

# Reciprocal Teaching

**ACTIVITY**  
INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED

DURING READING

 PRE-K K 1-3

## Objective

Students will learn to make predictions when reading, question themselves about ideas in the text, seek clarifications as needed, and summarize content.

## Background & Framework

Reciprocal teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) is comprised of four key strategies that should be taught explicitly and modeled for students *prior* to using Reciprocal Teaching:

1. Predicting
2. Questioning
3. Clarifying
4. Summarizing

The teacher leads a small reading group in working through a sequence of strategies to understand text. Students learn to ask good questions about the text, to identify problems that hinder comprehension (such as unfamiliar vocabulary, unclear references, etc.), and to clarify problems posed by the text. Responsibility is then transferred to student members of the small reading group, with individual students taking turns leading the group.

## Materials

Instructional-level text

## Procedures

**Step 1.** Divide a selected reading passage into fairly short sections.

This can be text that students have read once before (which supports slower readers) or previewed. Make text selections carefully to be certain they lend themselves to all four stages of reciprocal teaching.

**Step 2.** Assign one student to be the first group leader. The leader will supervise the group as they proceed through the Predict-Question-Clarify-Summarize cycle.

**Step 3.** Introduce the passage. Model for students how to ask a starting question about the main content, based on the book cover or title.

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**Step 4.** The group reads the first section of text silently.

The text has been previewed with the group or read once before (see Step 1).

**Step 5.** Guide the group of students through the four components of Reciprocal Teaching. (The sequence of the four components is not as important as working through each one). Support the designated group leader to guide the reading group through the following:

- **Summarize** in one or two sentences what has been read so far
- **Question** the text, ask questions and raise points for clarification
- **Clarify** the text through discussion
- **Predict** the future content of the text

**Step 6.** The next student group leader proceeds with the next section of text.

Each participant should have an opportunity to be group leader, leading the group through the four components of Reciprocal Teaching: **Predict-Question-Clarify-Summarize**

**Option:** each student in a small group of four is assigned one of the four roles: summarizer, questioner, clarifier, predictor, and leads the group in each task.

**Note:** Provide teacher support only as needed, primarily in the form of modeling and scaffolding—so the group can continue to make progress without impeding the students' self-direction.

*Reciprocal Teaching lesson plan based on the strategy introduced by Palincsar & Brown (1984)*

*Supporting research and related reading:*

Block, Gambrell & Pressley (2002). *Improving Comprehension Instruction: Rethinking research, theory and classroom practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palincsar, A.S. & Brown, A.L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction*, 1, 117-175.

Pressley, M. (2006). *Reading Instruction That Works: The case for balanced teaching*. New York: Guilford.

Strickland, K. (2005). *What's After Assessment? Follow-Up Instruction for Phonics, Fluency and Comprehension*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

ReadingQuest.org: Making Sense in Social Studies. <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/rt.html>  
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## Reciprocal Teaching (Continued)

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### Reciprocal Teaching examples

Remember that for Reciprocal Teaching to be used successfully, students need to have been taught and had time to practice the four strategies that are used in Reciprocal Teaching:

1. Predicting
2. Questioning
3. Clarifying
4. Summarizing

### NON-FICTION

Guided Reading Level T

Excerpt from Widener, S. (2006). *Born to Explore*. New York: Sundance/Newbridge Educational Publishing, LLC. Pp. 6–7.

*The Vikings lived in northern Europe more than a thousand years ago. The climate was harsh there, and the land was mountainous and not very good for farming. The Vikings were great sailors and explorers, probably for that very reason—they needed land. They sailed to richer countries such as England and France, invaded them, and settled there.*

*The fierce Vikings sailed on long wooden ships with carved dragons on the bow. To people who saw them coming, those ships meant one thing: trouble! The rough men from the North tore through villages and towns. On their raids, the Vikings seized people and forced them to become slaves. They stole treasures such as gold, silver, and furs.*

*Leif Ericson was a Viking. His family had a long history of adventure. Leif's grandfather killed a fellow Viking and was forced to leave his home in Norway. He fled by ship to Iceland. Leif's father, Eric the Red, was exiled from Iceland for three years after doing some killing of his own. Eric sailed with his family to a far land that was even more harsh. He named it Greenland.*

1. Read the first sentence with students and identify northern Europe on a map or globe.
2. The book title, *Born to Explore*, and the chapter title for the above passage, "A Search for Land," could lead to an opening question such as: Why might explorers be searching for more land? Allow students time to share their ideas.

