Oral cloze

Teaching strategies for reading comprehension

Best for:

- Year level: 3–5
- Phase of learning: surface

Overview

Description	During whole-class reading, students use their background knowledge as well as understanding of structure and grammar to infer missing words in a pre-prepared text and justify their inferences using various textual clues. This strategy (also known as a zip cloze) can be used to support development of general academic vocabulary (e.g. signal words for place, sequence words) or discipline-specific words/phrases (e.g. related to programming in Digital Technologies or technical and symbolic elements of images in Media Arts — see Appendix 2).
Learning focus (based on National Literacy Learning Progression)	**Comprehension** • listen actively and respond to texts read by others (UnT3) • make connections between texts and personal experience (UnT4) • draw inferences and explain using background knowledge or text features (UnT6) **Processes** • identify cohesive devices to connect ideas or events (UnT6) • use strategies to predict and confirm meaning (UnT7) • use knowledge of the features and conventions of the type of text to build meaning (UnT8) **Vocabulary** • identify key words and the meanings they carry (e.g. nouns, verbs) (UnT5)
Teacher preparation	1. Clarify the learning goal, i.e. the feature to which you wish to draw student's attention and for what purpose. For example, the focus could be on the use of signal words such as time markers that help readers follow a sequence of events in a recount. Whatever is chosen, teachers should ensure students have sufficient background knowledge to experience success. 2. Select an appropriate text. Ensure the specific textual features you wish to highlight are easily identified (see examples below). 3. Familiar texts or texts that have been constructed collaboratively after a shared experience are particularly useful because the subject matter is understood. This frees working memory to focus on the language features. Unfamiliar texts may be used to present more challenging tasks and to assess students' developing reading skills. 4. Select a section of text and write it on a chart or in a big book. Cover ('mask') selected words (e.g. with tape or sticky notes). Especially when first using this activity, leave the first word in the sequence uncovered, but highlighted or underlined (see example in Appendix 1). This will support students to tune into the types of words that have been masked.

Suggested implementation

1. Model the oral cloze procedure, making explicit the use of textual clues to infer plausible answers.
   Table 1 shows a possible think-aloud script for use with an oral cloze (see Appendix 1) highlighting words that tell 'where' (see highlighting in 'text' column of the table below). Although technical words about language (e.g. prepositional phrase) are used in the script, it is assumed that this knowledge was taught in a previous lesson.

Table 1: Text with a think-aloud script — model

	Text	Think-aloud script (to accompany use of Appendix 1)
Words that tell 'where' (see highlighting)	Today our class went on a print walk. First, we saw the sign on A block. It was on the wall. Next, we found the adventure playground sign. It was on the gate. Mary found it first. Then we went up the path and saw the tuckshop sign. Print walks are fun!	The first word group 'on a print walk' is a prepositional phrase starting with 'on'. It tells the reader where the class went. Therefore, the first gap (in the second sentence) is also likely to also be a prepositional phrase, on this occasion telling readers where the sign is. Typically, signs could be on something, up, down or around some place. The third sentence tells us 'it' (the sign) was 'on a wall'. If the print walk happened in the school grounds, the sign could be on the tuckshop, a classroom, the toilets or another place in the school where signs are found. In the first gap, we don't need to tell the reader that the sign is on a wall, because that additional information is revealed in the third sentence.

Table 2 shows other ways to highlight words in an oral cloze using the same text.

Table 2: Text alternatives — model

	Text
A sequence of events	Today our class went on a print walk. First, we saw the sign on A block. It was on the wall. Next, we found the adventure playground sign. It was on the gate. Mary found it first. Then we went up the path and saw the tuckshop sign. Print walks are fun!
Past tense	Today our class went on a print walk. First, we saw the sign on A block. It was on the wall. Next, we found the adventure playground sign. It was on the gate. Mary found it first. Then we went up the path and saw the tuckshop sign. Print walks are fun!

2. Show students the text with masking in place (see step 4 of Teacher preparation above) and ask them to suggest words that make sense in the gap. List these on the chart or the side of the big-book easel. Ask students to justify their suggestions using textual clues.

3. Discuss how using different words from the list would change the meaning of the text. Choose the most appropriate word from the list and compare it with the author's choice.

4. Peel back (unzip) the sticky note or tape to reveal the author's word/s one letter at a time. As you do this, compare with the list and eliminate words that don't fit the letter pattern.

