

Read Aloud Tips & Tricks 2025

Thank you for volunteering for Springfield School Volunteer's Read Aloud Program! Since 1969, Springfield School Volunteers has been making an impact in the lives of children across the Springfield Public School district, and we are ecstatic that you've chosen to join us in our work of helping to foster a love for books and sharing the importance of literacy in our schools.

Below, you will find some valuable tips to make the Read Aloud experience smoother for you and the school, and more fun for the students!

Before your Read Aloud day:

- Review the summary of the book assigned for that month"
- Look at the provided sample questions for before, and after story time.
- Read the book to test out when you should use different voices, change your inflection, add pauses for suspense, or ask questions.
- Watch the videos of the books being read aloud (links included) to get some more ideas.

On your Read Aloud day:

- Arrive to the school early. This will provide extra time to check in, review the book again and maybe even have a snack while you wait for the student leader to guide you to their class. It will also ensure that the Read Aloud starts on time.
- Parking may be limited at some schools. Park in any free space, as long as it isn't marked handicapped or reserved. All school buildings are locked to prioritize the safety of our students. Please follow the instructions to be buzzed in, and report to the main office.
- Don't forget to sign the book plaque! The book is a gift from you to the class. They'll want to remember who it is from!
- Once you get settled in your classroom, ask the **Before Reading...** questions you reviewed, or simply ask the class what they think the book will be about based on the cover. You might get some entertaining answers!
- Incorporate different voices for different characters, change inflection, and use facial expressions to add suspense.
- Once you're done reading, if time permits, ask the students what they thought of the book or some of the **After Reading...** sample questions we've provided.

After your Read Aloud day:

- If you have any suggestions or ideas for how the program could run smoother, including thoughts on the books, please email Elyssa Parrish, Read Aloud Program Coordinator, at parrishe@springfieldpublicschools.com. We are always open to hearing new ideas on how we can improve the program!
- Relax, rest, and share your positive experiences with us and others. Please know that you are a vital part of our team. We appreciate everything you do, and every book you read.

Thank you so much for being a Springfield School Volunteers Read Aloud volunteer!
Here's to another great year of great reading!

Best,

Springfield School Volunteers

Read Aloud Summaries, Tips & Tricks

PreK/K

October: *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson

Summary: This picture book encourages self-acceptance and celebrates diversity by showcasing how children who feel different find the courage to connect and share their stories.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/6rLlyFs8eIM?si=QLryniO-hP0jPIKO>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- What might it feel like to start a new school?

Questions After Reading:

- What did you learn from this story?
- How can you be kind to a friend this school year?

November: *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn

Summary: Chester Raccoon is nervous about starting school in the forest. To help ease his fears about being away from his mother, Mrs. Raccoon shares a family secret: The Kissing Hand.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/ZWzGUELaU8c?si=bbPb9RHyZjlf1lmQ>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book is about?
- What kind of animal is on the front cover?

Questions After Reading:

- Who would your kissing hand go to?
- If Chester were your classmate, how might you help him be less nervous?

December: *A Weekend with Wendell* by Kevin Henkes

Summary: In *A Weekend with Wendell*, the story follows Sophie as she navigates a weekend with her friend Wendell, who is a bit of a troublemaker and always wants to be the boss. After a while, Sophie can't wait for Wendell to go home until she finally asserts herself and shows Wendell that sometimes she must make the rules too, leading to a more cooperative and fun-filled weekend.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/0jizVFUF4To?si=MEZtShr4LrBEx-gR>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book is going to be about?
- What is your favorite activity to do on the weekend?

Questions After Reading:

- Have you ever had a hard time sharing?
- What is something you learned from Sophie and Wendell?

January: *The Thank You Letter* by Jane Cabrera

Summary: After a wonderful party, birthday girl Grace sits down to thank her friends and family for all of their kind gifts. But as she writes, Grace realizes there are so many things to be grateful for so she keeps writing! She thanks people all over town, including her teacher for helping her learn to write.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/axZD87hU0ro?si=FMEZETdl38x4HBhm>

Questions Before Reading:

- Why do people say thank you?
- What do you think the girl on the front is writing?

Questions After Reading:

- How would you feel if you received a Thank You letter from a friend?
- How do you express thanks to your parents/teachers/friends?

