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CHAPTER 5

Curt, the Late-First- to Second-Grade-Level Reader

Our final case study concerns Curt, an 8-year-old third grader. In a sense, it is inaccurate to label Curt a "beginning reader," his performance on the initial assessment tasks being clearly superior to that of Atticus (Chapter 3) or Beth (Chapter 4). Still, Curt is among the lowest readers in his third-grade class, and his teacher questions how much he is actually benefiting from the daily reading instruction being offered in a second-grade (2-2) basal reader. The classroom teacher also states that Curt's confidence in himself as a reader is low and seems to be getting lower with each passing week. This child can rightly be called a "reader at risk."

I. SUMMARY OF INITIAL READING ASSESSMENT

	Word recognition (graded lists)		Oral reading	
	Flash (%)	Untimed (%)	Accuracy (%)	Rate (wpm)
Primer	100	—	—	—
Preprimer	95	100	98	68
1-2	75	95	97	65
2-1	50	75	90	44
2-2	50	75	84	36
3	20	40	—	—
4	—	—	—	—

Spelling: No. of words spelled correctly—List 1 (6 of 10); List 2 (0 of 10)
Developmental stage—Phonetic/Within-Word Pattern (correct short vowels; inconsistent marking of long vowels)

Curt's word recognition performance was strong on the three first-grade lists (preprimer, primer, and 1-2). However, he could identify only 50% of the second-

grade words on the flash presentation and only 20% of the third-grade words. In addition, his correct word recognition responses were not always automatic. Figure 5.1 shows Curt's word recognition protocols for the 1-2 and second-grade lists.

The word recognition protocols reveal several of Curt's strengths and some identifiable weaknesses. Notice that he made few errors on one-syllable short-vowel words. He also seems to know the beginning consonant blends and digraphs (e.g., *smell*, *shot*, *priz*, etc.). On the other hand, Curt's performance deteriorated on the third-grade list, which features multisyllable words. There is also some indication that he has not automatized certain long-vowel patterns ("smell" for *smile*, "got" for *gate*, "priz" for *prize*) and r-controlled vowel patterns ("peefit" for *perfect*, "harcut" for *haircut*, and "father" for *farther*).

Curt's oral reading was accurate, but relatively slow (for a third grader, anyway) on the first-grade passages. There was a marked decline in both his accuracy and rate on the 2-1 passage, and he reached frustration on the 2-2 passage. Figure 5.2 shows the coding of Curt's reading of the 2-1 passage.

On the spelling task, Curt's errors showed characteristics of both the *Letter-Name* and *Within-Word Pattern* stages of development.

	1-2			Second	
	Flash	Untimed		Flash	Untimed
1. leg	_____	_____	1. able	old	✓
2. black	_____	_____	2. break	book	brek
3. smile	smell	✓	3. pull	_____	_____
4. hurt	_____	_____	4. week	_____	_____
5. dark	_____	_____	5. gate	got	✓
6. white	_____	_____	6. felt	feelt	0
7. couldn't	colder	✓	7. north	_____	_____
8. seen	_____	_____	8. rush	_____	_____
9. until	_____	_____	9. wrote	_____	_____
10. because	_____	_____	10. perfect	peefit	prefik
11. men	man	✓	11. change	_____	_____
12. winter	_____	_____	12. basket	_____	_____
13. shout	shot	0	13. shoot	_____	_____
14. glass	_____	_____	14. hospital	hospel	✓
15. paint	_____	_____	15. spill	spell	✓
16. children	_____	_____	16. dug	bug	✓
17. table	_____	_____	17. crayon	carrion	carry-on
18. stand	star	✓	18. third	_____	_____
19. head	_____	_____	19. taken	_____	_____
20. drove	_____	_____	20. prize	priz	0
% correct	75	95	% correct	50	75

FIGURE 5.1. Curt's word recognition performance on the 1-2 and second-grade lists.

^{hug-H}
 A hungry wolf can eat 20 pounds of meat
^{single}
 at a single meal. That's like eating one
^{of}
 hundred hamburgers. To get all this meat,
^{hurt}
 wolves usually hunt big animals like deer
^{mice}
^{mose}
 and moose. But a hungry wolf will chase
^{even ✓}
 and eat a rabbit or a mouse. It may even go
 ←
 fishing! Wolves live in groups called packs.
^H
 The pack members "talk" to each other with their
^{Then}
 bodies. When a wolf is scared, it holds its
 ears close to its head. When a wolf is happy,
^{top}
 it wags its whole tail. If it wags the tip,
 watch out! It is getting / ready to attack.

FIGURE 5.2. Coding of Curt's reading of a 2-1 passage (100 words). From *Wild, Wild Wolves* by J. Milton (1992, pp. 15–16). Copyright 1992 by Random House. Reprinted by permission.

