

Summer Reading

Under the Covers and Around the Campfire

by Jerry Stemach & Carol Seibert

Jerry documents evidence that reading 'volume' - how much a student reads - is directly related to their success with reading. Read on to see how to encourage your students to read this summer. Carol offers a [complete lesson plan](#) to jumpstart your students' summer reading goals. You'll get [complete texts](#) of our re-told versions of *The Telltale Heart* and *The Gold Bug* short stories from our *Start-to-Finish® Library series* as well as [complete professionally-narrated audio files!](#)

What the Experts Say: Dr. Kevin Feldman



"Common sense confirms what research suggests--**reading volume matters!** Reading voluminously not only builds reading skills, **it increases vocabulary, general background knowledge, and supports improved cognitive functioning across the board!**

Sadly, struggling readers are caught in a "Catch 22" relative to reading. The very thing they need to do—read—they often avoid because they are not yet skilled. Noted literacy researcher, Keith Stanovich dubbed this phenomenon the "**Matthew Effect**", taken from the Bible parable in which "**the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.**"

Literacy research strongly supports the findings that **struggling readers need a combination of both excellent explicit instruction and prodigious amounts of reading practice.** Therefore, teachers and parents need to pull out the stops to **ensure struggling readers are provided with age-appropriate reading materials that tickle their fancy and motivate them to read, read, and read some more! It does make a difference!**

*Kevin Feldman, Ed.D.
Director of Reading and Early Intervention,
Sonoma County Office of Education, CA*

Once upon a midnight dreary,
while I pondered weak and weary,
over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore...



Well, you've done it again. You've put together a few lines from a famous poem, a picture of a bird and a man, and said, "Ah! **The Raven** by Edgar Allan Poe."

Now, what has Mr. Poe to do with summer reading? Read on.

Summer is just around the corner: hours of extra daylight, baseball and bike rides, a camping trip perhaps with spooky stories around a campfire, stay up late, sleep in later. At last—**time to read** all those books I never got to all school-year long!

Time for reading?? Not if you're one of the struggling readers we know. Reading is the *last thing* you'll find them doing this summer. **Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."** They are 'weak and weary' from pondering over many a quaint and curious volume...until now.

The Rich Get Richer

Experts like Kevin Feldman and Keith Stanovich tell us that as good readers spiral upward to higher and higher levels of language and knowledge, struggling readers spiral downward into lowered expectations, lack of motivation and limited practice.

Did you know that the **average 5th grade student at the 90th percentile reads almost two million words per year outside of school, more than 200 times more words than the student at the 10th percentile, who reads just 8,000 words outside of school during a year?** (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998) It should come as no surprise, therefore, that these same struggling readers lag behind their able-reading peers in vocabulary development, background knowledge, fluency, and comprehension skills.

More reading—reading volume—leads to increased fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension. So the good news is that the more students read, the more information, motivation, and pleasure they will derive. Now, **how to get them reading this summer?**

Thank-you, Mr. Poe

We must convince students who struggle to read smoothly that there is a cost-benefit ratio to reading. **Step one is finding material that is at once motivating, age-appropriate, and at a skill level that allows these students to read with some degree of independence and fluency.**

Thanks to Edgar Allan, we have two re-told short stories that you can share with your struggling readers. Both stories are real page-turners.

[The Gold Bug](#)
(2-3 readability)



[The Telltale Heart](#)
(4-5 readability)



These collections of short stories come from the Start-to-Finish library of books. They can be purchased in three formats: computer book, audio book and paperback book to provide just the right combination of scaffolding so that older, struggling readers can be successful.

Today, we offer the audio (MP3) and print (PDF) files for two complete stories for FREE.

Scaffolding for Success

With this kind of scaffolding, students are suddenly motivated to read because the content matches their interest level and **they will be successful.** They can follow along as the text is read by an actor. They pay attention to the words because the text is considerate of their developing syntactic competence, vocabulary and background knowledge. And just wait until you hear Kurt Elling reading *The Telltale Heart*. The bedtime flashlight or campfire glow will cast ghostly shadows.

Reading Volume

Struggling readers lag behind able readers in vocabulary because vocabulary acquisition is linked to the volume of reading students do. Start-to-Finish books build vocabulary systematically. Less frequently occurring words are supported by definitions, illustrations and story context.

