

Challenging Talented Readers with the SEM-R

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Schoolwide Enrichment Model – Reading (SEM-R)
<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/semr>

Free Video Overview of the SEM-R Available at –
<http://gifted.uconn.edu/semr-overview>

*(*Be sure to check out the “**Implementation Resources**” link in the left-hand menu.)*

The Schoolwide Enrichment Reading Model: The Intersection of Interests and Meaningful Challenges

Given the diverse skills with which students enter a reading classroom, teaching all students using the same techniques and the same materials cannot foster increased reading achievement for everyone. These practices result in work that is too easy for talented readers—and too difficult for struggling readers—to provide opportunities for continuous growth. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model – Reading Framework (SEM-R) was developed to increase reading challenge and enjoyment for all students, but one important goal of this reading framework is to challenge talented readers.

The SEM-R includes three general categories of reading instruction that are dynamic in nature and designed to enable some flexibility of implementation and content in response to both teachers' and students' needs. This approach is based on Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model and includes three levels of enrichment: broad exposure to areas in which students might have interests, training and methods instruction, and opportunities to pursue self-selected topics of interest to students. The three distinct phases of the SEM-R are described in more depth below.

Phase I - Exposure

Teachers select literature to read aloud to students, interspersed with higher-order questioning and thinking skills instruction. These "book hook" sessions are initially 10 to 20 minutes in length, and teachers are encouraged to share high interest, challenging books with their students. A variety of genres can be selected for this phase including mysteries, poetry, historical and science fiction, biographies, autobiographies, and other non-fiction. The program emphasizes helping students to enjoy the process of reading; and selections are made based on student engagement with content and reactions to initial selections. Teachers are provided with bookmarks that feature guiding questions involving higher order thinking skills to help them frame the class discussion for the read aloud.

Phase II – Training and Self-Selection

The development of students' capability to engage in a structured silent reading time of self-selected high interest books is emphasized in this phase. Students are supported with individualized, differentiated reading conferences, termed Supported Independent Reading (SIR). Teachers coach students to select books that are slightly above their current reading level and the appropriate match is continually assessed through regular conferences with each student two to three times each week. While all students read independently, the teacher provides one-on-one instruction in strategy use, including phonics and vocabulary, as well as a higher-level discussion of the students' choice of books.

Phase III – Interest and Choice Components

Students are encouraged to move from teacher directed opportunities to self-choice activities over the course of the school year. Activities include (but are not limited to) opportunities to:

- exploring new technology
- engaging in discussion groups
- writing activities
- creativity training in language arts
- learning centers
- interest-based projects
- continuation of self-selected reading
- book chats.

The intent of these experiences is to provide time for developing and exploring student interest in reading. In addition, students engage in creative and critical thinking training and advanced training in the use of the Internet to find information about various literary genres, such as biographies and autobiographies. Options for independent study are also made available for students during this phase.

Summary

As an enrichment-based program, the SEM-R offers challenge and choice as well as opportunities for imagination and creativity. In essence, our research suggests that tapping into student interests through formal and informal assessments and then providing choice in reading materials can make tackling an appropriately challenging book more palatable for many students at all performance levels (Eckert, 2004; Reis, McCoach, Coyne, Schreiber, Eckert, & Gubbins, 2007). In describing how the SEM-R allowed her to find the “literacy sweet spot” for many more of the readers in her classroom, one teacher explained:

“In the beginning, I did not realize how much middle of the road reading instruction I did and how few of my kids I really challenged . . . I had not thought about the stagnation in reading that occurred for kids at the middle and the top.”

The Schoolwide Enrichment Reading Model (SEM-R)

Phase 1 - Exposure	Phase 2 - Training & Self-Selected Reading	Phase 3 - Interest & Choice Components
• High-interest book to read aloud and expose students to variety of topics and genres • Modeling responses to higher-order thinking questions & discussions about literature • Bookmarks for teachers with questions about literary devices, reading strategies, and other topics relevant to the exploration of literature	• Discussions about book selection and self-regulation • Supported Independent Reading • One-on-one teacher conferences providing differentiated reading instruction • Bookmarks for students posing higher-order questions regarding character, plot, setting, genre, and other topics for examining text in a scholarly manner	• Introducing creative thinking • Exploring the Internet • Genre studies • Literary exploration • Investigation centers • Book clubs • Buddy reading • Books on tape/CD • Literature circles • Creative or expository writing • Type III investigations
Type I Activities	Type II Activities	Type II & Type III Investigations

Increasing degree of student independence & selection



Character

What gift would you like to give the main character? Why?