<u>First-grade list</u>		<u>Second-grade list</u>	
1. bike	BIKE (c)	1. plant	PLAT
2. fill	FIL	2. dress	DRES
3. plate	PLAT	3. stuff	STOF
4. mud	MUD (c)	4. chase	CHAS
5. flat	FLAT (c)	5. wise	WISS
6. bed	BED (c)	6. shopping	SHOPING
7. drive	DRIV	7. train	TRANE
8. chop	CHOP (c)	8. cloud	CLOD
9. wish	WICH	9. thick	THIK
10. step	STEP (c)	10. float	FLOT

Curt spelled six of the ten first-grade words correctly, but misspelled all ten second-grade words. In his spellings, he represented short vowels conventionally (FIL for *fill*; DRES for *dress*) and showed good knowledge of consonant clusters (*PLAT*, *TRANE*, and *THIK*). These are characteristics of a speller at the Within-Word Pattern stage. However, Curt reverted to the Letter-Name stage when he failed to mark long vowels in several words (e.g., *DRIV*, *CHAS*, and *FLOT*). Over-

all, Curt's spellings reveal a sound but still-developing grasp of one-syllable word patterns that is in line with his late-first- to early-second-grade word recognition ability.

These assessment results indicate that Curt is a late-first-grade to early-second-grade reader. He possesses a solid base of first-grade word knowledge, although there is some question as to how fully he has automatized this knowledge. A lack of word recognition automaticity may, in fact, be contributing to this child's slow, potentially debilitating, word-by-word reading style.

Word recognition and reading fluency aside, given Curt's 1-2 to 2-1 reading level, comprehension will certainly be a major instructional focus in his tutoring program. Curt's ability to comprehend what he reads—an area not addressed in this initial assessment—will have to be monitored closely as tutoring begins.

II. TEACHING STRATEGIES

Curt's tutoring program will include work in the areas of (1) comprehension, (2) word study, and (3) reading fluency. Contextual reading, as opposed to skill work, will be the cornerstone of Curt's program. In fact, the tutor's main challenge will be to *guide*, in as skillful a manner as possible, Curt's reading of good stories written at an appropriate level of difficulty. This guided reading will serve to do the following:

- Strengthen Curt's comprehension of narrative and content texts.
- Build his sight vocabulary.
- Increase his reading fluency.

In addition to guided reading, the tutoring program will include specific activities (e.g., *word sort* and *repeated readings*) designed to improve Curt's word recognition ability and reading fluency.

Curt's lesson plan will be similar to Beth's (Chapter 4):

Beth's Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

1. Guided reading of new material (18)
2. Word study (10)
3. Easy reading (10)
4. Tutor reads to Beth (7)

Curt's Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

1. Guided reading of new material (22)
2. Word study (8)
3. Easy reading (8)
4. Tutor reads to Curt (7)

The only difference in the two plans is that in Curt's lesson a few minutes have been borrowed from *word study* and *easy reading* to increase the time allotted to *guided reading*.

This section describes, in detail, teaching strategies that address the needs of a struggling reader like Curt. (*Note:* If writing is to be included in Curt's program, refer to "Writing," Chapter 4, pages 139–145).

Guided Reading

Partner Reading

Partner reading, one form of guided reading, often begins with a preview. That is, before reading a selection, Curt and the tutor “walk through” the pictures on the first four to six pages, speculating on what is happening in the pictures and what may happen later in the story. The child and tutor then return to the opening page and begin to partner read (alternate pages), with the tutor usually taking the first turn.

Partner reading is a safe, comfortable way to begin reading stories with a slow, word-by-word reader like Curt. Basically, it involves the tutor and child alternating pages as they read a story aloud, with the tutor asking comprehension questions now and then. Given that this is the same procedure used with Beth (Chapter 4) in reading *preprimer* stories, why use it with Curt, a child with a good deal more reading skill?

There are several reasons that partner reading is a very legitimate way to begin one’s work with a first-grade-level reader. First, partner reading is psychologically appealing to the child (in this instance, Curt) because he can perceive the tutor, from the start, as an equal partner who is willing to share the reading load. Over the course of a few weeks, the tutor may well decide to reduce the amount of reading that she does in the lesson; still, in the beginning sessions, many children benefit from the tutor’s being an active and equal participant in the reading. A second and related advantage of partner reading is that the tutor’s oral reading of every other page provides a fluent model for the child to emulate. It was noted in the initial assessment that Curt tends to read in a word-by-word monotone. Such a beginning reader can benefit significantly from hearing and following along visually with the tutor’s intonated oral reading of the alternate pages of the story. A third advantage of partner reading, although one not restricted to this format, is the fact that Curt is reading aloud, thereby providing important opportunities for the tutor to diagnose his reading skill.

