**5 Powerful While-Reading Activities**

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After warming up your classroom with [pre-poetry reading buddy activities](https://englishteaching101.com/pre-poetry-reading-activities/) (picture prompts, title-guessing rebus game, and author’s biographical reading capsule), it’s time to set your classroom ablaze with five while-reading activities: suggestopedic reading-aloud, vocabulary notebook and word wall, think-pair-share comprehension questions, and thought-unit paraphrasing.

For the purpose of elaborating each activity, I will be using the poem [“The Seven Ages of Man”](https://genius.com/William-shakespeare-the-seven-ages-of-man-all-the-worlds-a-stage-annotated) or more commonly known as All the World’s a Stage by William Shakespeare as the target text.

**Suggestopedic Reading Aloud**

[Suggestopedia](http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-what-is-suggestopedia/146499.article) is a teaching approach developed by Bulgarian psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov used mostly in teaching foreign languages. Lozanov holds that students are most receptive when they are comfortable and relaxed in their environment. Thus, the use of art and music.

Suggestopedic Reading Aloud activity is a reading session where you and your students read aloud each line or text, observing appropriate stress and rhythm, and employing evocative background soundtrack that matches the poem’s theme.

For example, the soundtrack that I found suitable for The Seven Ages of Man is [*100 Years* by Five for Fighting](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR-qQcNT_fY).

1. In the first reading-aloud, the teacher reads each poetic line and the students repeat after him/her.

2. In the second reading-aloud, each pair reads a stanza or two (depending on the poem’s structure and length) until the last stanza.

Reading aloud while playing music in the background will surely evoke the right emotions and enhance students understanding of the overall theme of the text.

**Vocabulary Notebook and Word Wall**

Keeping a vocabulary notebook is a reading strategy to broaden your student’s mental lexicon. It is done by listing problem words which a reader comes across in a text, guessing their meaning using context clues, checking their conjectures against a reliable dictionary, and finally, using them in their own sentences.

1. With their vocabulary notebooks on their desks, each pair scans through each poetic line for problem words.

2. Still working in pairs, they copy and fill out the following table:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Problem Word** | **Context Clue/s** | **Guessed Meaning/s** | **Dictionary    Meaning/s** | **Own Sample Sentence/s** |
| mewling | puking in the nurse’s arms | crying | crying weakly | The baby is mewling because his diaper is wet. |

3. With you acting as a facilitator, the students check on the accuracy of their responses.

4. The students at the end of the session mount the problem words onto the Word Wall.

**Think-Pair-Share (TPS) Comprehension Questions**

Think-pair-share (TPS) is a collaborative learning strategy where students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading. This strategy requires students to (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and (2) share ideas with classmates.

In this activity, the teacher asks questions to elicit meaningful responses from the students that would lead to optimum understanding of the poem.

In pairs, they collaborate in answering the questions which may include:

* What comprises the seven ages of man according to the poem?
* Describe the school boy’s attitude towards school. How do you feel about this picture of childhood?
* What is compared to the “stage” in the first two lines? How are the two related?
* In lines 13 and 14, what is compared to “reputation”?
* What other comparisons are used in the poem. Which are examples of metaphor? Which are examples of simile?
* According to the speaker or “persona” in the poem, what physical and mental changes take place as a man reaches the sixth and seven ages?
* Do you agree with the persona’s description of old age? Why?
* What other acceptable descriptions of old age can you think of?
* In the last line of the poem, the word “sans” is repeated. What do you think is the purpose of repeating it four times?

**Thought-Unit Paraphrasing**

This is restating each stanza or thought unit in prose form. The dyad paraphrasers should work together to arrive at a simple yet meaningful paraphrased version of the poem. This activity seeks to assess whether the students grasp well the meaning of each poetic stanza or thought unit.

1. Working in pairs, the students study and analyze each stanza.

2. They write their paraphrases on sheets of paper. The following is a sample paraphrased version of the poem:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lines** | **Thought-Unit Paraphrases** |
| 1-5 | Shakespeare considers the world a stage and men and women actors on the stage of life. They play seven roles according to their age. |
| 5-6 | The first stage, as described by the poet, is the infant who is being carried by a nurse. The infant cries and vomits all the time. |
| 7-9 | Later, that infant grows into a schoolboy, not willing to attend school which is the fourth stage of a man’s life. |
| 9-11 | The third stage is that of a lover who is lost in his thoughts of love. The lover writes poetry to his lady’s beauty. |
| 11-15 | In the fourth stage, as he grows older, he joins the army and becomes a soldier. He is physically fit and is aggressive, short-tempered and ambitious in nature. |
| 15-19 | The fifth stage shows that with maturity and wisdom, the family man becomes a judge. He is a fair, healthy man full of wisdom. His look is authoritative and he advises people. |
| 19-25 | The sixth stage is about the man who has grown old and is seen in a pantaloon and spectacles. His authoritative voice has grown weak and his voice trembles as he talks. |
| 25-28 | The last stage is about the senile man who loses his teeth, his vision and his hearing. After this, the man part in the play ends and he exits from the stages of his life forever. |