

ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENT READING

*In books I have traveled, not only to other worlds, but into my own.
I learned who I was and who I wanted to be, what I might aspire
to, and what I might dare to dream about my world and myself.*

— ANNA QUINDLEN

Independent reading, as we use the term, is a systematic way of supporting and guiding students as they read on their own. In independent reading, students silently read books of their own choosing while you confer with individuals; they also respond to their reading in a journal approximately once each week. Independent reading is generally framed by two learning experiences: a book talk and a minilesson before, and group sharing and evaluation after. Later on you will also work with small groups and book clubs during this time.

Independent Reading Versus Sustained Silent Reading

Perhaps the best way to understand independent reading is to compare it with sustained silent reading. Independent reading is a much more organized and supportive approach than simply giving students “free time” to choose books and read. It also differs from the commonly used structures for silent reading known as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). As Figure 7-1 shows, there are evident differences on three fronts: the purposes, the roles of students and teachers, and the way each reading experience is implemented.

Both sustained silent reading and independent reading are designed to help students increase the time they spend reading and give them continued opportunities to expand and practice reading strategies. Additionally, independent reading provides the oppor-

tunity for you to provide explicit instruction to increase reading competence and encourages students to monitor their own reading through record keeping.

In both sustained silent reading and independent reading students usually select their own texts with some teacher guidance, but in independent reading you are actively guiding the selection through book talks and minilessons. You also teach students to keep their own records and reflect on their independent reading (see Figure 7-1)—the topics, genres, and difficulty of the texts they read, as well as on how many books they are reading and how long it takes to read each one.

Roles

In sustained silent reading students are expected to read continuously through the period, and some teachers may have them note the titles and pages read. Teachers read their own books at the same time students are reading to serve as a model. (In some schools, everyone, including the administrative staff, stops what she or he is doing and reads.) In independent reading students read continuously, but they also participate in short instructional conferences with the teacher and write in their reading response journals, capturing their thoughts about what they read.

In independent reading you play a major instructional role *and* serve as a model. There are many ways to help students know you are a reader without sacrificing highly productive instruction. For example, you can share your reading passion through:

- Your conversation about books you have read.

Comparison of Sustained Silent Reading and Independent Reading		
	Sustained Silent Reading	Independent Reading
Purpose	❖ To increase the time students read. ❖ To increase the amount of reading that students do. ❖ To enable students to practice their reading.	❖ To increase the time students read. ❖ To enable students to practice their reading. ❖ To improve reading competence through instruction. ❖ To enable students to manage and keep records of their reading.
Text	❖ Student selects text with some teacher guidance.	❖ Student selects "just-right" text with some teacher guidance.
Time	❖ Any time during the school day. ❖ Usually from 15 to 30 minutes.	❖ During reading workshop—a regular block of time during the school day. ❖ Usually from 50 to 60 minutes.
Initiation of Activity	❖ At a signal, students begin to read and continue until they receive the signal to stop.	❖ Teacher provides a book talk and minilesson. ❖ Students gather books and journals.
Role of Students	❖ Read continuously.	❖ Read continuously. ❖ Keep their own records. ❖ Reflect on their reading. ❖ Confer with the teacher about their reading. ❖ Think about and write responses to their reading.
Role of Teacher	❖ Read as a model for students. ❖ Monitor student behavior.	❖ Provide a short book talk. ❖ Provide instruction in the form of a minilesson. ❖ Confer with individual students on a regular basis. ❖ Observe student reading behavior and keep records. ❖ Reinforce and extend students' learning through group sharing. ❖ Help students evaluate during group sharing. ❖ Use observation to inform teaching of minilessons, guided reading lessons, and literature study. ❖ Work with small groups of students in guided reading or literature study.
Closing of Activity	❖ At a signal, students put their books away.	❖ The group meets for sharing and evaluation.

Figure 7-1. Comparison of Sustained Silent Reading and Independent Reading

- The examples you use in your minilessons.
- The books talks you give.
- The written reading responses that you model for students.
- The enthusiastic way you talk about books in the classroom.
- The excitement you show, in general, about books.

We believe in modeling, but modeling happens in a variety of ways. Besides, time is of the essence! We have so many students to teach, our instructional day is so crowded, and we must make the best use of every minute of our time. There is no need to sit before a class reading silently to show that reading is valuable, and we know of no research that supports this action.

