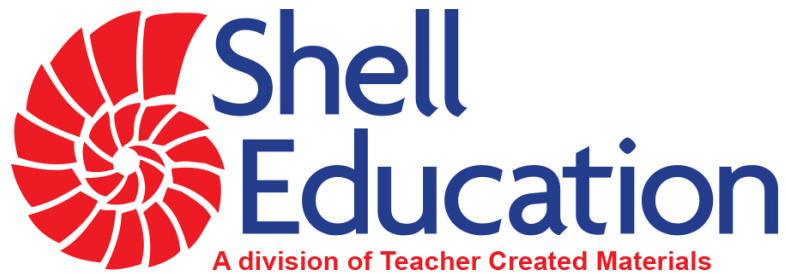


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STRATEGIES

for Motivating
Reluctant

Readers

Heidi Crumrine

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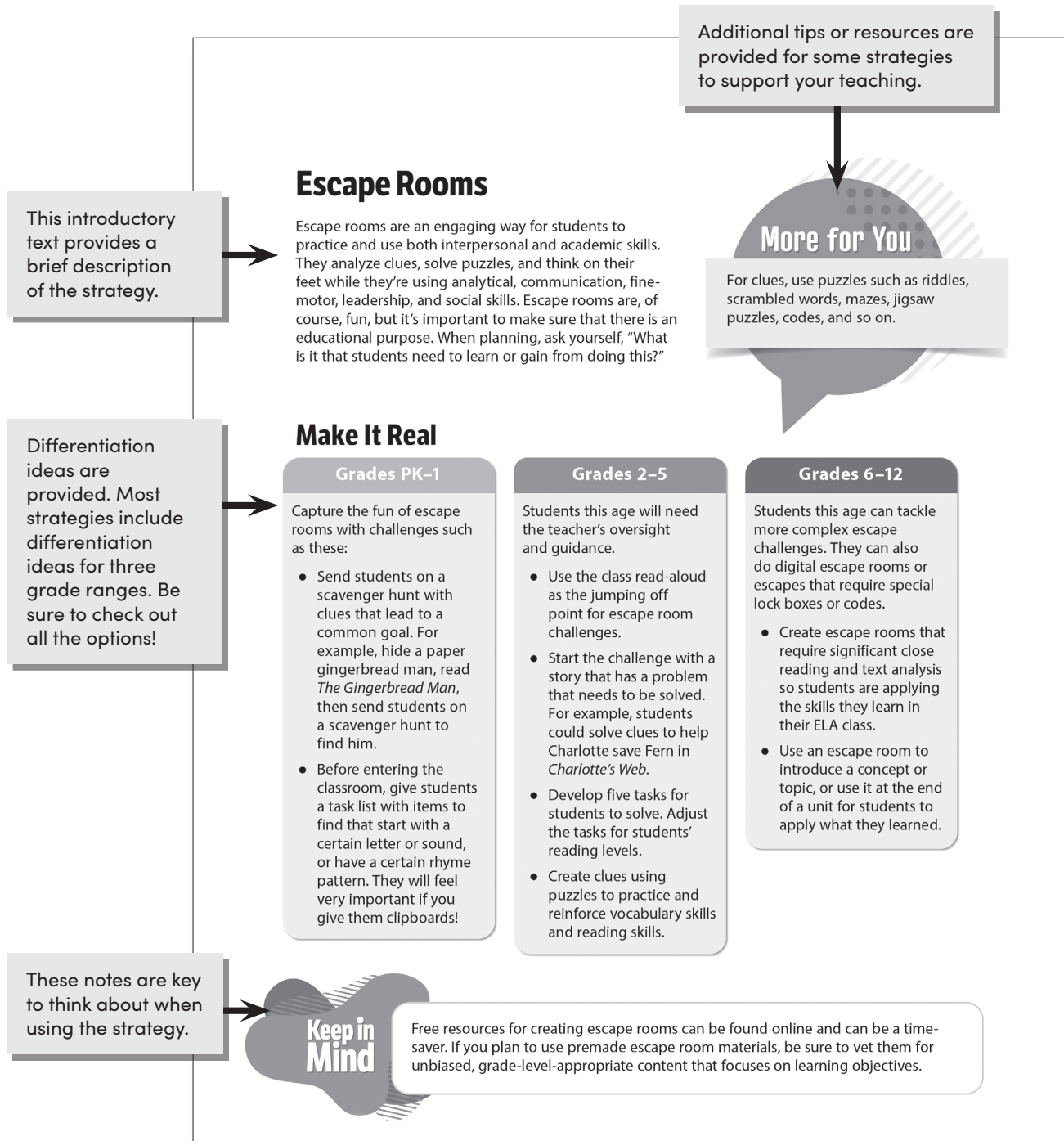
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How to Use This Book

