



# **Ziptales and the Science of Reading**

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*The more that you read, the more things you will know.  
The more you learn, the more places you will go.*

**-Dr. Suess**

## **The Science of Reading**

In 1997, Congress requested the Child Development and Behavior Branch of the NICHE to work with the U.S. Department of Education to establish a National Reading Panel with the explicit goal of finding the best, scientifically supported ways of teaching children to read. In 1999 the panel convened and began a rigorous review of more than 100,000 research articles to determine the science of reading. In 2000 this panel of educators, administrators, and research scientists released their report.

The National Reading Panel's report identified four key areas essential to high-quality, systemic reading instruction including:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics instruction
- Process to improve fluency
- Ways to enhance comprehension

The panel, likely due to the practitioners on the panel, translated the research to practice, identifying a combination of techniques effective for teaching children to read:

### **Phonemic Awareness—**

the knowledge that spoken words can be broken apart into smaller segments of sound known as phonemes. Children who are read to at home—especially material that rhymes—often develop the basis of phonemic awareness. Children who are not read to will probably need to be taught that words can be broken apart into smaller sounds.

### **Phonics—**

the knowledge that letters of the alphabet represent phonemes and that these sounds are blended together to form written words. Readers who are skilled in phonics can sound out words they



have not seen before, without first having to memorize them.

**Fluency—**

The ability to recognize words easily, read with greater speed, accuracy, and expression, and better understand what is read. Children gain fluency by practicing reading until the process becomes automatic; guided oral repeated reading is one approach to helping children become fluent readers.

**Teaching vocabulary words—**

teaching new words, either as they appear in text or by introducing new words separately. This type of instruction also aids reading ability.

**Reading comprehension strategies—**

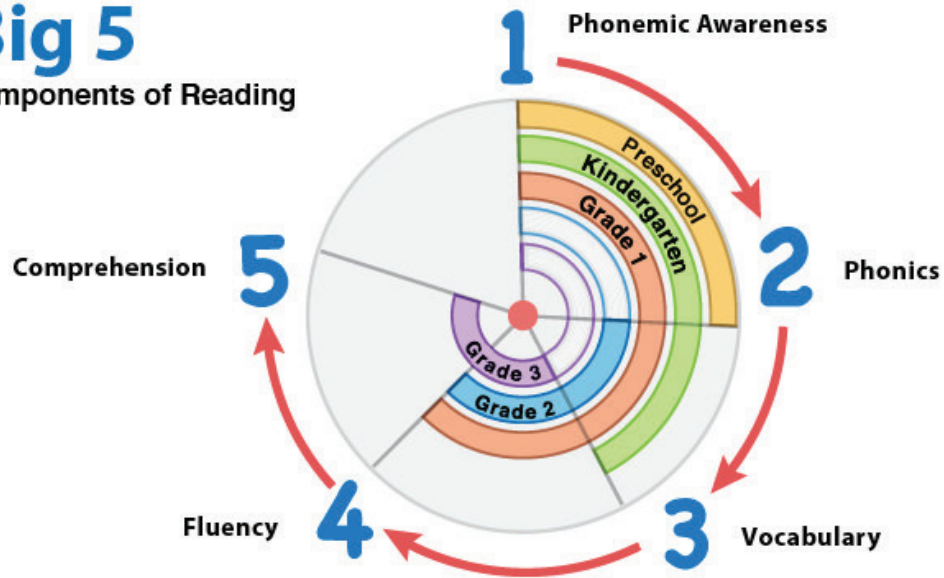
techniques for helping individuals to understand what they read. Such techniques involve students summarizing what they have read to gain a better understanding of the material.

According to Maryanne Wolf, Ed.D “The acquisition of literacy is one of the most important epigenetic achievements of homo sapiens. To our knowledge, no other species has ever acquired it.” These skills form a critically important building block for the future of every individual, particularly in the information age in which we live. These essential building blocks support and engage a lifelong learner. These skills are the focus of early childhood education between pre-school and grade 3.

