

PIRLS examines the processes of comprehen-

Focus on and Retrieve Explicitly Stated Information

Readers vary the attention they give to explicitly stated information in the text. Some ideas in the text may c c

Interpret and Integrate Ideas and Information

As with the more straightforward inferences, the reader engaging in this process may focus on local or global meanings, or may relate details to overall themes and ideas. In any case, the reader is processing text beyond the phrase or sentence level.

As readers interpret and integrate ideas and information in the text, they often need to draw on their understanding of the world. They are making connections that are not only implicit, but that may be open to some interpretation based on their own perspective. When they interpret and integrate text information and ideas, readers may need to draw on their background knowledge and experiences more than they do for straightforward inferences. Because of this, meaning that is constructed through interpreting and integrating ideas and information is likely to vary among readers, depending upon the experiences and knowledge they bring to the reading task.

By engaging in this interpretive process, readers are attempting to construct a more specific or more complete understanding of the text by integrating personal knowledge and experience with meaning that resides in the text. For example, the reader may draw on experience to infer a character's underlying motive or to construct a mental image of the information conveyed.

Reading tasks that may exemplify this type of text processing include the following:

- A discerning the overall message or theme of a text
- A considering an alternative to actions of characters
- A comparing and contrasting text information
- A Q

Examine and Evaluate Content, Language, and Textual Elements

As readers examine and evaluate the content, language, and elements of the text, the focus shifts from constructing meaning to critically considering the text itself. In terms of content, readers draw on their interpretations and weigh their understanding of the text against their understanding of the world – rejecting, accepting, or remaining neutral to the text's representation. For example, the reader may counter or confirm claims made in the text or make comparisons with ideas and information found in other sources.

In reflecting on text elements, such as structure and language, readers examine how meaning is presented. In doing so, they draw upon their knowledge of text genre and structure, as well as their understanding of language conventions. They may also reflect on the author's devices for conveying meaning and judge their adequacy, and question the author's purpose, perspective, or skill.

The reader engaged in this process is standing apart from the text and examining or evaluating it. The text content, or meaning, may be examined from a very personal perspective or with a critical and objective view. Here the reader relies on knowledge about the world or on past reading.

In examining and evaluating elements of text structure and language, readers draw upon their knowledge of language usage and general or genre-specific features of texts. The text is considered as a way to convey ideas, feelings, and information. Readers may find weaknesses in how the text was written or recognize the successful use of the author's craft. The extent of past reading experience and familiarity with the language are essential to this process.

Reading tasks that may exemplify this type of text processing include the following:

- A evaluating the likelihood that the events described could really happen
- A describing how the author devised a surprise ending
- A judging the completeness or clarity of information in the text
- A determining an author's perspective on the central topic

Purposes for Reading

The content, organization, and style that may be typical of a particular text genre have implications for the reader's approach to understanding the text (Graesser, Golding, & Long, 2000; Kirsch & Mosenthal, 1989; Weaver & Kintsch, 1996). It is in the interaction between reader and text that meanings are made and purposes are achieved. For the assessment, passages will be classified by their primary purposes and by the kinds of questions asked. That is, passages classified as informational will be accompanied by questions about the information contained in the passages and those classified as literary will have questions addressing theme, plot events, characters, and setting.

The early reading of most young children centers on literary and narrative text types. In addition, many young readers also enjoy acquiring information from books and other types of reading material. This kind of reading becomes more important as students develop their literacy abilities and are increasingly required to read in order to learn across the curriculum (Langer, 1990).

Within each of the two purposes for reading, many different text forms can be identified. Texts differ in the way in which ideas are organized and presented and elicit varying ways of constructing meaning (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000). Text organization and format can vary to a great degree, ranging from sequential ordering of written material to snippets of words and phrases arranged with pictorial and tabular data. In selecting texts for the PIRLS assessment, the aim is to present a wide range of text types within each purpose for reading. Texts will be selected only from sources typical of those available to students in and out of school. The goal is to create a reading experience for students participating in the assessment that, as much as possible, is similar to authentic reading experiences they may have in other contexts.

