

Documented

Supporting Research

for

Gems,

by George!

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Overview

Gems, by George!

A Nonfiction Program of:

- * 10 Big Books with Language Activity Sheets
- * 10 6-packs of Student Books
- * 6 Go Readers™
- * Word-for-Word Audio CDs
- * Teacher Resource Book

The English titles have been carefully adapted into Spanish. All of the above components are available in both languages.

Gems, by George!

is built around

CAREFULLY RESEARCHED

**Educational Philosophies and Practices
in the fields of:**

Vocabulary

Comprehension

Fluency

Oral Language Development

Engaging Content

Concepts of Print

Graphic Design

Visual Text

Drawing as a Response

Nonfiction Texts

All research is documented for each individual component.

Fluency

Recognizing high frequency words instantly is critical to fluency.

*** 42% of all words in the Big Books, by George books come from Edward Fry's list of the top 50 sight words. See pie graph below.**

What the research shows:

Foundations of Literacy
by Don Holdaway
Ashton Scholastic 1979

"... the learning reader doesn't really begin to read in any true sense until he recognizes 'at sight' the majority of words in a passage." p~28

Read It Again
by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"The ability to automatically recognize many high-frequency words allows the reader to maintain a focus on meaning. Shared reading gives children exposure to high-frequency words, which helps them learn to consistently recognize and read them." p.32

Reading for Life
by Learning Media
Learning Media 1997

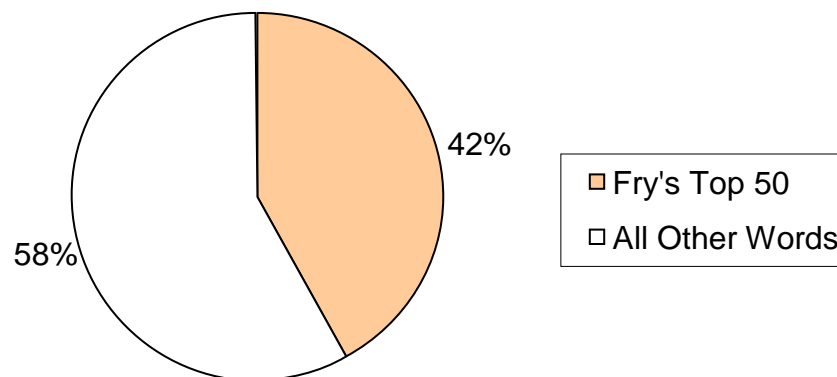
"As Marie Clay points out, 'a child [has] to gradually accumulate a reading vocabulary of known words which [he or she] can recognize rapidly and does not have to work out.'" p.40

The Art of Teaching Reading
by Lucy McCormick
Addison-Wesley-Longman
2001

"...many researchers believe that children who are thriving as readers and writers at the end of first grade usually seem to "just know" most of these one hundred high frequency words. Strong first grade readers recognize these words easily when they encounter them in texts and spell many (but fewer) of them with automaticity. (New Standards, 2000)." p.212

"We know children learn language best when using it for real purposes. We know words, for example, are easier to read when they occur in a story than in a list (Goodman, 1965). Why not let children learn these high frequency words as they encounter them in texts that are funny or sad or otherwise, memorable?" p.212

Text in George's Books



Vocabulary

“Why say GOOD when you mean EXTRAORDINARY or BIG when you mean ENORMOUS?”

The Big Books, by George books are rich in vivid, wonderful words! Vocabulary is the key to comprehension. This program presents vocabulary in two separate ways:

- * **Glossary words** - These words are content-specific. They are shown in orange type both in the text and in the glossary.
- * **George’s Wonderful Words** - These words are NOT content specific. They are expansive words to be incorporated into the students’ everyday speech and writing. There are 2 GWWs per book. They appear underlined in the text.

See p. 2A of this paper for examples of each.

