**Leon Furze –**  - [Leon] Hi, welcome to the VCAA On Demand video for reading. My name's Leon Furze. I'm the Director of Learning and Teaching at Monivae College in Hamilton. In this video, I'm going to go through active reading, guided reading, close reading, inferential reading, and the importance of making connections. First of all, active reading. Active reading involves engaging with the text more than just reading for leisure. So the techniques include predicting and pre-reading, asking questions, annotation, asking questions whilst reading, outlining, summarising. and synthesising notes. And the main purpose of active reading is to generate purposeful notes and ideas about the text being studied. So this is a quote from Duke and Pearson in effective practice for developing reading comprehension 2006. "Good readers are active readers. "They read selectively, continually making decisions "about their reading, what to read carefully, "what to read quickly, what not to read, "what to reread, and so on." Active reading in the classroom is about giving students the tools to deconstruct a text and to engage with the text.

So in this example from a VCE text, and this is from "Pride and Prejudice." You can see that the student has annotated their page extensively whilst they've been reading it. So they might have done this on one or two readings. They might have done it partially the first time they've read the text and then perhaps expanded on those with subsequent readings. It's also really important to point out that active reading isn't just colouring in. A lot of students think that getting out the highlighters and highlighting parts of the text is sufficient, but as you can see from this student's example, the notes in the margin and the different techniques for annotating the text are incredibly important. So this annotation includes symbols, such as the little stars and the circling next to particularly important points and also referencing pages elsewhere in the text. Underlining and highlighting, which actually indicate different things in this annotation, so the underlined points are from the first reading, the highlighted are from the second reading where the students has gone back through and really drilled it down to the most important quotes from this text, and the margin area, the margin notes, which is arguably the most important part of active reading.

Often students and particularly in the VCE will start annotating a text at the beginning of the year, such as a text for Section A of the study design and whilst that text is fresh in their minds, those annotations make perfect sense, but by the time it gets to term four and they're revising for the exam, they're absolutely meaningless. So part of active reading that really needs to be emphasised in the classroom is the importance of taking those margins notes. For students who struggle with active reading or for students who have never engaged in active reading before, guided reading is a really useful way in. In the VCE, it's also a very useful practice for all students because they're engaging with increasingly complex texts. For EAL students, it's an important process because it models the reading process but also you're doing a lot of the text discussion and analysis verbally. So guided reading involves the teacher modelling reading strategies, scaffolding reading and steering the students towards independent reading. So before reading, we're engaging in predictions, discussions and recaps about the text, that might involve of a brief introductory session in the lesson where we recap on some of the views and values from previous lessons or it might be links back to previous texts that the students have studied and I'll talk about that a bit more later when we talk about making connections.

Prediction also might involve giving the students a small excerpt of text and asking them what they think the larger excerpt is going to be about. It's a really important skill because it gets students in the right mental space for dealing with more complex texts. During the reading, the teacher will be modelling and steering towards independent reading. So on the first reading of a text, the teacher might project an extract up onto the board and conduct something like a think aloud where the teacher annotates the text and as they're going along explains exactly what they're thinking. After reading, it's really important to revisit the material that's just been read with discussion, collaboration and then ultimately analysis. The discussion and collaboration is the most important part of this. So once the guided reading has been completed with the teacher modelling the different strategies or approaches to deconstructing the text, it's really important to allow some time for the class to discuss either as a class or in groups or just as pairs.

Collaborating on texts after they've done a guided reading is a really great way of cementing in the knowledge that they've just taken from the text. The last point there says that guided reading should follow a model of gradual release of responsibility and I'm leaning a bit here on Fray and Fisher's ideas and really what that means is that over time, the amount of modelling from the teacher and the amount of guidance from the teacher should decrease and the amount of independent reading on behalf of the students should increase. So this example for the VCE comes from Section C, Analysing and Presenting Argument, and this would also work for analysing a spoken text and analysing persuasive speeches.

