



Cooperative Cloze

The value of students having structured opportunities to discuss their learning is widely recognised, and has been addressed in previous blogs and resources.

One strategy for encouraging talk in learning is the ‘cloze’ procedure, first developed in 1953.

Cloze passages are generally written texts that have words or phrases omitted. Students complete the passage by deciding words or phrases for those omitted, that fit the meaning of the text.

Ideally, cloze passages are worked with in pairs or groups, so that discussion can be used fully to consider possibilities. Cloze passages are sometimes used as a testing strategy, and can be informative. But the real value is in the process of students applying current knowledge to building new contexts.



A cloze procedure helps students:

- Use the context of the missing word/s to determine what would fit
- Develop prediction skills
- Develop understanding of sentence structure in text
- Reinforce typical grammatical patterns of types of text
- Consider possibilities.

Rossbridge and Rushton emphasise the need for a clear purpose, and for the structures to be in place to scaffold students to complete the cloze: *Random choices may test a student's memory or knowledge of vocabulary but will not support learning* (2011 p132).

Miller and McCallum suggest cloze for EAL/D students as part of the multiple opportunities for 'language recycling and expanding' that these students require (2015 p.91). However, students need structure, purpose, and a clear sense of the content. If they can avoid using target vocabulary, the process is not effective. Fountas & Pinnell also urge being extra supportive when working with EAL/D students, as they may not have the grammatical knowledge and the process may be confusing. (2001 pp 458-459).

Preparation

- Text should be no longer than 150 words to keep interest and learning focused.
- Leave the first and last sentences whole – this supports the reader.
- Keep the spaces the same length.
- Delete structure words if you have a grammar focus – pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, tense etc
- Delete content words if the focus is on the use of semantic knowledge.
- For a focus on spelling and graphophonic knowledge, delete specific letters.
- Delete words that encourage reading back as well as reading forward to determine the best word.



Implementation

- Model the process with the group or with the whole class.
- Put the text on butcher's paper or whiteboard so everyone can see and participate.
- Have students read the whole text silently before attempting to fill the spaces. They will get an idea of the general 'gist' of the text.
- Read each sentence aloud. Take suggestions from the class.
- Use 'think aloud' as you work through the options, testing each in the sentence.
- Ask students to give reasons for their choices.
- 'Test' the whole text for meaning by reading aloud.

Consider this excerpt adapted from *'The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth'* by Joanna Cole (pp. 16-18):

Before long – CLUNK – we hit rock. The Friz handed out jackhammers. We began to break through the hard rock.
"Hey, these rocks have stripes," said a kid.
Ms Frizzle explained that each strip was a different kind of rock. ...
"These rocks are called '*sedimentary rocks*', class," said Ms Frizzle.
"There are often fossils in sedimentary rocks."

Originally, the cloze process was that the fifth word in any text was omitted. Omissions were marked by a line of the same length each time.

Before long – CLUNK – we hit rock. The Friz handed out _____. We began to break_____ the hard rock.
"Hey, _____ rocks have stripes," said _____ kid.
Ms Frizzle explained _____ each strip was a _____ kind of rock. ...
"These rocks _____ called '*sedimentary*' rocks, class,"said Ms Frizzle. "There are often fossils in sedimentary rocks."

There are many aspects of text construction involved here in working out the words to fit into the spaces. Great for discussion.



One adaptation of the original had omission lines the same length as the missing word. This can be a support, as it narrows the possibilities, or it can be constricting, because students focus on the length of the word rather than meaning.

Before setting the passage, consider your own purpose. What is it you want students to review or work with?

This excerpt adapted from '*Bridge to Terabithia*' by Katherine Paterson, (P.81)

They painted the living-room gold. Leslie and Jess had wanted blue, but Bill held out for gold, which turned out to be so beautiful that they were glad they had given in. The sun would slant in from the west in the late afternoon. The room was brimful of light.

lends itself to looking at

Conjunctions and connectives

They painted the living-room gold. Leslie and Jess had wanted blue, _____ Bill held out for gold, _____ turned out to be so beautiful _____ they were glad they had given in. The sun would slant in from the west in the late afternoon. The room was brimful of light.

Adjectives

They painted the living-room gold. Leslie and Jess had wanted _____, but Bill held out for _____, which turned out to be so _____ that they were _____ they had given in. The sun would slant in from the west in the _____ afternoon. The room was brimful of light.



Variations

Track and cloze

Use a shared book the students know. Cover words or phrases with a sticky note. Students supply the missing words as you read. Use pictures for support. Then remove the stickers to confirm predictions.

Jigsaw cloze

This strategy focuses on text structure. Familiar text is cut into sentences, which are jumbled. Students reconstruct the text.

Double jigsaw cloze

This is an extension of the jigsaw above. Use sentences from two authentic texts – one a non-fiction text, and the other an imaginative text. Jumble the sentences. Students sort into the two types of text, then reconstruct each.

The purpose is for students to apply what they know about text, reading and writing to reconstruct a whole text.

For more detail and further variations, check out the NSW DET's *Programming and Strategies Handbook*, pp 160-162.

References

Cole, J. & Degen, B. (1987) *The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth*, Scholastic: US

Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G.S. (2001) *Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* Heinemann: Portsmouth NH

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Rossbridge, J. & Rushton, K. (2011) *Conversations about Text 2: Teaching grammar using factual texts* PETAA: Newtown