Management

The two kinds of reading are also managed differently. Silent reading usually begins with a prearranged signal, at which time students take out their books and read them until they receive the signal to stop. Reading sessions typically last fifteen minutes but may run as long as thirty minutes. Independent reading, as a component of the reading workshop block, may involve students in reading texts for thirty to fifty minutes every day.

You may begin the reading block with a book talk to promote new books and attract students to new titles. Then you provide a lesson on some aspect of reading. You design the minilesson based on your observation of your students' reading behavior during guided reading and individual conferences.

Prerequisites for Implementing Independent Reading

Effective implementation of independent reading requires several essential components:

1. A sufficient and varied supply of books at appropriate reading levels.
2. An organized, attractive, comfortable environment for reading.
3. Information about students as readers.
4. Building on background knowledge created from hearing and talking about books read aloud.

Books

We want our students to encounter a range of quality books. Accordingly, we need to fill our shelves with fiction, nonfiction, and poetry at various levels of reading difficulty so that students can immerse themselves in books they understand and enjoy. This collection of books usually stays in the classroom all year. Some teachers start with tested favorites and then add to the collection regularly, introducing new books with book talks. Thus the library keeps growing and changing day by day.

There must be enough books to match the reading levels of all the students in the class. The collection should include books that are known favorites of students at the particular grade level and should feature popular authors and topics as well as a variety of genres. You want these books to be inviting to students and to offer them variety.

An Orderly, Supportive Environment for Reading

Book talk, the minilesson, group share, and evaluation take place in the meeting area, which we describe in Chapter 6. Students' response journals are kept in a specific place from which it is easy for students to retrieve and return them. It is important to organize your classroom library so that books are accessible and well organized. Group books in labeled baskets, plastic tubs, or bins, so that students can select and return them easily.

The atmosphere of the room during independent reading is quiet and peaceful. Teach students to read silently and to walk about only if they are selecting or returning books. Help them understand that except for the minilesson and sharing, they do not talk with one another about their reading. The only sounds you'll hear are the whispers of an individual conference or the low voices of a guided reading or literature study group. The group conversations take place in a corner, away from the students who are reading silently.

Information About Readers

In Chapter 28 we discuss ways to use assessment to inform your daily instruction. You can gather needed information by observing students informally, making anecdotal notes, and employing systematic assessment measures. For example, you can use benchmark texts or

a Reading Inventory to find out how students are taking apart words or acquiring reading vocabulary. You can also highlight and discuss new words in the books students are reading independently. As you watch them during independent reading or discussion groups and review their reading response journals, you can make hypotheses about how well students understand the meaning of different kinds of texts. For example, you may discover that certain students need to understand the principles of biography or attend to the way an author shows the sequence of events. You can provide minilessons based on the patterns of need you observe and reinforce the concepts in conferences and group share.

One way to find out more about students' reading interests and their independent reading perspectives is simply to ask them questions about themselves as readers. Sample questions are provided in Figure 7-2; these questions are repeated in a reproducible reading questionnaire in Appendix 46. You can adapt this interview to suit your own interests and purposes by adding or deleting questions. You can interview students orally or give them a questionnaire to complete in writing at school or at home with the assistance of family members. You will not only acquire a great deal of information to make your teaching more effective but also demonstrate to students that:

- You value their independent reading experiences, attitudes, and goals.
- They have important responsibilities in thinking about their own independent reading.

Background Knowledge

Students' knowledge of texts helps them learn more as they read. By reading aloud to your students every day, you will enrich their background knowledge. From kindergarten on up, every teacher who reads aloud to her students contributes to the resources they will be able to draw on in the future. These experiences form shared literary knowledge and can be used as examples in minilessons in independent reading and in independent writing. As a result, students gain a heightened awareness of the writer's craft and the way texts "work."

For example, Stephanie, a fourth-grade teacher, had read *Peppe the Lamplighter* (Bartone 1999) aloud to her students. *Peppe* is a poignant story about a

Reading Interview

1. Do you like to read? Why or why not?
2. About how many books did you read last year?
3. Do you read at home? How much and how often do you read at home?
4. Where do you get books to read at home?
5. What books have you read recently?
6. What is your favorite book? What made it your favorite?
7. How do you choose books to read?
8. Who are some of your favorite authors? Why are they your favorites?
9. What topics or subjects interest you?
10. What is your favorite kind of book? What other kinds of books do you like to read?
11. What are the titles of some books that you want to read?
12. What kinds of books are easy for you to read? What kinds of books are hard for you to read?
13. How can I help you become a better reader?
14. Is there anything else you want me to know about you as a reader?