The weakness of partner reading at the first-grade-reader stage is the lack of focus on comprehension. With the fledgling reader, Beth, it was perfectly appropriate to partner read the short *preprimer* stories, stopping now and then for brief, ad hoc comprehension checks. The story lines were uncomplicated, and, in truth, accurate contextual reading by the child was as important a tutoring concern as comprehension. With Curt, however, we have a different situation. Curt can read the words in the first-grade stories. Therefore, the major goal should be to help him become an active, critical comprehender of the stories he reads—a goal not so easily accomplished through the ad hoc, make-them-up-as-you-go-along questions characteristic of partner reading.

A first step toward helping Curt with his reading comprehension involves making slight modifications in the partner-reading procedure. For example, before reading a story, the tutor asks Curt to make a *prediction* about the story’s content based only on the title and the first-page illustration. Then, after reading a

few pages, he is asked if he wishes to keep or modify his original prediction, and *why*. The same predict-read-confirm strategy is repeated at subsequent points until the story is completed. The prediction questions, when thoughtfully interjected and followed up (“Why do you predict that, Curt?”), will lead the child to take an active, personal interest in the story being read.

As Curt progresses in his tutoring program, moving from a first- to second-grade reading level, there will be a gradual transition from oral reading to silent reading. Regarding tutor guidance, the aforementioned prediction-oriented comprehension strategy will increase in importance. It is to this strategy that we now turn.

The Directed Reading–Thinking Activity (DRTA)

Russell Stauffer, a famous reading educator at the University of Delaware, coined the acronym DRTA (Directed Reading–Thinking Activity) in the mid-1960s. Reacting to the sterile methods of teaching comprehension in the basal reader programs of his day, Stauffer was searching for a new approach—a teaching approach that would demand active, creative decision making of both students and teacher as they read and discussed a story together. Thus was the DRTA born. Before discussing this teaching strategy, however, let us look briefly at a few of Stauffer’s assumptions regarding reading comprehension.

Drawing on the early work of John Dewey (*How We Think*, 1916), Stauffer (1970) conceptualized reading as a thinking activity. He argued that the comprehending reader, either adult or child, is engaged in a cyclical process of (1) constructing hypotheses or anticipations about upcoming ideas or events in a passage, (2) testing these hypotheses as he/she reads further, either confirming, disconfirming, or partially accepting them, and (3) constructing new hypotheses based on information presently available.

Make hypothesis 1 → Read → Confirm/disconfirm/partially accept (hypothesis 1)

Make hypothesis 2 → Read → Confirm/disconfirm/partially accept (hypothesis 2)

Make hypothesis 3 → (and so on)

We can readily see that Stauffer viewed reading comprehension not as a *product* (the passive retention of information read), but rather as a *process* (the active construction of meaning through critical interaction with the author’s words).

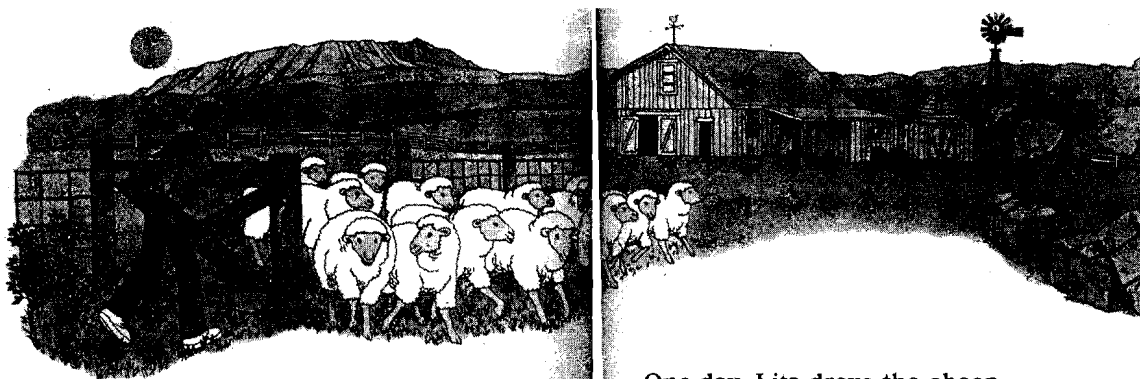
Anticipating by some 25 years a major trend in reading research, Stauffer also argued that comprehension is, in a very real sense, an individual or personal matter. He believed strongly that individual children bring their own distinctive background experiences and thinking styles to the reading of a given story, and that these personal characteristics play a major role in how a child will comprehend the story. For example, a primary-grade story about a young boy on a fishing trip with his dad might be comprehended quite differently by an inner-city

child who has never been fishing than by a rural child who, along with his best friend, visits the local pond almost every Saturday morning. This is not to say that in a class of 25 children, there will be 25 different interpretations of a story's message. Stauffer was pointing out, however, that an effective teacher of comprehension will show insight and flexibility in evaluating the background experiences and thinking strategies of individual readers.

