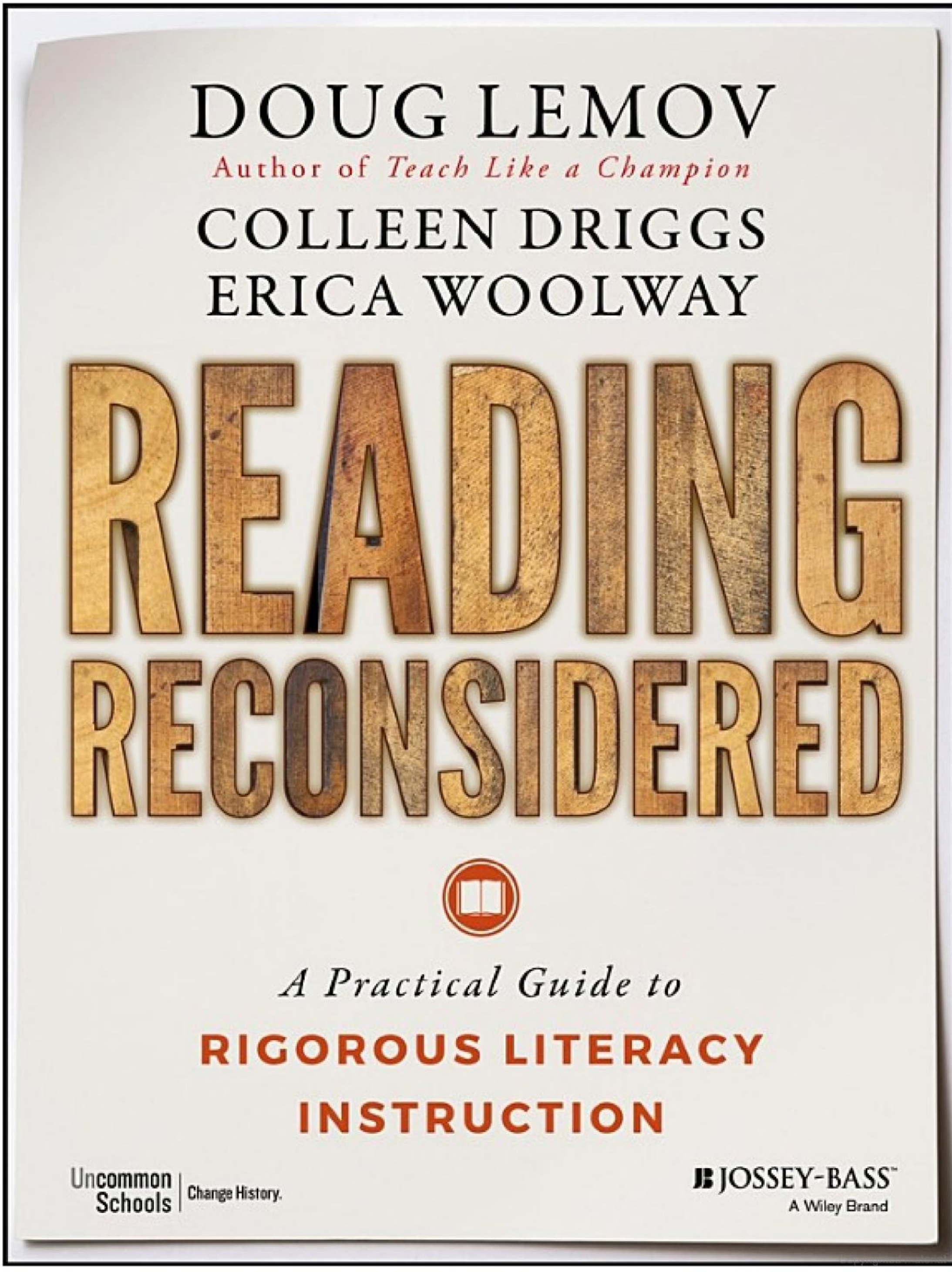

DOUG LEMOV

Author of *Teach Like a Champion*

COLLEEN DRIGGS

ERICA WOOLWAY

READING RECONSIDERED

A Practical Guide to RIGOROUS LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Uncommon Schools | Change History.

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READING
RECONSIDERED

A Practical Guide to Rigorous Literacy Instruction

DOUG LEMOV
COLLEEN DRIGGS
ERICA WOOLWAY

Uncommon Schools | Change History.

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Published by Jossey-Bass

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One Montgomery Street, Suite 1000, San Francisco, CA 94104-4594 —;www.josseybass.com

Written by Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs, and Erica Woolway

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Lemov, Doug, 1967- author. | Driggs, Colleen, author. |Woolway, Erica, 1979- author.

Title: Reading reconsidered : a practical guide to rigorous literacy instruction / Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs,

Erica Woolway.

Description: San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass & Pfeiffer Imprints, Wiley, 2016. | Includes bibliographical

references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015038419 (print) | LCCN 2015049348 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119104247 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781119104346 (pdf) | ISBN 9781119104254 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Reading. | Reading comprehension. | Language arts–Correlation with content subjects. |

BISAC: EDUCATION / Teaching Methods & Materials / Reading & Phonics.

