

## Importance of Reading Meaningful Texts in Early Childhood

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## Introduction

- **Children's Literature:** Good-quality trade books for children from birth through early adolescence covering topics of relevance and interest to children through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction
  - **Good quality:** Including the story, pictures, and language
  - **Trade books:** Designed for enjoyment and information
  - **Birth through early adolescence:** Age criteria
  - **Topics of relevance and interest:** Reflect children's life experiences, understandings, and emotions
  - **Prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction:** Cover a range of genres

## Definitions

- **Textbook:** Designed for the purpose of instruction
- **Trade book:** Designed for the purpose of entertainment and information (e.g., *storybook*)
  - Note: this class will only cover trade books
- **Authentic literacy:** Reading for real-life purposes outside of school
  - Reading authentic texts increases students' motivation to read
- **Aliterate:** A person who can read, but chooses not to
  - Exposure to authentic children's books can help prevent an aliterate society

## Foundational Skills for Successful Reading

- **Oral language:** Ability to listen and speak
- **Print awareness:** Understand the nature of print (e.g., title of a book, read left to right)
- **Interest in Reading:** Value and enjoy reading
- **Vocabulary knowledge:** Understand the meaning of words
- **Comprehension strategies:** Understand the meaning of a text
- **Reading Fluency:** Read a text quickly and accurately
- **Phonemic awareness:** Ability to recognize sounds (phonemes) in spoken words
- **Phonics:** Identify the relationship between letters and sounds

### Benefits of Reading Meaningful Texts:

#### #1: Develops Language and Literacy Skills

- **Oral Language:** Helps children learn language structures (e.g., grammar)
- **Print awareness:** Teaches children the nature of print and books
- **Interest in Reading:** Fosters a love for reading
- **Vocabulary knowledge:** Helps develop understanding of new words
- **Comprehension strategies:** Discussions of a story help children understand the plot, theme, etc.
- **Reading Fluency:** Practice reading storybooks increases reading fluency

### Benefits of Reading Meaningful Texts:

#### #2 Improved Academic Performance, Knowledge, and Cognitive Development

- Higher performance on exams
- Higher academic achievement in all academic courses
- Increased knowledge of various topics
  - *The more you read, the more you know*
- Develops children's imagination
- Fosters children's brain development

### Benefits of Reading Meaningful Texts:

#### #3 Nurtures Social and Character Development

- Shared storybook reading develops relationships between the child and the reader (teacher, parent, relative)
- Children are more understanding of others and themselves
- Stories help children have a better understanding of human nature
- Stories help children have a better understanding of other cultures
- Many stories teach positive character skills

### Cultural Relevance Rubric

Modified from Freeman and Freeman (2007)

1. Are the characters in the story like you and your family?			
Just like us			Not like us
4	3	2	1
2. Have you ever had experiences like the ones described in the story?			
Yes			No
4	3	2	1
3. Have you lived in or visited places like those in the story?			
Yes			No
4	3	2	1
4. Do the characters in the story talk like you and your family do?			
Yes			No
4	3	2	1