

Sample Stories with Rehearsal Practice



EFFORTLESS, ENJOYABLE &
ENRICHING READING EXPERIENCES



Turning Reading Instruction into Language-Literacy Development

BY BRUCE HOWLETT

Sparking the Fluency Shift: Creating Effortless, Enjoyable and Enriching Reading Experiences

36 short stories:

- Arranged by levels of text complexity—measures of readability
- Preceded by rehearsal practice activities
- The power of repeated reading with the challenging words, phrases & sentences
- Strengthening reading accuracy and developing appropriate rate and expression
- Up to eight levels per grade
- Small steps between each story
- Allowing readers to move up levels in weeks—not months
- Arranged from early first grade (6 y/o) to sixth grade reading levels
- Allowing for progression beyond the low bar of “grade-level reading”

“I stopped thinking that the words in *Fluency Shift* were too hard for my students after the first session. I realized that these are the words I want my students to read.”

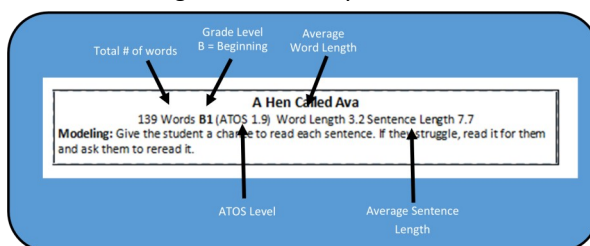
We have never been satisfied with the progress our students have made applying the abilities that they developed with *Sparking the Reading Shift* using decodables and leveled books as practice. These books also do not reflect our best understanding of fluency development. Like most educators, we are also concerned about the spreading disinterest in reading among students. So, we created *Sparking the Fluency Shift*, (\$20) a collection of **36 short stories** arranged by accurate measures of **text complexity** and preceded by **rehearsal practice**. This combination accelerates progress towards “effortless, enjoyable and enriching reading experiences” – the subtitle of the book.

Each of the 150-to-400-word stories is only slightly more challenging than the preceding story, **creating small steps between levels**. With up to eight levels per grade, readers commonly **move up a level every week or two** rather than waiting months as with popular leveling approaches. This provides both the student and teacher with much-needed motivation and frequent positive feedback.

Each story is preceded by two pages of **rehearsal practice**, which takes advantage of the **power of repeated reading** by exposing readers to the more challenging words, phrases, and sentences before they read the story. The rehearsal activities build reading accuracy, and appropriate rate and expression, so students read the stories with greater ease and without laborious decoding. Even multisyllabic and poly-morphemic words are read without frustration. As a result, students experience reading more as an enjoyable pastime and less as an academic task.

Sparking the Fluency Shift offers students a path beyond grade level reading by providing stories that range from **beginning first grade to a solid sixth grade level**. Students who read at grade-level, the 50th percentile, have more in common with struggling readers at the 30th percentile than they do with proficient readers at the 70th percentile. By offering this range of reading practice, delayed readers have the opportunity to read like **proficient readers who often read two or three grade levels** above their actual grade. Teachers benefit by having a resource to achieve these higher levels without additional prep time. No training is required. We give copies to parents with no educational background who reported success the first time they used *Sparking the Reading Shift* with their children. However, we are always just an email away—Bruce@ReadingShift.com

The text box at the top of each story provides leveling and readability information



©Bruce Howlett 2024

List of Rehearsal Activities

- 1 — Phrase Progression for Fluency**
- 2 — Meaningful Sentence Building**
- 3 — Sentence Pyramids**
- 4 — Vocabulary Expansion**
- 5 — Morphological Word Families**
- 6 — Sight Word Development**
- 7 — Say it with Feeling**
- 8 — Reading Like You Speak**
- 9 — Onset-rime Backwards Reading**
- 10 — Word Parts into Whole Words**
- 11 — Multisyllabic Word Mapping**
- 12 — Punctuation, Expression and Meaning**
- 13 — Effortless Word Recognition**
- 14 — Recognizing Syllables & Morphemes**
- 15 — Synonyms for Vocabulary Expansion**

Rehearsal Practice for “The Path” - First Grade (6 y/o) reading level

Sentence Pyramids — The Path

“Read each line with increasing ease, stopping briefly before the next line. Ask for help with words that are challenging. Reread the final sentence smoothly.”

One day
One day Jack sits
One day Jack sits on the
One day Jack sits on the path by
One day Jack sits on the path by his
One day Jack sits on the path by his deck.

He goes
He goes to the
He goes to the store
He goes to the store and
He goes to the store and buys
He goes to the store and buys sand.

Then Jack
Then Jack sweeps
Then Jack sweeps the
Then Jack sweeps the sand
Then Jack sweeps the sand off the
Then Jack sweeps the sand off the blocks.