With these ideas—comprehension as *hypothesis testing* and comprehension as *an active interaction between the individual and the text*—firmly in mind, Stauffer developed the Directed Reading–Thinking Activity (DRTA). The key terms are *directed* and *thinking*. The teacher directs or guides the reading in such a manner that the child is led to interact with the story in an active, problem-solving manner. At this point, let us use an actual first-grade story to illustrate the DRTA process.

A Model DRTA Lesson

To the reader of this manual: Read the story in Figure 5.3, “Lita’s Plan.” As you come to each *stopping point (/)* marked in the text, ask yourself what you are thinking at that moment, specifically what you anticipate happening next in the story.



Lita's Plan

Lita's mother and father had a sheep farm. Their farm was next to some green hills.

At the start of the day, Lita let the sheep out. She took them up into the hills. At the end of the day, she and the sheep went home.

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One day, Lita drove the sheep way up into the hills. They came to a green spot next to a pool. The sheep started to bend down to eat.

“I will stay here for the day,” said Lita.

Lita started to look over the place. She was a good scout. She walked to the pool. There she saw some bees in a tree. She let the sheep feed. She did not let them go next to the bees in their nest. / STOP 1

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FIGURE 5.3. “Lita’s Plan,” a Level 1-2 basal story. From *Moving On* (1980, pp. 106–111). Copyright 1980 by the American Book Company.

It was a hot day. Not a cloud was in the sky. Lita sat in the shade of a tree. Then she took out her slingshot. To make the day go by, she shot nuts from the tree into the pool.

Lita was a fine shot. "I will send the nuts into the pool," she said. "One by one! There they go!"



108



As Lita sat with her slingshot, she saw a big, tan cat. It was under the tree where the bees had their nest. The cat wanted to get at the sheep.

Lita let out a shout, "Go! Go!" But the cat didn't run. He stayed still. He was waiting to get a sheep. Lita had to think fast. / STOP 2

109



In a flash, Lita had a plan. She took her slingshot. Then she took a nut. She didn't want to hit the cat. She wanted to hit the nest, but she didn't want to smash it.

110

The nut hit the nest with a loud crash. The bees came flying out. They went for the big cat.

Lita shouted with joy as the cat ran off. She was very proud of the fine shot she had made. She was proud of the bees, too! / STOP 3



111

The following dialogue shows how Curt, an 8-year-old inner-city child, might respond to “Lita’s Plan” and the comprehension questions accompanying it.

Opening Questions

TUTOR: The title of this story is “Lita’s Plan.” Can you point to Lita in the picture?
[Curt points to the girl in the picture.] Where do you think Lita lives?

CURT: On a farm.

TUTOR: Okay. What kind of plan do you think Lita may have?

CURT: [No response.]

TUTOR: Have you ever had a plan to do something?

CURT: Uh huh. I planned to go on the train to my grandma’s house.

TUTOR: Good. Well, it looks as though this young girl, Lita, is going to plan to do something in this story. Do you have any idea what it might be? Look at the picture

CURT: She might be planning to find a lost sheep.

TUTOR: Could be. I want you to read pages 106 and 107, and we will find out a little more about Lita.

Stop 1

TUTOR: Were you right about where Lita lived? You said on a farm.

CURT: Yes. She lives on a sheep farm.

TUTOR: What is her job each day?

CURT: She looks after the sheep.

TUTOR: How does she look after them?

CURT: She takes them way up in the hills to a swimming pool, but there were some bees there.

TUTOR: You mean a swimming pool with a diving board and lifeguard and everything?

CURT: Yeah.

TUTOR: Would you find that type of swimming pool way up in the hills where sheep graze? I want you to read the top part of page 107 once again to see where Lita took the sheep. [Curt reads the first four lines on page 107.]

CURT: She took them to some green grass near the swimming pool. [Tutor explains that “pool” in this story refers to a small body of water like a pond. It is not a concrete swimming pool like one you would find in the city.]

TUTOR: Curt, you mentioned bees before. What do you think might happen next in this story? Remember, at first you predicted that a sheep was going to get lost. Do you still think that’s going to happen?

CURT: I think a sheep is going to go near the bees and get stung, and the girl is going to have to help the sheep.

TUTOR: All right, good prediction. Let's read pages 108 and 109 and see what happens.

Stop 2

TUTOR: Do you want to change your mind about what might happen in this story?

CURT: Yeah! I think the big cat is going to go after one of the sheep and the girl will shoot the cat with the slingshot.

TUTOR: Okay. The cat wants to get at the sheep. Do you think Lita is in danger?

