

Directed Reading –Thinking Activity (DR-TA)

Russel Stauffer 1969



The purpose of DR-TA is to equip readers with:

- the ability to determine purpose for reading .
- the ability to extract, comprehend, and assimilate information.
- the ability to examine reading material based upon purposes for reading.
- the ability to make decisions based upon information gleaned from reading.

Group DR-TA: There are certain essential phases in the implementation of a group DR-TA. The first phase involves directing reading-thinking processes. The second phase involves fundamental skill training.

A. Phase 1:

Directing the reading-thinking process. Directing the reading-thinking process involves the reader in three steps: predicting, reading, and proving. As students proceed through a selection, they predict or define purpose for reading: they read and select relevant data; and they evaluate and revise predictions, using the information they acquire.

The teacher, the material, and the group are all essential to the success of this activity. The teacher has to create an environment that will arouse students' curiosities and meet their reading needs. The group serves to audit and extend the thinking of its members. The material should be well written, appealing in content, and of an appropriate difficulty level. For the purpose of directing the reading-thinking processes, the teacher may treat the selection in segments. Here is an example of how teachers might implement this phase with a selection divided into segments.

1. Each student either receives or locates a copy of the selection; the teacher directs the student to study either the title or the pictures on the first page.
 - a. What do you think a story with this title might be about?
 - b. What do you think might happen in this story?
 - c. Which of these predictions do you agree with?

The teacher encourages students to make several different suggestions and to discuss agreement or disagreement with one another's suggestions. The teacher promotes this interaction.

2. When the teacher introduces the DR-TA, he/she first familiarizes students with the strategy for dealing with unknown words. That is, if students encounter unknown words, the teacher would expect the students to implement the following steps in the specified order:

- a. Read to the end of the sentence.
- b. Use picture clues, if available.
- c. Sound out the word.
- d. Ask the teacher for help.

Before asking for teacher assistance, the student should try to figure out the word and, according to Stauffer, the teacher should give the student the opportunity to do so.

3. The teacher directs the students to read a segment of the story silently to check their predictions. The teacher is responsible for ensuring students read for meaning, observing reading performance, and helping students who request help with words. When the latter occurs, the teacher might have the student suggest a word it might be, explain what the student did to figure out the word, and, if the word is still unknown, the teacher provides it.
4. After students have read the first segment, the teacher asks them to close their books and the comprehension check begins.

Questions serve to guide the students' examination of the evidence, their evaluation of their previous predictions, and their generation of new predictions.

"Were you correct?" or *"What do you think now?"* force students to examine the proof of their predictions. Oral reading of a particular sentence directs students to share their evidence with other group members.

"What do you think now?" or *"What do you think will happen?"* encourage students to screen their ideas and make predictions about events to come.

5. The students read the next segments of text and with each new segment of reading material continue the predicting-reading-proving cycle. As students proceed, they come upon more and more information; divergent conjectures begin to converge. At the beginning of the selection, predictions usually tend to be divergent. Toward the end of the reading, predictions should tend to be divergent. Toward the end of the reading, predictions should tend to converge.

B. Phase 2:

Fundamental skill training. After the students have read the selection, the teacher has completed the first phase of the DR-TA – directing the reading-thinking of the selection. Now the second phase begins. Stauffer refers to this phase as the phase when "skill training of a different kind is accomplished." The second phase entails reexamining the story, reexamining selected words or phrases, and pictures or diagrams, for the purpose of developing systematically and concurrently the students' reading-thinking abilities and other reading-related skills. These might include word attack, the use of semantic analysis, concept clarification and development, power of observation, and reflective abilities.

Individualized DR-TA: Individualized DR-TAs apply, extend, and refine the skills and abilities that students acquire in group DR-TAs. Stauffer claims that individualized DR-TAs afford a systematic method by which students can learn about themselves in terms of their own interests, tasks, judgments, and thinking abilities.

Teachers can introduce individualized DR-TAs after group DR-TAs or in conjunction with them. Familiarity with group DR-TA procedures is a prerequisite for introducing an individualized DR-TA.

There are several features that distinguish an individualized DR-TA:

1. It does not use traditional grouping; instead, each student is free to work with a minimum of interruption, in pursuit of his or her interests. If interests coincide, students may occasionally work together.
2. The teacher expects students to know why they are to select materials, what materials they might select, and how they should select them. To this end, the teacher schedules time for selection of material and for discussion of selection techniques. The teacher may help students either individually or in groups to formulate interests, needs, and methods for selection.
3. Students should generate their own reading purposes and be familiar with the predicting, reading, proving cycle of the DR-TA. Either worksheet or student record cards might direct these processes.
4. At scheduled times, students should share their work or what they have read with others. This process might involve the use of posters, bulletin boards, dramatizations, reports, and the like.

Examples of follow-up activities:

1. *Oral reading* – Explain to students that the story they have read has plenty of conservation; have them take parts and reread the story.
2. *Comprehension* – Write several sentences that describe events that either did or did not happen in the story. Have the students decide which events did happen and then arrange the order.
3. *Word identification* – Have students locate specific words in the story. Have students locate ending and root words.
4. *Enrichment* – Invite students to participate in a variety of authentic enrichment activities that may include dramatization, writing, or any kind of group activity.

DRTA Evaluation



Name _____

Date _____

(Rate from 1 to 4: 4 indicates almost always; 1 indicates almost never.)

Predictions

- Makes predictions readily _____
- Uses previous experiences _____
- Uses textual information _____

Monitoring

- Checks predictions _____
- Revises predictions when necessary _____
- Justifies responses _____
- Uses previous experiences _____
- Uses text examples _____
- Rereads when necessary _____

Extension

- Can expand responses _____
- Integrates both the text and previous knowledge _____
- Compares this story with others _____

Summarizing

- Important information included _____
- Critical inferences made _____
- Response well-formed _____