

What is the Science of Reading?



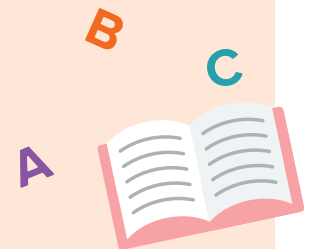
The Science of Reading refers to our collective understanding of how we read based on thousands of studies spanning 50+ years in the modern era. It is a complex, interdisciplinary topic spanning the fields of neuroscience, linguistics, psychology, and education, among others.



The most important takeaway is that reading is not a natural cognitive process. It's not something we learn by instinct. It must be explicitly taught and reinforced, preferably from an early age when our minds are better at building the necessary bridges between sight, speech, and meaning.

The Five Essential Components

- ▶ Phonemic awareness
- ▶ Phonics
- ▶ Fluency
- ▶ Vocabulary
- ▶ Comprehension



Language Comprehension

Background Knowledge

facts, concepts, etc.

Vocabulary

breadth, precision, links, etc.

Language Structures

syntax, semantics, etc.

Verbal Reasoning

inference, metaphor, etc.

Literacy Knowledge

print concepts, genres, etc.

Word Recognition

Background Knowledge

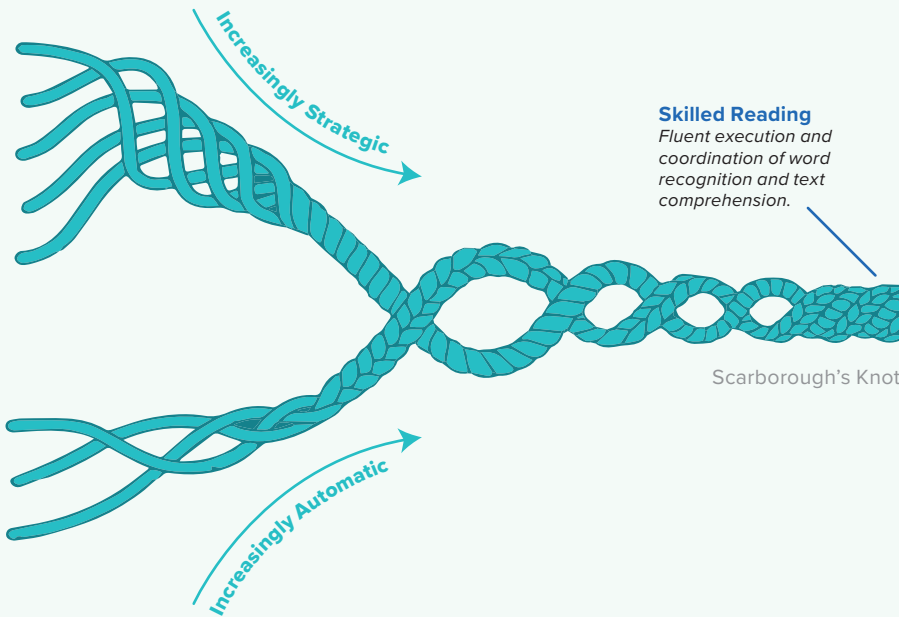
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Scarborough's Knot



The Simple View of Reading

One approach that has consistently stood up to scientific scrutiny is the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). This is the idea that reading comprehension is the product of two components—word recognition and language comprehension. The ability for students to recognize and decode written words is only half the battle—students must also have the background knowledge, vocabulary, and conceptual understanding of language necessary to give meaning to those words.