What the research shows:

Meeting of Minds

by Stuart McNaughton
Learning Media 2002

“One way to influence comprehension is to improve children’s learning of words. This can be done by sheer exposure, by the teacher simply reading books to children.” p. 171

“Biemiller (1999) has reviewed a number of these studies.” p. 171

“In the best of conditions—when appropriate texts are selected and when the teacher provides explanations of new words—studies have shown impressive gains in word learning.” p. 171

“The evidence suggest that the narrow range of vocabulary and limited rate of introducing new words in basal series restrict vocabulary growth.” p. 132

“It is possible to present rich texts to make them fit the children.” p. 132

The Art of Teaching Reading

by Lucy McCormick Calkins
Addison-Wesley-Longman
2001

“But we can give our children the words that will take them to new worlds, launch new investigations, and introduce new concepts.” p. 55

“...Children will encounter difficulties on standardized reading tests not because they can’t read the words or recall a passage but because they they don’t know the difference between a continent and a country, a century and a decade, a species and a gender.” p. 55


Foundation of Literacy

by Don Holdaway
Ashton Scholastic 1979

“New content words tend to be remembered and leaned first.” p. 52

Vocabulary


Detours



14 What do you think is happening here?

15 Sometimes life cycles don't go as planned. They take **detours**. Most tiny acorns don't grow up to be majestic oaks. Many provide food for other life cycles like those of birds, bears, and squirrels. George thinks that's OK.

Air on the Moon



12 Why don't people live on the moon?

13 **G** Can I move to the moon?
G Nothing can live on the moon. Unlike Earth, there is no **oxygen**.
G How's the weather?
G In the day, it is hot as an oven at 273° F. At night it is frigid at -244° F.
G Too cold for me.

Comprehension

Comprehension is addressed in two major ways in Big Books, by George!:

*** An open-ended question/prompt appears under the photograph of the left-hand page of each 2-page spread. These are designed to require higher order thinking.**

See page 3A of this paper for an example.

*** The purpose for reading is set on the inside front cover where students are asked to predict or infer what the book is about. Predictions/inferences must then be validated on the inside back cover.**

See page 3B of this paper for an example.

What the research shows:

**Becoming a Nation of Readers
The Report of the Commission
On Reading**

The National Institute of
Education 1984

"...questions and the manner in which they are phrased influence what children will learn from experience. Questions can be phrased in ways that require children merely to put some part of an experience into words or they can be phrased in a thought provoking manner." p. 22

Read It Again!

by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"Alternatively, the introduction can begin with the teacher asking the children to predict the title and content from the cover picture and then guiding discussion about it..." p.45

"...I try to create an atmosphere that invites the children to interact with any aspect of the book as active collaborators with me and this sets up a lively paced, ongoing dialogue throughout the session. The children's thoughts and their strategies for predicting, checking, and making inferences provide rich models for the children to learn from each other, and give me a clear view of their thought processes. This way of introducing new texts can be used very effectively in groups where there are many ESL students." p. 46

The Art of Teaching Reading

by Lucy McCormick
Addison-Wesley-Longman 2001

"Douglas Barnes (1993), in his important article "Supporting Exploratory Talk for Learning reports that most of the questions asked by the teachers he observed were strictly factual and required little or no ability to sustain sequential thinking.... Why is it so inconceivable that we should simply say to our children, "Could we talk about..." and then back out of the conversation, leaving space for them to comment and elaborate on each other's comments without acting as Masters of Ceremonies? p. 61-62

Strategies That Work

by Stephanie Harvey &
Anne Goudvis
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"text structures... include cause and effect, problem and solution, questions and answer, comparison and contrast, description and sequence. If students know what to look for in terms of text structure, meaning comes more easily." p. 121

Reading For Life

by Learning Media 1997

"Throughout the whole process of reading and retrieving information from expository texts, students can reflect on various aspects of their experience." p. 141

Literary Circles

by Harvey Daniels
Stenhouse Publishers 1994

"skillful readers use a rich variety of specific and usually unconscious thinking strategies to get ready before reading, to construct meaning during reading, and to take ideas beyond the text after reading." p. 32

Comprehension

Plants



How would it feel being
deep inside a rainforest?

2

Comprehension

COMPREHENSION

George asks questions!