Classification: LCC LB1050 .L44 2016 (print) | LCC LB1050 (ebook) | DDC 372.4–dc23

LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015038419

Cover design: Wiley

Cover image: ©kyoshino/Getty Images, Inc., ©marekuliasz/Shutterstock

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Figures 1.1, 1.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3; Chapter 3: Sample Embedded Outline (Javsicas); Chapter 4: Stop and Jot example (DeLuke); Appendix: Ideas for Meta-Embedding, Embedding Nonfiction: Quality-Control Checklist, Glossary of Technical Vocabulary Terms, Read-Write-Discuss-Revise Cycle Template, Sample Vocabulary Rollout Script, Reader's Response Journal Template, Literary Terms and Definitions, all copyright © 2016 by Uncommon Schools.

Appendix: Sample Vocabulary Rollout Script image of a fortune teller, copyright © Everett Collection/Shutterstock

Video Contents

These video clips and useful tools are also accessible via a login at www.teachlikeachampion.com/yourlibrary

For instructions, please see How to Access the Online Contents in the back of the book.

Video Clips

Close Reading (Chapter 2)

Clip	Module	Teacher	Description
1	Layered Reading	Patrick Pastore	Patrick uses both contiguous reading and line-by-line reading as he and his students read "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge."[*]
2	Close Reading to Analyze Meaning	Rue Ratray	Rue reads for subtlety and author's craft by juxtaposing a line from *The Giver* with plausible alternatives.
3	Close Reading Bursts	Beth Verrilli	Beth and her students closely read a short and crucial moment in *Othello*.

Nonfiction (Chapter 3)

Clip	Module	Teacher	Description
4	Embedding Texts	Colleen Driggs	Colleen makes the familiar more rigorous with an embedded text.
5	Embedding Texts	Patrick Pastore	Patrick embeds a short nonfiction piece on the Civil War to illuminate elements of a short story set in that time. ("Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge")
6	Embedding Texts	Patrick Pastore	Patrick models rigorous character analysis with the help of an outside-the-bull's-eye embedded text. (*The Westing Game* and a description of histrionic personality disorder)

Writing for Reading (Chapter 4)

Clip	Module	Teacher	Description
7	Writing for Reading	Gillian Cartwright	Gillian builds student writing stamina and uses writing to support a high-quality discussion of *Fences*.
8	Reading Class Cycles	Kelsey Clark	Kelsey has systematized Stop and

			Jots that give her students multiple opportunities to reflect on their reading in writing.
9	Reading Class Cycles	Julia Goldenheim	Julia expands the Read-Write-Discuss cycle by having students revise based on insights gleaned from discussion of the text. (*The Winter of Our Discontent*)
10	Reading Class Cycles	Jessica Bracey	Jessica “re-cycles” to ensure that students frequently reflect on their reading through writing and to create the illusion of speed.
11	Writing Is Revising	Julie Miller	Julie carefully monitors student writing, then provides clear feedback based on her observations of students' writing. (*The Life and Times of Oscar Wao*)
12	Writing Is Revising	Julia Goldenheim	Julia quickly addresses a common error by Show Calling one student and soliciting constructive feedback from the

			class.
13	Building Stamina	Eric Diamon	Eric strategically helps students build their writing stamina. (*Baseball in April and Other Stories*)
14	Building Stamina	Lauren Latto	Lauren supports students' writing stamina by giving them a choice of three equally rigorous writing prompts for *Romeo and Juliet*.

Approaches to Reading (Chapter 5)

Clip	Module	Title	Description
15	Accountable Independent Reading	Patrick Pastore	Patrick encourages quality Accountable Independent Reading by giving students a clear focal point. (*Catcher in the Rye*)
16	Accountable Independent Reading	Daniel Cosgrove	Daniel uses a catchphrase to expand Accountable Independent Reading duration at low transaction cost. (*James and the Giant Peach*)
17	Control the Game	Nikki Frame	Nikki gently administers a

			consequence and positively brings an inattentive student back into the class's Control the Game reading of *A Single Shard*.
18	Control the Game	Jessica Bracey	Jessica masterfully Controls the Game during a Read-Aloud portion of her lesson. (*Circle of Gold*)
19	Control the Game	Rob De Leon	Rob bridges for his students as they finish a section of *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.
20	Control the Game	Eric Snider	Eric prompts students to fill in missing words to ensure that the students are following along during a Control the Game reading. ("Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed")
21	Control the Game	Patrick Pastore	Patrick names the sound and Punches the Error to minimize transaction costs and put the majority of decoding work on students. (*The Westing Game*)

22	Control the Game	Bridget McElduff	Bridget normalizes error and brings in the whole class to help a student correctly pronounce a word.
23	Read Aloud	Taylor Delhagen	Taylor injects life into reading aloud with drama and pizzazz.
24	Read Aloud	Maggie Johnson	Maggie asks for a little spunk, and gets some joy and laughter in return. (*To Kill a Mockingbird*)

Vocabulary (Chapter 6)