Figure 7-2. Reading Interview

young boy who comes to the United States with his family to pursue the American dream. Stephanie wanted to illustrate how an author uses figurative language to describe the characters and communicate inner feelings, so she referred to *Peppe* in her minilesson. To show how writers use simile and metaphor, she pointed out how the author said, "his face was cold like stone" to describe the father's reaction to something *Peppe* said. The students quickly made the connection because the story was part of their shared literacy experience. They could then watch for examples of figurative language in the books they were reading independently and contribute these examples to the later group discussion.

Independent Reading 60-minute Block	
Time 5 to 15 minutes	Book Talk [optional] Minilesson Status of the Class [optional]
30 to 45 minutes	Individual Reading Conferring Written Response
5 to 10 minutes	Group Share and Evaluation

Figure 7-3. *Independent Reading*

A Basic Structure for Independent Reading

The basic structure for independent reading (see Figure 7-3), which you will adapt daily to fit your own needs and challenges, includes:

1. Book talk (optional).
2. Minilesson.
3. Status of the class (optional).
4. Individual reading, conferring, and written response.
5. Group share and evaluation.

You will want to begin independent reading by bringing students together in a community meeting that usually involves the entire class. You might choose to start with a book talk on one or two books and then present a minilesson. After the minilesson, students begin to read while you confer with individuals. At the end of independent reading, you will usually bring the group together again for a group share and evaluation.

Another option for this beginning meeting is called “status of the class” (Atwell 1998). You ask each student to state briefly what he or she will be doing during independent reading and note the responses on a class list, thus creating a record of how each student plans to spend her time. A more informal way to gather this information is to walk around the room at the begin-

ning of independent reading, glance over students’ shoulders to see what they are reading or writing, and make a note of the title and page on your clipboard.

Book Talks

Talking about books is a way to spark students’ interest and introduce them to new texts they might otherwise miss. When you are selecting books to talk about, consider:

- New books by authors whom the students love.
- Another book by an author whose book you’ve read aloud.
- “Best-selling” titles that are popular with the age group.
- Books on issues or topics that interest the students.
- Books that introduce a new author, genre, or illustrator.

Think of a book talk as a brief commercial for a book. You might prepare for your book talk by jotting a few notes on a sticky note to remind you of the essential points you want to make. Remember, commercials are short, punchy advertisements. You want to whet the students’ appetites. A book talk will take only one or two minutes. A good book talk might involve:

- Talking about the title and the author.
- Showing the cover and some of the illustrations.

- Reading aloud the lead or a particularly interesting or exciting part of the book.
- Connecting the book to the students' lives.
- Posing questions.
- Giving a brief synopsis of the book.
- Connecting the book to other books the students like.
- Telling a little about the plot or about one character.
- Sharing your own response to the book.

The following are two book talks Rebecca gave to her fifth graders on books she thought would interest them.

This book is called *Taking Sides* and it's by Gary Soto (teacher is holding book up). It's about Link, a middle school boy who plays basketball. He's a little older than you are. He speaks Spanish and comes from a neighborhood, first of all, where a lot of kids speak Spanish. He plays for a basketball team and has lots of friends in his neighborhood. But he moves out of the city neighborhood to a suburb. The kids in his new neighborhood don't speak Spanish. He joins the basketball team in his new middle school and what happens is his new middle school plays his old middle school in basketball. It was hard for Link to go from his old neighborhood to his new neighborhood and what's really hard about it is when his new basketball team has to play his old basketball team. His first neighborhood is where his real friends are and that's the neighborhood he feels he relates

How to Give a Book Talk

- ❖ Look at everyone.
- ❖ Speak loudly so all can hear.
- ❖ Talk about the characters, the problem in the story, or some interesting information.
- ❖ Read a small part of the book to interest the readers.
- ❖ Get the readers interested in the book.

