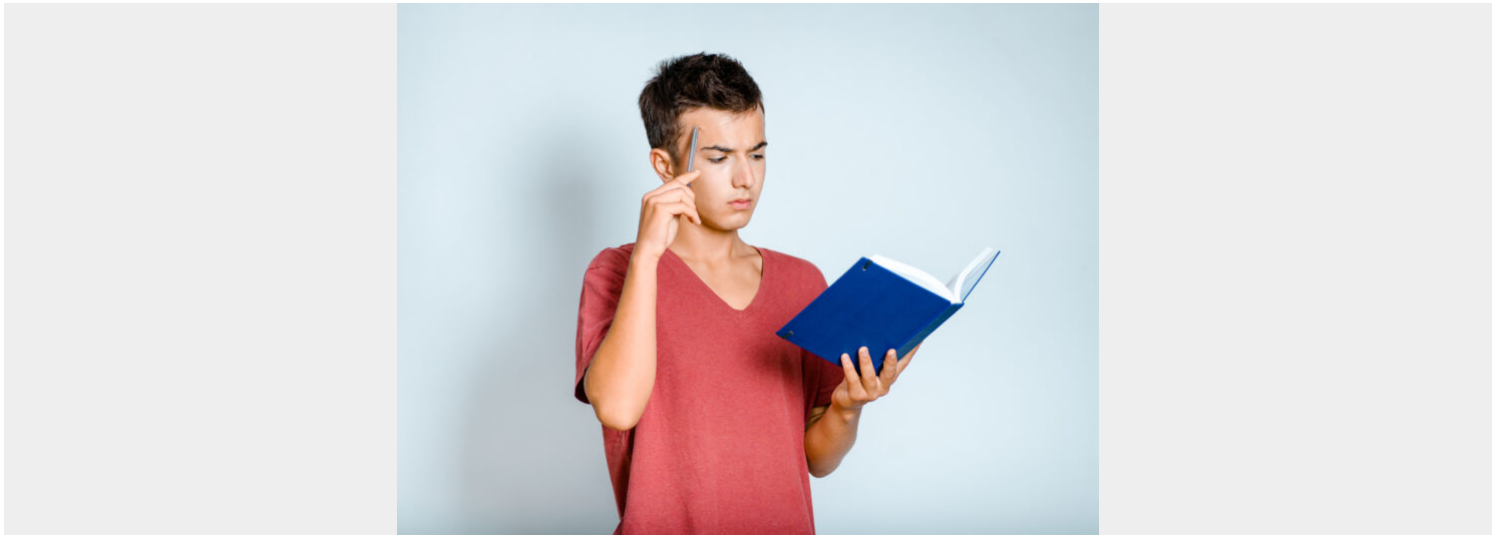


TEACH YOUR STUDENTS TO BE CLARIFIERS OF TEXT

by Robert Crowe



In this article, you will learn...

- Why deep learning requires deep reading.
- To ensure accurate reading comprehension, students must move from just clarifying to understanding how to use context clues when they are confused to owning the role of clarifier whenever they are accessing information from the text.
- Clarifying concepts and vocabulary in order to make meaning is a reading skill that can and should be taught.

Categories: [feature](#), [Teaching](#)

Tags: [instructional strategy](#), [literacy](#), [reading](#), [roles in learning](#), [student ownership](#)



Reading Time: 5 minutes

Deep learning—of anything—requires strong reading comprehension skills. But deep learning cannot happen if the reader doesn't understand what they are reading. That's why one comprehension skill that students must master is the skill of clarifying. Clarifying information helps the reader stay on track as they continue reading.

Research bears this out.

"Clarifying strategies teach struggling readers to do what proficient readers do: They stop reading when a text no longer makes sense and implement various repair strategies. Engaging students in identifying unclear concepts, structures, and passages helps students to learn self-monitoring techniques. Understanding and practicing repair strategies helps students to look for synonyms or other text clues. ([LiteracyWork International, 2010](#))"

What Does It Mean to Be a Clarifier of Text?

For our students to be successful readers they must take ownership of their reading and of the reading comprehension skill of clarifying. But [ownership for students](#) needs to be more than just doing the skill—it is recognizing the importance of the thinking behind the clarifying and turning themselves into a clarifier of text.

In other words, students must move from just clarifying to understanding how to use context clues when they are confused to owning the role of clarifier whenever they are accessing information from the text.

A clarifier thinks like this, "Whenever I read, I need to clarify any words, phrases, or ideas that I don't understand in the text. I need to stop and think about how the authors is telling me about the information. I ask myself, do I understand each of the words, phrases, or ideas the author is using? If not, I can find out what the author means by using context clues, the glossary, or asking someone. I make sure I know what the author is telling me before I take my notes. Clarifying information helps me stay on track as I continue



reading.”

How Can Your Students Become Clarifiers?

Teaching students to become clarifiers can be done in a variety of ways. One way to help students practice the role of clarifier is to use the following graphic organizer as a tool for building this skill.

Clarifying the Vocabulary

Name: _____ Date: _____

Skill: _____

Why am I learning this skill?

Word or phrase I am clarifying:	
Write the sentence with the vocabulary word.	What is the part of speech?
Are there any signal words? What do the signal words tell you about the unknown word?	Are there any punctuation clues? What do the punctuation clues tell you about the unknown word?
Are there any visual clues? What do the visual clues tell you?	Are there any clues from surrounding sentences that tell you about the unknown word?
Prediction of meaning:	Actual meaning:

How will I use this skill in the future?

Here are the directions you can use with your students.

Clarifying the Vocabulary

Using the **Clarifying the Vocabulary** skill builder supports students in analyzing unknown words or phrases when they hinder their comprehension.

Directions:

When working with students to help them analyze unknown words or phrases to clarify comprehension, have students:

1. Write on the Skill line the skill: clarifying vocabulary in order to make meaning while reading or listening.
2. Reflect on the importance of learning this skill and the question: *Why am I learning this skill?*
3. Record their thoughts in the space next to the question.
4. Record the word or phrase they are clarifying.
5. Review the parts of speech and how they are determined in a sentence.
6. Review the meaning of signal words and how they are identified.
7. Review punctuation clues and how they are identified.
8. Review visual cues and how they are identified.
9. Review context clues and how they are identified.
10. Review prediction of meaning and what clues can be used to support this.
11. Review actual meaning and how this can be determined.
12. Reflect on how they will use this skill in other situations and the question: *How will I use this skill in the future?*
13. Record their thoughts in the space next to the question.

[Click here](#) to download this Skill Builder and its directions.

So, Why Develop Clarifiers of Text?

Comprehension is stronger when students have an opportunity to clarify what they are reading and talk about it. Talking about the reading is stronger when students are able to not only ask questions, but to also clarify ideas, restate the facts, and share what they think they will be reading next. The ability to effectively [question](#), clarify, [summarize](#), and [predict](#) is stronger when readers are explicitly taught each of these skills. That's [Reciprocal Teaching](#), and it is an instructional strategy that not only promotes deep reading, but also [student ownership](#) of learning.



Continue the Learning

Check out these articles and resources to continue your learning about this topic...

- [Our Article, "How to Engage Your Students in the Learning Process"](#)
- [Our Downloadable Resources for Reciprocal Teaching](#)
- [Our Guide for Teachers, *The Learning Progressions for the Literacy Standards*](#)

The Learning Brief

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- Clarifying concepts and vocabulary in order to make meaning is a reading skill that can and should be taught.

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