Pre-K/K continued

February: *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats

Summary: Join Peter as he goes on a wonderful snowy adventure! Along the way, he enjoys the crunching of snow under his feet, making a snowball, and he witnesses a snowball fight!

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/Owd_FSIn6ss?si=0LSVsFK1rr-zj2Q-

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book will be about?
- Do you like the snow?

Questions After Reading:

- What happened to Peter's snowball?
- What are your favorite things to do on a snowy day?

Grade 1

October: *The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid of Anything* by Linda Williams

Summary: A children's Halloween story about a brave old woman who, while collecting herbs and spices in the woods, encounters a series of spooky items that try to scare her.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/jtcGFWStz5o?si=wRZyPbqy8dnPFpVN>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- Who is someone in your life who isn't afraid of anything?

Questions After Reading:

- What did she do with the spooky things she found?
- Do you think there's anyone who really isn't afraid of ANYTHING?

November: *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst

Summary: In this contemporary classic, a mother reassures her twins that they are always together because they're all connected by an invisible string. "How can that be?" The mom explains the simple truth that binds us all: the invisible string is made of love.

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/xm7syTd9xSs?si=C_8q6Er2nygSYm5T

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this story is about?
- Can strings really be invisible?

Questions After Reading:

- What did you learn from this story?
- Who is your invisible string attached to?

December: *The One Day House* by Julia Durango

Summary: Inspired by a friend's volunteerism, *The One Day House* shows how a simple act of kindness can inspire a community to come together to make a real difference. In this story, a young boy, Wilson, dreams of one day fixing up his Gigi's house. His determination inspires everyone in the neighborhood to pitch in, and they all work together to make Gigi's house safe, clean, and pretty.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/Te1EKUXm6dQ?si=F2mAOKNEk9Opo1Fa&t=36>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- What's something you'd like to do "one day"?

Questions After Reading:

- How did the community come together to help Wilson and Gigi?
- What is one thing you learned from this story?

January: *Lola Sleeps Over* by Anna McQuinn

Summary: Lola has been to her cousin Hani's house many times, but she's never spent the night, until now. Lola packs lots of things for her first sleepover, and she and Hani have lots of adventures!

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/w6SSiKL-CkY?si=V9ZrPRzgRvoxsrlZ>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- What are some of your favorite activities to do at a sleepover?

Questions After Reading:

- What is an activity Hani and Lola do at their sleepover?
- If you haven't been to a sleepover before, would you want to go to one?

Grade 1 continued

February: *Rent Party Jazz* by William Miller

Summary: Set in New Orleans in the 1930s, *Rent Party Jazz*, is about a young boy named Sonny whose mother struggles to make rent. After his mother loses her job, they fear being evicted. But Sonny meets a jazz musician named Smilin' Jack, who offers to play at a rent party to raise money to help pay their rent. The party brings together neighbors who sing, dance, and contribute a bucket of coins, showcasing community support and the power of music!

Watch Read Aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAiP8oWjAJA>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- Do you know anything about Jazz music?

Questions After Reading:

- How did Sonny and his mom's friends help?
- Who is someone who helps you when you need it?

Grade 2

October: *My Hair is Magic* by M.L. Marroquin

Summary: Celebrating natural hair and self-acceptance this is the story of a confident young girl with a big, magical Afro. She embraces her hair as soft, protective, gentle, fierce, beautiful, calm, brave, and cool. When asked why her hair is so big, her reply is, "Why isn't yours?"

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/pbp7f3Ak1hY?si=i3AjhGpo_kN5TSrt

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book is about?
- What is something that is magical about you?

Questions After Reading:

- Is it ok to say no when people ask to touch you?
- What is something people ask you about yourself?

November: *LARF* by Ashley Spire

Summary: No one believes Larf exists, and he likes it that way. Larf is a sasquatch, the only sasquatch in the world (or so it seems). He has a very pleasant, and very private life in the woods, where on any given day he might be found jogging, gardening or walking his pet bunny Eric. One day Larf reads an article that says a sasquatch is scheduled to appear in the nearby city of Hunderfutz. He's not planning a trip, so that must mean he's not the only sasquatch in the world!