5. Discuss how the words chosen to complete the blanks change meaning significantly or slightly. For example, in the sentence below, for older children, the highlighted words are all grammatically correct and make sense, but they alter the meaning significantly and reveal the author's viewpoint.

'After the invasion, the people were encouraged / required / coerced to cooperate with the military authorities.'

Further reading

'Think-alouds', *Reading Rockets: Classroom strategies*, WETA Public Broadcasting, USA, www.readingrockets.org/strategies/think_alouds.

'Modelling through think alouds', *Literacy Teaching Toolkit*, State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/literacy/speakinglistening/Pages/teachingpracmodelling.aspx
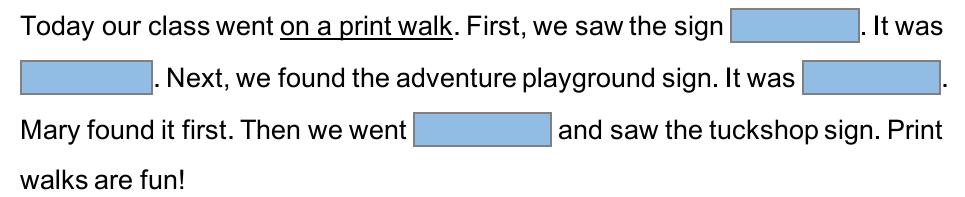
Appendix 1: Example of a cloze for recount think-aloud

Today our class went <u>on a print walk</u>. First, we saw the sign ▭. It was ▭. Next, we found the adventure playground sign. It was ▭. Mary found it first. Then we went ▭ and saw the tuckshop sign. Print walks are fun!
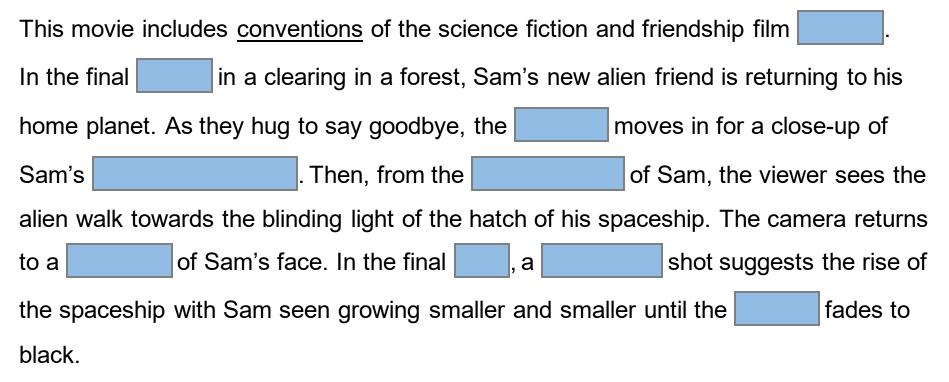
Answer: Today our class went <u>on a print walk</u>. First, we saw the sign <u>on A block</u>. It was <u>on the wall</u>. Next, we found the adventure playground sign. It was <u>on the gate</u>. Mary found it first. Then we went <u>up the path</u> and saw the tuckshop sign. Print walks are fun!

Appendix 2: Sample cloze for Years 5–6 Media Arts

This movie includes <u>conventions</u> of the science fiction and friendship film ▢.
In the final ▢ in a clearing in a forest, Sam's new alien friend is returning to his
home planet. As they hug to say goodbye, the ▢ moves in for a close-up of
Sam's ▢. Then, from the ▢ of Sam, the viewer sees the
alien walk towards the blinding light of the hatch of his spaceship. The camera returns
to a ▢ of Sam's face. In the final ▢, a ▢ shot suggests the rise of
the spaceship with Sam seen growing smaller and smaller until the ▢ fades to
black.

Answer: This movie includes <u>conventions</u> of the science fiction and friendship film <u>genres</u>. In the final <u>scene</u> in a clearing in a forest, Sam's new alien friend is returning to his home planet. As they hug to say goodbye, the <u>camera</u> moves in for a close-up of Sam's <u>facial expression</u>. Then, from the <u>point of view</u> of Sam, the viewer sees the alien walk towards the blinding light of the hatch of his spaceship. The camera returns to a <u>close-up</u> of Sam's face. In the final <u>shot</u>, a <u>helicopter</u> shot suggests the rise of the spaceship with Sam seen growing smaller and smaller until the <u>screen</u> fades to black.