

# How Short Texts Help Students Move Beyond Surface-Level Comprehension

Although most daily encounters that adults have with print are short texts, such as articles, newsletters, or notices, students usually encounter longer texts in school. This often promotes rushed reading and surface-level comprehension. The short-text format is a highly effective way to focus on a specific comprehension strategy because students can read a passage quickly and then dig in for deeper comprehension. The format allows both time for deeper thinking and a chance for students to discuss what they've read.

In addition, the short-text format allows for “short and sharp” teaching. Each session has a single comprehension strategy focus, so teachers are not trying to cover the map. Focused teaching (in this case, teaching to one focus) enables deliberate instruction. This should not, however, be the way in which reading instruction is carried out on a daily basis. Of course, students should also be exposed to longer texts for the sustained reading that builds reading stamina. However, for students who lose comprehension after a page or two, short text provides an excellent alternative. If, starting in Kindergarten, students are regularly exposed to the strategies that lead to constructing meaning, their guided and independent reading practice will be meaningful reading practice, not just a decoding exercise.

Crevola, C. & Vineis, M. (2005). The Short-Text Format. *Now I Get It!: K-5 Comprehension Strategies for Fiction and Nonfiction (Guidebook for Instruction)* (pp. 7-8). New York, NY: Mondo Publishing.