Watch Read Aloud:

Questions Before Reading:

- What type of animal is on the cover?
- Have you ever seen anything like it in real life?

Questions After Reading:

- Who is LARF?
- Do you think sasquatches really exist?

December: *Hannukah Bear* by Eric A. Kimmel

Summary: Bubba Brayna makes the best latkes in the village! On the first night of Hanukkah, the scent of her cooking wakes Old Bear from hibernation. He lumbers into town following the smell and makes his way to Bubba Brayna's house. Bubba Brayna, who is 97 and does not see or hear very well, mistakes Old Bear for the rabbi!

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/dUIUeETZfY4?si=S_TQe9W-vn3VFrA

Questions Before Reading:

- What is Hannukah?
- What culture of people celebrate Hannukah?

Questions After Reading:

- Why didn't Bubba Brayna realize the bear wasn't the rabbi?
- What's your favorite traditional food to enjoy during the holidays?

January: *If You Ever Want to Bring an Alligator to School, Don't!* by Elise Parsley

Summary: If your teacher tells you to bring something from nature for show-and-tell, what should you bring? An alligator could really make Magnolia stand out from the crowd! But when she starts to think of all of the things that could go wrong, will she change her mind?

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/HWBv3tRiplo?si=jZX35nlfLA0TBF15>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- Why shouldn't you bring an alligator school?

Questions After Reading:

- What's something you'd bring to show and tell?
- What's another animal you shouldn't bring to school?

Grade 2 continued

February: *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall

Summary: A young boy named Jabari, eager to jump off the diving board, initially feels nervous despite his swimming lessons and swim test. With the encouragement and support of his father, Jabari learns to manage his fear and ultimately takes a successful leap into the pool. The story emphasizes the importance of facing new challenges and overcoming one's fear.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/XwNNlgtHFiU?si=QrXGz0yxNfGtw1Mx>

Questions Before Reading:

- What is the character doing on the front cover?
- How do you think he is feeling?

Questions After Reading:

- When was a time you did something you were afraid to?
- How do you think Jabari feels AFTER jumping off of the diving board?

Grade 3

October: *The Legend of the Coqui* by Georgina Lazaro

Summary: This is a story about of how the coqui got its name. Long ago in Puerto Rico, the animals ate, slept, and snacked all day—every day. The queen of the forest, the parrot, knew this wasn’t good, so she challenged them to a race. Everyone strutted their stuff except the frogs. No one paid attention to them. They were too tiny. But could this be their chance to get noticed?

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/64XzWzjqRUY?si=EtPpBvBY_4DjaTpF

Questions Before Reading:

- What is the Coqui?
- What do you think this book is going to be about?

Questions After Reading:

- How did the coqui get noticed?
- What did they do to win the race?

November: *CeCe Loves Science* by Kimberly Darting

Summary: This story follows inquisitive Cece and her equally curious best friend Isaac as they explore a science project to determine if dogs eat vegetables. Using Cece’s dog Einstein as their subject, they follow the scientific method to investigate the question. They observe Einstein, research, collect data, and analyze it, ultimately leading to a surprising conclusion.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/IGd7pxA1WNo?si=mrh-Hcl40uuF9kIY>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book is about?
- What are your favorite school subjects?

Questions After Reading:

- What did Cece learn?
- What is something you are curious about?

December: *Nadia’s Hands* by Karen English

Summary: Nadia, a Pakistani American girl, is chosen to be the flower girl at her aunt's wedding. Her hands are decorated with traditional mehndi, a natural dye that creates intricate designs. Nadia worries about taking “those hands” to school on Monday, but when she sees how happy her hands have made her family, she comes to understand the rich culture she has inherited. * *There is a Note at the back of the book with the pronunciation and definition of the Urdu words used in the story.*

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/lvQ10hNLV50?si=Tgvv4q9BFrnyWC5N>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book will be about?
- What is the art on the cover?
- Have you ever been to a wedding?

Questions After Reading:

- Why did Nadia get a mehndi on her hands?
- What does she learn about her culture?

January: *Bad Boys* by Margie Palatini

Summary: Wally and Willy are on the lam again. But disguised as Willimina and Wallanda, they're in the clear ... or are they? These wolves think they can fool an entire flock with their womanly wool-wear, but three savvy sheep expose their plan. It looks like another close shave for these *baa-aad* boys!