Jack’s mom
Jack’s mom is happy
Jack’s mom is happy and pats
Jack’s mom is happy and pats him
Jack’s mom is happy and pats him on the
Jack’s mom is happy and pats him on the back.

Effortless Word Recognition

“Starting with the word *blocks*, go down each row and each time you find the word read it out loud. Continue for each of the words in the top row.”

blocks	bricks	cracks	come	walk
brick	come	walk	blocks	bricks
blocks	blocks	bricks	walk	come
cracks	come	blocks	come	walk
come	cracks	walk	walk	cracks
walk	bricks	cracks	blocks	bricks
bricks	cracks	come	bricks	blocks
come	walk	cracks	cracks	walk

Rehearsal Practice for "The Path" - First Grade (6 y/o) reading level

Onset-Rime Backwards Reading — The Path

"As you become a better reader you will recognize bigger chunks of words, on sight. This will make reading easier. Read down each column until you can read the words smoothly."

ing	ick	ore	ack
thing	sick	more	back
ing	ick	ore	ack
sing	slick	lore	snack
ing	ick	ore	ack
sling	brick	store	pack
ing	ick	ore	ack
ring	lick	shore	lack

Phrase Progression for Fluency

Reading words in phrases moves readers from word-by-word reading towards fluent sentence reading. "Read each group of words smoothly, pausing briefly at each slash mark. Then read each line again without pausing."

Jack likes

Jack likes / to fix things

Jack likes to fix things / like the deck

Jack likes to fix things like the deck / in his back yard.

Jack likes to fix things like the deck in his back yard.

Jack goes

Jack goes / to the store

Jack goes to the store / and buys

Jack goes to the store and buys / a lot of sand and blocks.

Jack goes to the store and buys a lot of sand and blocks.

He taps

He taps / the blocks down

He taps the blocks down / to make them flat

He taps the blocks down to make them flat / and sweeps the sand

He taps the blocks down to make them flat and sweeps the sand / off the path.

The Path

161 Words — T1 (ATOS 2.5) Word Length 3.5 Sentence Length 7.0

Modeling: If the student is struggling with accuracy or fluency, read the story to them. Then ask them to try reading it again. If needed, alternate reading lines.

Jack likes to fix things.

One day Jack sits on his deck.

He looks at the brick path to his deck.

The path is old and the bricks are cracked.

Jack's mom fell on it and hurt her leg.

Jack wants to fix it.

He goes to the store and buys sand.

Jack pulls out all of the bricks.

He then puts the sand down and make it smooth.

Many of the old bricks are cracked.

He runs back to the store and buys stronger blocks.

Jack puts the blocks down using a new design.

Then he packs sand in the gaps.

He sweeps the extra sand off the blocks.

Now, the path is flat. No one will trip and fall.

Jack's mom comes home.

She is so happy that the path is fixed.

"The walk is much safer and looks great!"

It is time to rest so they sit on the deck.

Jack feels good that the path is fixed.

Reading Like You Speak — Caterpillar's Big Change

“When you emphasize certain words in a sentence it reflects your understanding of the text. Read each sentence, adding a little more emphasis to the underlined word. Which sentence sounds most like the way you would say it while speaking?”

The **friends** spent the day exploring the garden.

The friends spent the day **exploring** the garden.

The friends spent the day exploring the **garden**.

Every day was a new chance for exploration and discovery.

Every day was a new chance for **exploration** and discovery.

Every day was a new chance for exploration and **discovery**.

He was **surprised** that their friendship was strong.

He was surprised that their **friendship** was strong.

He was surprised that their friendship was **strong**.

Morphological Word Families

“The words in each column have related meanings. First, read the base word at the top of the column. Use it in a sentence. Then slowly read down the column, thinking about how the words are related.”

bright	differ	brave	real	explore
unbright	differs	braved	really	explored
brightly	differing	braving	reality	exploring
bright	differ	brave	real	explore
brighter	different	bravely	unreal	explorer
brighten	indifferent	bravery	realm	exploration
bright	differ	brave	real	explore
brightest	differed	bravest	realize	reexplore
brightness	difference	braves	realized	unexplore

Rehearsal Practice for “Caterpillar’s Big Change” - Third Grade (8 y/o) reading level

Multisyllabic Word Generalization — Caterpillar's Big Change

“Read down each column, saying the hyphenated word with a pause between word parts. Then read the following words smoothly. Repeat, if needed.”