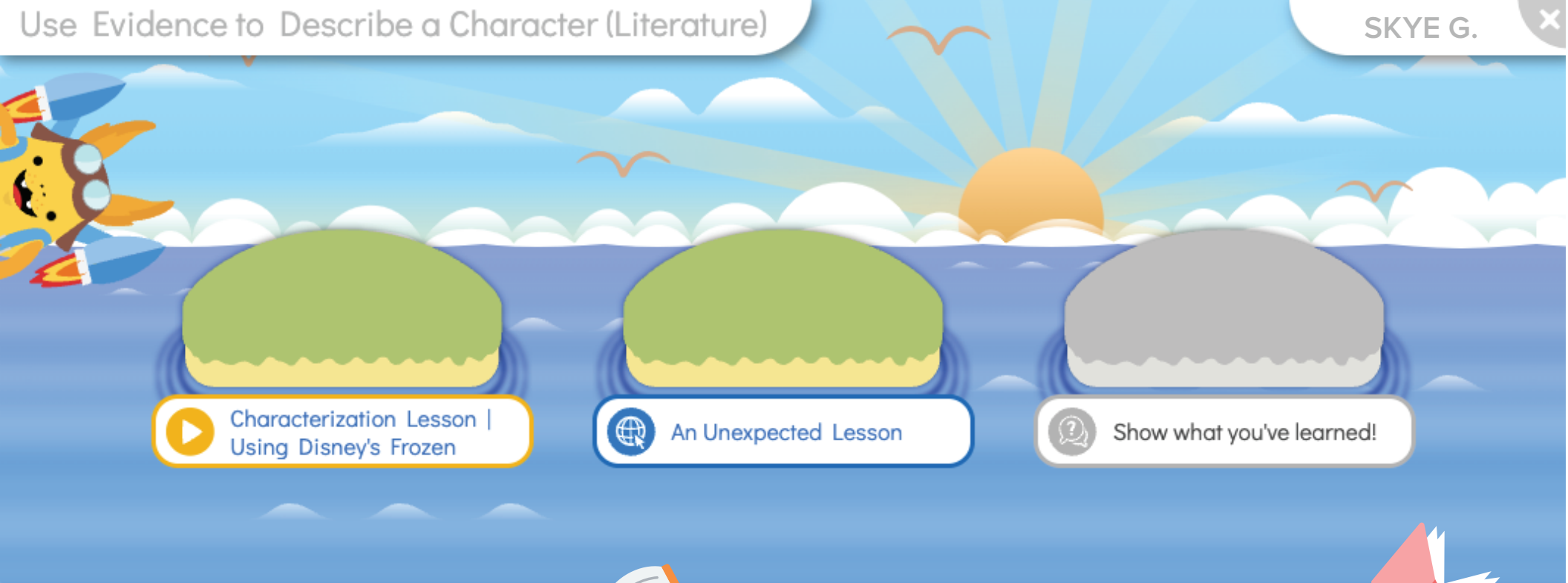


Explicit and Systematic Instruction

This term appeared in the National Reading Panel's report to Congress (2000) and has become a cornerstone of effective literacy frameworks in the years since.

Here's what it means:

- ◆ **Explicit:** Direct instruction, clear modeling, no ambiguity. This is in contrast to previous schools of thought in which students were asked to imply letter-sound-meaning connections while reading, with less time spent on explicit instruction (especially in phonics).
- ◆ **Systematic:** Purposeful lesson sequencing, developing requisite background knowledge, new concepts build on previous instruction. Systematic reading instruction means strategically weaving in the five key components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through a holistic approach that continuously builds on itself.



How eSpark Aligns

Explicit and Systematic Instruction

Students begin every Quest with a framing video, in which eSpark clearly defines the purpose of the quest and introduces the new concept through concise, direct instruction. That purpose is reiterated multiple times throughout the Quest.

eSpark's learning designers are intentional about how our reading Quests are sequenced. As a result, each Quest builds on prior learning and students are more likely to possess the requisite skills and knowledge before being presented with a new concept.

The Five Essential Components of Reading

eSpark's early reading instruction includes an intentional balance of all five. Through a combination of Small Group Skills and independent Quests, teachers can easily identify gaps and differentiate instruction to fill areas of need for any student.

Building a Love of Reading

Early reading instruction can be tedious, and the work involved has the potential to turn students off from reading. eSpark's play-to-learn approach keeps students engaged and having fun during these critical stages, building the knowledge without diminishing the spark.