

MASTERING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH GUIDED READING TECHNIQUES

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Abstract

The text presents the description of guided reading approaches and its influence on promoting critical thinking in learners.

Key words: *critical thinking, guided reading, comprehension, thinking skills, effective reading.*

Purpose. In an era marked by the proliferation of information, the ability to think critically is indispensable. It is our responsibility to equip students with the skills necessary to cope with the complexities of the modern world. Guided reading techniques serve as a potent vehicle for promoting critical thinking in learners. This work explores the significance of guided reading in mastering critical thinking skills and illustrates its effectiveness through a comprehensive examination of its principles, methodologies and outcomes.

Guided reading is a pedagogical approach that involves providing tailored support to students as they engage with texts, facilitating comprehension, analysis, and interpretation. By structuring reading activities based on students' individual needs and abilities, guided reading encourages active participation and deep engagement with the material. Through scaffolded (constructed) instruction, educators scaffold students' learning, gradually give them responsibility as their proficiency improves. This progressive approach cultivates independence and confidence, empowering students to tackle complex texts with confidence.

Methods. Guided reading focuses on developing critical thinking skills. Through targeted questions, discussion prompts and reflective activities, educators stimulate students' cognitive processes and encourage inquiry, analysis and

evaluation. Guided reading encourages intellectual curiosity and skepticism by stimulating students to question assumptions, examine evidence and consider alternative perspectives. Additionally, by engaging students in collaborative conversations, students learn to express their ideas, defend their points of view and engage with diverse perspectives – an important skill in an increasingly interconnected world.

Furthermore, guided reading promotes metacognition – the ability to monitor, evaluate and regulate thinking processes. By encouraging students to reflect their reading strategies, identify barriers to comprehension and adjust their approaches accordingly. Guided reading promotes self-awareness and adaptive learning. Through ongoing feedback and assessment educators help students develop effective reading habits and metacognitive strategies enhancing their ability to learn independently and persist in the face of challenges.

Before diving into the text, the educator facilitates a pre-reading session to stimulate students' critical thinking skills. By analyzing the title, cover image, and drawing from their prior knowledge, students make predictions about the text's content. This process fosters engagement and sets the stage for active comprehension during the reading task.

During guided reading sessions the educator models critical thinking by verbalizing their thought process while reading. They may pause at certain points to ask questions, make connections or clarify confusing parts of the text. This strategy (*Think – Alouds*) helps students develop metacognitive awareness by observing how skilled readers approach comprehension tasks.

Additionally, *Text Analysis* occurs after reading a passage or chapter. Here, students engage in guided discussions where they analyze the text's structure, language and themes. The teacher prompts critical thinking by asking questions such as, "Why did the author choose this particular word?" or "How does the setting influence the characters' actions?" This encourages students to examine the text deeply and consider multiple perspectives.

Guided reading sessions often include explicit instruction on vocabulary words met in the text. The teacher facilitates discussions about word meanings, synonyms, antonyms and context clues (*Vocabulary Exploration*). Students are encouraged to use critical thinking skills to define the meaning of unfamiliar words and understand how vocabulary contributes to overall comprehension.

Another strategy is a *Comparative Analysis* where students may read multiple texts on similar topics or themes. They engage in comparative analysis by identifying similarities and differences between the texts, and forming their own opinions. This encourages students to synthesize information from multiple sources and consider various viewpoints.

Results. Research highlights the positive impact of guided reading on students' overall academic performance, with significant improvements observed on standardized reading assessments. Studies show that students who take guided reading classes retain information better and understand complex texts better than their peers. Additionally, guided reading has been shown to be effective in meeting

individual learning needs and allows educators to tailor instruction to students' varying cognitive abilities and learning styles.

Moreover, guided reading interventions have been particularly beneficial for students struggling with reading comprehension difficulties or language barriers, facilitating their transition to more advanced levels of literacy.

Implementing guided reading strategies in multicultural and multilingual classrooms increases students' cultural sensitivity and appreciation of diverse perspectives.

Qualitative research has revealed that students participating in guided reading classes demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation and self-efficacy in their reading endeavors.

The research indicates that guided reading gives significant benefits for students' academic achievement and cognitive development. Studies have demonstrated improvements in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquirement and critical thinking skills among students engaged in guided reading activities.

Conclusions. The nature of guided reading allows students to improve their critical thinking skills over time, moving from surface understanding to deeper analysis. As students' progress through guided reading classes, they learn to recognize fixed ideas, recognize logical errors, and identify underlying themes or messages within texts. Guided reading is crucial because it gives students the confidence to approach new information with curiosity rather than fear.

The collaborative aspect of guided reading promotes a supportive learning environment where students can learn from each other's viewpoints and thoughts. In the end, acquiring critical thinking skills through guided reading can provide students with the intellectual tools they need to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Thus, guided reading has proven to be not only an educational tool for improving literacy skills but also a transformative practice that empowers students to think critically, independently, and empathetically.

Given above examples illustrate how guided reading techniques can be used to promote critical thinking skills such as prediction, analysis, evaluation and reflection. Guided reading empowers students to become active and independent readers.

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