

Building Reading Coherence in Grade 6: A Scaffolded Pathway from Word Knowledge to Written Synthesis

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Abstract

Grade 6 reading modules often contain sound activities but leave teachers to infer how those activities work together. This conceptual-design article examines Reading Enhancement for the Development of Learners, a five-day module organized around The Legend of the Guava, and asks how its vocabulary, oral reading, comprehension, assessment, and summary-writing tasks can become a coherent learning progression. The analysis treats the module as an instructional artifact rather than as evidence of learner achievement. It maps each task to the reading process it is intended to support, identifies points where repetition can be converted into responsive practice, and proposes a seven-part pathway: prepare meaning, model fluent reading, rehearse language, read with a purpose, discuss evidence, compose a synthesis, and diagnose the next instructional need. The pathway preserves the module's practical sequence while strengthening links among word knowledge, fluency, comprehension, metacognition, and writing. Two design tools are offered: a coherence audit for reviewing lesson components and an evidence map that aligns learner products with instructional decisions. Particular attention is given to vocabulary depth, purposeful repeated reading, the distinction between skills and strategies, question quality, and the analytic use of summary writing. The article argues that a reading module becomes instructionally powerful not by accumulating activities but by making the contribution of each activity visible, cumulative, and responsive to learner evidence. The proposed design is suitable for classroom adaptation and future evaluation, but no claim of effectiveness is made without implementation data.

Keywords: Grade 6 reading; instructional coherence; vocabulary; oral reading fluency; reading comprehension; summary writing

Introduction

Reading comprehension is not produced by a single lesson component. Learners must recognize words efficiently, connect vocabulary and syntax to prior knowledge, build a coherent representation of events, monitor whether the text makes sense, and communicate an interpretation. The Active View of Reading emphasizes that word recognition and language comprehension interact with active self-regulation, motivation, and strategy use rather than operating as isolated channels (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Perfetti and Stafura (2014) similarly position word knowledge within a broader comprehension system in which lexical quality influences the construction of meaning. For classroom design, the implication is direct: vocabulary, fluency, comprehension questions, and writing should form a coordinated sequence rather than a collection of adjacent exercises.

The source material, Reading Enhancement for the Development of Learners, is a teacher's guide and learner module for Grade 6 built around The Legend of the Guava (Talan, 2021). Across five days it includes context-clue items, schema activation,

teacher read-aloud, word, phrase, and sentence drills, group and independent reading, literal and higher-order questions, an oral-reading check associated with Phil-IRI mechanics, a formative test, and a six-to-eight-sentence summary. The range is a strength: the module recognizes that reading involves preparation, performance, meaning making, and written response. Yet a wide range does not automatically produce instructional coherence. Teachers still need to know why an activity appears at a particular point, what evidence it should yield, and how that evidence should change the next move.

This article reframes the module as a design problem. It does not evaluate learners, estimate gains, or report classroom implementation. Instead, it asks how the existing sequence can be made cumulative and diagnostically useful. Such work matters because instructional materials often function as the enacted curriculum: their order, prompts, and scoring rules shape what teachers notice and what learners practice. A coherent module makes those decisions explicit.

Purpose of the Article

The article has three purposes: to analyze how the source module connects major components of reading instruction; to identify design revisions that strengthen progression from word knowledge to written synthesis; and to provide a practical pathway and evidence map for adapting comparable Grade 6 narrative units. The guiding question is: What relationships among tasks must be made explicit for a multi-activity reading module to operate as one responsive learning sequence?

Conceptual-Design Method

Artifact and Unit of Analysis

The study uses qualitative instructional artifact analysis. The unit of analysis is the task episode: a teacher prompt, learner action, expected product, and implied instructional decision. The source module's sixteen tasks were coded according to their primary contribution to word knowledge, oral language and fluency, comprehension, self-regulation, assessment, or composition. The analysis then examined three relationships: whether a task prepares learners for the next task, whether later tasks reuse or deepen earlier learning, and whether the learner's response gives the teacher usable evidence. No participant records, scores, interviews, or observations were available or inferred.

Standards for Coherence

Four standards guided the review. First, purpose visibility asks whether learners and teachers can identify the reading process being practiced. Second, cognitive progression asks whether the sequence moves from access to increasingly independent meaning making without equating difficulty with higher-order thinking. Third, evidence continuity asks whether products from one task inform later instruction. Fourth, adaptive value asks whether the design contains a plausible response when learners are already proficient or still need support. These standards draw on distinctions between reading skills and deliberate strategies (Afflerbach et al., 2008), on gradual transfer of responsibility from teacher modeling to independent performance (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), and on formative assessment as a process of using evidence to modify teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Reading the Existing Sequence

Meaning Is Prepared Before the Full Text

The module begins with photographs, experience questions, context clues, and a motive question. This order can reduce entry barriers and create a purpose for listening. Its success, however, depends on the depth of the vocabulary encounter. Selecting a synonym from four options can check an approximate meaning, but it does not establish flexible word knowledge. Beck et al. (2013) recommend rich encounters that connect meaning, use, morphology, and multiple contexts. In the source unit, words such as arrogant, filthy, hesitant, and starving could be linked to character evidence, intensity, antonyms, and sentence revision. The goal is not to preteach every difficult word; it is to prepare the few words that unlock central relationships in the narrative.