dif-fer-ent	dis-covery	ex-citing	flut-ter	ex-claimed
different	discovery	exciting	flutter	exclaimed
dif-fer-ing	dis-cover-ed	ex-cite-ment	flut-ter-ed	claim-ing
differing	discovered	excitement	fluttered	claiming
in-dif-fer-ent	dis-cover-ing	ex-cited	flut-ter-ing	re-claim
indifferent	discovering	excited	fluttering	reclaim
sur-prise	cur-ious	ex-plore	a-maze	sur-prise
surprise	curious	explore	amaze	surprise
sur-pris-ing	cur-ious-ly	ex-plor-ing	a-maz-ed	sur-pris-ing
surprising	curiously	exploring	amazed	surprising
un-surpris-ed	un-curi-ous	ex-plorer	a-maz-ing	com-prise
unsurprised	uncurious	explorer	amazing	comprise

Sentence Pyramids

“Read each line with increasing ease, stopping briefly before the next line. Ask for help with words that are challenging. Reread the final sentence smoothly.”

The little
 The little garden
 The little garden was filled
 The little garden was filled with
 The little garden was filled with colorful
 The little garden was filled with colorful flowers.

They crossed
 They crossed a glistening
 They crossed a glistening stream
 They crossed a glistening stream to get to
 They crossed a glistening stream to get to the
 They crossed a glistening stream to get to the leaf.

The curious
 The curious bug
 The curious bug went
 The curious bug went exploring
 The curious bug went exploring and discovered
 The curious bug went exploring and discovered a leaf.

The caterpillar
 The caterpillar woke
 The caterpillar woke up
 The caterpillar woke up and
 The caterpillar woke up and felt
 The caterpillar woke up and felt different.

Caterpillar's Big Change

335 Words — M3 (ATOS 4.5) Word Length 4.5 Sentence Length 10.7

Understanding Check: Have you ever thought about how much your body has changed just in the last three years? Does it feel like you have gone from being a caterpillar to a butterfly?

Once, there was a little caterpillar named Chris. He lived in a little garden filled with colorful flowers and friendly bugs. Chris loves this garden with all its flowers and bugs.

One sunny morning, Chris woke up and felt different. His body was changing! Tiny wings were popping out of his side. "Wow!" exclaimed Chris, amazed by his new look. He moved his wings and found out that he could flutter around.

Chris wanted to show his friends his new wings. He fluttered over to Bella the ladybug and Sammy the spider. They were surprised and clapped their tiny bug hands. "You look great, Chris!" said Bella.

But Chris' journey didn't stop there. He wanted to see the world beyond the garden. He asked his friends if they wanted to come along. Bella and Sammy were a bit scared, but they didn't want to miss the fun. So off they went on their exciting outing.

They saw tall green trees and colorful birds flying high above. They crossed a glistening stream on a swaying leaf. Chris laughed as water drops tickled his wings.

Soon, they reached a big field with the brightest flowers Chris had ever seen. Butterflies of all colors danced around them. "Welcome, young fliers!" said a wise old butterfly. She told them about the world outside the garden.

As the sun started to set, Chris knew it was time to go back. He thanked the old butterfly and started their journey home. Bella and Sammy felt braver now and chatted about their exciting day.

Back in the garden, Chris realized that even though he loved adventure, there was no place like home. He hugged his friends, and they promised to have more adventures together.

And so, the curious caterpillar and his friends spent their days exploring both their cozy garden and the wide world beyond. Every day was a new chance for discovery and fun, reminding them that no matter where they went, friendship and home were always close by.

Rehearsal Practice for “Predictions” - Sixth Grade (10 y/o) reading level

Multisyllabic Word Mapping — Predictions

“Read the first sentence by saying the hyphenated words with a pause between word parts. Then read the sentence below it in a normal voice. Repeatedly read the second sentence until it sounds smooth.”

Lyra was born with an ex·traor·di·nar·y gift, she could pre·dict the fu·ture.

Lyra was born with an extraordinary gift, she could predict the future.

She gazed at the stars, cap·ti·vated by the flick·er·ing con·stel·la·tions.

She gazed at the stars, captivated by the flickering constellations.

Lyra’s re·pu·ta·tion grew as she in·ter·pret·ed the pat·terns in the sky.

Lyra’s reputation grew as she interpreted the patterns in the sky.

She was capti·vat·ed by the flick·er·ing stars and con·stell·a·tions.

She was captivated by the flickering stars and constellations.

She want·ed to be her·self with all her strengths and weak·ness·es.

She wanted to be herself with all her strengths and weaknesses.