CURT: Yes. If she shoots that cat, he might get mad and come after her. Then she's really in trouble.

TUTOR: By the way, what kind of cat is it?

CURT: A mountain cat. It's big and mean and likes to eat sheep.

TUTOR: All right. The title of the story is "Lita's Plan." Now tell me once again what her plan is going to be.

CURT: When the mountain cat goes after the little sheep, Lita's going to shoot the cat with her slingshot and he's going to run away.

TUTOR: Okay. Let's read to the end of the story and see what happens.

Stop 3 (End of Story)

TUTOR: What was Lita's plan?

CURT: She shot at the bees' nest, and the bees came flying out after the cat, and he ran away.

TUTOR: Was that her plan, or did she hit the bees' nest by accident?

CURT: That was her plan.

TUTOR: Can you read me the sentences that show it was a real plan and not an accident? Look here on page 110. [Child finds the sentences and reads them aloud.] Good. Now do you think it was a good plan?

CURT: Yeah.

TUTOR: Why?

CURT: Because the cat went away.

TUTOR: Okay. But could something have gone wrong?

CURT: Uh huh. She could have missed the nest and hit the cat. Then she'd have been in real trouble.

TUTOR: What else could Lita have done?

CURT: She could have yelled for help, but nobody was around.

TUTOR: What would have happened if she had just tried to take the sheep home?

CURT: The cat would have followed them.

TUTOR: Curt, you really read this story well. One last question—did you like it?

CURT: It was all right!

In analyzing the preceding DRTA dialogue, let us focus on (1) the predictions made by the child, (2) the specific guidance offered by the tutor, and (3) the nature of the dialogue between child and tutor.

Predictions

Curt made three predictions during his reading of the story:

Opening prediction: She might be planning to find a lost sheep.

Stop 1 prediction: I think a sheep is going to go near the bees and get stung, and the girl is going to have to help the sheep.

Stop 2 prediction: When the mountain cat goes after the little sheep, Lita's going to shoot the cat with her slingshot and he's going to run away.

With regard to the actual ending or climax of "Lita's Plan," none of these predictions are correct. However, when we take into account the points at which Curt made the three predictions (at the *beginning* and at *one-third* and *two-thirds* of the way through the story), each of them becomes a perfectly reasonable hypothesis. This is an important point. The tutor, having pre-read the story, knows how the plot eventually unfolds. However, in evaluating the child's predictions at the various stopping points, the tutor must take into consideration only the information available to the child at a particular point in the story. For example, if the child's prediction at Stop 2 is a logical one based on information read up to that point, it should be accepted, even acknowledged by the tutor as an example of good thinking. If the prediction is illogical ("off the wall," if you will), the tutor can probe for the child's reasons and possibly have him return to the text for a rereading. The major point is that the child should be allowed to read the story "on his own terms" as long as he honors the information in the story line. The tutor's task is *not* to correct the child's predictions; the story line will do this as the child reads on. Rather, the task of the tutor is to listen carefully to the child's answers, to hold him to a reasonable ("within reason") interpretation of the unfolding plot, and to be continually evaluating the quality of the child's thinking.

Guidance

In a DRTA lesson, the eliciting of predictions from the child at various stopping points in the story is one type of guidance offered by the tutor. A second way to guide the reading lesson is to ask a few specific questions at the stopping points that check the child's understanding of key information in the story. These comprehension checks are very important when working with a remedial reader like Curt. Let us examine a few questions in the preceding DRTA dialogue.

Sometimes the child responds quickly and accurately to the tutor's question:

TUTOR: What is her [Lita's] job each day? (Stop 1)

CURT: She looks after the sheep.

TUTOR: By the way, what kind of cat is it? (Stop 2)

CURT: A mountain cat. It's big and mean and likes to eat sheep.

The tutor may choose to acknowledge such correct answers with a nod or a verbal "Okay." In either case, she matter-of-factly moves on, mentally noting that the child is picking up and adequately interpreting important information in the story.

On other occasions, the child's responses to comprehension checks may be incomplete or confused. Consider the following example:

TUTOR: How does she look after them [the sheep]? (Stop 1)

CURT: She takes them way up in the hills to a swimming pool, but there were some bees there.

TUTOR: You mean a swimming pool with a diving board and lifeguard and everything?

CURT: Yeah.

TUTOR: Would you find that type of swimming pool way up in the hills where sheep graze?

CURT: [Silence.]

TUTOR: I want you to read the top part of page 107 once again to see where Lita took the sheep. [Curt reads the first four lines on page 107.]

CURT: She took them to some green grass near the swimming pool. [Tutor explains the alternative meaning of the word *pool*.]