Schema activation also requires discipline. Asking about experiences with guava can build relevance, yet the connection should return to the text rather than remain a warm-up conversation. Learners might predict what features of the fruit a legend could explain, record the prediction, and revisit it after reading. This makes prior knowledge a hypothesis to be examined, not a substitute for textual evidence.

Oral Practice Needs a Meaningful Object

The module uses teacher oral reading, word drills, phrase drills, sentence drills, silent reading, and individual oral reading. This creates repeated exposure, but repetition has value only when each encounter has a distinct purpose. The National Reading Panel (2000) found support for guided repeated oral reading, while Rasinski (2012) argues that fluency includes accuracy, automaticity, and expressive interpretation. Repeating isolated words and phrases can help pronunciation, but prosody becomes meaningful when phrasing reflects a character's intention, a shift in mood, or a causal relation.

A stronger sequence would have the teacher model one short passage while thinking aloud about phrasing, invite paired rehearsal with a specific focus, and then ask learners to explain how vocal choices communicate meaning. The individual oral-reading check can be used diagnostically, consistent with the Phil-IRI manual's purpose of approximating performance in oral reading, silent reading, and listening comprehension to help teachers adjust instruction (Department of Education, 2018). It should not be treated as a stand-alone verdict about a learner's overall reading ability.

Questions Should Change the Reader's Work

The source moves from literal questions about setting and character to questions asking learners to judge the king's actions and compare forms of happiness. This progression opens space for interpretation, but labels such as LOTS and HOTS can conceal differences in task quality. A factual question may require careful inference if evidence is dispersed, while an opinion question may require little reasoning if no evidence or counterclaim is expected. Oakhill et al. (2015) distinguish processes such as inference, integration, monitoring, and knowledge of text structure; questions should be designed to make one or more of these processes visible.

A useful revision is to require an answer, evidence, and explanation. Instead of only asking how the old woman's words affected the king, learners can identify the change, cite two details from different parts of the story, and explain the causal link. Instead of asking whether they would act like the king, they can compare the king's choice with

an alternative, identify who is affected, and defend a judgment using the text. The question then becomes a tool for constructing and checking a mental model rather than an invitation to guess the teacher's preferred moral.

Summary Writing Can Reveal Comprehension

The final six-to-eight-sentence summary is the sequence's strongest opportunity for integration. Writing about a text can improve and reveal comprehension because the writer must select, connect, and organize ideas. Yet summary quality should not be reduced to the number of events recalled or the count of surface errors. A learner may reproduce many details without capturing causal structure; another may understand the story but need sentence-level support. McNamara (2007) emphasizes that comprehension instruction should make strategic processing explicit, including monitoring and repairing understanding.

The summary prompt can therefore ask learners to state the narrative problem, select the events that change it, explain the consequence, and express the resolution without copying. Analytic scoring should distinguish content selection, causal coherence, textual accuracy, organization, and language control. Separate dimensions make feedback actionable. Hattie and Timperley (2007) frame effective feedback around the goal, current performance, and next step; a single holistic score supplies too little information for that purpose.

Table 1

Coherence audit of major components in the source module

Component	Primary contribution	Existing strength	Revision priority
Context and vocabulary	Access to key meanings and prior knowledge	Uses familiar fruit and selected words	Deepen a few words and revisit initial predictions
Teacher read-aloud	Model of fluent, purposeful reading	Provides whole-text access	Name the modeled process and invite noticing
Word, phrase, sentence drills	Accuracy, phrasing, and language rehearsal	Creates repeated exposure	Tie phrasing and pronunciation to meaning
Group and silent reading	Supported and independent construction of meaning	Varies participation structure	Give each rereading a distinct purpose
Literal questions	Retrieval and local integration	Checks basic story information	Require evidence when information is dispersed
Interpretive questions	Inference, evaluation, and perspective	Invites judgment	Add evidence, counterclaim, and explanation
Oral-reading check	Approximation of accuracy and fluency	Creates individual evidence	Use results to select targeted support
Written summary	Selection, causal integration, and composition	Requires a whole-text product	Score content, coherence, and language separately

Note. The audit evaluates instructional relationships, not the effectiveness of the module or the performance of learners.

A Seven-Part Instructional Pathway

The proposed pathway retains the source module's practical breadth while assigning each phase a distinctive job. Prepare meaning selects a small set of indispensable words and activates relevant knowledge through a prediction. Model fluent reading demonstrates how phrasing, monitoring, and inference operate in a short passage.

Rehearse language provides targeted oral practice linked to the text. Read with a purpose gives each rereading a question or representation to build. Discuss evidence requires claims, details, and explanations. Compose a synthesis converts the emerging text model into a concise written product. Diagnose the next need uses oral, discussion, and written evidence to decide whether the learner needs vocabulary, fluency, inference, organization, or language support.