So before reading or before hearing the speech, we have a discussion of the issues explored in the text and perhaps a recap of the meaning of the term argument. One of the biggest areas of concern with Section C, Analysing and Presenting Arguments, is that students rely too much on the persuasive techniques and not enough on the logic and structure of the piece. So this deals with that problem by providing them with a conversation or a discussion beforehand about what argument actually is. During the reading, we then have a guided reading of the persuasive text, including think alouds when identifying arguments and structure. So for example, when reading the introduction to the text, the teacher might highlight on the projector or on the board the ways in which the author has established credibility or contextualised the issue. Often in Section C, the introductory parts do the same thing which is to contextualise what the problem is and to establish what the author's authority is on that issue, perhaps bring in some of the stakeholders and outline the main contention. So going through a guided reading for an introduction to a Section C piece is really great way of showing students the conventions of those types of pieces of writing.

After reading, there might be a class discussion or a discussion in small groups or pairs of the techniques used to support the arguments, the overall logic of the persuasive text, and the structure of those arguments. So again, one of the really important parts in the VCE of section C, whether we're looking at a written text or exploring a speech or an oral persuasive text is the overall logic of the arguments, the structure of how those arguments flow through the piece. This is a really great thing to do with guided reading because the teacher can very explicitly map out the progress of those arguments over the course of the text. This might then end with a repetition of the task, either with the same piece or with another similar persuasive text. And again, we're looking at that gradual release of responsibility so we're looking at the students taking ownership of that process and over time, doing it for themselves, which is exactly what they'll have to do in the exam at the end of the year for VCE English.

Close reading is another style of reading activity that we can do in the classroom at the VCE and in Fisher, Frey, and Hattie, we see four elements of close reading, the repeated reading of a short text or extract, annotation of the short text or extract to reflect their thinking, the teacher's question to guide analysis and discussion, and the students extended discussion and analysis. So again, you can see this follows a very similar format to the guided reading from the previous slides with an emphasis on the repeated reading of short extracts of text. So in my VCE classroom, if we're studying a complex text like "Pride and Prejudice," for example, it's really important to acknowledge that "Pride and Prejudice" is a lengthy and complex novel and that trying to tackle the whole thing is going to be overwhelming for students. Close reading addresses that by breaking down the the scale of what the students are encountering but also close reading is a fantastic way of getting students to analyse and to get really great quotes and textual evidence from those texts to back up their arguments when they later write.

So a few example activities, and I will go through one of these in the next slide as well, text walks which is sometimes called chalk talks, group annotations of short passages, and anything from the Harvard Visible Thinking Routines, which are available for free from the Project Zero website. A lot of those activities are centred on short extracts of text with the opportunities for students to engage with them on multiple occasions. Close reading really encourages questioning and deeper analysis of text, which is exactly what we're aiming for in the VCE. So in my classroom, we spend probably the majority of the time at VCE doing close reading exercises, particularly for the areas of study with reading and responding and the comparative essays. We spend a lot more time doing close reading of short with extracts then we spend on general discussion of the text or the themes or the issues and the ideas.

You'll also find that as students engage more and more with close reading, that they are actually able to offer some of those ideas about what the key themes, issues, ideas, and values in the text are for themselves rather than the teacher having to provide them. So this example is of a text walk which you'll sometimes see called a chalk talk. It's a really versatile close reading activity. This is one of the mainstays of my classroom. It's the activity that we come back to again and again and again over the course of a study of text. So students annotate these short passages in groups and we might have between five and eight passages spread around the room. If we're doing electronically, like this example, I might use an electronic annotation format or a PDF, but in any case, there are three or four students working on one short extract at a time. They might have three or four minutes to work on annotating that extract and then they have to move on to the next extract.

By the end of the lesson, every group of three students will have encountered every short passage of text and had an opportunity to add their annotations to it. As you can see in this example here, different groups have added different points. Some have underlined and highlighted, some have written notes, some have added sticky notes, some have just pulled out key ideas or themes. This is a fantastic close reading activity because it's extremely versatile. So you could do this with extracts which focus on a specific character or you could do it with extracts that focus on a specific theme or issue or value. You could do it with extracts that are just chronological. So for example, a series of extracts from chapter one of a novel or you could do it with entire poems from a poetry collection.