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/tMOeFI963G4?si=mH5x_QqA67NdmanY

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you know about the Big Bad Wolf?
- What do we think this book is going to be about?

Questions After Reading:

- Why did Willy and Wally dress up as sheep?
- How do Willy and Wally get caught in their disguises?

Grade 3 continued

February: *Rescue and Jessica* by Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes

Summary: Rescue thought he'd grow up to be a Seeing Eye dog — it's the family business, after all. When he gets the news that he's better suited to being a service dog, he's worried that he's not up to the task. Then he meets Jessica, a girl whose life is also turning out differently than the way she'd imagined it. Now Jessica needs Rescue by her side to help her accomplish everyday tasks. It turns out that Rescue helps Jessica see after all: a way forward, together, one step at a time. An Endnote from the authors tells more about the training and extraordinary abilities of service dogs, including their real-life best friend and black lab, Rescue.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/v2CL5PnXTck?si=ERPogzDS9dIQm8JW>

Questions Before Reading:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- Why does the dog have a vest on?

Questions After Reading:

- What is a seeing eye dog?
- What's the difference between a seeing eye dog and a service dog?

Grade 4

October: *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts

Summary: All Jeremy wants is a pair of those shoes that everyone else at his school has. Grandma tells him, “We don’t have room for want, just need.” When Jeremy’s shoes end up falling apart and the guidance counselor gives him some to wear, Antonio is the only one who doesn’t laugh. Jeremy learns that sometimes the things you have are worth more than the things you want.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/bGKYmjaYqhY?si=PwctWA8L50Eq2elQ>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think is so special about *Those Shoes*?
- What is the setting of the story?

Questions After Reading:

- What did you learn from this story?
- What did the guidance counselor give Jeremy?
- What is something you have really wanted? Were you able to get it?

November: *The Walk* by Winsome Bingham

Summary: Granny takes her granddaughter on “the walk” along with some other “treasured souls.” The group is made up of young and old — a woman with a walker, children holding hands – and the procession grows and grows as they head toward their destination: the girl’s school, which is their polling location. Granny explains that the lesson today is for the community. It’s time to vote!

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/MSvR3MLYF5E?si=p2w2B-E6zDt9JMuv>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book is about?
- Where do you think they are walking to?

Questions After Reading:

- What did you learn from the story?
- Why is voting important?

December: *Mama Panya’s Pancakes: A Village Tale from Kenya* by Mary and Rich Chamberlin

Summary: On market day, Mama Panya’s son Adika invites everyone he sees to a pancake dinner. How will Mama Panya ever feed them all? This clever and heartwarming story about Kenyan village life teaches the importance of sharing, even when you have little to give. * *Additional references can be found at the back of the book, including a section on Speaking Kiswahili, which has the definition and pronunciation of the Kiswahili greetings in the story.*

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/0hWv4PfcBPQ?si=c9M55hkAwL-vnXJm>

Questions Before Reading:

- Who do you think the main character is?
- By a show of hands, how many of us like pancakes?

Questions After Reading:

- What did we learn from this story?
- What were you thinking when Adika kept inviting more people over for pancakes?

January: *A Drop Around the World* by Barbara Shaw McKinney

Summary: Through beautiful illustrations and poetic verse, *A Drop Around the World* tells the story of a raindrop’s journey through the water cycle. Traveling to different parts of the world, following *Drop* in its various forms (liquid, solid, vapor), students will learn how essential water is to all life.

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/6q_CQiDqtRU?si=LnOkCGArpqY8imWy

Questions Before Reading:

- How far around the world do you think a drop of water can go?
- What do you know about the water cycle?

Questions After Reading:

- What are some of the things we use water for?
- What did the drop of water do as it made it around the world?

Grade 4 continued

February: *Carter Reads the Newspaper* by Deborah Hopkinson

Summary: This book follows the life of Carter G. Woodson, who as a child read the newspaper to his father, a formerly enslaved man who could not read. Woodson became the second African American to earn a PhD and in 1926 established what would become Black History Month. * *Additional Resources at the back of the book include a list of the Black leaders pictured in the illustrations as well as a timeline of Woodson's life.*

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/oVi2ogkAK3s?si=Sx1LEllgNoNr9GRk>

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you think this book is going to be about?
- Do you know anyone who reads the newspaper?