The phases are ordered but not rigid. If learners demonstrate secure vocabulary, rehearsal can be brief. If oral reading is accurate but comprehension is weak, more repetition is unlikely to solve the problem; the teacher should work on inference, monitoring, or knowledge connections. If discussion is strong but summary writing is fragmented, the learner may need a planning scaffold rather than more comprehension questions. Coherence therefore depends on branching decisions, not only on completing every page.

Table 2

Evidence map for responsive implementation

Phase	Learner evidence	Teacher decision	Possible adjustment
Prepare meaning	Explanation or use of key words; prediction with reason	Which meanings block access?	Use examples, morphology, visuals, or first-language resources
Model fluent reading	Noticing of pauses, emphasis, and self-correction	Can learners connect oral choices to meaning?	Contrast two readings and discuss the difference
Rehearse language	Accurate, increasingly expressive reading of a short segment	Is difficulty lexical, syntactic, or decoding-related?	Shorten the segment and target the specific source
Read with a purpose	Annotations, sequence map, or causal chain	Is the text model coherent?	Reread the relevant paragraph with a focused prompt
Discuss evidence	Claim supported by details and explanation	Is evidence relevant and sufficient?	Use sentence frames, partner rehearsal, or counterexamples
Compose a synthesis	Concise summary preserving causal structure	What separates understanding from writing control?	Plan orally, use a story map, or provide language feedback
Diagnose next need	Pattern across oral, discussion, and written products	What is the smallest productive next step?	Regroup learners and assign targeted practice

Note. Evidence should guide a next instructional move; completion alone does not establish mastery.

Discussion

Coherence Is More Than Correct Ordering

The analysis shows that the module already contains the major ingredients of an integrated reading sequence. The central design issue is not absence but relationship. Vocabulary precedes reading, yet it must return during interpretation and writing. Oral practice repeats language, yet it must illuminate meaning. Questions move beyond recall, yet they must demand evidence. The summary closes the unit, yet it should also reveal what to teach next. Instructional coherence is created when these relationships are explicit and cumulative.

This conclusion also clarifies the role of strategy instruction. Afflerbach et al. (2008) caution against treating a strategy as a skill performed automatically. A learner may answer a context-clue item correctly but still not choose to use context strategically during authentic reading. Teachers need to name when and why a strategy is useful, model the decision, invite guided use, and examine whether the learner transfers it. The same principle applies to rereading, questioning, summarizing, and monitoring.

Assessment Must Be Instructionally Consequential

A diagnostic label has value only when it changes support. Phil-IRI-informed oral reading, comprehension responses, and written summaries provide different windows on performance. None should be allowed to stand for the whole reader. A learner who reads slowly may understand deeply; a fluent performer may construct a weak causal model; a capable discussant may struggle to organize writing. Triangulating these products makes instruction more precise and reduces the risk of assigning a generic remediation package.

The evidence map also protects against unnecessary activity. When learners have met the goal, teachers can move to richer application rather than repeat the same drill. When learners have not met it, the response should target the identified source of difficulty. Black and Wiliam's (2009) account of formative assessment is useful here: evidence becomes formative through the action it enables, not through the frequency of testing.

Implications for Material Development

Developers of reading modules can apply the coherence audit before publication. Every task should state its purpose, anticipated evidence, relationship to prior learning, and likely response to difficulty. Repeated activities should change the reader's work rather than merely reproduce the same demand. Rubrics should separate dimensions that lead to different instructional decisions. Teacher notes should include adaptation routes for learners who need less or more support.

The pathway is not a replacement for teacher judgment or a complete reading curriculum. It is a design architecture for one narrative sequence. Vocabulary breadth, decoding development, knowledge building across texts, sustained reading volume, and varied genres require attention beyond a five-day module. The pathway is most defensible as a transparent classroom proposition to be adapted, documented, and evaluated.

Research Agenda

Future research can examine the pathway through design-based classroom studies, teacher usability interviews, analysis of learner work, and comparative lesson enactments. A pilot should document starting reading profiles, implementation fidelity, adaptations, and changes in vocabulary, oral reading, comprehension, and summary quality using measures aligned to the targeted processes. Research should also test whether the evidence map improves the precision of teacher feedback and regrouping. Any effectiveness study would require appropriate consent, ethical review, and transparent reporting; the present article supplies a design rationale, not outcome evidence.

Conclusion

A strong reading module is not defined by the number of activities it contains. It is defined by whether each activity prepares, reveals, or advances a consequential part of reading. The source Grade 6 module offers a promising sequence from vocabulary and oral reading to comprehension and summary writing. Its instructional value can be strengthened by clarifying purpose, deepening selected word learning, linking fluency to interpretation, requiring evidence in discussion, and using written synthesis diagnostically.

The seven-part pathway organizes these revisions as a responsive progression: prepare meaning, model fluent reading, rehearse language, read with a purpose, discuss evidence, compose a synthesis, and diagnose the next need. The result is not an empirical claim but a testable design proposition. It turns a sequence of tasks into a visible learning logic and gives teachers a principled basis for deciding what should happen next.

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