

# Mini Lessons

Reflect! Reflect! Reflect! Monitor your own teaching carefully. With reflection, you will grow and make things better!

I want to know all about mini lessons. What can I read?

*Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6* by Fountas and Pinnell – Chapter 8

*The Art of Teaching Reading* by Lucy Calkins – Chapter 5

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Where should I have my mini lessons?

Designate an area in your room where your class can sit comfortably with their legs crossed on the floor. Sitting together builds a sense of community. Once you decide, meet in that area daily.

What are some things I might need to keep in my mini lesson area?

- an easel for shared reading
- teacher sized white board for teaching
- teacher chair
- pocket charts
- big books
- sentence strips
- white boards
- white board markers
- chart paper
- markers
- post it notes
- wikki sticks - <http://www.wikkistix.com/>
- tape
- a reading pointer
- a timer
- plexiglas sheet to place in front of book to write on

What are the different components that make up a mini lesson?

(chart from Becky Koesel)

Mini Lesson Stage	Tools to Use	How does it Sound?
<p><b>Connection</b> 30 seconds – 1 minute</p> <p>Connect today’s lesson with previous lessons or their schema. Do not ask a question for your connection. Questions will lead to conversational swamps.</p>		<p>Yesterday we talked about _____ . Well today, we are going to talk about _____.</p> <p>I have been noticing that many of you have been _____, so I thought I would show you _____.</p>

<p><b>Teach</b> 3 – 8 minutes</p> <p>Think about the focus of your lesson and the best way to demonstrate the concept.</p>	<p>Shared Reading – using a big book</p>	<p>After reading selection or portion of the selection – “Let’s go back. I want to show you something about what readers understand about how paragraphs help them create mental images when reading. I am going to highlight...”</p>
	<p>Use students as examples of what good readers do.</p>	<p>“I want to tell you about what I saw Aliyah doing yesterday that was really smart thinking as a reader. When she...”</p>
	<p>Students demonstrate or reenact for the class.</p>	<p>“When you are reading with a partner it is a really good idea to stop occasionally and have a conversation with your partner about the reading. Let’s watch Anthony and Vince as they partner read. See if you can tell when they are reading the words on the page and then when they are having a conversation about the book.”</p>
	<p>Think Aloud – talking through your thought processes out loud</p>	<p>“When readers begin a new book, there are some things they do before they actually begin reading the words on the page. Watch me as a reader and I am going to think out loud about a book I am going to get ready to read.”</p>

<p><b>Active Involvement</b> 5 minutes maximum!</p> <p>Think about how to allow the kids to just “try out” what you taught them. Remember that mini lessons are not about their mastery. Don’t be discouraged if they don’t get it right away.</p>	<p>Selected books by teacher that are passed out.</p>	<p>“I am going to hand you and your partner a book. See if you and your partner can use the table of contents to build your schema for the book like I did with <u>The Big Fitz</u> by Jack Edwards.”</p>
	<p>Kids bring one of their just right books.</p>	<p>“Take out a piece of fiction from your book bag. Locate a place where there is dialogue and see if you can practice mentally shifting the characters in your head. Really try to picture the different people involved in the conversation as well as changing their voices in your head.</p>
	<p>Hand students a copy of a common text that is appropriate for all to try.</p>	<p>“I thought our science book would be a great place to try out reading diagrams. Look on page 123 and notice the diagram at the bottom of the page. I want you and your partner to spend a minute or two just reading and thinking in your head about what it is about. Now turn and tell your partner.”</p>
	<p>Interactive Read Aloud</p>	<p>“I am going to continue reading. What I would like you to do is try to think about questions that you have while I am reading. When I pause, you can write them on a post-it-note / turn to your partner.”</p>

<p><b>Link</b> 30 seconds – 1 minute</p> <p>Linking what you taught to their reading work today.</p>	<p>Try this out today...</p>	<p>Why don't you get started right here in the meeting area." Monitor and release them a few at a time.</p> <p>Write this assignment in your writer's notebook.</p> <p>Try this out today in your reading. Remember that this is a strategy that is helpful when reading (fiction/nonfiction/etc.) Be sure to read that type of text for the first half of independent reading.</p> <p>I am going to give you and your partner a text to try out this strategy. The first half of workshop will be in partnerships working on this. I will come around and coach you as needed.</p>
	<p>Add this to your reading toolbox and use it when you need it.</p>	<p>Can I have a few volunteers to try this out and bring back to the group how it went for you?</p> <p>If you try this, be sure to let us know during share time.</p> <p>This is a new learning piece today, so I want you to add this to your reading toolbox today and use it if you see an opportunity. We are going to continue our work with this tomorrow, so there will be other opportunities to try it out"</p>

### How can I come up with ideas for my mini lesson?

The mini lesson sets up the purpose for reading during the reading workshop. When you conference with students after guided reading groups, the gaps you observe in their reading will drive your mini lesson instruction. The mini lessons will be what the majority of your class needs to be successful in reading and writing.

### My kids move around too much and I feel that I cannot control their behavior. What can I do?

Your very first mini lesson should be about procedures and expectations. Make a chart that clearly defines what is expected of the students while they are on the carpet. You might even want to have a picture next to each expectation. Post this chart in the mini lesson area. Each day before you begin, revisit your expectations. Also, between each section of the mini lesson, remind kids of what is expected. Be proactive!

### My mini lessons always last longer than 15 minutes. What tips do you have to shorten them?

- When you sit down, set a timer for 15 minutes so you can monitor the time.
- Make a mental note of the time when you sit down and frequently check the time. Make sure your clock is visible from your meeting area.
- Have all your materials ready to go at the mini lesson area.
- Focus your teaching on one skill. Too many skills will overload your lesson.
- Asking kids a lot of questions will bog your lesson down. This is a time for you to do the teaching and the kids to do the learning. Keep questions down to a minimum. There is time for kids to talk during the active engagement portion.
- Are you spending a lot of time correcting behavior? Have clearly defined expectations that are stated frequently. (see question above)
- Video tape yourself. Take a trip “outside of the box” and see what you’re really saying and doing.

### After I did my mini lesson, the kids did not seem to get it. What now?

Reflect on your entire lesson. Were the kids on cognitive overload? Did you give them too much new information? Did you use explicit language? Did you talk about too many skills? Knowing where your children are on their literacy journey will definitely help you plan your mini lessons effectively.

### When do I choose shared reading or modeled reading?

- Modeled Reading – When you want students to focus on your thinking process rather than the physical text.
- Shared Reading – When you want to show students explicitly about the physical structure of the text structure or genre.

### Is shared reading different than a mini lesson?

Shared reading is incorporated during the teach section of the mini lesson. Shared reading is using an enlarged text that all children can see. The teacher involves all children in reading together following a pointer.

### Do I always have to read the entire book during the shared reading segment?

Absolutely not! You only need to read the part that pertains to your teaching point. Reading too much can distract from the focus of your teaching point and lengthen your lesson.

When would you read the entire book during the shared reading segment?

- The book is short.
- The entire book pertains to the teaching point.
- You have allocated time in the mini lesson.

After all of this, I am STILL confused. What now?

- Talk to someone on your grade level. Your neighbor may have been in your same boat before.
- Make arrangements to observe another teacher instruct her mini lesson. Take lots of notes and ask questions!