Clip	**Module**	**Teacher**	**Description**
25	Explicit Vocabulary Instruction	Akilah Bond, Colleen Driggs, and Gillian Cartwright	Watch Akilah, Colleen, and Gillian demonstrate the importance of accurate and student-friendly definitions.
26	Implicit Vocabulary Instruction	Tondra Collins	Tondra turns one student's struggle into an opportunity for Implicit Vocabulary Instruction. (*Twelve Angry Men*)
27	Implicit Vocabulary Instruction	Nikki Frame and Patrick	Nikki and Patrick drop in definitions to support students'

		Pastore	understanding of a text. (*Number the Stars* and *A Single Shard*)
28	Implicit Vocabulary Instruction	Jamie Davidson	Jamie projects a picture of a scalpel on the overhead to support a definition that's critical to understanding the text. (*Boy: Tales of Childhood*)
29	Implicit Vocabulary Instruction	Maura Faulkner	Maura, after quickly defining a key word, asks a series of application questions to increase rigor and support student mastery of the word. (*Number the Stars*)
30	Implicit Vocabulary Instruction	Erica Lim	Erica pushes students to use a tough vocabulary word, as well as identify nonexamples of it. (*The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*)
31	Maintenance and Extension	Steve Chiger	Steve reviews and reinforces vocabulary words in his high school English class.
32	Maintenance and Extension	Beth Verrilli	Beth reviews the word *exploited* as it relates

			to *Macbeth* through a series of Cold Calls.

Reading Systems (Chapter 7)

Clip	Module	Teacher	Description
33	Phases of Implementation	Patrick Pastore	Patrick rolls out and models Interactive Reading for his students. (*Miracle's Boys*)
34	Phases of Implementation	Kim Nicoll	Kim models elements of Interactive Reading like labeling and writing margin notes. (*The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*)
35	Phases of Implementation	Amy Parsons	Students in Amy's class autonomously annotate as they read *Forgotten Fire*.
36	Interactive Reading System	Alex Bronson	Alex highlights a student's Interactive Reading notes in her science class as a model for the rest of the class.
37	Discussion Systems	Erica Lim	Erica encourages the use of nonverbals like eye contact and strong voice in her class discussion.

38	Discussion Systems	Erica Lim	Students in Erica's class hold a rigorous discussion with little prompting.
39	Discussion Systems	Erin Krafft	Erin installs a system that students can use to respectfully agree or disagree with their partner during their Turn and Talks.
40	Discussion Systems	Eric Snider	Eric uses multiple Turn and Talks while reading a short story, “Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed,” to check for comprehension and keep engagement high.
41	Discussion Systems	Laura Fern	Laura's class engages in an impeccable Turn and Talk supported by strong systems she's established.

Toward Intellectual Autonomy (Chapter 8)

Clip	Module	Teacher	Description
42	Toward Intellectual Autonomy	Maggie Johnson	Maggie facilitates a discussion based on phrases students have autonomously identified as important during

			independent reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
43	Autonomous Discussion Structures	Beth Verrilli	Beth clearly lays out the frame for a class discussion to support a rigorous and student-driven conversation about *The Great Gatsby*.
44	Autonomous Discussion Structures	Ryan Miller	Ryan models for students replicable actions of higher-level discussion as he facilitates a peer-to-peer conversation in his history class.

Useful Tools

Reading Nonfiction (Chapter 3)

- Ideas for Meta-Embedding
- Unit Plan with Embedded Texts: Rue Ratray and *The Giver*
- Embedding Nonfiction: Quality-Control Checklist

Writing for Reading (Chapter 4)

- Read-Write-Discuss-Revise Cycle Template

Vocabulary Instruction (Chapter 6)

- Sample Vocabulary Rollout Script

Toward Intellectual Autonomy (Chapter 8)

- Reader's Response Journal Template
- Literary Terms and Definitions

[*] For the video clips in which a specific text is highlighted, we've included the text title as an additional note.

To our kids, with whom we have 16,000 more nights to read—not nearly enough

About the Authors

Doug Lemov is a managing director of Uncommon Schools and leads its Teach Like a Champion team, designing and implementing teacher training based on the study of high-performing teachers. He was formerly the managing director for Uncommon's upstate New York schools. Before that he was vice president for accountability at the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute and was a founder, teacher, and principal of the Academy of the Pacific Rim charter school in Boston. He has taught English and history at the university, high school, and middle school levels. He holds a BA from Hamilton College, an MA from Indiana University, and an MBA from the Harvard Business School. Visit him at www.teachlikeachampion.com.

Colleen Driggs is a director of professional development for the Teach Like a Champion team at Uncommon Schools. Alongside Erica and Doug, she works to train thousands of high-performing teachers and school leaders across the country each year—reaching over one million students. Colleen is also an adjunct professor for Relay Graduate School of Education's National Principals Academy Fellowship. Before joining the Teach Like a Champion team, she taught middle school science in New York City; middle school science and literacy in New Haven, Connecticut; and middle school literacy in Rochester, New York. In Rochester, she served as the chair of the Reading Department, coaching literacy teachers and developing curriculum and assessments, at Rochester Prep Middle School. Colleen received her BA in psychology and education from Hamilton College and a master of education degree from Pace University.