(Inside Front Cover)

He wants the students to:

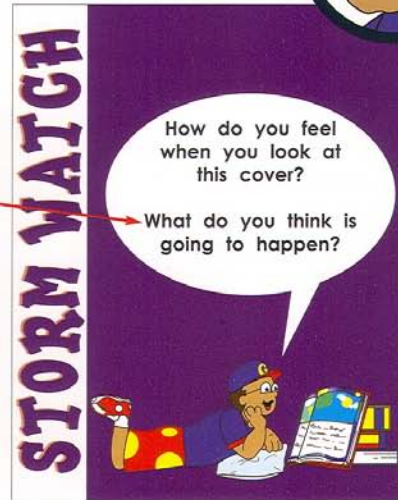
- 1) Make a **PREDICTION** or **INFERENCE** about the book
- 2) Engage in additional comprehension strategies such as:
 - Visualizing**
 - Problem Solving**
 - Sequencing**
 - Comparing/Contrasting**
 - And **MORE!**

George wants answers!

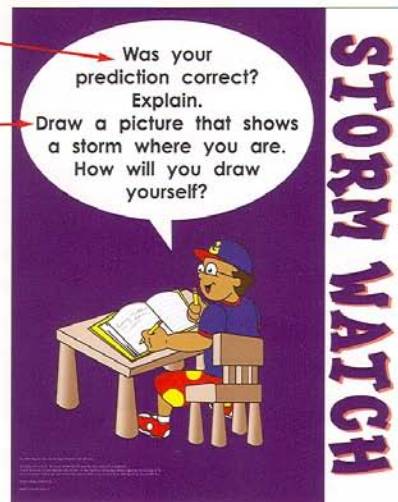
(Inside Back Cover)

- 1) Were your **PREDICTIONS/ INFERENCES** Validated? Refined? Contradicted?
- 2) Use response options such as
 - talking**
 - drawing**
 - writing**
 - charts and diagrams**to show what you know!

GEORGE ADDRESSES THE 5 KEY COMPONENTS OF "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND"
(See back cover)



Inside Front Cover



Inside Back Cover

Engaging Content

“The first decision many young learners make about books is whether or not they are interesting enough to read or even to listen to! The Big Books, by George! books are full of truly interesting, engaging content.

What the research shows:

Meeting of Minds

by Stuart McNaughton
Learning Media 2002

“Texts for listening... need to match children’s oral language in words and content sufficiently to guarantee “engagingness” and, at the same time, to provide sufficient opportunities for children to encounter new words, new meanings, and new topics.” p. 177

Strategies That Work

by Stephanie Harvey
and Anne Goudvis
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

“Just as we read difficult books ourselves, it’s important to share books that are a stretch for children.” p. 56

“Nonfiction books are often challenging to read and filled with sophisticated information that students love... The lesson here is never underestimate what a student can read when motivated to do so.” p. 57

“Distinguished author and Newbery winner Katherine Paterson suggests, ‘It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading. Something that will stretch their imaginations...’ p. 62

“But the first purpose of real-world nonfiction is to convey factual information, important ideas, and key concepts.” p. 122

Read It Again

by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

“...text must be worth coming back to many times for many purposes and invite collaborative meaning making.” pp. 13-14

“The texts must delight the children, offer many opportunities for active participation, and have sufficient substance to support many re-readings.” p. 14

“The texts used in shared reading should always initially be above the current reading level of the learners, thereby immersing and engaging them in new experiences, new language and language structures, and new topics and concepts.” p. 61

The Art of Teaching Reading

by Lucy McCormick Calkins
Addison-Wesley-Longman

“The process of Education, Jerome Bruner (1963) suggested that ‘Experience over the past decade points to the fact that our schools may be wasting precious years by postponing the teaching of many important subjects on the ground that they were too difficult....’ p.13

Concepts of Print

BIG BOOKS should have:

- * **Big, clear type so they are easily seen even from the back of the room**
- * **Double-wide spacing for framing and one-to-one matching.**

What the research shows:

Read It Again!

by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"... the layout and organization of the text, the size and spacing of the print... need to be considered in conjunction with the purposes the books will be used for." p. 117

"The following table lists the features of supportive text for emergent readers and why each is important.