In this example, the tutor posed a question and the child's answer was somewhat lacking. After some probing, the tutor directed Curt to reread a small section of the story to clarify his understanding. Even after this rereading, Curt still did not recognize that the word *pool* referred to a small body of water—a pond. Thus, the tutor provided the needed definition. (Note that when she asked Curt to reread, the tutor designated the page—even the location on the page—where the needed information was to be found. This was to save time and make the important task of rereading less arduous for the child.)

In summarizing this section, there seem to be two distinct types of "guiding" questions in the DRTA. At each stopping point, one or two specific questions related to the story content will induce the child to attend closely to important information as he reads. On the other hand, prediction questions will require him to synthesize the incoming information and make thoughtful projections forward into the story. It is the tutor's skillful, timely use of both types of questions that will produce beneficial comprehension lessons.

The Nature of the Dialogue

The dialogue between tutor and child in a well-run DRTA should be *conversational* in nature—an informal discussion about unfolding events in a story. Such a dialogue cannot be accomplished in a traditional question–answer paradigm:

Tutor, who knows <i>the</i> answer, asks a question.	→	Child must produce the “right” answer.
---	---	---

In this paradigm, the tutor is the final arbiter of truth. The child ends up reading the story for the tutor’s purposes, not his/her own, and an equal, open exchange of ideas does not occur.

Certainly, as we have seen before, direct questions do have a role to play in the DRTA process. Such questions serve as a check on the child’s ongoing comprehension of important story information. However, it is the DRTA prediction questions that open up the comprehension lesson. The prediction questions serve as “pivot points” that facilitate discussion between child and tutor. By making predictions about upcoming events in the story, Curt is setting his *own* purposes for reading. The tutor’s task, then, is to “climb into the child’s mind” and attempt to understand his predictions and the reasoning underlying them. This will lead to honest questions that will inspire trust between the two participants:

TUTOR: What do you think will happen now?

[Child makes prediction.]

TUTOR: Why do you think that, Curt?

[Child gives reasons.]

TUTOR: Okay, I think I see what you’re getting at. That makes good sense. Let’s read on and see what happens.

One may question why the adjective *conversational* is used in characterizing the optimal DRTA dialogue. Why not a *problem-solving* dialogue or an *open-ended* dialogue? The reason is this: To an outside observer the interaction between tutor and child in a skillfully run DRTA does resemble a conversation, a give-and-take of ideas noticeably lacking in rigidity or authoritarianism. Establishing such a conversational style is not easy. Personality, judgment, and practice all figure into the equation. However, the tutor who is willing to listen carefully to what a child has to say will have a head start toward becoming an effective user of the DRTA.

Planning a DRTA Lesson

The real learning and teaching in a DRTA lesson occurs during the guided reading of the story—in the child’s mind as he/she purposefully reads a section of the text, and in the minds of both child and tutor as they dialogue about the unfold-

ing plot. Such learning-teaching cannot be totally prescribed beforehand, because the DRTA process encourages the child to read each story (or section of a story) from his/her own personal perspective. In this way, the reading will always be alive with possibilities, with potential. The spontaneity of the process notwithstanding, a successful DRTA lesson does require a certain amount of *preplanning* on the tutor's part. As we shall see, such planning supplies a needed structure or stage on which the action (learning) can be played out.

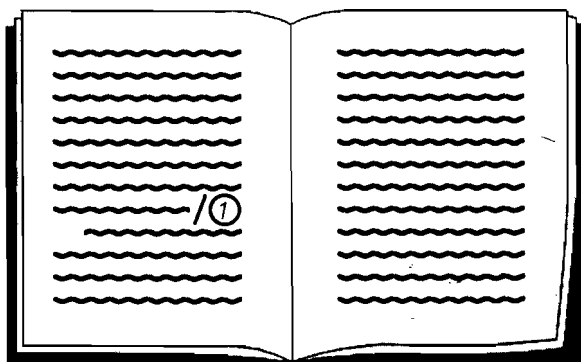
The planning process can be described in a straightforward manner:

1. *Read the story through from beginning to end.* This step will take only a few minutes' time.

2. *Go back through the story and choose appropriate stopping points.* Having read the story once (Step 1), the tutor knows the plot. On this second reading, therefore, the tutor should be consciously considering three or four breaks or *stopping points* in the story that lend themselves to questions about what has happened thus far and what might happen as the story continues. Although the choosing of good stopping points is very important, there is no mystery to the task. While reading, the tutor must simply ask, At what point in the story am I able to anticipate an important upcoming event or plot turn? Why am I able to do so? What information have I read that is triggering the anticipation?

3. *Plan questions to be asked at the stopping points.* The reasoning involved in choosing a given stopping point (Step 2) should immediately make available to the tutor several questions that can be asked at that stopping point. Therefore, it is suggested that the tutor plan questions for each stopping point as it is sequentially chosen (i.e., choose Stop 1—plan questions for Stop 1; choose Stop 2—plan questions for Stop 2; and so on).