Illustrate some of the similarities between two or more characters.

How might you rewrite this story to include one of your friends as a character?

If you were the author, what further episodes, events, or discoveries would you have the character participate in?



Setting

List all the places that the story took place.

Think of six words that describe a setting from the story.

Why did the author place the story in this location?

Do you think the setting for this story was real or imaginary? Why?

Locate the probable location for the story on a map. If the setting is imaginary, draw it.



Setting

Why was the setting on appropriate place for this story to take place?

Do you think the author would enjoy writing a story that took place where you live? Why?

Would you want to live in a setting similar to the story location?

How might your parents or friends react to living in the story setting?

Plot

What do you think was the most important event in the story? Why?

Think of what has happened in the story so far. Why do you think the author chose to order the events as he or she did?

Describe a conflict that occurred in the book. What were the sources or causes of the conflict?

Mark Twain once wrote, "Truth is stranger than fiction.... Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities." Explain how this book is an example or nonexample of this saying.

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P-1

Power

Identify a powerful character in the book. Does the character's power derive from his or her expertise, personality, position, strength, or some other source?

Compare a character who uses power for good with one who uses power for evil. What are the similarities and differences in how they view power?

How do characters in the book demonstrate their power? What is the purpose of these demonstrations?

Imagine you are transported to the world of the book. How would you prepare to resist or fight the influence of a powerful antagonist?

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T-4

Fantasy/SciFi

How does this novel demonstrate the theme of good vs. evil? How does the fictional setting emphasize this conflict?

In what ways does the author exaggerate something from the "real world" to show something about his or her fictional world?

Are there nonhuman characters in the book that reflect human characteristics? What can you learn from these characters about human feelings or behavior?

What do you think is the moral of the story? Why?

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FS-3

SEM-R Phase 1 Planning Template

Book Information:	
Goal / Objective / Standard:	
Book Hook Pages:	Target Audience:
Possible Discussion Questions:	
<u>Reading Strategies Addressed:</u> ___ Synthesizing ___ Making Inferences ___ Metacognition ___ Questioning ___ Visualizing ___ Making Connections ___ Determining Importance ___ Vocabulary Development ___ Other:	
Connecting Resources or Themes:	
Brief Summary of Text:	

SEM-R Phase 1 Planning Template

Book Information: <i>Dear Beast</i> by Dori Hillestad Butler; illustrated by Kevin Atteberry (Holiday House, 2020)	
Goal / Objective / Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7 - Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)	
Book Hook Pages: Chapter 1 – pgs. 6-13	Target Audience: Grades 2-4; Early Readers, Struggling Readers
Possible Discussion Questions: - This book contains letters between a cat and a dog who are very different. As we read, think about what clues are in the illustrations about each of these main characters. - Describe the main characters in this book (Simon the cat & Baxter the dog) in five or fewer words. Avoid using trite words (nice, good, bad, mean, etc.).	
<u>Reading Strategies Addressed:</u> ☒ Synthesizing ☒ Making Inferences ☐ Metacognition ☐ Questioning ☒ Visualizing ☐ Making Connections ☐ Determining Importance ☐ Vocabulary Development ☐ Other:	
Connecting Resources or Themes: - Nutmeg Award Book for 2025 - There are multiple books in this series. Other books about dogs or pets. (Dear Mrs. Larue: Letters from Obedience School; King & Kayla; Ribs)	
Brief Summary of Text: Through a series of humorous letters, Simon, a grumpy and jealous cat, informs Baxter, his boy's new dog, that he is not welcome and should leave at once.	