Questions After Reading:

- Who is Carter G. Woodson?
- What topic did he fight to encourage schools to include?
- What does it mean to “blaze a trail”?

Grade 5

October: *The Boy Who Grew Flowers* by Jen Wojtowicz

Summary: Rink Bowagon is a shy boy with a strange talent – he grows flowers from his body during a full moon. He and his family are considered outcasts and none of the other students talk to him at school. But when a new student, Angelina Quiz, arrives Rink discovers that she has unique qualities too, and finds friendship and acceptance at last.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/4LHjyBiUJOU?si=Vir6Aqou6OngGXZp>

Questions Before Reading:

- Why do you think the boy has flowers? Where do you think he is taking them?
- What do you think this book is about?

Questions After Reading:

- How were Angelina and Rink different from their classmates?
- Is being different good or bad? How?
- What makes you special or unique?

November: *Uncle Jed's Barbershop* by Margaree King Mitchell

Summary: Uncle Jed is the favorite relative of the narrator, Sarah Jean. He's the only Black barber in the county and travels all over to cut his customers' hair. He dreams of the day when he can open his very own barbershop. There were many setbacks along the way, but Uncle Jed made his dream come true even when nobody else believed in it.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/Fcu1ajzOHx8?si=VKcl75G9bGKKP2N6>

Questions Before Reading:

- Do you have a favorite aunt or uncle? Why are they your favorite?
- Families include aunts, uncles, parents, siblings, grandparents, etc. What does a family do for each other?

Questions After Reading:

- How does Uncle Jed help his community?
- How does Uncle Jed demonstrate generosity and kindness throughout the story?
- What does this story teach about setting goals and not giving up?

December: *Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki

Summary: Shorty and his family, along with thousands of other Japanese Americans, have been forced to relocate from their homes to a "camp" after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Fighting the heat, dust, and freezing cold nights of the desert, Shorty and the others at the camp need something to look forward to, even if only for nine innings.

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/Edf64unhJw4?si=v6M48x_LkfSSYITD

Questions Before Reading:

- What do you know about Pearl Harbor?
- Have you ever had a nickname? How can a nickname make someone feel like they do or do not belong?

Questions After Reading:

- Why are Shorty, his family, and other Japanese Americans at the camp? How did they get there?
- How does playing baseball make Shorty and his family/friends feel about themselves?

Grade 5 continued

January: *Sir Cumference and the Roundabout Battle* by Cindy Neuschwander

Summary: Edmund Rounds, the castle steward, and Sir Cumference notice strangers camped nearby. The steward's son, who everyone calls Rounds 2, is busy taking inventory but decides to investigate. He reports back that an enemy is lying in wait! Will he figure out how many bows and arrows they have to create an appropriate battle plan in time? In this installment of the Sir Cumference series, students will learn the rounding techniques Rounds 2 used to figure out the totals more quickly and help stave off a potentially disastrous attack.

Watch Read Aloud: https://youtu.be/lkkBdlkg7vQ?si=znuSKTVgvB3_KiqM

Questions Before Reading:

- What is the setting of this story?
- What do you think this book will be about?

Questions After Reading:

- What's something you learned from this book?
- How does Rounds 2 use problem-solving skills throughout the story?

February: *Trombone Shorty* by Troy Andrews

Summary: Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews got his nickname by carrying a trombone twice as long as he was high. A 2016 Caldecott Honor and Coretta Scott King Award Winner, Trombone Shorty is a lively autobiography about how the author followed his dream of becoming a musician, despite the odds of growing up in New Orleans's Tremé neighborhood.

Watch Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/QitquEL48Co?si=J-80s5ablRMWggbxN>

Questions Before Reading:

- Do any of you play musical instruments?
- Do you think Trombone Shorty is a nickname?
What might you be able to infer about this person based on this nickname?

Questions After Reading:

- Is this story fiction or non-fiction?
- Where did this story take place?
- What do you know about New Orleans? Have you ever been there?