The mechanics of preplanning a DRTA lesson involve (a) marking the stopping points in the text (penciled-in slash marks will do), and (b) writing out possible questions to be asked at each stopping point.



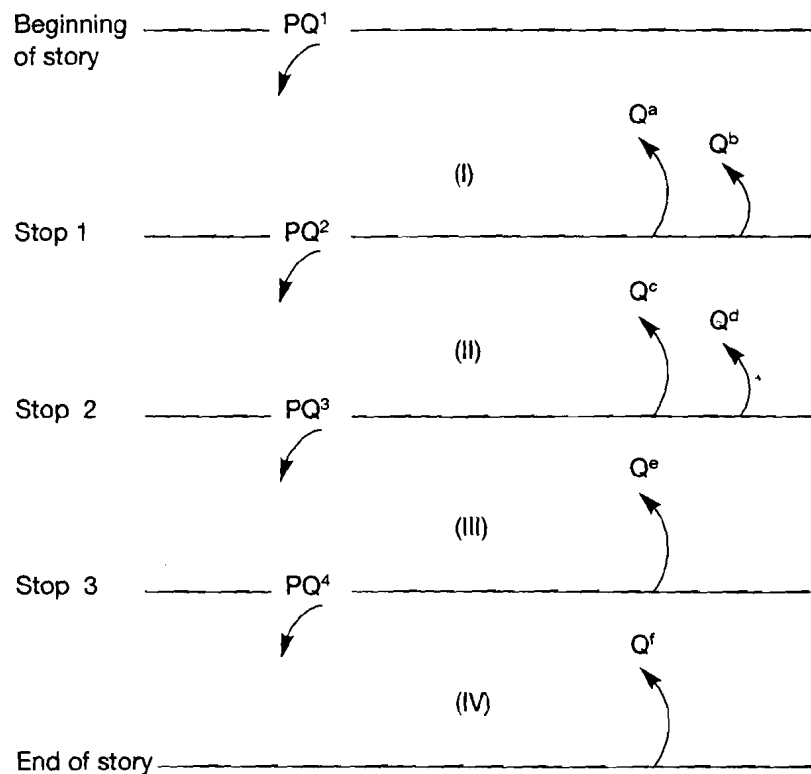
TITLE:	
	~~~~~
	~~~~~
STOP ①	Why ~~~~~
	~~~~~?
STOP ②	What ~~~~~
	~~~~~?
STOP ③	Why ~~~~~
	~~~~~?

Figure 5.4 provides a useful scheme or design for planning. With slight modifications, this scheme can be applied to the planning and teaching of different types of stories across the grade levels. Notice that in the hypothetical DRTA plan in Figure 5.4 the tutor decided to divide the story into four parts (see Roman numerals I–IV). Such a decision must be based not only on logical prediction points within the story, but also on the story’s length. For example, a tutor may believe that a child’s motivation and concentration can best be maintained if the reading is stopped every two pages or so for discussion. This would lead the tutor to divide a nine-page story into at least four sections. Over time, as the child’s reading fluency and ability to concentrate improve, the number of stopping points in a given story can be reduced.

Having considered the issue of *how many* stopping points to select, let us move through Figure 5.4 from top to bottom, examining the questioning sequence in this particular DRTA plan.

### *Beginning of Story*

In this story, the title and first page picture lent themselves to a global prediction (PQ¹) about the story plot. Be forewarned, however, that not every story title and



**FIGURE 5.4.** Schema for planning a DRTA lesson. PQ, prediction question; Q, question back into the story.



opening illustration will be so obliging. Asking a child to predict from such innocuous titles as “Benjie” or “The Bike” can, if one is not careful, create an artificial, uncomfortable beginning to the reading lesson. Therefore, if the title and picture do not lend themselves to an opening prediction, do not press the child to make one. Simply begin reading the story and wait for a more natural point to begin the prediction process.

### *Stop 1*

At Stop 1, after Part I has been read, three questions are planned: Q^a, Q^b, and PQ². The first two questions (Q^a and Q^b) seek information about the story setting and the characters that are introduced on the first two pages. The third question (PQ²) asks the child if he/she wants to keep or change his/her original prediction (PQ¹)—and why or why not.

### *Stop 2*

For Part II of the story, three more questions are planned. Two of these (Q^c and Q^d) check the child’s comprehension of plot-relevant information. The third question (PQ³) asks the child to predict what might happen next in the story.

### *Stop 3*

The questioning at Stop 3 can be handled in two different ways. One way combines a retelling question with a prediction question. Begin by asking the child *to retell* (Q^e) what happened in the section he/she has just finished reading—Part III. If the child’s summarization of the events is incomplete, the tutor can probe for further information. If necessary, the tutor can have the child reread parts of the text. With the retelling established, the stage is set for the prediction question (PQ⁴); for example, “Based on what you’ve told me, what do you think will happen now?” Used judiciously, certainly not at every stopping point, the retelling *plus* prediction strategy can be a useful questioning sequence.

An alternative questioning strategy at Stop 3 simply involves asking the child how he/she thinks the story will end (PQ⁴). A follow-up question (“Why do you predict that?”) may be appropriate, but one does not want to overquestion at this crucial juncture in the story. Elicit the prediction; that is, have the child make an intellectual commitment based on what he/she has read, and then allow the child to read to the end.

### *End of Story*

Questioning at the end of a story can and should be handled in several different ways, depending on the particular story being read. Sometimes a straightforward recap question is called for: “How did it end?” or “Was your prediction correct?”

