

## The Movie Read: Bringing Purpose and Power to Reading Aloud From a Distance

Now, more than ever, reading aloud is a critical part of your students' at-home routine—whether the read-aloud reaches the whole class through video or is shared by each family as schedules allow. Either way, a read-aloud has profound effects on children. It

- **Is part of a cherished routine.** The read-aloud is a familiar structure where students can feel connected to you, the reader, and their peers (or family members if the read-aloud happens at home). In a time of crisis, this kind of learning routine can provide wonderful support.
- **Builds a community of readers.** Read-alouds are shared experiences through which the whole class can connect: rooting for beloved characters, questioning old ideas with new information, and mulling over challenging themes invite students to come together as a community with a common interest. It's a safe place to keep questioning and learning.
- **Models the qualities of good reading.** Hearing an expert reader find the rhythm and expression of the language and bring the story or information from the text into vivid color is a model students will use to build their own reading voice in their heads.
- **Establishes touchstone texts.** Books that students can learn deeply from deserve repeated visits—these are what I call *Best Friend Books*. Rather than reading a new book every day, regularly coming back to previously read books sets students up to go further and deeper in their comprehension, understanding of text structures, style, and craft. It also sets them up to know and connect to books more deeply—growing a friendship with familiar texts.

The first-read of a book you plan to return to again and again (a Best Friend Book) deserves to be presented generously and without interruption the first time you read it to your students. Let them relish the language and the unfolding of the text. As a reminder to you, the reader, let's call this "the movie read"; at the movies, there is no pause button, no one on the speaker stopping the movie at critical spots to quiz you, nudge your conversation, or interrupt the flow of the story. Let that first read-aloud be an experience in which students can focus on getting the big picture along with the details they can soak up on their own. There will be several opportunities—both after this first read, and in return visits to the read-aloud—to explore the structure, analyze characters, unpack figurative language, clarify ideas, and more.

Here are some ways you can do a movie read with a Best Friend Book remotely, and/or provide caregivers with tips for making the most of reading aloud at home:

**Teaching to students who have a device of their own:**

- Once you've identified a book you think has great potential for reading aloud, read it carefully and make notes on how you'll present it to fully engage your students. Consider the tone of the story (e.g., chatty, bitter, solemn, jovial, snarky) and let your voice reflect that. Consider the mood (e.g., sad, whimsical, gloomy, calm, content) and use your voice, pacing, and intensity to evoke that in the listener. Practice a few times. Here are some pointers:
  - Avoid a long introduction or "front-loading" the book. You might say how excited you are to share this particular book with them and briefly why you chose it, but get into reading it as soon as possible.
  - Begin with lots of energy and maintain that energy throughout. Students will respond to your enthusiasm.
  - Modulate your voice and pacing to reflect the tone and mood. In nonfiction, note the places where new ideas are introduced and adjust your pacing to allow students time to process. (As a model, consider the narrator voice on the Discovery Channel.) In fiction, note the shifts in emotion and echo those in your voice as you read.
  - Show the illustrations; linger so students can take them in.
- Whether you are livestreaming the read-aloud or recording it in advance, do a test run (if a family member is available, they can give you immediate feedback from behind the camera; if not, film a short clip and review it to make adjustments). Items to check for include:
  - The framing: does your camera capture both your face and the book fully? How far forward do you need to move the book to create the effect of "zooming in" on a page or feature?
  - The lighting: Can your face and the pages both be seen clearly and without glare off the pages? (Tip: Position yourself so that the light source is in front of you, not behind you or coming in from one side.)
  - The sound: Is the recording clear?
- Pre-record or livestream the read-aloud, following the tips above and remembering to read through the book without unnecessary stopping. If your students aren't accustomed to a cover-to-cover read-aloud, introduce the "movie read" before you begin, and reassure them that you want them to listen and enjoy—from start to finish—and there will be time to talk afterward, and revisit the book at other times.
- After the read-aloud, you might pose some open-ended prompts to get students talking and wondering. [The Book, Head, Heart framework](#),

developed by Kyleene Beers and Bob Probst, offers such prompts. You might be able to facilitate a live discussion or, alternatively, as students watch a recorded read-aloud, they may post questions and ideas to a class sharing board on the digital learning platform.

- Use students' thoughts and responses to inform your second and third visits with this book—You can reread the whole book or key parts that students had questions about or wanted to hear again.

### **Teaching to students who share a device at home:**

Follow the same steps and suggestions as above, using a pre-recorded read-aloud. If possible, use your digital learning platform to have students share their responses.

### **Teaching to students who may have limited or no online access:**

If you are creating packets of materials to send home, consider sharing some tips for caregivers on reading aloud. Invite them to start with a familiar read. You might:

- Thank the caregiver for reading aloud and share some of the benefits daily reading has—even for students who know how to read. (It provides a predictable and well-loved routine, connects reader and listener together in a shared experience they can enjoy together now and revisit later, and provides the child with a model for excellent reading and writing.)
- Provide some tips for selecting the read-aloud material. Remind caregivers that engaging texts can come from a range of sources—books, children's magazines, online sites with collections of eBooks and articles such as [scholastic.com/learnathome](http://scholastic.com/learnathome).
- Provide some pointers for delivery, such as:
  - Begin with lots of energy and maintain that energy throughout. Be genuine, though. Let your enthusiasm be sincere and match the tone of the book.
  - Change your tone of voice and your pace to reflect shifts in emotion (stories) or new, important facts (nonfiction books and articles).
  - Show the illustrations as you read; adjust your pace and linger a little where appropriate to allow the child can take them in. Avoid awkward gaps in the flow of the story, however.
- After the reading, suggest that the caregiver ask the child what he or she found surprising or notable and allow a conversation about the book to happen naturally. Above all, make sure that the child has an enjoyable experience that she or he will want to repeat. You can dig in and have more robust conversations when you revisit the book and read it again.
- Encourage the caregiver to reread books or other texts that the child enjoyed.