Erica Woolway is the chief academic officer for the Teach Like a Champion team at Uncommon Schools. In this role, she works with the team to train thousands of high-performing teachers and school leaders across the country each year—reaching over one million students. Prior to becoming CAO, she served as both dean of students and director of staff development at Uncommon Schools and as an adjunct literacy instructor at Relay Graduate School of Education. Erica began her career in education as a kindergarten teacher and then worked as a school counselor. She received her BA in psychology and Spanish from Duke University, an MA and master of education degree from Teachers College in school counseling, and an MA in school leadership from National Lewis University. She is a coauthor of *Practice Perfect* with Doug Lemov and Katie Yezzi. She currently lives in New York City with her husband and their three boys.

About Uncommon Schools

At Uncommon Schools, our mission is to start and manage outstanding urban public schools that close the achievement gap and prepare low-income scholars to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. For nearly twenty years, through trial and error, we have learned countless lessons about what works in classrooms. Not surprisingly, we have found that success in the classroom is closely linked to our ability to hire, develop, and retain great teachers and leaders. That has prompted us to invest heavily in training educators and building systems that help leaders to lead, teachers to teach, and students to learn. We are passionate about finding new ways for our scholars to learn more today than they did yesterday, and to do so, we work hard to ensure that every minute matters.

We know that many educators, schools, and school systems are interested in the same things we are interested in: practical solutions for classrooms and schools that work, can be performed at scale, and are accessible to anyone. We are fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe and learn from outstanding educators—both within our schools and from across the United States—who help all students achieve at high levels. Watching these educators at work has allowed us to derive, codify, and film a series of concrete and practical findings about what enables great instruction. We have been excited to share these findings in such books as *Teach Like a Champion* (and the companion *Field Guide*), *Practice Perfect, Driven by Data, Leverage Leadership*, and *Great Habits, Great Readers*.

Since the release of the original *Teach Like a Champion*, Doug Lemov and Uncommon's Teach Like a Champion

(TLaC) team have continued to study educators who are generating remarkable results across Uncommon, at partner organizations, and at schools throughout the country. Through countless hours of observation, Doug and the TLaC team have further refined and codified the tangible best practices that the most effective teachers have in common. *Teach Like a Champion 2.0* builds off the groundbreaking work of the original *Teach Like a Champion* book and shares it with teachers and leaders who are committed to changing the trajectory of students' lives.

We thank Doug and the TLaC team for their tireless efforts to support teachers everywhere. We hope our efforts to share what we have learned will help you, your scholars, and our collective communities.

Brett Peiser
Chief Executive Officer
Uncommon Schools

Uncommon Schools is a nonprofit network of forty-four high-performing urban public charter schools that prepare more than fourteen thousand low-income K–12 students in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts to graduate from college. A 2013 CREDO study found that for low-income students who attend Uncommon Schools, Uncommon "completely cancel[s] out the negative effect associated with being a student in poverty." In July 2013, Uncommon Schools was named the winner of the national 2013 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools for demonstrating "the most outstanding overall student performance and improvement in the nation in recent years while reducing achievement gaps for low-income students and students of color." To learn more about Uncommon Schools, please visit our website at http://uncommonschools.org. You can also follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/uncommonschools, and on Twitter and

Instagram at @uncommonschools.

Acknowledgments

Having seen this book through to reality demands of us many heartfelt thanks to a great many people. We start with our team: John Costello, Dan Cotton, Joaquin Hernandez, Derek Hines, Maggie Johnson, Jennifer Kim, Tracey Koren, Hilary Lewis, and Rob Richard. Writing this book wouldn't have been possible without your superb analysis and insights, your relentlessness about honoring teachers with deep study of their work, and your great camaraderie. We love coming to work because of the joy that you all bring to it, and that helps us do our best thinking and writing.

We are especially grateful to Rob and John, who happily granted every request in order to edit and produce all of the invaluable videos of teachers you see here and to Maggie, our reading content specialist, who generously devoted hundreds of hours sharing anecdotes and examples from her own teaching experiences, provided feedback on drafts, and offered thoughtful ways to frame some of the key ideas in the book. If she sees her thinking in this book, we are honored.

Without knowing it, we started drafting this book five years ago with our colleagues in the 5–8 Reading Working Group at Uncommon Schools: Kelly Dowling, Mabel Lajes-Guiteras, J. T. Leaird, Amy Parsons, Patrick Pastore, Serena Savarirayan, Hannah Solomon, and Lauren Vance. Your collective wisdom about literacy instruction is the foundation of this book, and the talented teachers you lead continue to inform and shape our understanding of excellent reading instruction. A special thanks to Evan Rudall, former CEO of Uncommon Schools, who originally gave us the overwhelming and incredible task of helping

Uncommon “do reading” better. We'll try not to hold it against you!

Thank you, perhaps most of all, to the teachers who graciously allowed us to observe and videotape their instruction, who responded to emails and requests for phone conversations even at the end of long workdays, and who shared student work samples as well as the templates they've created in hours of careful planning. Teachers do the most important work in our society, we believe, and they do it with insight, passion, and skill. We are grateful to you all for doing that and for sharing what you've learned with us.