SEM-R Phase 1 Planning Template

Book Information: <i>Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina</i> by Misty Copeland with Charisse Jones (Touchstone, 2014)	
Goal / Objective / Standard: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6 - Assess how point of view or purpose shapes text - Remind students that “You can’t judge a book by its cover...” (literally and metaphorically)	
Book Hook Pages: Pgs. 173-174; 236-237	Target Audience: Arts/Dance enthusiasts; Students of Color
Possible Discussion Questions: - How would you feel if you were Misty? Explain how you would react to these pressures she describes in her biography? - Does Misty seem likable to you? What textual clues helped you reach this conclusion?	
Reading Strategies Addressed: ☒ Synthesizing ☒ Making Inferences ☐ Metacognition ☐ Questioning ☐ Visualizing ☒ Making Connections ☐ Determining Importance ☐ Vocabulary Development ☐ Other:	
Connecting Resources or Themes: - Book Trailer (Behind the Book & Interview with Misty) - https://www.amazon.com/Life-Motion-Ballerina-Misty-Copeland/dp/1476737983 - Boys & Girls Club Alumni Hall of Fame (http://www.bgca.org/whoweare/alumni/AHOF/Pages/AHOF.aspx) - <i>Firebird</i> (PB, Copeland); <i>Taking Flight: From War Orphan to Star Ballerina</i> (Michaela DePrince); <i>The Skin I’m In</i> (Flake); <i>The Body Image Workbook for Teens</i> (Taylor)	
Brief Summary of Text: Misty Copeland tells the story of her journey to become the first African-American principal ballerina at the prestigious American Ballet Theatre. When she first placed her hands on the barre at an after-school community center, no one expected the undersized, underprivileged, and anxious thirteen-year-old to become one of America’s most groundbreaking dancers. But when Misty became caught between the control and comfort she found in the world of ballet and the harsh realities of her own life, she had to choose to embrace both her identity and her dreams, and find the courage to be one of a kind.	

Useful Internet Resources for SEM-R Implementation



To learn more about the [SEM-R](#) and to review the video and access helpful classroom resources including “booklists on the web,” more bookmarks, teacher and student logs, and examples of conference rubrics –

<https://gifted.uconn.edu/semr-about/>

[Digital Booktalk](#) was started by professors working with librarians in Florida on promoting good book selection and reading engagement. Since then the site has blossomed into a safe space on the web where teachers and students can share, view, and learn to create book trailers for children’s and young adult literature. Use of these resources is free with a simple registration. *What a great Phase 3 opportunity!*

<https://www.digitalbooktalk.net>

Add a little technology to your conferencing by offering students an opportunity to create videos for you and classmates. Check out “[5 Tools to Use Instead of Flip](#),” for some classroom-ready suggestions.

<https://classtechtips.com/2024/06/06/instead-of-flip/>

At [KidLit TV](#), you can explore the world of children’s literature through book trailers, themed book lists, interviews with authors and illustrators and even some arts and crafts projects created by an esteemed advisory board from the UK and US.

<https://www.kidlit.tv/>

Created by The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, [Read.gov](#) provides a variety of free reading resources, including online classics, reading lists, and author interviews. Look for links to home pages for kids, teens, adults, and educators & family.

<https://read.gov/>

[Library Thing](#) provides free tools for cataloguing what you’re reading – or your entire classroom library. You can also join social groups of readers with similar interests from all over the world, including a Book Nudgers group just for teens!

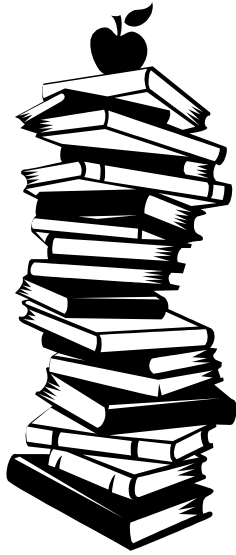
<https://www.librarything.com/>

[The Hub](#), YALSA's Teen Literature Blog, is a regularly updated, interactive forum about teen reads, including recommendations for great teen reads, information about YALSA lists and awards, book trailers and other book-related videos, and best of the best lists.

<https://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/>



Helpful Print Resources for Using the SEM-R



- ***Shifting the Balance, Grades 3-5: 6 Ways to Bring the Science of Reading in the Upper Elementary Classroom*** by Katie Cunningham and Kari Yates, Routledge (2023)
- ***Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement*** (3rd edition) by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis, Stenhouse Publishers (2017)
- ***The Reading Zone: How to Help Kids Become Skilled, Passionate, Habitual, Critical Readers*** (2nd edition) by Nancie Atwell & Ann Atwell Merkel, Scholastic (2016)
- ***Literacy Is Liberation: Working Toward Justice Through Culturally Relevant Teaching*** by Kimberly N. Parker (2022)
- ***Reading Ladders: Leading Students from Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be*** by Teri S. Lesesne, Heinemann (2010)
- ***Some of My Best Friends are Books*** (3rd edition) by Judith Wynn Halsted, Great Potential Press (2009)
- ***The Joyful Reading Resource Kit: Teaching Tools, Hands-On Activities, and Enrichment Resources, Grades K-8*** by Sally Reis, Jossey-Bass (2009)

Other books mentioned this week that I want to remember:
