

Fast and Slow Reading

This minilesson is a focus on pacing and rate, an opportunity to demonstrate how rate does change according to the demands of the text.

You could use a big book, a read aloud, or guided reading books.

I start by asking the students to listen to me read and tell me how it sounds. I read really fast, stop and ask for feedback, and then read very slowly, one word at a time.

I engage the children in a conversation about reading rate. How fast is fast enough? How do you know? Do you read at the same rate all of the time? Which books might be fun to read a bit faster? Which ones might you want to read slowly? Why? Does it sound like reading when you read one word at a time?

Over time, we develop a chart like the following to reflect our thinking:

BOOKS TO READ FAST	BOOKS TO READ SLOWLY
<i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i>	<i>Knots on a Counting Rope</i>
<i>The Cat in the Hat</i>	<i>Chickens Aren't the Only Ones</i>

For guided practice, I have students work with partners and use “thumbs up and thumbs down” to coach each other on rate. If the listener thinks the reading needs to speed up a bit, he can signal the reader with a thumbs up signal. If the reading needs to slow down, a thumbs down signal comes from the listener. The students then add the book to the appropriate column on the Books to Read Fast and Slow chart.

For independent reading, I open with a reminder about rate and ask the students to self-monitor their silent reading rate. The independent reader’s job is to be really aware of their own rate and to try to think in terms of matching their rate to the kind of text. At the end of independent reading, we reflect and debrief.

Key Questions

- Which reading rates match which books?
- How can I self-monitor my rate?