Recognizing Syllables & Morphemes

Finding connections between words aids vocabulary and sight word development. “Read down each column, saying the hyphenated word with a pause between word parts. Then read the following words smoothly. Repeat, if needed.”

order	flick-er	pre-dict	real-ize	capt-ive
order	flicker	predict	realize	captive
or-din-ary	flicker-ing	predict-ion	realiz-ed	captiv-ate
ordinary	flickering	prediction	realized	captivate
order-ly	flicker-ed	predict-able	real-ity	captivat-ing
orderly	flickered	predictable	reality	captivating
guide	re-pute	ac-cur-ate	weak	pre-cious
guide	repute	accurate	weak	precious
guid-ance	reput-ed	accura-cy	weak-ness	precious-ly
guidance	reputed	accuracy	weakness	preciously
mis-guided	reputati-on	in-accurate	weak-en	precious-ness
misguided	reputation	inaccurate	weaken	preciousness

Reading Like You Speak — Predictions

“When you emphasize certain words in a sentence it reflects your understanding of the text. Read each sentence, adding a little more emphasis to the underlined word. Which sentence sounds most like the way you would say it while speaking?”

She was **born** with an extra-ordinary gift, she could predict the future.
 She was born with an **extra-ordinary** gift, she could predict the future.
 She was born with an extra-ordinary gift, she could **predict** the future.

She was **captivated** by the flickering stars and constellations.
 She was captivated by the **flickering** stars and constellations.
 She was captivated by the flickering stars and **constellations**.

People began to **ask** her for guidance, and to interpret the stars.
 People began to ask her for **guidance**, and to interpret the stars.
 People began to ask her for guidance, and to **interpret** the stars.

Meaningful Sentence Building

“Turning phrases, groups of words, into meaningful sentences improves comprehension. First, read down each column, then find two other phrases that combine to make a meaningful sentence by zig-zagging across the rows.”

Lyra	was born	to twin calves.
The neighbor’s cow	would give birth	with an extra-ordinary gift

Lyra	streaked	about the snake.
A shooting star	warned her father	across the sky.

The neighbors	created	when things went wrong.
Lyra	blamed her	a feeling of wonder.

Predictions

610 Words — **B6** (ATOS 7.3) Word Length 4.3 Sentence Length 17

Understanding Check: What does it mean when the story says that Lyra’s gift is both a blessing and a curse?

In the ancient land of Astoria, there was a girl named Lyra who was born with an extraordinary gift. She could look up at the stars and see the future, as though the sky was a book filled with secrets waiting to be discovered. Her parents were in awe of their daughter’s talent, but they soon realized that it would bring her more trouble than happiness.

As a child, Lyra would often spend hours on end gazing up at the stars, captivated by the flickering constellations. Her parents thought it was a harmless hobby, until Lyra began making predictions that came true with eerie accuracy. She told her mother that their neighbor’s cow would give birth to twin calves, and a few days later, it happened. She warned her father to avoid a certain path in the forest, and sure enough, he narrowly escaped a poisonous snake.

News of Lyra’s gift soon spread throughout Astoria, and people began to seek her out for guidance. Lyra would look up at the sky and interpret the patterns of the stars, telling them what they needed to know. Her reputation as a seer grew, and she became known as the Star Reader. They came with all sorts of questions, from the simple to the life-changing.

However, Lyra soon discovered that her gift had a down side. People started to overly depend on her predictions, forgetting that they had the power to shape their own futures. They would blame her when things didn’t go their way, accusing her of misleading them. Some even saw her as a threat, fearing that her gift would give her too much power over their lives.

Slowly Lyra became fearful of her power, growing more isolated. She spent most of her time alone, gazing up at the stars and trying to make sense of the visions she saw. Her gift was a not just a blessing but also a curse. She often wondered if it would have been better not to have it at all.

One night, as she was sitting outside her house, a shooting star streaked across the sky. Lyra made a wish, something she had never done before. She wished for the gift to be taken away from her, to be just like everyone else. She closed her eyes and waited for the shooting star to disappear.

When she opened her eyes again, the sky was different. The stars were still there, but they no longer held the same magic they used to. Lyra realized that her wish had come true, and that she could no longer see the future in the stars.

At first, Lyra was relieved. She felt like a burden had been lifted from her shoulders, and that she could finally live a normal life. But as time went on, she realized that something was missing. She missed the sense of wonder she used to feel when she looked up at the sky, the feeling that there was something greater out there.

Lyra realized that even though her gift had caused her pain, it had also brought her joy. It had connected her to the stars and to something greater than herself. She realized that she didn’t want to be like everyone else, that she wanted to be herself, with all her strengths and weaknesses.

Lyra looked up at the sky once more, and saw something that she had never seen before. She saw a future that was hers to create, a future that wasn’t set in stone. She smiled to herself, knowing that her gift had given her something more precious than any prediction could ever offer - the freedom to choose her own path.

For even more self-evident progress combine ***Sparking the Fluency Shift*** with ***Sparking the Reading Shift*** integrated language-literacy intervention and enrichment lessons