Figure 7-4. How to Give a Book Talk

BOOK TALKS

purpose: - to share a really good book
 - to share an exciting author
 - to share unfamiliar books/authors
 - to get feedback from others
 - to get kids interested in books

preparation: - find out what kids are interested in
 - make sure that you've read the book
 - choose a book that others will like
 - practice
 - write page numbers and notes on a "stickie"

Content: - share a strong lead
 - tell about book, but don't give away secrets
 - mention other books by the same author - series
 - don't get confusing
 - tell title, author and why you chose to share it
 - show book around, but don't fidget with it
 - read a passage

Figure 7-5. Teacher's Chart on Giving a Book Talk.

to more, but he didn't have a choice about moving to his new neighborhood. He has to go through a lot of suffering inside when the time comes for the day of the big game and he thinks his old friends might think he's a traitor for playing on the new team. I decided to give this book talk today because lots of kids in our class like to read books about sports and you might be the kind of kid who likes to read about basketball.

When I was in school I always liked to read about friendship and about things kids were going through at my same age. Judy Blume has written many books about friendship. You may have read *Superfudge* or *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*. Well Judy Blume has written this book, *Blubber*, that I remember reading when I was in fifth grade. It's the story of a fifth grade class and there's a girl in the class who ends up doing her animal report on whales. Kids start to make fun of her because she chooses to do her report on whales and because of the way she looks. The story deals with bullying and teasing and with kids being strong leaders and sticking up for kids who are being made fun of. So if you like

books about kids in fifth grade who keep going through the same kinds of things you're going through, you'll enjoy reading *Blubber*.

You can also have your students present book talks, once you have presented several minilessons on how to give one effectively. Figures 7-4 and 7-5 are examples of charts a teacher made to go with her minilesson on giving effective book talks. Rebecca also had her students keep a running list of the book talks they wanted to give (see Figure 7-6) and used it to schedule student book talks throughout the year.

Minilessons

Independent reading almost always involves a minilesson. This explicit teaching, designed to help students work more productively during independent reading, provides very specific instruction regarding effective reading strategies and skills or focuses students' attention on elements of literature.

Usually the point of a minilesson can be summed up in one or two sentences: "Looking at the cover and reading some of the pages will help you determine whether a book is right for you," or "When you come to a word you don't know, look for a part you know that can help you." As you deliver a minilesson, you will usually:

- Introduce a concept.
- Give one or more clear examples.
- Ask the students to generate additional examples.
- Remind students of what they have learned and how they will apply it in their own independent reading.

After presenting a minilesson, you will reinforce the new learning in conferences and in group share.

As part of the minilesson, you typically create a chart that illustrates the principle you just introduced and provides examples. Hang the chart up in your classroom so that your students can refer to it whenever they need to.

Several groups of teachers who are experienced in providing minilessons generated this list of elements common to good minilessons. Effective minilessons:

- May involve using the overhead projector or chart paper.

BOOK TALKS	
Name	Book/Author
✓ Jeff G.	<u>The Hobbit</u>
✓ Jeff M.	<u>Books</u> , Dan Gutman
✓ Monica M.	<u>Letters From Rifka</u>
✓ Justin L.	<u>Unmentionable</u>
✓ Peter B.	<u>Journal of Scott P. Collins</u>
✓ Eric F.	<u>Loch</u>
✓ Amanda G.	<u>The Wolves of Willoughby Chase</u>
✓ Adam S.	<u>Half Magic</u>
✓ Amanda S.	<u>Are You There God</u>
	<u>It's Me Margaret</u>
✓ Sam L.	<u>Books</u> , C.S. Lewis
✓ Alison B.	<u>The Journal of Joshua Loper</u>

Figure 7-6. List of Student-Prepared Book Talks

- Are quick and appropriately paced.
- Can often be summarized in one or two clear sentences.
- Are brief, concise, and to the point.
- Focus on one procedure, skill, or understanding.
- Are well prepared and based on observed student needs.
- Involve the students in contributing and applying the understanding.
- Incorporate models produced by the teacher or by students or taken from quality literature.
- Employ selective reading of texts.
- Are part of a sequence of topics that build understandings over time.
- Involve revisiting topics for sharing, emphasis, and further understanding.
- Engage students from the beginning and involve active student participation.
- Use high-quality resources and powerful examples.

- Focus on topics that students and teachers think are important.
- Make connections between reading and writing.
- Don't include too much information in any one lesson.
- Use varied ways of presenting information and varied materials.
- Develop community through conversation and sharing.

Status of the Class

You may find it helpful to have each child quickly indicate what she will be working on during independent reading. Atwell (1998) calls this process taking "status of the class." For example, as the student announces the title of the book she is reading and states what page she is on, or reports that she will be writing in her response journal, you can jot this information on a class list. You can update the list daily or weekly to keep track of student accomplishments. As we mentioned, another way to record the status of the class is to take a quick walk around the room as students begin reading, noting what children are working on on a class list.

