

An interactive read aloud places more responsibility on students to share what they are thinking in a way that simulates an authentic reading experience than do traditional read aloud practices. Traditional read aloud practices in most classrooms involve teachers choosing a story, reading it aloud to their students, stopping occasionally to reflect on and discuss what is happening in the story, and, finally, promoting discussion at the end of the reading. This method places the teacher, not the student, at the heart of the activity and decision-making; however, successful readers read, monitor their comprehension, pause, think about what they have read, and resume reading. Teachers can simulate this type of interaction in a read aloud at any grade level. In this way, teachers who invite more student participation enable students to “pause” the read aloud to share what they are thinking and to “restart” the read aloud when the thought has been sufficiently considered.

STEP**1**

The first step in this practice is to choose a text that suits your instructional purposes and will promote engaging dialogue. Interactive read aloud allows a teacher to model during reading strategies, such as questioning and inferring, introduce students to literary craft elements, such as flashback, and promote peer discussion.

STEP**2**

Next gather your students so that they can face the reader (usually you, but a student could be the reader) and each other. Introduce the text as you normally would, then describe how this experience will differ from the way that you normally conduct read aloud. Their job is to think while the reader reads and to pause the reading by saying “stop” or “pause.”

STEP**3**

Model what it looks and sounds like--read the first page of the text, say “stop” at an interesting place, share your thought, say “keep going” or “continue” softly, and repeat the cycle. If your students can notice and name comprehension strategies, such as inferring and questioning, then invite that as well (e.g., “Stop, I have an inference...”).

STEP**4**

Invite students to join in as you continue to read. In many cases, they will be shy to “interrupt the teacher,” due to years of being told not to do this! You may need to be the person who says “stop” for a while; you may need to ask probing questions once a student has stopped the reading; and you may need to coach students to react to each other’s during reading thinking. Be patient; they will improve with your coaching and you will find that they are more engaged over time during read aloud events.