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# Reciprocal Teaching (Continued)

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3. Prompt students to read the passage.
4. The group leader should talk the group through **summarizing** the key points and ideas in one or two sentences. The group leader might write the summary sentences down, or a group recorder could be designated to write them down. An example summary sentence is: Vikings were fierce northern European explorers who sought new land but were not welcomed by the people in the new lands where they settled and raided.
5. The group leader should solicit **questions** from the group; terms, ideas or information that need clarification. For example:
  - What is a "bow" and why did they carve dragons on it?
  - What does "exiled" mean, and why were Leif Ericson's father and grandfather exiled from their homes?
  - Were northern European countries considered rich countries? Were they desirable places to live? Why or why not?

The group leader or a designated recorder might want to write down the key questions for clarification.

6. The group leader directs peers to reread the passage for **clarification** of these questions. Focused discussion among the group members should take place to arrive at clarification. For example: The group leader should ensure the group reaches consensus on the meaning of the term "exiled." Teacher feedback could be helpful in such a case. For another example, the group leader should prompt group members to refer to specific points in the text that support their ideas about whether other countries were rich or desirable. The group leader should ensure that responses stay within a reasonable realm and are based on what is stated in the text.
7. The group leader should solicit **predictions** from group members about what might happen next. For example:
  - What do you think the Vikings will do in Greenland?
  - How do you think they will survive in Greenland since it is considered even more harsh? Or will they not survive?

These predictions might become questions and points for clarification in the next round, after the continuing section of text is read.

8. The group reads the next section of text and the next group leader assumes responsibility for guiding the group through **Predict-Question-Clarify-Summarize** cycle. The sequence in which these occur is not as important as working through each of the four stages of Reciprocal Teaching.

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## FICTION

### Guided Reading Level T

For Reciprocal Teaching to be used successfully, students need to have been taught and had time to practice the four strategies that are used in Reciprocal Teaching:

1. Predicting
2. Questioning
3. Clarifying
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Excerpt from Mitchell, J. (2004). *Brave One*. Illustrated by Elise Hurst. Austin, TX: Harcourt Achieve Inc. p. 14.

*Kiondo heard someone shout his name. He turned and looked down the street. Pili was at the bottom of it, waving her arms frantically. He only had a moment to wonder what was wrong with her. Then the water hit him.*

*Suddenly he was on his back and water was rushing over him. He gasped and tried to stand, but the current swept him away.*

*Kiondo rolled over and over, and the stones of the street bed cut and grazed his skin. Even so, he clawed at them hoping to find one large enough to cling to. And then he did—for a few moments—but it came loose in his hand and the current propelled him on.*

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For Reciprocal Teaching to be used effectively, students need to have been taught and had time to practice the four strategies that are used in Reciprocal Teaching:

- Predicting
- Questioning
- Clarifying
- Summarizing

1. This passage came from Chapter 3 in the book, so a good opening question would be something such as, "What is the last thing you remember happening with our main characters when we read yesterday? (There had been many days of rain; the nearby lake was filled to the brim; the big brother tries to take care of the family; they saw the creek overflowing). What was coming down the street? (water)."
2. Prompt students to read the passage.
3. The group leader should talk the group through **summarizing** the key points and ideas. Aim to summarize it in one or two sentences. Once the group comes to general consensus on a summary sentence, the group leader might write the summary sentence(s) down, or a group recorder could be designated to write them down. An example summary is: Kiondo got knocked over by the flood just as he saw his sister in the water down the street, and he could not get up on his own.
4. The group leader should solicit **questions** from the group; terms, ideas or information that need clarification.  
Why was Pili waving her arms frantically? What does "frantically" mean?  
What was Kiondo "clawing" at and why?

The group leader or a designated recorder might want to write down the key questions for clarification.

5. The group leader directs her peers to review and reread the passage for **clarification** of these questions. Focused discussion among the group members should help to clarify. For example, the group leader could ensure the group members reach consensus on the meaning of "frantically." Teacher feedback might be key at this point.
6. The group leader should solicit **predictions** from group members about what might happen next.  
Do you think Kiondo will be able to escape the flood? How?  
What will happen to Pili?  
How else might the flood affect their village?

These predictions might become questions and points for clarification in the next section of text.

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7. The group reads the next section of text and the next group leader assumes responsibility for guiding the group through **Predict-Question-Clarify-Summarize** cycle. The sequence is not as important as working through each of the four stages of Reciprocal Teaching.