Choose a strategy and give it a try! Some strategies include student activity pages, which are provided in Appendix C as well as digitally. (See page 87 for more information about the Digital Resources.)



First Chapter Friday

First Chapter Friday (FCF) is a classroom routine during which the teacher reads out loud the first chapter of a book every Friday (or whatever day they choose). Use FCF to provide exposure to a variety of texts, perspectives, and voices that students may not encounter on their own and to encourage them to make connections across content areas or to connect books around a common theme or narrative thread. Guests (the principal, other teachers, former students, and parents) can also be invited to share the first chapters from their favorite books!

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

- Rather than FCF, you may wish to adopt the routine of “First Page Friday.” Select a book from the library and read one or two pages to pique students’ interest.
- After reading the first page, have students make predictions about the story. Place the book in the classroom library for students to read on their own.

Grades 2–5

- For this age, FCF can begin to include an actual first chapter of a book.
- Adjust the number of pages you read based on the attention span of your students. As students grow, you can read more, but it’s important to remember that FCF is a sneak peek only, and if students struggle to pay attention, it defeats the purpose.

Grades 6–12

- Secondary teachers often want to read books aloud but struggle with finding time to do so. FCF is a great way to infuse reading aloud into the classroom and curriculum.
- Incorporate student choice by asking students what kinds of stories they like, and choose books to feature accordingly. You can then expand students’ horizons from there.



Keep in Mind

- First Chapter Friday is a more in-depth peek into a book than a book talk and can be a natural follow-on from a book talk. Or, after a few book talks, have students vote on which book’s first chapter they would most like to hear.
- Engage students in choosing books. They can nominate books or bring in books from home.
- Students’ interest tends to wane after about ten minutes of read-aloud. That might mean you abridge the chapter, which is okay.
- FCF should be about community building, offering students exposure to a variety of texts and voices and letting students enjoy listening to a book. Avoid asking students to complete FCF worksheets—this dampens students’ enjoyment of hearing books read aloud.

Book Tastings

A book tasting gives students the chance to sample a variety of books before choosing one to read. Similar to a cake tasting for a wedding, you give students a sample of what's available by setting out books for them to "taste." Put placemats on tables and set books on the placemats. Arrange the tables by topics, themes, genres, and so on—whatever is appropriate for the level of your students. Set a specific goal that you articulate to students to keep them engaged and focused!

More for You

See page 83 for My Book Tasting Notes (grades 3–12).

Make It Real

Grades PK–2

- Offer a modified version of book tastings using musical chairs. Place books on chairs and play music. When the music stops, children sit in the closest chair and explore the book.
- Facilitate book tastings for small groups of students while the other students are completing independent tasks such as center work.
- Give students a goal for choosing a book: choose one to take home, choose one to read during independent reading time, and so on.

Grades 3–12

- A combination of chapter books and rich picture books can be offered for students in these grades.
- Provide note-catchers for students to capture their impressions of books and indicate ones they want to read. Note-catchers can include space for students to record the title, author, genre, impressions of a book, and whether they are interested in reading it.
- Use book tastings to introduce students to books to choose from for book clubs.

Keep in Mind

- Students do not need to spend more than three to five minutes with one particular book. The idea is to allow students to explore many titles.
- If you wish to be extra-creative, make the book tasting like a tea party. Find lace doilies at a dollar store, and serve juice, herbal tea, or hot cocoa in teacups. Set up placemats and books and invite students to wear fancy hats. As an alternative, feel free to simply place some books on tables and set the kids loose. Both options can work!

All-School Reading Challenges

Reading challenges harness the power of friendly competition to motivate students to read to reach a particular goal together. Students can be challenged to read a specific number of minutes, pages, or books; collectively read a variety of genres; and so on. The goal is not to pit students against one another but rather to celebrate reading progress and highlight the success of individual classes and the school community as a whole.