And there's the original literacy team at Rochester Prep, with whom Colleen worked and learned much of her craft. Thank you to Stacey Shells, Patrick Pastore, and Jaimie Brillante for helping pilot some of the early ideas for this book and for your constant feedback in helping make those ideas better.

An incredible thank you, also, to Christy Lundy and Stephen Chiger, both leaders of literacy at Uncommon Schools and trusted thought partners. Steve, thank you for your eloquent contributions, your sagacious feedback on drafts, and for your incredible spirit of collaboration and humility. The good news is, we owe you a pony. The bad news is, we are going to keep promising it at the next get-together so you keep coming to talk reading with us. Thank you to Katie Yezzi, Sam DeLuke, and Emily Hoefling for thoughtful feedback on our drafts using your experienced elementary school lens, and to all of the school leaders within Uncommon with whom we work, for your leadership generally and for your insight on teaching reading. Of course, all of the work at Uncommon Schools is possible only because of the support and guidance of our leadership: Brett Peiser, Julie Jackson, and Paul Bambrick-Santoyo.

There are also many friends outside of Uncommon to whom we owe a great deal of thanks: David Didau and Judith Hochman for significantly informing our discussion of writing, Sara Yu for her depth of knowledge about books and youth fiction in particular, David Coleman for taking the time to meet with us to discuss the vision behind the Common Core, Jessica Petrencsik for reviewing early drafts, and professor Patricia O'Neill for her comments in the Text Selection chapter.

Thanks to our agent, Rafe Sagalyn, for your leadership, guidance, and keeping us in line most of the time. A huge thanks to the team at Jossey-Bass who have supported us through the entire process, including Nic Albert, whose writing was a major asset to both the content and organization of this book; Michele Jones, whose careful edits ensured at least some clarity of ideas; and our editor, Kate Gagnon, whose constant support made this project possible.

Finally and most of all, thank you to our families: to our spouses, who put up with quite a bit even without the strain of a manuscript to write when there are bedtimes looming; and to our children, whom we adore beyond words and who we hope will forgive us for experimenting wildly on them with ideas from this book in our nightly reading with them.

Introduction

Reading Reconsidered

This book is about the enduring power of reading to shape and develop minds, both in the classroom and, ultimately, outside of it. Of the subjects taught in school, reading is first among equals—the most singular in importance because all others rely on it. Excellence in almost any academic subject requires strong reading. This applies to the history, math, science, arts, and other subjects that students study in their K–12 years, as well as the behavioral economics, organic chemistry, or ancient religious history they will pursue at the university level (to say nothing of the intellectual pursuits of their private and professional lives).

One of the core requirements of reading beyond the K–12 level is the ability to make meaning from the literature of a discipline: often dense and arcane, and where grasping the main idea—*this is a document about the rights of citizens!*—is insufficient. The specifics must be mastered—which rights, say, as defined how and by whom. Getting the gist is not enough. Academic success often means a student with a challenging text—sometimes at the margins of his comfort level—that he must read and master, alone. It's not *all* challenging reading—there will surely be fantastic lectures and labs and discussions, but even then, what a student is able to contribute to or take from those activities will depend heavily on what she took from the hundred pages of dense critical theory, case law, restoration drama or metastudies she sat down with the night before. The farther students advance, the more demanding the reading required of them.

If our hopes and expectations for our students stretch far—to

A few years ago, the head of Uncommon Schools, the nonprofit where we work and which runs forty-four high-performing urban charter schools, turned to us in the midst of an otherwise ordinary meeting and asked us to “figure out” reading. By “figure out,” he meant for us to go and analyze what we (our schools and teachers) were doing in our reading classrooms and determine what we needed to do more or less of. In other words, we were tasked with finding better ways to reach a consistently higher reading standard—to better prepare our students to succeed in college and in their lives beyond. We received this mandate despite the fact that, by most people's measures, we were succeeding in our ELA classrooms. Our students were consistently able to significantly outperform “expectations” as defined by what other similar populations of kids were able to achieve and what schools in similar neighborhoods did.[2] Internally, however, we knew that it wasn't good enough to do better than a standard that was not nearly high enough; we needed to find a way to help our kids outperform students born to privilege and the lifetime of implicit benefits to literacy that come with it.

Our standard had to be true and enduring excellence, and there we fell short.[3] Whereas in math and other subjects we would close the gap between our kids and those of privilege in just a year or two, our best schools took three and four years to do so in ELA. Some of them never did. Whereas our math results were consistent, those in ELA were far less predictable. Further, our first rounds of graduates brought back tales from college that were not always the march of triumph we'd expected. We'd sent 100 percent of our graduates on to college, but in many cases 150 pages of reading a night in texts of dizzying complexity had left our students overwhelmed by the challenge.

The charge to figure out reading was relatively terrifying. Our first thought was, “What if we can't think of anything to say?” But we set out to solve the problem in the way we've become accustomed to: by watching and learning from what successful teachers do and by doing our best to figure out what, among those things, works best.

