

The goal of all reading is the comprehension of meaning. The good reader learns to interpret words in their contextual setting. He comprehends words as parts of sentences, sentences as parts of paragraphs and paragraphs as parts of stories. There are three main criteria for a good reader — purposeful reading, good comprehension and flexibility of speed.

**1. Purposeful reading**

The good reader knows why he is reading and how he wants to benefit. He will judge what particular information is wanted, what degree of comprehension is needed, what use will be made of the information and how long the information will have to be retained.

**2. Good Comprehension**

Once the reader has established his purpose in reading, he must be sure of understanding enough to satisfy this purpose. Comprehension can be regarded from four main angles: literal comprehension, interpretation, critical evaluation and creative thinking.

*Literal comprehension* — is a skill of getting the direct meaning of a word, an idea or a sentence in context.

*Interpretation* — getting deeper meanings, anticipating meanings, drawing inferences, making generalizations, reasoning from cause to effect, detecting significance, making comparisons and identifying purposes.

*Critical evaluation* — passes personal judgement on the quality, value, accuracy and truthfulness of information. Some reasons for writing are to entertain, to inform and to persuade. Creative thinking seeks out or expresses new ideas. It starts with a mental question of an inquiry.

**3. Flexibility of speed**

This means adapting the speed of reading to the

reader's purpose and the difficulty of the material. These include the skills of skimming — to understand the main points, scanning to pick out specific details and intensive reading to study and to retain the maximum.

In most schools the pupils tend to treat reading and comprehension exercises as something they must complete to satisfy their teachers. To them reading and comprehension mean retrieval of the facts of a study. The pupils quickly learn to parrot back an endless recollection of printed words. The reason for this is that teachers during a reading and comprehension lesson give the pupils a reading text accompanied by a selection of questions. These may be open ended, closed or multiple choice. These questions often focus on elements unique to that particular text only and the information gained by answering the questions will be unrelated to any task outside that performed in completing the answers to the questions.

e.g. Read the paragraph and answer the questions.

The squirrel is a small animal. It lives on trees. It eats nuts and fruits. It can jump from tree to tree. It has a long tail. It is grey and brown.

1. Is the squirrel a big animal?
2. Does it have a long tail?
3. What does it eat?

Teachers have to make reading and comprehension more meaningful and purposeful to the pupils. Then only will we have pupils who will read rather than have pupils who can read but will not read.

*Bibliography*

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