Either way, the emphasis is on the group work, the collaboration, and the repeated exposure to these small extracts of text and by the end of it, you end up with something that looks like this with five to eight very detailed annotated passages that students can then take away and we can scan these in or we can reproduce them digitally and hand them out as a resource for students to then take away quotes, derive some of their ideas, and ultimately use those later in the text response. Inferential reading is another complex skill but a skill that can be certainly taught and worked with in the VCE classroom. Inference reading between the lines using cues in the text to make meaning so that might mean using evidence in the text which is subtle or perhaps doesn't immediately make itself apparent.

So again, this links in with close reading because this might require multiple readings of the same parts of the text, but it also involves drawing on prior knowledge and drawing on links to evidence in the text, which connect to students' other experiences, which I'll talk about at the end of this presentation. Inferential reading allows students to understand relationships between characters, the layers of meaning in a text, the subtext, the ideas, the issues, the values, and also more complicated things like symbolism and motif. Without inferential reading, students will fall back typically on description and will fall back on essays which are really just summaries of what the characters do and say in the text. Inference allows students to acknowledge that the characters in these novels, particularly if we're studying fiction, they don't exist.

They are a construction of the author and the inferential reading will lead students to discussing how the author has constructed the characters, what those characters represent, whether they are a vehicle for a particular issue or idea and so on. And it finally encourages students to go beyond making obvious or those descriptive statements when they write on these texts for their coursework and in the exams. This is an example for VCE, but again, this could be applied elsewhere and for inferential reading, we might just use prompts which are essay or coursework style prompts but which focus the students on looking for that deeper meaning. So what does the developing relationship between the characters represent, maybe the relationship between characters mirrors part of the narrative or plot or maybe there's a thematic or values based element to their relationship? What societal values are represented in the text? How are the authors values represented and how by how they present the issues in the text, what features of the genre have influenced this text and that's a really great question, particularly if you're studying classics or genre fiction obviously, but to get students to acknowledge that texts don't exist in a bubble, they have influences on them, the authors context, the genre of writing that they're working within, the historical context, all of these things impact upon the deeper meanings in a text.

And why did the character respond in this way? And that final question there is about empathising with the characters, which requires inference because it does require students to just go beyond that surface level description of characters and to really get into the character's situation and understand why the author has crafted the character in this way. So inference is ultimately about reading between the lines and going for that deeper meaning in texts, which is exactly what the examiners are looking for at the end of year exam and what we should be looking for in our coursework. The final point is on the importance of making connections. Good readers and confident readers often bring connections to the text and they might be from their own experiences or they might be from other texts they've read or the world around them.

So those are the three types of connections that Keene and Zimmerman they refer to as text to self, text to text, and text to world. How does this text relate to my own lived experience? How does this text relate to other things that I've read or things that I've seen on the television, movies that I've watched, things that I've heard, and how does it relate to the real world issues that are happening now and my knowledge of the historical context of the world in which the text was written? I like this quote from Billman and Pearson and they write that leveraging the resources that "students bring to the classroom "builds a bridge between old and new knowledge." And I think if we focus some of our close reading and inferential reading tasks on drawing out those connections very deliberately, for example by asking the students explicitly to annotate for connections to their own lives, that's a great way of doing what Fisher and Frey call activating prior knowledge. So anything that includes the students context, their history, their prior readings and experiences is going to allow them to engage with the text on a much deeper level In the VCE, again, in a lesson we may use the three types of connection text to text, text to self, and text to world as the basis for a guided annotation activity. So just like the annotation activity that you saw before which was done on "Pride and Prejudice" for the close reading, the text walk, we could do a text walk that explicitly instructs students to look for text to text, text to self, and text to world connections and their annotations focus on those connections.

We should really be encouraging students to make connections to their own lives and as a last point to think about, if you're studying a text like "Flames," written by an Australian author and set in Tasmania, consider what the different lived experiences of the students in your classroom bring to that text. You may have students in your classroom who weren't born in Australia, you may have students in there who have been to Tasmania or who have never been to Tasmania, you may have students from migrant backgrounds who only moved to Australia very recently, and others who moved when they were much younger. Every single student will have a different experience and will bring that experience to the text with them. So it's really important to be able to help the students to connect the dots between their own lived experiences and the experiences that the author is presenting in the text. Thank you for watching.

[Copyright Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Copyright.aspx) 2022