Even before we started to develop thoughts about solutions, we noticed a lot about the challenge. For example, we noticed that “what we did” in our ELA classrooms could roughly be described as “just about everything.” There was a daunting breadth of skills and knowledge teachers were setting out to ensure that students mastered in a typical ELA classroom: learn to use hundreds of new words, develop the ability to comprehend texts in multiple genres, interpret texts in discussion with peers—and independently. Develop clear and evocative prose. Love and celebrate books. Know deeply some of the best ones that had been written. In some cases, the list included teaching those things to students who arrived in fifth grade not yet able to decode reliably. Oh, is *that* all?

But we noticed, also, that teachers did “just about everything” in another way, too. There was an immense inconsistency in the methods used by teachers across our network, even in comparison to the diverse approaches used by teachers in other disciplines. Our teachers, we sometimes thought, not only used every approach and ascribed to every philosophy under the sun but also often saw their chosen approach—to a degree far more evident than in our math or science classrooms, say—as something more than practical. The way they taught ELA was an expression of themselves, of their most deeply held beliefs. They were not necessarily going to relish suggestions that they make changes to that, we thought.

Our journey, several years in the making, began with that initial request to “figure it out,” but it was refined and focused with even greater urgency soon after, in response to another clarion call, this one directly from teachers and sounded in reaction to the phrase *Common Core*. At that point, no one had yet written standards or promulgated a test or tied that test to the lives of teachers and students in a variety of useful and not-so-useful ways. But teachers knew there would be changes, challenging ones, and they wanted their students to succeed with them. And with some anxiety, they knew they would be measured on something they did not yet fully understand. As information trickled out, we strove to combine what we were learning about teaching reading with what the Common Core required—or at least with the best arguments it was making—and how we saw teachers making those changes.

Because our work is informed in part by the phrase Common Core and because that phrase is fraught for many teachers, let us reflect on it for a moment. First, we want to observe that there are two levels on which teachers can react to the Common Core: the practical and the philosophical.

On the practical level, teachers have to consider the sorts of questions their students will have to be able to answer, about what kinds of texts, in what kinds of formats when they (both students *and* teachers) are formally assessed. They have to place bets to some degree: what the assessments will ask them to read and do is not always transparent, even though they understand that they will be evaluated for their success in preparing students for them. Teachers must make a “best guess” or, alternatively, bet in a different way and choose *not* to consider the assessments, continuing to teach in the manner they think is right and rigorous and true, no matter how reading is measured. These practical challenges are real, and we do not intend to minimize how stressful they can be for teachers. On a practical level, how rigorous, fair, accurate, and worthy those assessments turn out to be and how much teachers should adapt their teaching to them are questions we cannot answer.

But no matter how teachers may feel about the practical realities of assessment and implementation, it is also important for teachers to engage the questions the Common Core seeks to raise at the philosophical level. What is it that it asks teachers to do? Why? Are they good ideas, even if the pragmatics of the implementation are messy?

The Core of the Core

To that last question, we think the answer is a clear "Yes"—particularly if one were to try to simplify the changes the Common Core asks of teachers to focus on a few most important ideas and then think about how to execute them, regardless of how they are measured. We tried to do that and distilled from the Common Core four very clear and, we think, very good ideas. Those four ideas make up what we think of as the *Core of the Core*:

1. Read harder texts
2. "Close read" texts rigorously and intentionally
3. Read more nonfiction more effectively
4. Write more effectively in direct response to texts

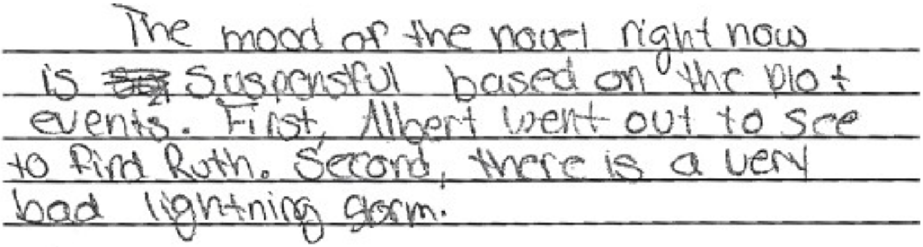
When we discuss the Common Core in this book, it is, for the most part, these four ideas that we focus on. We of course discuss other topics as well: the end goal of autonomous reading, and a variety of foundational aspects of reading instruction, such as developing vocabulary. But the rationale behind these four Common Core ideas is, we think, sound and addresses some of the most important gaps in current reading instruction. So no matter what happens to the Common Core on the practical side—how it is assessed and implemented by districts and states, and so on—making those four changes and making them well is likely to ensure