Feature

- * Clear, readable print style suitable for large-group reading
- * Ample space between words and lines

Rationale

Facilitates engagement

"Supports one-to-one matching; helps develop concepts of letter and word; enables explicit work with letter clusters and words..."
pp. 117-118

Reading for Life

by Learning Media
Learning Media 1997

"One very effective way of highlighting concepts about print and particular print information is to use a pointer or a masking device with enlarged texts during shared reading." p.36

"Criteria for text selection.... Are *the typeface and layout clear?*" p. 93

Foundations of Literacy

by Don Holdaway
Ashton Scholastic 1979

"...we enlarge so that the bold print can be seen clearly from fifteen feet or so." pp. 65-66

"When large groups of children are involved they must all be able to see the print being processed or discussed if the situation is to be experienced as intelligibly literate." p. 130

The text looks
like this.

Why Nonfiction?

- * **Almost 80% of the material adults read is nonfiction.**
- * **Standardized test students take are almost 80% nonfiction.**
- * **The majority of books in our schools are FICTION! What's wrong with this picture?**

What the research shows:

Text Forms and Features

by Margaret Mooney
Richard C. Owen 2001

"...I realized that the greater proportion of material...used in the name of "teaching reading" was fiction...What about the children who did not enjoy fiction?" p.xii

The Reading Research

Quarterly

Volume 35, Number 2

"3.6 per day: The scarcity of information texts in first grade"

by Nell K. Duke
IRA Apr/May/June 2000

"Scholars have pointed out that information texts can play an important role in motivation children to read in the first place." p. 202
"...the total time spent with information texts during whole-class written language activities was 282 minutes or an average of 3.6 minutes per day." p. 215-216

"Of particular concern is the fact that information text was particularly scarce in the classroom in low-SES settings." p. 220

The Art of Teaching Reading

by Lucy McCormick Calkins
Addison-Wesley-Longman
2001

"Nonfiction reading is the primary reading fare of every teacher, researcher, and teacher-educator, and it will be the primary reading fare of each of our students. Yet ironically, the curriculum in our schools focuses on the texts and skills of reading fiction." p. 437

Read It Again!

by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"Informational, or nonfiction, books should also be included in a balanced literacy program from the child's first days of school." p. 84

Strategies That Work

by Stephanie Harvey
and Anne Goudvis
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"Nonfiction picture books...fire kids up, especially if text quality matches the compelling photographs, charts, and illustrations." p. 119

I See What You Mean

by Steve Moline
Stenhouse Publishers 1995

"But most of what we read in everyday life are not stories or poems or rhymes; most of what adults read and write are information texts." p. 5

Importance of Graphic Design

Visually appealing books are the most motivating for students, especially reluctant readers, to pick up. From photographs to color to font style and size to inside front and back covers to the layout, the Big Books, by George! books have great graphic design.

The series pays particular attention to the page borders using them as a “frame” for the text. The borders are content-specific.

See page 7A of this paper to see examples of this at work.

What the research shows:

I See What You Mean

by Steve Moline
Stenhouse Publishers 1995

“Good design contributes to a text’s meaning and helps the reader to access the text.” p. 13

“Graphic design organizes the information using layout and typography.” p. 119

“Graphic design combines visual and verbal texts and in the classroom, graphic design can be an important part of the writing process (which is also a thinking process and a visualizing process).” p. 119

Meeting of Minds

by Stuart McNaughton
Learning Media 2002

“In one study (Hoffman, McCarthy, Abbott, Christian, Corman, Curry, Dressman, Elliot, Matherne, and Stahle, 1994), kindergarten children... identified the same features as the researchers for potential to engage them, notably the design (illustrations and format...)” p. 64

