

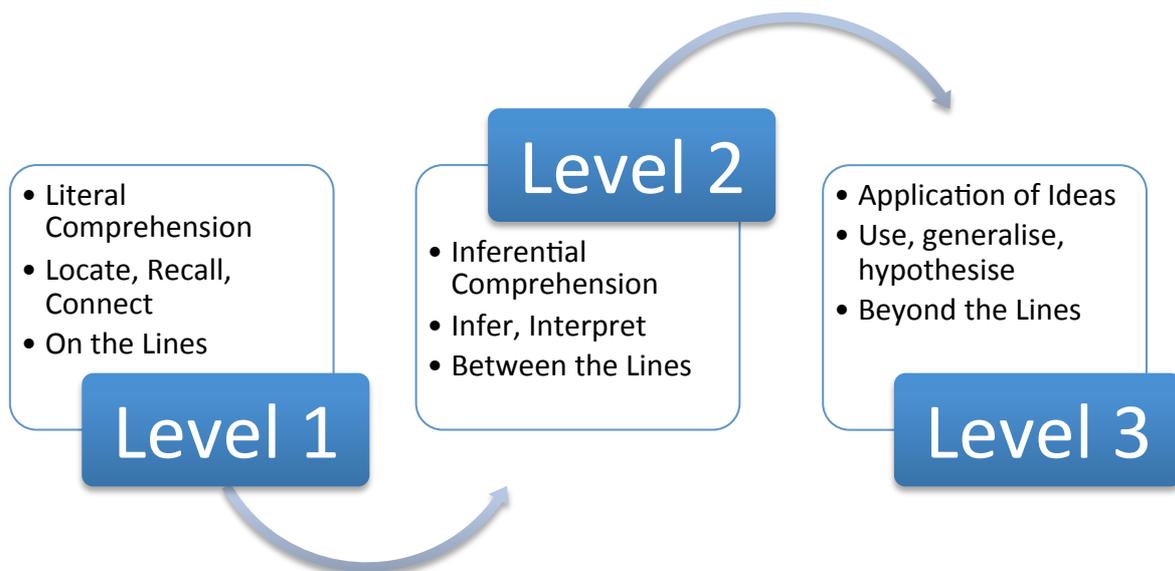
THE THREE LEVEL GUIDE

What is it?

A Three Level Guide is a powerful, metacognitively focused tool for teaching reading comprehension. It can be used in a variety of ways and can increase your capacity to differentiate your teaching of challenging texts. While working on the guide, students read with purpose and have opportunities to engage in the different types of thinking involved in developing a full understanding of a text.

Unlike most comprehension activities that give importance to questions, Three Level Guides are focused on statements and on students' thinking about those statements. The statements are teacher crafted and specific to the focus text. They are written in such a way that they ask students to recall, infer and apply knowledge from the text to reflect on the statements. Students decide whether the statements are true or false and prepare reasons to explain their decision-making.

In order to provide a multi-level scaffold and to meet the needs of diverse learners, the three levels of comprehension are always included in a guide.



Why is it important?

Reading is a complex cognitive process that involves readers thinking at multiple levels simultaneously. Research tells us that the most effective forms of reading comprehension instruction are those that focus on helping students reflect on and manage their thinking. Also effective are approaches that emphasise the importance of quality talk around reading. The Three Level Guide is a tool that can focus students' thinking as they work with others who are also exploring and explaining their thinking. Using a Three Level Guide helps to develop a class community focused on developing deeper understandings of texts.

Three Level Guides present teachers with really workable solutions to differentiating instruction. High-level readers are given opportunities to extend their thinking while less-able readers benefit from peer support and teaching. They also benefit from the whole-class discussion that occurs, giving them access to ideas they might not have been able to grasp alone. With one custom-made Three Level Guide, a teacher can promote learning for many different levels of readers in the class.

Three Level Guides can also function as an informal assessment tool. As ideas are clarified verbally and interactively, you will have opportunities to hear your students think aloud and be able to assess the reasoning strategies of individual students.

Things to consider before starting

Developing your own Three Level Guides

- Any text or set of texts can be used as a focus for a Three Level Guide e.g. book chapter, news report, picture or visual image, magazine article, science reports and explanations, life writing excerpts in history, opposing persuasive essays etc.
- Developing a guide can take some time so select a focus text that builds key understandings in a topic or curriculum unit. You will get more out of the guide if you choose a text with challenging ideas rather than one that many students could manage fairly easily on their own.
- Decide what understandings you want the students to have gained once they have completed the activity (e.g. what do you want them to understand as a result of their interactions with each other around this text?). Make a list of these teaching goals before you craft your statements.
- Examine the text closely and, using three coloured highlighters, code statements and ideas that you think will allow you to make Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 statements for students to consider and discuss.
- Use the template provided to record the statements under the three levels (see back page).

Introducing the Guide to students

- Before you begin working with the Three Level Guide tool, think about how familiar your students are with the process. If this is a new teaching tool, students will need to be trained in how to use it. Model using a short sample text, and guide the whole class as they work in pairs or small groups. This will help students to familiarise themselves with the format and provide opportunities for them to practise the strategies and thinking skills required.

Steps in a Three Level Guide session

Lesson Sequence

1. Make sufficient copies of the Guide and the reading passage or stimulus for your class/purposes. Each student should have their own materials.
2. Decide on whether you would like students to work collaboratively from the outset of the lesson or if they will collaborate after a period of individual work.
3. Place students in mixed-ability groups of four or five students.
4. Give each student the selected passage and a copy of the relevant Three Level Guide exercise.
5. Explain how you want students to work together (see Step 2) and explain that they have two separate pages: a passage to read and a Three Level Guide exercise.
6. Set them to work and circulate to ensure that students are on track.
7. When everyone in a group has finished, ask the students to share their answers and to try to reach a consensus on the true or false judgments through discussion.
8. Circulate among the groups, arbitrating group decisions where necessary.
9. Review activity through whole-class discussion of how to analyse the text to engage with it on multiple levels.

Variations

- Use a jigsaw technique where students start at different levels in the guide. This is useful in shorter lessons as all students get access to all aspects of the text analysis through discussion.
- While all groups are working on collaborative tasks, use a guided reading approach with lower progress readers to scaffold their work on Level 3 statements. This will ensure they are challenged, while still receiving teacher support.

References

Glasswell, K., Mostert, W., Judd, L., & Mayn, L. (2013). *Accelerating Reading Comprehension*. Sydney, Australia: ACER Press.

Lamont, H. (2006). *Teaching and Learning with Torch*. Sydney, Australia: ACER Press.

Three Level Guide Template

Based on:

Level 1	T/F	Read the numbered statements about your focus text. Decide if they are true or false. Write T (for true) or F (for false) to indicate your reading of the facts in the text. The statements may be worded differently to the original text so check your decisions by re-reading. Be ready to give reasons to support your thinking.
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
Level 2	T/F	Read the numbered statements about your focus text. Decide if they are likely to be true or false, given what you can infer. Write T (for true) or F (for false) to indicate your opinion. Be ready to justify your choices.
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
Level 3	T/F	Read the numbered statements about your focus text. Decide if the author of the text would be likely to agree with them. Write T (for true) or F (for false) to indicate your opinion. Be ready to give reasons to explain your thinking.
1		
2		
3		