



Early Years Reading Guide

Finding out more about the
changes in Early Reading



Contents

Welcome to your Early Years Reading Guide	1
What is the 'Simple View of Reading'? <i>by Morag Stuart</i>	2
Reading Schemes: The author's view! <i>by Jeanne Willis</i>	3
Tell us what you think!	4



Welcome to your Early Years Reading Guide

As you are aware, the renewed Primary Framework is now with you, and you're probably getting to grips with what it means for you. At Harcourt, we aim to support you through this period of change through adapting our resources in line with your needs.

The renewed Primary Framework has focused significantly on improving the teaching of early reading, and has introduced the 'Simple View of Reading' and guidance on teaching systematic phonics, through 'Letters and Sounds'. We have updated our **Rigby Star** reading resources in line with these changes to ensure that we are supporting you as your teaching and children's learning evolves.

This Early Years Reading Guide will provide you with more information about the key changes in reading guidance. We've asked Morag Stuart, a major contributor to the Rose Review to explain why the Simple View of Reading has come about and what it means for your teaching. Then Jeanne Willis, a top children's author, will be sharing her thoughts on reading schemes and how these have a role to play in fostering children's love of reading. Finally there is an opportunity to tell us what you think about developing **Rigby Star** in the future!

We hope you will find this Guide useful. If you have any questions about what you read here, or how Harcourt can support you through the early reading changes, please get in touch with your local literacy specialist.

Kind regards



Kath Donovan

Kath Donovan
Director of Primary Education at Harcourt

What is the ‘Simple View of Reading’? *by Morag Stuart*

Morag Stuart, one of the contributors to Jim Rose’s Independent Review of Reading, helps us to understand the new framework for reading

The “Simple” View of Reading? A contradiction in terms, surely? There’s nothing simple about how we learn to read – in fact it’s one of the most complex of all human activities!

People have tried to understand the process behind learning to read for many years and in the last 30 years research has been divided into two major areas:

- ★ Word level - how do children learn to read (recognise, understand and pronounce) written words?
- ★ Text level - how do children learn to understand the sentences and texts they read?

The Simple View of Reading acknowledges these two necessary but different dimensions of reading.

Readers have to be able to read the words on the page to access the meaning. But being able to read the words on the page does not *guarantee* access to the meaning. Different kinds of skills underlie the ability to read words (word recognition skills) and the ability to understand sentences and texts (language comprehension skills).

The name “Simple View of Reading” therefore does not imply that reading is simple or that learning to read is easy. It proposes that in order to understand reading in all its complexity, we need to understand the two separate dimensions and the ways in which these dimensions influence each other.

Why was the Simple View introduced?

There are three main reasons why the Simple View of Reading was introduced:

- ★ We now know that there are two separate aspects to reading: word recognition and language comprehension, and it is possible to be good at either one of them without being good at the other. The Searchlight model confused the distinction between the two aspects.
- ★ We now know that different skills underlie each of the two aspects and that both sets of skills must be actively taught. The Searchlight model didn’t promote this strongly enough.
- ★ The Searchlights Model assumed that children used their knowledge of spoken language to help them decipher words. Now we know that children have to decipher the words *before* they can activate their spoken language knowledge. Therefore knowledge of spoken language contributes much more to comprehension than it does to decoding and the Simple View reflects this.

How should the teaching of reading reflect the Simple View?

Well, I think the most important thing here is to avoid two possible misinterpretations of the Simple View:

- ★ Don't think that word recognition is the first process to teach and language comprehension the second! They both need to be taught from the start.
- ★ Don't think that children arrive at school with fully formed language comprehension abilities and the only job to do is to teach them word recognition. Language comprehension develops throughout childhood and adolescence, and vocabulary develops throughout life!

Practical hints for the classroom

- ★ Always encourage children to use their phonic knowledge and skills to read unfamiliar words. Guessing from the first letter and the context or the picture will not help children to read the unfamiliar word in a different context or help them to read other words.
- ★ Give plenty of practice of common words, especially 'tricky' ones, so these can be transferred to the sight memory. Research shows most children need more repetition of these tricky words than they typically get through book-reading.
- ★ Make sure that children get plenty of opportunity to apply their phonic knowledge by reading and writing words, phrases and sentences. Research shows that children make much better progress in phonics when they do this.
- ★ Introduce some 'decodable' books into your children's reading diet. Although there is little research on the subject, it's commonsense that they will be beneficial. Think of this analogy: when children learn a musical instrument they first play simple tunes using only a few notes they have learned to make. It is clearly desirable that children should be able to read most of the words in the books they are given to read so that they don't become discouraged.