Some teachers find a record like this unnecessary because they regularly confer with children and get the same information. Also, you may find that the students' reading lists, which indicate the title and date of finished books, provide enough accountability.

Reading and Conferencing

During independent reading, students are nestled in comfortable places reading or writing thoughtful written response letters in their journals. While the children are reading, you have the opportunity to confer with individuals. To confer means to have a genuine conversation with the reader about how the reading is going. The conference enables you to understand each student's reading process. What's more, it is a time when you can provide powerful, customized instruction that will help the individual student refine and extend her reading competence.

A reading conference is not an interrogation. The questions you ask need to be genuine questions. You are treating the student as a reader. An onlooker would probably observe two people engaged in lively conversation about a book, one perhaps showing the other a particularly intriguing twist in the plot or a uniquely

moving paragraph.

You'll want to have a clipboard or notebook with a class list whenever you hold individual conferences with students during independent reading. You can make quick notes on the class list and/or refer to previous notes to guide your interactions during the conference. (See Conference Record Form in Appendix 12.)

You can pull up a chair and sit next to the reader or call the reader to sit with you at a table or desk tucked in a corner, away from the hubbub of classroom activity. "Leaning over" the reader gets in the way of a good conversation; sit next to the reader so that you are face to face, on the same level. Talk in whispers or very low voices so that you will not disturb other readers and will model the quiet atmosphere that you want to preserve.

The amount of time you spend with an individual reader varies. It might be as brief as one or two minutes, or a more involved six- to eight-minute session. Sometimes you will listen to a student read a portion of the text aloud. Consider asking the reader how you can be helpful; however, from your general conversation with the reader, you'll also determine one or two pointers that you can teach on the spot. We are describing valuable, powerful teaching. One explicit point directed to an individual student can contribute profoundly to the student's success as a reader. The following is an excerpt from a conference:

(Mrs. Bishins pulls up a chair and sits next to Dana who is reading *The Great Gilly Hopkins*)

MRS. BISHINS: How's this book going for you?

DANA: I'm really liking it because I like the way Katherine Paterson gives her characters interesting personalities. Gilly makes me laugh and feel sad at the same time. Sometimes I just can't believe the things she does.

MRS. BISHINS: Yes Gilly is quite a character. You are noticing *how* the author writes or the author's "craft." What is it about the way that Paterson writes that makes us feel so connected to her characters?

You might also want to reinforce the concept or principle you taught in the minilesson at the beginning of the independent reading period. Or you might have recorded on your class list aspects of reading that you

want to help an individual student with. In essence, you are relating to the student as another reader, making specific teaching points, summarizing what you have taught her, and making notes on your class list that will guide your next instructional encounter with her.

Group Share and Evaluation

During group share and evaluation, the community of readers usually gathers in the meeting area to discuss their reading. Often, group share is related to the mini-lesson. At other times, you may simply ask pairs or threesomes to talk about some particular aspect of their reading or their journal responses at their seats. Make sure sharing sessions are varied and involve as many of your students as possible. Group share reinforces students' reading and extends their thinking as they benefit from the thoughts and ideas of others. It is a time both to summarize and to extend children's learning.

During this time, students also evaluate both their individual work and how the group worked together. Sometimes they solve problems or set goals for the next session. The ultimate goal of the group evaluation is for the students, as a community of readers, to support one another's work. They share responsibility; it is not just the teacher's.

There are many ways you can vary how students share with the group. For example, you can invite students to:

- Talk about their reactions to their reading.
- Read parts of a book.
- Write something before they come to the group.
- Share journal responses.
- Share lists from their journals, such as interest lists.
- Mark places in their book with sticky notes before they attend the group meeting so they can quickly find the spots in the text they want to share.

Sometimes individuals share with the whole group; sometimes they share in pairs, threesomes, or small groups. The following list includes a variety of examples we have observed in classrooms. They will help you think about the range of ways students can talk with one another as readers and writers.

- "Today, you learned how to record the kind of book—or genre—that you are reading on your reading list. Starting with Jaquita, share the title of

your book and its genre so we can find out how many different kinds of books our class is reading. If you had trouble labeling your book, we'll all think together about what genre it might be."