More for You

Reading Bingo (grades PK–2)—see page 84.

Reading Bingo (grades 3–5)—see page 85.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

- Create a Bingo card for students to complete. Include tasks such as read outside, read a book with a friend, read a book out loud to a stuffed animal, listen to someone read to you, and so on.
- Provide time for students to complete the reading challenges at school to ensure everyone has an equitable way to participate and contribute to the class goals.

Grades 2–5

- Create a series of reading challenges that students can check off at their own pace. For example, read a new author, read a book that has pictures, read a book recommended by a classmate, and read a book that won an award.
- This approach allows students to select texts that interest them while meeting a goal and being celebrated for it.

Grades 6–12

- Create challenges that engage the larger community without pitting individual classes against one another. Consider school challenges such as staff vs. students, the humanities department vs. the STEAM department, and the east building vs. the west building.

Keep in Mind

- Pitting students or individual classes against one another in a binary win/lose scenario can exacerbate feelings of incompetence in struggling readers. Set up the challenge to celebrate the success of the group rather than focusing on specific individuals.
- Students can compete against themselves by setting a goal based on their interests and needs and then celebrating meeting that goal whenever it happens.

Act Out a Passage

Instead of asking students questions about what happened in a text and why it happened, task students with acting it out. They don't need to write or create a script. This can be done collaboratively as a whole class, in groups, or individually. Students will need to dive deeply into a text to find important details and make meaning from the text. Acting out texts also helps students in the audience better comprehend them through watching the performances.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

- Have students act out an important scene in a story. They can take on roles or make puppets to use.
- Support students in acting out the scene by coaching them and asking questions. For example, help students think about how the characters are feeling: "How do the other mice feel when Frederick shares his poem? How can you show that with your face and body?"

Grades 2–5

- Ask the class, "What are the main events in this story?" Make a list together and then assign events to different small groups of students to act out.
- Have each group work collaboratively to create their scene. Then have the groups perform their scenes in succession to tell the story.
- Students don't need to read from the text while performing—they can use words or phrases that are the most important.

Grades 6–12

Have students act out a scene with various challenges:

- Give students a word bank and require students to use those words in their scene.
- While a group is at the front of the class, the rest of the class tells the group what scene to act out.
- Have each group create a different ending to the story and act it out.

Keep in Mind

- The purpose is to help students understand big ideas, characters, and events of a story.
- Students who are shy or reluctant to take a role in a scene can collaborate with the group to make props or write a short script.

Realia

When students can see and manipulate real materials, they make strong connections that support recall and comprehension. *Realia* refers to real-life objects that students can handle and experience using their senses. Using realia supports vocabulary development and content knowledge across the curriculum. One of my colleagues took her high school students into the cafeteria’s industrial freezer so that they could experience cold like the character in their novel. She took the use of realia to the next level as she sought to connect her students to what they were reading.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

Use as many tactile experiences as possible to grow young learners’ background knowledge.

Examples:

- Read *This Is the Sunflower* by Lola M. Schaefer and then have students dissect a sunflower plant.
- Read *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner and then grow a small vegetable garden in the spring. Incorporate the food students grow into snack time.
- Read *The Artist* by Ed Vere and have students create their own art to share with the world.

Grades 2–5

Create opportunities for students to use realia to experiment with what they are learning.

Examples:

- Read *Volcanoes!* by Anne Schreiber and build a volcano in the classroom.
- Read *Rise to the Sky* by Rebecca Hirsch and then take students outside to explore and collect artifacts that show the life cycle of a tree.
- Read *Solar Story* by Allan Drummond and build a solar cooker to make s’mores.

Grades 6–12

Having objects available to manipulate and pass around can scaffold learning and help provide context without seeming too babyish.

Examples:

- When reading *Romeo and Juliet*, provide wooden swords and old formal dresses.
- When reading *A Raisin in the Sun*, bring a plant to class and water it every day before class starts.
- When reading *Of Mice and Men*, bring in and pass around hay for students to touch.

Keep in Mind

EL students in particular benefit from realia that connects to what they are learning about. They are learning concrete vocabulary and concepts as well as nuances of language. For example, if you are reading about baseball and have a baseball and bat to pass around, students will be better able to connect the word with the object.