



SUNSHINE READERS

Do's and Don'ts of Reading Aloud

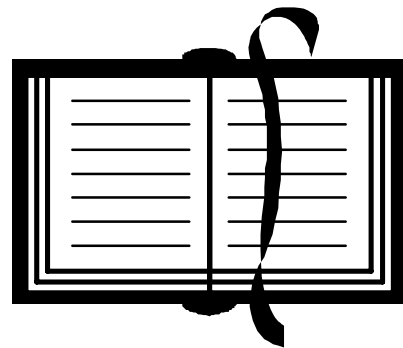
by Ellen Nathan, Language Arts Specialist

Do's

- ◆ Half the battle of being successful at reading aloud to children of all ages is in the selection of books. Become familiar with the very large selection of children's books available. You are in the enviable position of exposing children to books. Be diligent about choosing quality literature.
- ◆ Preview the book by reading it to yourself first. (Children know when you are winging it.) Such advance reading allows you to spot material you may wish to shorten, eliminate, or elaborate on. It is perfectly acceptable to adapt the text to the age level of the group without destroying the integrity of the story.
- ◆ Add a third dimension of the book whenever possible. Bring in artifacts that generate discussions about the book and how it relates to the children's own lives.
- ◆ Young children frequently find it difficult to just sit and listen. Between read aloud segments lead children in stretching exercises and then allow them a moment to settle down quietly.
- ◆ The art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually, it doesn't happen overnight. **But always wait for the attention of the whole class.** The children will begin to realize that you will wait for them to stop talking and fidgeting. Complimenting the children who are focused and attentive helps. Gently looking at a child who is talking or fidgeting will signal her/him that you are waiting for their full attention.
- ◆ If you are reading a picture book, make sure the children can see the pictures easily. Seat the children on a rug—with you in a child's chair so that the children in the back row can see the pictures above the heads of the others.
- ◆ Remember that even sixth-grade students love a good picture book. There are many picture books with very powerful themes that elicit excellent discussions.

Don'ts

- ◆ Do not read stories that you don't enjoy yourself. Your dislike or lack of enthusiasm will show in the reading and that defeats your purpose. Your intent will be contagious.
- ◆ Consider the intellectual, social and emotional level of your audience in making a read aloud selection. Challenge the children, but don't overwhelm them.
- ◆ Don't start a reading if you do not have enough time to do it justice. You want plenty of time for the "Intro", "Through" and "Beyond" activities. (See the back of this sheet.)
- ◆ Don't be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly by young children. However, use your own judgement. If answering the questions will disrupt the flow of the story, wait until the end and then discuss the story and answer the children's questions.
- ◆ Don't impose your interpretations of a story upon your audience. Let it come from the children with your gentle guidance.



Ellen Nathan was the National BookPALS Program Director from 1996 - 2005. She is a Language Arts Specialist who also worked for the LA Unified School District for over 20 years.