



Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades

Debbie Miller

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If you have ever wondered how to teach comprehension strategies to primary-age children, read on.

First, imagine a primary-grade classroom where all the children are engaged *and* motivated; where the buzz of excited, emerging readers fills the air; where simultaneously words are sounded out and connections are made between the books of their choice and the experiences of their lives. Then, open these pages.

Welcome to Debbie Miller's real classroom where real students are learning to love to read, to write, and are together creating a collaborative and caring environment. In this book, Debbie focuses on how best to teach children strategies for comprehending text. She leads the reader through the course of a year showing how her students learn to become thoughtful, independent, and strategic readers. Through explicit instruction, modeling, classroom discussion, and, most important, by gradually releasing responsibility to her students, Debbie provides a model for creating a climate and culture of thinking and learning.

Here you will learn:

techniques for modeling thinking;
specific examples of modeled strategy lessons for inferring, asking questions, making connections, determining importance in text, creating mental images, and synthesizing information;
how to help children make their thinking visible through oral, written, artistic, and dramatic responses to literature;
how to successfully develop book clubs as a way for children to share their thinking.

Reading with Meaning shows you how to bring your imagined classroom to life. You will emerge with new tools for teaching comprehension strategies and a firm appreciation that a rigorous classroom can also be nurturing and joyful.

Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades Details

Date : Published January 1st 2002 by Stenhouse Publishers

ISBN : 9781571103079

Author : Debbie Miller

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Education, Teaching, Nonfiction



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Tevia says

LOVE LOVE LOVE this book! So many awesome ideas!

Marianne says

This is my favorite professional development book. I've read it so much the pages are falling out. I love the theories and activities. They all revolve around a calm, meaningful classroom in which children are engaged in learning.

Shannon Lionheart says

I would recommend this book to new teachers or those who have not taught in the United States.

Shauna Faherty says

Informative and easy to read

This book is wonderful. Provides so many meaningful insights. Things you can actually use in your classroom. Easy to understand and easy to read.

Mandy Robek says

I enjoyed the changes in this second edition providing more insight to Debbie's unit plans. She's shared with readers big questions, possible targets and things to think about to plan more effectively. Lots of mentor text suggestions!

Trina says

A must read for any educator-primary or secondary level. I'm impressed with this book for so many reasons (including showcasing a phenomenal teacher and a community of learners), but mainly how Debbie Miller honors how children learn best: providing children the opportunity to be the ones who are doing most of the reading, writing, and talking. These kids are the ones getting smarter. This is a resource I will return to again

and again.

Chris Heim says

The content of this second edition deserves four stars, but the fact that there is so little difference between the first and second editions of the book merits two stars, hence the overall rating of three stars. So, if you've never read this and you teach 1st or 2nd grade children to read, I do highly recommend you get yourself a copy. It's an accessible, well-written guide to growing a love of reading in children while building their higher-order comprehension skills, in particular. It includes unit overviews, anecdotes, broad lesson ideas, and lists of recommended texts organized by strategy.

Stevie says

Funny how nothing ever goes wrong in these text books. They have perfect ideas and all of the students are so bright and try so very hard. It seems like there would be at least one student that would not want to go along with these wonderful ideas. Maybe those kids get edited out. I want to read a book about those kids.

isel porras says

Good refresher about reading instruction and how to do it the right way!

I wish I had more instructional time to do even more of this- learning for the sake of learning, as it should be!

Alison Condiffe says

I love this book and writer. Dipping into this book is like talking to a trusted colleague who always shares great ideas. Feel inspired and renewed each time I read this.

Jill says

This book SERIOUSLY rocked my world!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

After I read The Book Whisperer, I was inspired to throw out my basal (which my principal JUST ordered) and do my reading instruction just like she does. But I was wondering how I could do this in a primary classroom, since Donalyn Miller teaches sixth grade. So, when a teacher blog set up a read-along of the Book Whisperer, I loosely followed along, and that's where I found that Donalyn Miller would answer bloggers' questions if they submitted them. So I submitted mine, asking how I could do her same plan in first and second grades.

And she picked MY question to answer!!!!!! OMG! She told me I should read this book, so I got right on it.

And it is amazing. This book was written by a teacher in Colorado who does a reading workshop model with her first grade class. She gave very explicit directions on how to do it in your own class, and she recommended a ton of books - many multicultural! Love that. I also loved how she included real pictures and samples of her students' work. That made me think that maybe I can do this!

So, I can't really throw out my basals, but I think I can make this work. I also just bought this at the Borders clearance yesterday!

Angela says

I want to be Debbie Miller when I grow up. This second edition of Reading with Meaning is so relevant to education today. While I consult my original copy constantly, it was nice to reread the book with Debbie's updated ideas on reader's workshop. I recommend to all teachers everywhere.

Charmaine Miller says

I would give this book a 4.5/5.

I would suggest taking up "Reading with Meaning" as a follow-up for "The Daily 5." The books are very similar in my opinion, with "The Daily Five" delving more into the concrete details of classroom management during the reading workshop. Miller's book is a great follow-up because it addresses some of the how, but more importantly, the why of reading workshop in great detail.

In reading "Reading with Meaning", I've learned the intentionality behind teaching what I had known to be an abstract and nebulous world-- comprehension (or deeper structures) of reading. I love how Miller lays out her plans for the year and includes her learning targets and how she will know (and they will know) when the students have achieved them.

Overall, this was a must-read for me as a primary teacher. My criticism would be that the book, even the updated version, felt dated, and I wondered if Miller's structures would work in classrooms now. For example, we learn for the first time near the end of the book, on page 160, about this random person named Michelle, who helps Miller in her classroom. Is it assumed that all classrooms have an aide or co-teacher? Perhaps in the days Miller was teaching, having an aide was more common. But what about classrooms that don't have this resource?

I also wondered what kind of schools would allow this kind of teaching. In my experience teaching in the last four years, teachers are required to teach from a specific reading curriculum. In some schools, the inhibitors on teacher autonomy are stronger: scripted lessons, pacing guides etched in stone, administrators lording over lesson plans. I wonder if Miller's methodology, which is no doubt very well thought out, researched and proven in its techniques can be implemented in the modern classroom where a teacher is shackled by the micromanaging school, state and federal expectations.

The book felt like a time-traveling quest back to the '90s and early 2000s (when I was a grade school student). I felt like the only current information the author used to update the book was by saying how great the Common Core was and how it aligns with her plan.

Again, there is so much valuable information in this book that I am willing to overlook some of the dated material, and I am excited to try to use Miller's methods in my classroom!

JennE says

From Amazon...

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RwM is a MUST read for beginning teachers and teachers wanting to begin instructing with best practices. It's easy to read, practical and the ideas and strategies are easy enough to try the next day.

Jen says

Amazing book that I plan to read repeatedly during my years teaching.