- "Today we talked about how an author gets readers interested in the first few lines—or the 'lead'—of a story. If you are reading fiction, read the first line of your book. Let's go around the circle, starting with Jeremy. Say the title and author and read the first line of your book."
- "We've been talking about how you can make connections between the book you are reading and other books you know. Starting with Sarah on my left, talk in threes about how the book you are reading is like another book you know. I'll give you three minutes to talk with one another and then I'll ask a few of you to share with the group."
- "Today we talked about how authors choose titles for books. Starting with Alicia, share the title of your book and tell us what made it a good title for the book you are reading."
- "We've talked about several books that have sequels or prequels. If you are reading a book that has a sequel or prequel, tell us how the sequel or prequel relates to the one you're reading."
- "We've been studying how illustrators support and extend our understanding and enjoyment of books. If you're reading a book with illustrations, share one illustration with the group and tell us why you think this illustration is important."
- "Today we're going to have share at your tables. We have been learning about major and minor characters. At your table, take turns talking about who is the most important character in your book and why. Then tell who is the least important character. What makes him or her a minor character?"
- "On our chart we listed many ways in which an author makes characters believable. I asked you to write down two ways your author made a character believable in the story you are reading. Share the notes you made in your group of three."
- "We've been talking about how authors evoke feelings about characters. Share with a partner your feelings about one of the characters in your book. How did the author get you to feel this way?"
- "Stories have a problem and a resolution. If you have recently finished your book, share the problem

in your story and talk about how it was resolved. Tell us if that resolution was a satisfying ending for you."

- "Characters are important in stories because they learn and change. We have talked about how authors show us that characters are changing. At your tables, with a partner, talk about how one character in your book changed and what caused that character to change."
- "Time is sometimes a significant part of a story. Who is reading a story in which time is important? What made time important in your book?"
- "An important part of understanding your reading is figuring out what the author is trying to say to you as a reader. What is the author's message? In groups of three, briefly share the main message in your book."
- "We talked earlier about point of view. A story is usually told from one person's point of view, although sometimes a story has multiple points of view. (Judy Blume's *The Pain and the Great One* has two, for example.) The person whose point of view it is is the narrator of the story. I'd like everyone to briefly share who is the narrator of your book."
- "Authors use their own knowledge and experiences when they write their books. Sometimes they also do research to help them get the information right. This is true whether the author is writing fiction or non-fiction. Where do you think the author of your book got her information or ideas? Share at your table."
- "One of the reasons we like to read is that we meet characters who remind us of ourselves or people that we know. The author describes what the character says or does, how the character looks, and what others say about the character. These descriptions might remind you of someone in your own life. Share with a partner a character who inspires you to think of someone you know."
- "In groups of three, read the most interesting part of your journal entry today."
- "I asked you to mark a place in your book where you were reminded of something or someone in your life. Talk with two other students about what you marked."
- "We have been reading informational books and talking about the importance of accurate information. What did you discover about your author's

background? How did that influence your opinion of your book's accuracy? Share around the circle, beginning with Josiah."

- "You marked two places to share: (1) a part where the character's talk reveals something about him or her, and (2) a part where the author reveals what the character is thinking. Share the two parts with your partner."
- "We have been learning different ways to figure out unfamiliar or new words. Today I asked you to put one or two sticky notes in places where you figured out a new word. Beginning with Sandy, share one word you solved and tell how you figured it out. I'll write your words on the chart."
- "Read to your partner the paragraph in your book that you prepared to read aloud. Ask your partner to comment on your phrasing and smoothness."
- "I asked you to take a few minutes to look over your reading list and think about the books you have read this year. How often did you complete a book? Were most of them easy, just right, or challenging? Then you wrote a paragraph about what you learned about yourself as a reader by examining your list. Read your paragraph to a partner."
- "Tell us why you believe your classmates would enjoy books by the author you're reading. Let's go around the circle so that we can learn about a number of authors."

Summary of Teacher and Student Roles in Independent Reading

The way we have structured independent reading, there are clearly defined roles for teachers and students. Figure 7-7 summarizes teacher and student roles in all components of independent reading.