These base skills begin as early as birth as a baby develops receptive language and can recognize a mother’s voice. Over the next three years those skills evolve. By pre-school, children are expected to have developed vocabularies of nearly 100 words, mastered many of the sounds of consonants, diphthongs and vowels. At this stage that the receptive and productive speech evolve into literacy skills the development of which is outlined here:

## The Big 5

Essential Components of Reading



Given the vital nature of these skills it is imperative that we infuse them into the academic hours and also every opportunity available. Failure to understand what has been read will permeates all academic subjects. Low literacy will also lead to drop-out and lack of job skills.

### Addressing The Literacy Challenge with Ziptales

Ziptales includes resources for each phase of a child's literacy development building on the skills and developmentally appropriate phases. An easy-to-use interface allows easy access to more than 500 stories, poems, and puzzles, and 200 lessons.

**Pre-Literacy** leverages the audio and visual elements and activities to support the learning of basic vocabulary (shapes, colors, etc.) as well as phonemic awareness and phonics with letters. The 100% human narration provides a variety of voices ensuring the content is engaging and represents all communities. The 2020 National Literacy Trust report emphasizes “hearing narration in the voices of authors that share a heritage with the content/characters of the books can be an enriching experience.”



**Developing Literacy** utilizes more than 180 stories, poems, puzzles, and activities to build on the skills emerging from the pre-literacy introducing application of phonemic awareness and phonics-based texts through to more complex stories necessary to bridge to the skills in the next developmental cycle. The rich animations coupled with the human narration and highlighted text on-screen engage the user in vocabulary development for greater fluency and comprehension. The lessons infuse all elements of language development including Reading, Writing and Oral language.



**Extending Literacy** uses more than 200 original texts, with human narration and animation to engage the reader across a wide genre of texts and ability levels and encourage more practice to build on comprehension skills. Every story comes with two interactive comprehension quizzes and worksheets. The enrichment and skills portion of Extending Literacy focus on explicit teaching of key concepts in both the reading and writing portions of literacy. There are lessons on grammar, punctuation, spelling, comprehension, writing (all genre types) as well as a suite of special lessons instructing children in basic skills such as decoding types of text, writing paragraphs, analyzing language, and effective oral communication.



Ziptales is more than a collection of books. Ziptales applies the concept of translational research, born in the medical community, to literacy development. Leveraging the science of reading and all of the research from more than 100,000 studies reviewed by the National Reading Panel, the elements that have been proven time and again to support literacy development to meet children where they are in the process. Through engaging, original stories and activities designed to address the appropriate skill development while simultaneously making the process of learning fun, Ziptales enhances literacy skill development for all users.

In his paper Audiobooks and Literacy (Serafini 2004) Dr. Frank Serafini notes that audiobook solutions, like Ziptales, provide the following benefits:

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- *Expose readers to new vocabulary. As new words are heard in the context of a story they become part of a child's oral and eventually written vocabularies.*
- *Provide demonstrations of fluent reading and appropriate phrasing, intonation, and articulation.*
- *Expand access to materials for readers. Experienced readers and those struggling with decoding can listen to stories well beyond their independent reading levels and can comprehend more complex literature.*
- *Create opportunities for readers to discuss literature. Reading comprehension is enhanced through discussion, and audiobooks provide a perfect opportunity for classes to share these stories.*
  
- *Support struggling readers. As developing readers listen to audiobooks and follow along with a printed version of the story, they learn to match the sounds of oral language to their written counterparts. This matching of sounds to symbols is the basis for reading instruction.*
  
- *Invite children into the world of reading and literature. One of the most important roles of classroom teachers and librarians is exposing children to quality literature.*

## **References**

Best, E. (2020). Audiobooks and Literacy. London: National Literacy Trust.

<https://www.brainyquote.com/lists/authors/top-10-maryanne-wolf-quotes>

Audiobooks and Literacy; A Teachers Guide to Using Audiobooks in the Classroom

<http://frankserafini.com/classroom-resources/audiobooks.pdf> (C) Listening Library