For other stories a possible “moral” might be pursued. For still others, alternative endings can be discussed, taking into account the logic of and possibilities suggested in the plot. If this course is taken, the tutor often finds that the child’s suggestions reflect reasoning and imagination superior to that found in the original story line. One final way to handle end-of-story questions is simply to omit them. On occasion, the tutor will be able to see in the young reader’s nonverbal behavior (a smile of satisfaction or a quick look up at the tutor to share the “moment” of comprehension) that the final plot turn has been understood. In such cases, there is good reason to omit preplanned questions that could prove to be redundant and artificial.

The DRTA planning scheme (Figure 5.4) is not intended to be a recipe or set of detailed, sequential steps for planning (and teaching) each and every story. The scheme is systematic only in its broad outline—that is, read the story through one time; go back through the story and choose stopping points; develop questions for each stopping point. In every other respect, flexibility is the key:

- Different stories will have a different number of stopping points (1–5), depending on their length, plot structure, density of ideas, and so forth. Moreover, two tutors could choose different, but equally good, stopping points for the same story. There is no formula to follow at this stage.
- It has been noted that not every story title will lend itself to an opening prediction, nor will every story require a postreading discussion.
- At some stopping points, only a single prediction question may seem appropriate. At others, the tutor may feel obligated to check, via several questions, the child’s comprehension of important information in the section just read.
- Although *stopping point* and *prediction* usually go hand-in-hand, there is no ironclad rule that a prediction question must be asked at each stopping point. Within some stories, both good and poor ones, there may be only one or two points where a logical prediction can be made by the reader. Instead of abandoning the story (not enough prediction points), the tutor may choose to designate the customary three to four stopping points, but ask the child to make predictions only at those points in the story where it is reasonable to do so.
- Finally, and possibly most important, the preplanning of questions does not mean that all of them must be asked in the actual teaching of the story. For example, in many cases, a child’s response to the first question at a stopping point (Do you want to change your original prediction? Why or why not?) will include the answer to another question that had been planned for that stopping point. Obviously, the tutor will not go ahead and ask a question whose answer has already been supplied. On a more subtle note, it must be reemphasized that the question-and-answer dialogue between child and tutor should be alive with possibilities. If a preplanned question tends to deaden this dialogue, no matter how relevant it appeared to be at the planning stage, that question should be omitted. The decision to omit (or alter) questions must, of course, be made in the act of teaching, and such on-the-spot judgments will improve with experience. Again,

the neophyte tutor is urged to pay close attention to the child's verbal and non-verbal behavior during the questioning phase. Take your cue from the child's responses as to whether the preplanned questioning sequence is appropriate. At all costs, do not become a slave to a rigid, preplanned script of questions at each stopping point.

### Word Study (One-Syllable Vowel Patterns)

Earlier in this manual we considered the teaching of beginning consonant letter-sound relationships (Chapter 3, "Atticus") and the teaching of word families, short vowels, and consonant blends (Chapter 4, "Beth"). Now we are ready to take up another important aspect of word recognition training—that is, the teaching of high-frequency one-syllable vowel patterns.

Figure 5.5 shows a basic word study sequence for first- and second-grade readers.

Beginning consonants	Word families*	Short vowels*	One-syllable vowel patterns
b	-at	a hat	(a) mat
c	-an		lake
d	-ap		car
f	-ack		tail
g			
h	-ed	e pet	(e) leg
j	-et		seed
k	-ell		meat
(etc.)			he
	-it	i big	(i) kid
	-ing		ride
	-ig		bird
	-ick		light
	-ot	o top	(o) job
	-op		rope
	-ock		coat
			born
	-ut	u rub	(u) bug
	-ug		mule
	-ub		burn
	-uck		juice

**FIGURE 5.5.** Sequence of word study instruction. Beginning consonant digraphs (*ch, sh, th, wh*) and beginning consonant blends (*bl, dr, st, etc.*) are introduced at the word-family and short-vowel levels.