SAT was 507, and the average math score was 501. In the intervening years, Critical Reading scores have gone steadily down (to 495 in 2015) while math scores have gone steadily up (to 511 in 2015).[4] At some point in the early-1990s, their trajectories crossed. Math was no longer the bigger challenge; reading was. ELA scores are in “relative decline,” and whatever scholastic or demographic or instructional trends have pushed SAT scores downward have affected reading more negatively than math, a fact which suggests that the most common explanation cited—that a wider percentage of U.S. students now take the test—is probably insufficient. Something else is happening to reading skills in the United States. One clue may lie in Marilyn Jager Adams's observation that the scores of the top 10 percent of test takers have dropped the most.[5] Her argument, that this statistic indicts a lack of preparation for the notoriously challenging level of text difficulty on the SAT, is compelling, and one of many arguments for reading harder texts in school.

tends to skip a key step. Teachers spend a fair amount of time on words, building vocabulary that supports writing. From there we often teach the rules for writing grammatically correct, complete sentences. Next we progress to writing paragraphs: write a paragraph with a topic sentence, three sentences with supporting detail, and a conclusion. Next the paragraphs are linked in an essay. But the resulting essays often reveal a significant gap in the process: the sentences students write, though often correct, are largely unimaginative and often wooden ("I think X. I think Y"), insufficient for the hard work of describing the complex relationships of complex ideas.[1]

The essays our students write are limited, in short, because their sentences aren't very good. There is far more to a sentence than whether it is grammatically correct, but our students often have limited proficiency with writing's fundamental unit of expression. In fact, one of the most common definitions for the sentence is "a complete thought," but often students do not have the ability to control its syntactic elements: to subordinate one thought to another; to express the possibility but not assuredness of an outcome, to allude briefly to a previously discussed idea. When your writing consists primarily of simple sentences beginning with the subject, the range of ideas you can capture is limited.

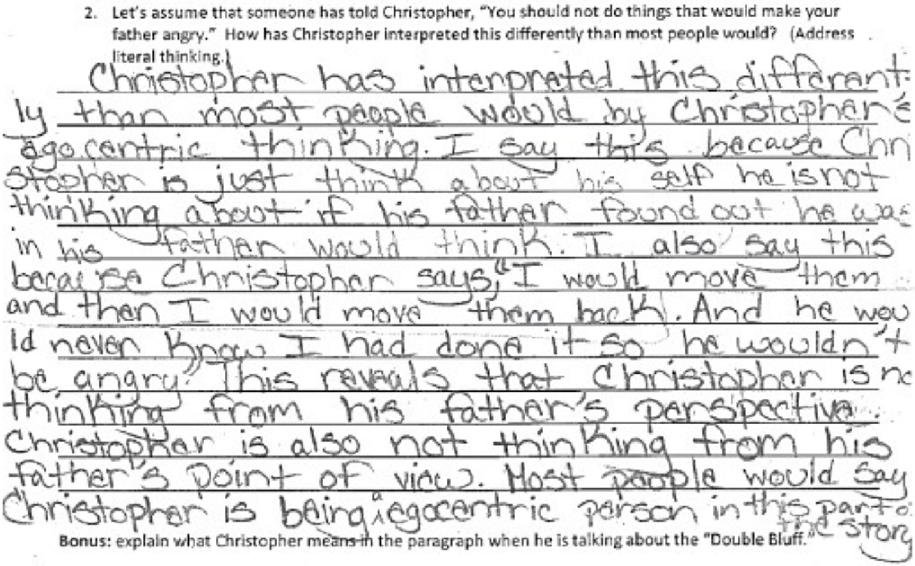
It might help here to look at some actual student writing. Consider Figure 4.4, a student work sample in a response about the mood of a scene from the novel *Lily's Crossing*.



The mood of the novel right now is Suspensful based on the plot events. First, Albert went out to see to find Ruth. Second, there is a very bad lightning storm.

Figure 4.4 Student sample work that comes across as wooden

Figure 4.4 is a classic example of wooden writing. ("First, X. Second, Y.") The sample in Figure 4.5 illustrates an increase in complexity, but still contains elements of woodenness characteristic of the writing of many emerging writers. This student expresses some scholarly understandings of the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, and uses higher-level vocabulary to express her ideas. She lacks, though, the writing tools to develop her ideas into a truly well-written response. The wooden sentences and repetition interfere with this student's ability to articulate a response that reflects her true level of understanding.



2. Let's assume that someone has told Christopher, "You should not do things that would make your father angry." How has Christopher interpreted this differently than most people would? (Address literal thinking.)

Christopher has interpreted this differently than most people would by Christopher's egocentric thinking. I say this because Christopher is just think about his self he is not thinking about if his father found out he was in his father would think. I also say this because Christopher says, "I would move them and then I would move them back". And he would never know I had done it so he wouldn't be angry." This reveals that Christopher is no thinking from his father's perspective. Christopher is also not thinking from his father's point of view. Most people would say Christopher is being a egocentric person in this part o the story

Bonus: explain what Christopher ~~means in~~ the paragraph when he is talking about the "Double Bluff."

Figure 4.5 Student sample work that contains elements of woodenness characteristic of the writing of many emerging writers.

Imagine that these students had been taught (or prompted to use) slightly more sophisticated sentence structures—for example, by combining similar ideas in one complex sentence or contrasting ideas with a transitional phrase, such as *whereas* or *although*.

