Reading Focus

Objectives

Students will

- paraphrase text, analyze details, and read aloud to understand author's style
- draw conclusions about author's style

Preteach

Build Background Tell students that reading skills are the tools of the trade for good readers. Explain that students will acquire a toolbox of strategies for identifying and describing an author's style as they read and study this collection.

Direct Teach

Guided Practice

Paraphrasing

- Model for students how to paraphrase "The Dancer." Read the original text on this page aloud.
- Read the paraphrased text aloud. Tell students that the narrator's sentences have been rewritten using complete sentences in this paraphrase. This helps them fully understand the text's meaning.
- Ask students what important information is conveyed by the original text, yet lost when paraphrased.

Reading Focus

by **Kylene Beers**

What Reading Skills Help You Understand Style?

In order to determine a writer's style, you probably know to look for the literary devices the writer uses—such as word choice, figures of speech, symbols, dialect, and irony. What reading skills will help you find those elements? Try these skills to get started.

Paraphrasing

When you **paraphrase,** you restate a text in your own words. A paraphrase is different from a summary, in which you restate only the most important points. Any time you paraphrase, you should include all the information that is in the original.

Paraphrasing helps you understand difficult lines of poetry and sentences written in an old-fashioned or unfamiliar style. Paraphrasing also helps you appreciate an author's style. When you compare your paraphrase with the original, you will be able to see differences in style.

Look at this passage from Vickie Sears's "Dancer" along with a paraphrase.

Original Text	Paraphrase
"Tell you how it was with her. Took her to a dance not long after she come to live with us. Smartest thing I ever done."	I'll tell you what happened. I took her to a dance soon after she came to live with us. It was the smartest thing I ever did.

You can easily see that the original text is written in dialect and gives us a strong feeling for the narrator's voice. The paraphrase is written in standard English and tells us little about the narrator.

Analyzing Details

Analyzing details can help you understand what you read. Such analyzing helps you follow a plot, visualize a setting, understand characters, and figure out a theme. Analyzing details can also help you appreciate an author's style.

Look at the details in this passage from Francisco Jiménez's "The Circuit." Consider the length and complexity of Jiménez's sentences. Also, look for figures of speech, strong images, and the level of vocabulary he uses.

> The garage was worn out by the years. It had no windows. The walls, eaten by termites, strained to support the roof, full of holes. The dirt floor, populated by earthworms, looked like a gray road map.
>
> from "The Circuit" by Francisco Jiménez

Besides giving us a clear picture of the family's new home, the passage also reveals aspects of the author's style. Francisco Jiménez uses both short and long sentences, with occasional figures of speech ("like a gray road map"). He also uses an adult vocabulary ("strained," "populated") as he looks back on a difficult childhood experience.

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 370–371

Literary Skills

- Paraphrase material from a text.
- Analyze details.
- Read aloud.
- Draw conclusions.

Resources

Collection 4 Resources, Reading Focus Skill Builder, p. 4

PowerNotes, interactive lesson presentation with activities

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

Use the Think-Aloud strategy to model analyzing details. Read aloud the excerpt from "The Circuit." Stop after each sentence to make a comment. For example, read aloud, "The garage was worn out by the years." Point out that when something is "worn out" it looks old, such as a worn out tire. Therefore, this sentence describes an old garage. Read aloud the next sentence. Point out that the lack of windows means it was dark inside the garage.

Reading Aloud

You have probably been asked to **read aloud** by your teacher to demonstrate understanding or fluency—the smoothness with which you read. Reading aloud can also be fun. For example, you may read aloud dialogue from stories to get the flavor of the characters' conversation. Reading aloud can also enable you to hear what the author's style sounds like.

"The Tell-Tale Heart" has no dialogue. The story consists of a long monologue delivered by the narrator to an unspecified "you." But reading some of the story aloud can give you clues to the narrator's personality and to the author's style. What do you learn about Edgar Allan Poe's style from reading this passage aloud?

> Ha! Would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye.
>
> from "The Tell-Tale Heart"
> by Edgar Allan Poe

You might notice, as you gasp for breath, that Poe uses long sentences. By having the narrator repeat himself and throw in parenthetical (or side) comments, Poe also shows that the narrator is—at the very least—highly agitated. You might also notice that Poe uses words that make the passage sound rather weird and scary ("madman," "hinges creaked," and "vulture eye").

Drawing Conclusions

A conclusion is your final thought or judgment about something. To **draw conclusions** about an author's style, consider details from the text and decide how they contribute to the style.

Your Turn

Read the following passage aloud. Then, answer the questions below.

> So I'm strolling down Broadway breathing out and breathing in on counts of seven, which is my lucky number, and here comes Gretchen and her sidekicks: Mary Louise, who used to be a friend of mine when she first moved to Harlem from Baltimore and got beat up by everybody till I took up for her on account of her mother and my mother used to sing in the same choir. . . .
>
> from "Raymond's Run"
> by Toni Cade Bambara

1. What details of Bambara's style do you notice? What conclusions can you draw from them?
2. Paraphrase the passage, and compare your paraphrase with the original.

Now go to the Skills in Action: Reading Model

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Learn with graphics. Use the *PowerNotes* version of this lesson at:
go.hrw.com L8-371 Go

Guided Practice

Reading Aloud/Drawing Conclusions

- Model for students how to read aloud to **draw conclusions** about style. Read aloud the excerpt from "The Tell-Tale Heart" on this page.
- Point out that Poe's style tells students about the narrator. He repeats the word "cautiously" three times. This emphasizes the narrator's nervousness. Poe also uses long sentences with lots of punctuation to represent the narrator's fast-paced, erratic thinking.

Assess

Independent Practice

Your Turn

Possible responses:

1. *She uses dialect and imagery. It sounds excited and rambling, like a child telling a story. The passage is one long sentence, which gives the impression of a young person narrating an event.*
2. *While walking, the narrator sees an ex-friend and her sidekicks approaching.*

Have students work in pairs to practice the Think-Aloud strategy with the passage from "The Tell-Tale Heart"

go.hrw.com *For more about the Think-Aloud strategy, see this page in your* ***Interactive Teacher's Edition****.*

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Ask students to imagine that Edgar Allen Poe and Toni Cade Bambara are both members of a panel discussion at a fiction writing conference. Ask students:

- How would each author describe his or her writing style?
- What questions and comments would each have for the other?

Have students break into pairs and role-play this discussion. Ask selected pairs to perform their role-play in front of the class.

Learn It Online
For a multimedia version of the instruction found on this page, use the **PowerNotes** Reading Focus presentation. Preview at **go.hrw.com**.
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