Morag Stuart is a professor in the Psychology of Reading at the Institute of London. She was a major contributor to Jim Rose's Independent Review of Reading.

Useful Links

See the paper on the 'Simple View of Reading' at: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primaryframeworks/foundation/early/simple/

See teacher-experiences of using Rigby Star at: www.rigbystar.co.uk/teachers_cases

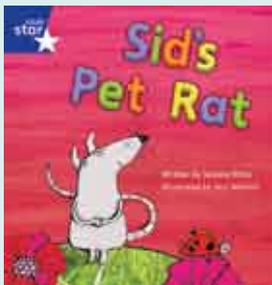
Reading Schemes: The author's view! by Jeanne Willis

As a children's author (voted *Author of the Year* by my new best friends at BettyBookmark.com) I've covered every genre; board books, novelty books, picture books, puberty books, poetry and novels. I've written over a hundred books for the trade, so why does my heart still skip a beat when I'm asked to write for reading schemes?



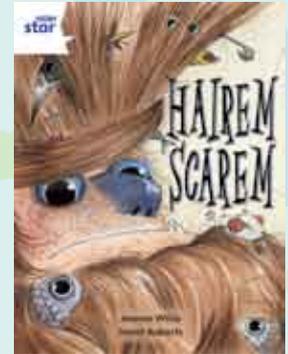
Well, it ain't the money, so it must be love. I do like a challenge and I like tight briefs and we're not talking lingerie here. To enjoy writing for Harcourt is to understand that it's not as easy as it reads; it's harder than Haiku. As well as being restricted in length, you can only use a few specific words, the likes of which I'd challenge Shakespeare to turn into a half-decent tome.

Yet you are strictly forbidden to deviate from *The List*. Your plot may be worthy of the Booker, but if for example, you are delinquent enough to feature a giraffe when 'giraffe' isn't on *The List*, you'll be put in detention and made to rewrite it all over again, using the words 'Rat', 'Cat' and 'Mat' until you have learnt your lesson.



Some authors hate that kind of discipline but I find it liberating. If I decide to write something off my own bat with no brief and no word list, I'm at the mercy of the entire English dictionary; too much choice, quite frankly. What a relief to be asked to do a book in less than twenty words, all of which have been tried, tested and handed to me on a plate.

The rules are rightly rigid, but the stories must never be. Kids don't want to read dull books and I don't want to write them. I put as much work into my educational books (*Monster Runs Away*, *Hairem Scarem*, *Sid's Pet Rat* etc) as I put into my trade books. If children love the former, they'll read the latter; everybody wins.



I'll never forget the first book I learnt to read at school; *Little Red Hen*. It was part of a reading scheme and I can still remember every word. There were only twelve of them, but having mastered them one by one, I knew I'd cracked the magic code. By which time I was gagging to get onto Level 2 to find out what mad capers Little Red Hen got up to with Jip the Dog.

Do reading schemes work? Put it this way; I didn't get where I am today by not reading reading schemes. If you don't believe me, ask Betty Bookmark.



Jeanne Willis is an award-winning author of numerous children's books including *Tadpole's Promise*, *Daft Bat*, *Susan Laughs* and *The Dr Xargle Series*. Her latest novel is called *Shamanka*.

Useful Links

Read more about Jeanne Willis at:

www.bettybookmark.com/i/interviewjeanne

To help parents use reading schemes with

their children, send them to: www.readathome.co.uk

Making Reading Magical

As we all know, learning to read is not 'simple' and teaching early reading in alignment to the changing recommendations is challenging. But as Jeanne Willis reminds us, cracking the magic code in reading is an exciting first step in a child's learning. The **Rigby Star** reading resources are specifically designed to help children crack this magic code, and make the whole early reading experience a magical one. For more information on how **Rigby Star** can help you and your children in early reading, as well as free resources and further teaching ideas, please visit:

www.rigbystar.co.uk



Tell us what you think!

We want **Rigby Star** to continue evolving as your teaching and learning evolves. On www.rigbystar.co.uk, please click on 'email us' to tell us what you think is needed. We'd love to know:

- ★ If we could do one thing to help you teach with **Rigby Star**, what would it be?
- ★ What resources would you like to see added to the **Rigby Star** Family?