Strategies That Work

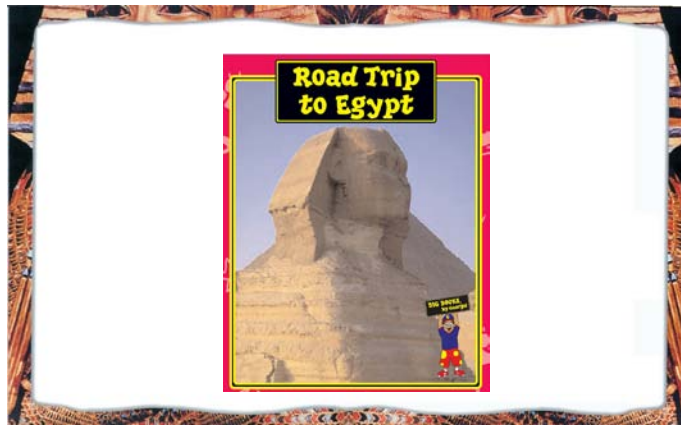
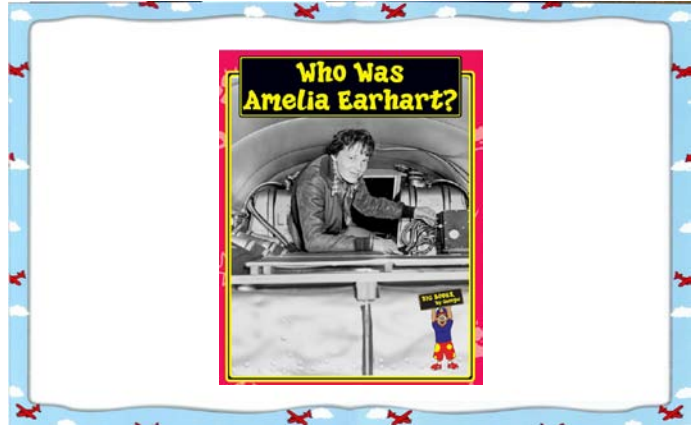
by Stephanie Harvey
and Anne Goudvis
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

“Fonts and effects Teachers can note examples of different fonts and effects, such as titles, heading, boldface print, color print, italics, bullets, captions, and labels, which signal importance in text.” p. 120

Importance of Graphic Design

Notice the match between the title and the page borders. The theme of the book is extended to the design of the border.

Amelia's
page
borders
are
covered
with
airplanes



Egypt's page
borders
have
striking
images
of
Egyptian
art.

Water Color's
page
borders
are
vivid
with
under
the
sea
scenes.



Visual Text

Words are NOT the only important elements in the Big Books, by George books. Good readers should be able to analyze and process information in photographs, diagrams, charts, graphs, and all other forms of visual texts. Every Big Books, by George! title features at least one of these types of visual text.

See page 8A for a sample of the visual text that appears in this series.

I See What You Mean

by Steve Moline
Stenhouse Publishers 1995

What the research shows:

"...information literacy is more than communicating with words, because many information texts also include important visual elements, such as diagrams, graphs maps and tables. To provide a complete literacy program, therefore, we need to include opportunities to draw information as well as to write it." p. 1

"Sometimes the words make incomplete sense without the visual elements that accompany them; words and image together make the meaning." p. 12

Read It Again!

by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"The use of photographs in these books make them much more easy to comprehend than some of the more abstract illustrations used to illustrate other kinds of books." p. 69

"As we look at the books we identify the features that define nonfiction texts, such as:

- * real people, places, objects, events
 - * photographs
 - * diagrams and maps
 - * captions and labels
 - * table of contents, glossary, index
 - * headings
- p. 88

Strategies That Work

by Stephanie Harvey
and Anne Goudvis
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"Nonfiction picture books... fire kids up, especially if text quality matches the compelling photographs, charts, and illustrations." p. 119

"Illustrations and photographs...play a prominent in nonfiction to enhance reading comprehension. Nonfiction trade books and magazines brim with colorful photographs that capture young readers and carry them deeper into meaning." p. 121

"Diagrams...word bubbles, tables, graphs, and charts graphically inform nonfiction readers of important information." p. 121

Text Forms and Features

by Margaret Mooney
Richard C. Owen 2001

"They are not only expected to be competent readers in order to gain information but are also assessed on their ability to process and represent that information in reports, essays, charts, paragraphs, and summaries." p.xii

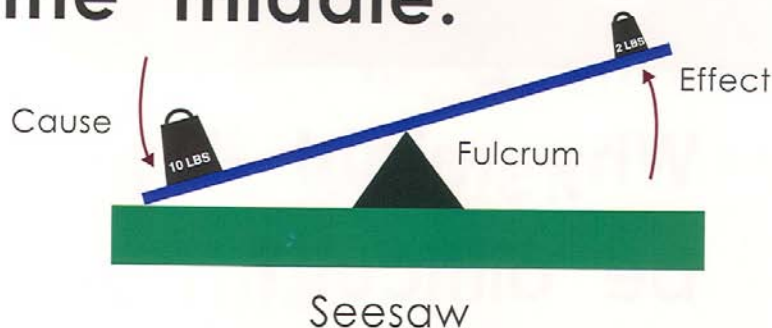
Visual Text

Ever See a Lever?

