Why Reciprocal Reading?

Reciprocal reading is a well-researched method used to develop learners' reading skills, promote higher order thinking, develop listening and talking, and ensure access to the curriculum for all learners. Studies have also demonstrated that learners transfer their learning into other contexts. Reciprocal reading is just one in a number of strategies which can be used when learners are reading and analysing texts. Its aims are to:

- improve reading comprehension through the use of four reading strategies: **predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising**
- scaffold the four strategies by modelling, guiding and applying the strategies while reading
- enable pupils to reflect on their reading and develop higher order thinking skills
- use the social nature of learning to improve reading comprehension
- be one strategy in promoting literacy across learning in all sectors

Although reciprocal reading focuses on four strategies these need to be seen in the context of a broad and rich reading curriculum which also includes; previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualising, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarising and evaluating to be developed.

Reciprocal reading can be developed through any text type and with learners of all ages. Most importantly, reciprocal reading ensures that all learners can access the curriculum which is not always the case with individual reading.

How does it build on more traditional reading methods?

Many comprehension exercises are taught and practised through writing answers to pre-prepared questions. The reciprocal teaching method encourages children to ask questions of the text themselves and to answer and build on the questions of their peers. Asking questions and peer discussion can be a powerful learning experience and requires a higher level of understanding and engagement with the text. It also ensures that pupils with lower reading abilities can engage with the text and the curriculum.

Speaking and listening skills are also central to reciprocal reading. Speaking and listening development is crucial for creative and critical thinking. The reciprocal teaching approach gives children the opportunity to practise speaking and listening skills in a non-threatening environment.

What are the benefits to the teacher?

This strategy does not replace independent reading but is one method of promoting greater understanding for all. Reciprocal reading can begin with the teacher using the four strategies themselves when they read aloud to the class. The children then copy this process in their groups. When the children are comfortable with the process, they should be able to work independently of the teacher. This allows the teacher to work with all the groups, confident that the children are developing deep understanding of the text. The teacher can then lead a whole class discussion based around the findings of each group.

Reciprocal Reading Guide

Reading the Text.

1. Everyone in the group reads a short section individually.
   (This strategy is best used when all can read fluently).

   Or

2. All read together out loud or in pairs: known as shared reading.
   (This strategy is best used when one or more members of the group are less fluent readers).

   Or

3. One person reads and the others follow the text.
   (This is a good strategy to use when you have a mix of very confident readers willing to lead and some less confident readers).

Defining the roles

1. The Leader: Decides who will do each job, introduces the text and makes sure everyone is joining in.

2. The Predictor: Encourages all learners to make logical predictions and use information from their wider knowledge, and personal experiences to predict what will be in the text.

3. The Clarifier. Helps the group to identify confusing words, sentences and ideas. They then encourage the group to reach a shared understanding of the text.

4. The Summariser. Helps the group to identify the most important ideas in the text using known summarising strategies.

5. The Questioner. Asks questions which encourage full understanding of the text; allows the group to analyse the text and help the group to evaluate the text.

Notes for Teachers

To implement reciprocal reading, students of mixed reading and achievement levels work in small, cooperative groups of 4-5 students. They support each other in applying a sequence of reading strategies as they read orally or silently from a shared selection of text.

The first time reciprocal reading is undertaken pupils will need detailed information and instruction from the teacher. If this strategy is used across the whole school, then students should become familiar with the roles and concepts very quickly. The more often they participate, the better they will become in participating and adopting each role.

The teacher can showcase each strategy themselves by reading a text aloud and showing how they would lead, predict, question and clarify. This could be done in one lesson or individual strategies could be dealt with in several lessons.

If the text chosen has new curriculum vocabulary which cannot be deciphered easily from the context, then it may be advisable to teach these terms before the learners begin to read.

When tackling the 5 roles for the first time, the teacher should explain the roles and allocate these to learners the first few times reciprocal reading is undertaken. Once pupils are familiar with the process, they could be given choice of roles. Please note that although each learner is given an individual role, the whole group should contribute during each of the 5 sections. The leader should ensure all take part at all times.

The teacher can then lead a whole class discussion about the text to ensure that all learners have met the success criteria. Follow up activities could include summarising, mind mapping and using the information to create new tasks.

Explanation of the Roles:

1. **The Leader:** Decides who will do each job, introduces the text and makes sure everyone is joining in. This is a key role and it may be best to allocate this role to a dependable student at first. It is vital that they encourage all learners to contribute to each section of the discussion.

2. **The Predictor:** Encourages all learners to make logical predictions and use information from their wider knowledge, and personal experiences to predict what will be in the text. The pupil should go around each member of the group and brainstorm ideas *before* they read.

3. **The Clarifier:** Helps the group to identify confusing words, sentences and ideas. They then encourage the group to reach a shared understanding of the text. This is a key social role in that they must try to ensure that all the pupils understand everything in the text. It is important that pupils feel confident that they will be helped not mocked. One strategy is to get all the learners to highlight confusing terms, sentences and sections for discussion as soon as the shared reading is over.

4. **The Summariser:** Identifies the most important ideas in the text. For example, the key ideas were, the main points were...
   There are a number of key strategies for summarising which makes this a fun activity. This could also lead to all members producing a written summary to be shared with the class as a whole or for revision purposes. For individual summarising strategies see the separate sheet.

5. **The Questioner:** In order to encourage higher order thinking, use Bloom's Revised Taxonomy fans or questions. These are:

   Remembering: basic questions such as; what are the main ideas, key points, facts, statistics and examples within the text.

   Understanding: learners should try to explain the ideas to each other in their own words.

   Analysing: a higher order skill looking at purpose; bias and persuasion; inferences and hidden meanings within the text; patterns in the text such as layout, headings, repetition, imagery; use of statistics and references to experts in order to convince etc

   Evaluating: How well did the text meet its purpose? Was the information reliable? How well did the author put across the message/ideas?