Twitter Thread by The Reading Ape

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This is a really interesting question and, in essence, asks what reading comprehension actually is. Beck et al. (1997) argued that it has historically been viewed as the extraction of information from the text and that this was assessed by the asking of questions AFTER reading.

> How else to do test for understanding if don\u2019t answer questions?
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> — Dr CharlieMain (@lomas_scot) December 31, 2020

They suggested that this approach had led to strategies-based instruction with the major drawback being that teachers focused on the strategy rather than the meaning of what is being read - eg. 'Success For All'. More here-https://t.co/4BgmcyLsec

They posited that comprehension is the building of understanding; the construction of meaning from the text and that this takes place DURING reading. The role of teachers, therefore, was more dialogic. Queries rather than questions - https://t.co/TJgGLMCTyA

This is far more aligned to 'close reading' as articulated so gently and coherently by @Doug_Lemov in 'Reading Reconsidered' whereby students are supported by the teacher to use information to construct meaning rather than to merely collect pieces of information.

Through the articulation (through writing) of the development of understanding of meaning, students are able to express understanding and teachers are able to check that understanding, refer back to it and build upon it.

However, although close reading is essential for cognitive, semantic and vocabulary development and longer lasting memory codes(Nyberg,2002)the vast majority of reading is not supported by a pedagogue or scaffolded through collaboration. It is solitary, moment by moment activity.

It is, in fact, everything a close read is not: it is the extraction of the gist of what the author is communicating and it occurs in the moment of reading. We seldom read with the expectation that we will be questioned on the content or our understanding afterwards.

Hence, it is our top-down, global knowledge that affects our levels of understanding of written texts (Kitsch, 1998). So how do we assess what a child has understood at the moment of reading as opposed to going back over text to 'find' meaning or developing meaning with support.

Could it be that we have ignored one of the simplest ways of assessing comprehension at the moment of reading? Reading fluency is dependent on rate, accuracy AND prosody; prosody being - the ability to make oral reading sound like authentic oral speech (Rasinski et al., 2011).

So, if a reader is exhibiting high levels of prosody, the evidence of understanding is inherent. If a reader is able to make sense of a text such that they are able to read it in a way that it makes sense to others, then their understanding is evident.https://t.co/KOIJMExT2G

Clearly, reading aloud presents issues of anxiety as well as performance but we are not assessing performance, we are assessing the evidence of understanding at the point of reading and a prosody rubric makes assessment relatively simple - @TimRasinski1 - https://t.co/1X8yRGXCYQ

Of course, this does not obviate the problem that perhaps all we are assessing is the global, cultural and contextual knowledge of the reader, but it may give some sense of any knowledge deficits and hearing children read almost always furnishes us with some illuminating data.