Sophisticated sentence structures (for example, using transitional phrases or subordinating conjunctions) liberate students from the confines of their limited mastery of syntax and allow them to precisely formulate their arguments. You'll probably also note the role that more sophisticated vocabulary can play in helping students as they shape powerful sentences.

A technique that helps address student writing deficits is **Art of the Sentence** (AOS)— asking students to synthesize a complex idea in a single, well-crafted sentence. Having to make one sentence do all the work pushes students to use new grammatical forms, structuring their sentences in new ways and diversifying their syntax and word choice (see *TLaC 2.0* for more on AOS).

Part of this has to do with scarcity. If you are packing for a trip and have a dozen suitcases to fill, you can leave plenty of space in each. Just toss everything in. But if you have just one bag, you must cleverly tuck small items into larger ones and roll bulky items into tight spirals to fit the space available. Sentences are similar. If you can use an unlimited number of words to express an idea, there is no pressure on your technique. But if you have just one sentence with which to capture an important and complex idea—well, then, as with that suitcase, you must roll and tuck ideas deftly into the corners of the sentence.

With regular practice making a single sentence do the work, students improve the quality of their writing and increase the range and complexity of tools they can use to capture ideas. But just as important, as this chapter is about the synergies between reading and writing, this has an important effect on student's ability to *read* complex sentences and syntactic forms. Consider how often students when reading will seize on the meaning of a part of a sentence—a clause or a phrase within it. They understand the phrase but miss the syntactic cues in the rest of the sentence that make it mean something else entirely: a “despite” or a “but in fact” that sets an idea up to be rejected. Writing your own complex sentences that describe not only an idea but also the relationship of multiple ideas is one of the best ways to hone the skill of unpacking such sentences when written by others. In fact, we think that AOS is one of the single best tools you can use to build reading skills.

As is true of any form of art, students become skilled at composing sentences by studying the masters, copying the masters' specific stylistic tools, gradually adapting others' tools for use in their own work, and ultimately fine-tuning their own style. The first time you ask your students to write a single well-crafted sentence, chances are that they'll struggle. Calling attention to carefully written sentences that surface in student reading—in books, teacher-drafted examples, and peer-drafted examples—is an important first step. ("Let's take a look at this complex and carefully crafted sentence. What do you notice about its syntax/organization?" "How did the author show contrast in this sentence?" "Let's look at the verbs in this sentence. How do they help capture the author's ideas?")

Students don't always realize the complexity or beauty of a sentence until it's been pointed out to them; and they need specific, replicable criteria for what makes a sentence beautiful or well wrought if they're going to churn out their own artful sentences. So in addition to increasing awareness of excellent sentences written by others, teachers can equip students with tools for copying and adapting the sophisticated structures they've observed in authors' sentences—and in so doing, elevate their own writing. Three types of prompts can support and push students to write better sentences.

The Sentence Starter

The first type of prompt, the **sentence starter** , provides students with specific words or phrases to, well, start their sentences. Providing students with a single sentence starter forces them to apply a more sophisticated syntactical structure to their own writing. The act of writing a single sentence focus on the author's intentional side-by-side description of very different settings. This prompt asks students to analyze setting—and the fact that it's intentionally created by authors—more deeply than they would if the teacher simply asked them to describe one or both of the settings. Students spend their time analyzing rather than developing general or surface-level responses. The teacher's sentence starter helps shape the direction and depth of the discussion that will follow the writing.

Undoubtedly, there are times when you want students to share unique interpretations and analyses. But it can be daunting to sift through all of them when you have planned a particular target for discussion. And it can be unproductive when your goal is to deeply discuss one (or two) key ideas.

Sentence Parameters

Sentence parameters , a second type of prompt, are specific words, phrases, or structures you give to students to use anywhere in the sentence. Your choice of parameter depends on your goals for students' reading and/or discussion and what you'd like them to practice as writers.

Using sentence parameters, you might ask students to include a specific word or phrase. (“Use the phrase ‘internal conflict’ in your sentence.”) This is particularly effective for providing opportunities to reinforce vocabulary words, especially technical vocabulary words important in reading (*irony, conflict, characterization*, and so on).

Sample Sentence Parameters

Here are a few ideas to get you started setting sentence parameters for your students:

- Explain how and why Templeton supported Charlotte in

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A

Absorption rate: description of; embedding nonfiction to increase; how what we read impacts; increased by batch processing primary text

Accountability: Accountable Independent Reading (AIR); Gillian Cartwright's tools to ensure students' observations; Interactive Reading (IR); of students for following feedback and guidance on revisions

Accountable Independent Reading (AIR): accountability aspect of; accountability tools for in-class; barriers to; description of; for homework

Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) barriers: the accountability challenge; the fitness challenge; the report-back lag

Accountable tools for AIR: confirm and scaffold comprehension; find a focal point; finite time limits; "I'll meet you at the top of page 91" phrase as; interactive reading task; limit text and gradually increase; remembering to be "silent" during silent reading time

Achievement First Bushwick

Acting word definition out

Active practice: to master meaning; to master usage; three keys to; vocabulary

Adams, John

Adams, Marilyn Jager: her observation on dropping SAT scores of top 10 percent; on providing students with