Teacher's Role

Your role involves organization and routines; it also involves genuine, informed inquiry into students' learning and skillful conversations that support their learning. You are always trying to extend students' understanding as readers, sometimes through direct teaching and sometimes by supporting and extending their thinking. Remember that you are also another reader in a community of readers with a responsibility

Roles in Independent Reading		
Component	Students	Teacher
Minilesson	❖ Listen to and participate in the lesson. ❖ Offer comments, examples, or pose questions. ❖ Listen carefully for directions. ❖ Remember directions while reading and/or writing in response journals.	❖ Select topic for minilesson based on observation of student needs, interests, and consideration of curriculum goals. ❖ Provide brief, engaging minilesson that focuses on one topic that will help the readers. ❖ Provide management minilessons that are essential for students to learn the routines and procedures of independent reading. ❖ Provide minilessons to help students learn effective reading strategies and skills. ❖ Provide minilessons to help students analyze literary works. ❖ Provide powerful examples from texts students know. ❖ Use visual aides such as charts or projected transparencies. ❖ Be clear and explicit in teaching and provide a summary of the lesson. ❖ Remind students to use what they have learned in minilessons as they do their independent reading.
Reading	❖ Select a book for independent reading ❖ Read silently without talking with others. ❖ Write responses in a journal on various aspects of the text as directed by the teacher. ❖ Keep records of their reading.	❖ Provide minilessons on book selection and assist individual readers in selecting books. ❖ Monitor and analyze students' records of reading.
Conferring	❖ Confer with the teacher about some aspect of reading. ❖ Sometimes read aloud for the teacher's observation. ❖ Share response journal with the teacher and talk about it.	❖ Have genuine conversations with students about all aspects of the texts they are reading. ❖ Assist individuals with performing the routines of independent reading. ❖ Teach individuals effective reading strategies and skills. ❖ Sample students' oral reading often, making notes on behaviors. ❖ Promote students' oral reading with fluency and phrasing. ❖ Sometimes discuss students' journal responses.
Group Sharing and Evaluation	❖ Share thinking with pairs, in threesomes, or with the whole group. ❖ Reflect on and/or extend application of the day's minilesson. ❖ Evaluate how personal reading is going, what was learned, and how the group is working together.	❖ Invite students to share their thinking. ❖ Vary the sharing activities to include pair and three-some sharing as well as the whole group. ❖ Reinforce the concept from the minilesson by asking for examples. ❖ Ask the class to share and evaluate how their personal reading is going. ❖ Ask the class to summarize what they have learned. ❖ Ask the class to evaluate how the group is working together during independent reading.
Options:		
Book Talk	❖ Listen for books that might be interesting ❖ Learn how to give a good book talk.	❖ Provide one or more good talks to interest children in a new book. ❖ Give a brief book description that has the qualities of a TV commercial—short, engaging, clever, and varied.
Status of the Class	❖ Inform the teacher of personal reading progress—book title, page, and any other information asked. ❖ Inform the teacher of progress on writing weekly journal response. ❖ Have goals in mind for the day's work.	❖ In the large meeting or by walking around the room, quickly gather and record information on students' personal reading progress—book title and page number. ❖ Gather and record information on students' progress in writing responses in journals. ❖ Reinforce goals for the day's work.

Figure 7-7. Roles in Independent Reading

to participate as a member. You may not be able to read all the books your students are reading, but becoming familiar with the literature that interests your students will help you provide effective lessons.

Students' Role

Students, too, have specific tasks and responsibilities. They are responsible for carrying out the assigned activities, and they are expected to think about texts and to contribute to the learning of others. The routine tasks and responsibilities make the whole system work because once those are in place, you can focus your conversations on what students want to learn.

A Balance of Structure and Individual Choice

Independent reading involves structure and routines. It begins with a minilesson and ends with group sharing and evaluation; oral language is the foundation of learning in this dynamic instructional process. You and your students will develop systematic ways of monitoring reading progress and assuring quality time for daily reading. Students gradually learn to take ownership for their own reading development. You provide support and guidance, along with direction. Independent read-

ing also offers a way of combining reading and writing instruction, since some student responses can and should be in writing.

Suggestions for Professional Development

1. Work with your grade-level colleagues to create classroom collections to support independent reading.
2. Select two books that will expand your students' reading power. Prepare two book talks and share them with your colleagues. Talk about why these book talks will interest the particular students you teach.
3. Prepare two minilessons based on your assessment of your students. Share these minilessons with your grade-level colleagues.
4. State each important principle readers need to learn in one clear statement that can become the basis for a minilesson. Talk about how these minilessons will help your students become better readers.
5. Share two ways you had students share to assure variety.