*Tools turn and pull,
Lift and sever.*

*What can you do
On a seesaw lever?*

When you push down
on one side of the
lever, the other side
goes up. The **fulcrum** is
in the middle.



9

Drawing Responses? Absolutely!

“Expressing ideas through drawing is enjoyable and often produces incredible detail. Labels or written sentences may be incorporated as students are ready. Big Books, by George adds ‘draw’ as an everyday option for written responses!”

What the research shows:

I See What You Mean

by Steve Moline

Stenhouse Publishers 1995

“...information literacy is more than communicating with words, because many information texts also include important visual elements, such as diagrams, graphs, maps, and tables. To provide a complete literacy program, therefore, we need to include opportunities to draw information as well as to write it.” p. 1

“Drawing can sometimes be neglected or treated as a add-on reward or afterthought in the classroom...there is sometimes the assumption that in the end drawing is not really as important (as useful, as series) as writing. This attitude sometimes takes the form of an instruction to provide a written report, ‘and if you have time left over, do a drawing.’” p. 15

“But we have just seen that drawing is integral to the meaning of information texts and in this context it is not the same as ‘doing art’.” p. 16

Reading For Life

by Learning Media

Learning Media

“Drawing favorite or exciting scenes is a response that many students enjoy and learn from. Visual and oral presentations can be encouraged when several students have read the same book.” p. 90

Nonfiction Writing Strategies

by Marcia S. Freeman

Maupin House Publishing, Inc.

2001

“Kindergarten students can make their lists by drawing, pasting pictures, or with you acting as the scribe in a shared writing activity. p.15

“I gave them an index card and they drew the specific place and labeled it.” p. 16

Encouraging Oral Language Development

Big Books, by George! books are perfect to get your students talking.

*** Listen to, and encourage further discussion as they interact with each other and the text.**

***Talking and listening are critical components of reading and writing.**

What the research shows:

Read It Again!

by Dr. Brenda Parkes
Stenhouse Publishers 2000

"The texts must delight the children, offer many opportunities for active participation, and have sufficient substance to support many re-readings... the children are drawn into increasing participation so that the reading of the text becomes a collaborative effort involving thinking, talking, and reading." p. 14

"A great deal of teaching and learning happens every time active learners meet with a responsive teacher to read and reread shared books and to engage in discussion... of texts." p.25

"Readers' oral language is their primary course for anticipating what may happen next in the text and checking whether their reading makes sense (Clay 1991). Shared reading can be used to reinforce and build on the oral language each child has... p. 62

Foundations of Literacy

by Don Holdaway
Ashton Scholastic 1979

"A traditional error of thinking about reading and writing was to see them as discrete subjects isolated from the world of language and spoken culture and then to teach them as if they had no relationship to listening and speaking." p. 12

Seen in perspective the child's oral language skills make an excellent starting point since they provide a set of well-established stable responses." p. 91

Reading For Life

by Learning Media
Learning Media 1997

"Shared reading involves discussion before, during, and after the reading... interacting where opinions, ideas, and interpretations are shared and exchanged." pp.71-72

The Art of Teaching Reading

by Lucy McCormick Calkins
Addison-Wesley-Longman 2001

"After evaluating ten thousand research studies, the U.S. Department of Education's Commission on Reading issued a report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1985), which goes so far as to state that "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children." (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and, Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). p. 51

Teaching Reading Comprehension

by P. David Pearson and
Dale D. Johnson
Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1978

"...phonological knowledge is prerequisite to comprehension (if you do not have it, you cannot understand auditory messages)..." p. 11

"... the closer the match between the... information on a page of print information in our heads, the greater the likelihood we will understand the text." p. 12