Volume is a curious word. You know its usage here. What does it mean to a struggling reader? Loudness? as in 'turn up the volume.' Book? as in 'the volume I want is missing from the set.' Considerable quantity? as in reading volume leads to increases in vocabulary, background knowledge, and improved cognitive functioning across the board! In the words of Kevin Feldman, our struggling readers must read voluminously and we must do all we can to get them started — this summer!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cunningham, A.E. & Stanovich, K.E. (1998). What reading does for the mind. *American Educator*. Spring/Summer.


Stanovich, K.E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360-407.

Below is the **Universally Designed lesson**, including **2 FREE short stories** and audio files from *The Gold Bug* (Gold level Start-to-Finish Library) and *The Telltale Heart* (Blue level Start-to-Finish Library)

Getting Ready for the Lesson

Everything you need for this lesson is available to you from the internet. Simply click on the links provided below. (Go here to get the resources online:

http://www.donjohnston.com/research/articles/SummerReading_JS_CS_LLMay07.html

1. **Download and Print** the chapters from the PDF files, [The Gold Bug](#), Parts 1-4 (Start-to-Finish Gold Library, 2-3 grade readability) and [The Telltale Heart](#), Parts 1 & 2 (Start-to-Finish Blue Library, 4-5 grade readability) (**TIP:** Print 2-sided to match the audio. Test 1 copy before printing all copies.) **NOTE:** These books are written for older students who struggle with reading. Please listen to or read the text before making copies to ensure the material is appropriate for your students. 
2. **Download the MP3 audio** file to a player such as an iPod®. The MP3 file is a fluent reading of the passage by a professional narrator.
Here's how: On a PC, RIGHT CLICK on the [The Gold Bug MP3](#) or [The Telltale Heart MP3](#) and choose SAVE TARGET AS...
On a Mac, press CTRL key, click the [The Gold Bug MP3](#) link or [The Telltale Heart MP3](#) link then SAVE LINK AS...
Browse to the location where you want the file saved. **Click OK.**
3. If you prefer, [play the MP3 from here](#) over your computer speakers. (Allow pop-ups so player will open.)
4. If you want to make the entire book and audio recording available, order them before you begin the lesson. Call 800.999.4660, option 2 and request **Code F07MWB** for the paperback, **Code F07AWB** for the audio book of *The Gold Bug* or. **Code H21MWB** for the paperback, **Code H21AWB** for the audio book of *The Telltale Heart*.

Part II: The Lesson

Engaged Learning

Brewster and Fager (2000) use research to support their assertion that, unless learners are motivated and engaged, they will not invest their time and effort in something like volume reading.

...numerous studies have shown that **student engagement in school drops considerably as students get older** (Anderman & Midgley, 1998)... Whether the decrease in student engagement is the result of unmotivated students or of school practices that fail to sufficiently interest and engage all learners, **an ample body of research suggests that the situation can be changed** (Brooks, Freiburger, & Grotheer, 1998; Dev, 1997; Skinner & Belmont, 1991). (*emphasis mine*)

Use these two FREE Poe short stories with the accompanying MP3 audio files to change this situation for YOUR learners!

These highly-engaging, multi-modal stories will fit right into older learners' late night storytelling this summer. And perhaps the ghost of Edgar Allen Poe will motivate them to read even more!

THE LESSON

Engage, Motivate and Connect to Content—BEFORE the School Year Ends

- Explain that Edgar Allen Poe is the author of some of the scariest classic stories ever written.
- Use the audio book file to read Part 1 of ***The Telltale Heart*** aloud to the whole group
- Have learners close their eyes and try to visualize the story as it is being “told” by the main character.
 - Think—Pair—Share
 - Think about (predict) what might happen next (in Part 2)
 - Get together with a learning partner
 - Write down or draw a scary ending to the story
 - Share story endings with the whole group.To increase learner involvement and engagement, have learning pairs act out their story endings.

Scare Up Increased Summertime Reading... Really!

Host a Summer Storytelling Contest to entice adolescent readers to read, practice, and retell another scary story that will impress their friends and cause goose bumps on even the most sweltering of summer nights. The result will be an increase in background knowledge, increased fluency, and the formation of personal connections to literature.

- **Challenge Categories**

Category 1: Create an audio, video or live “reading” or re-enactment of *The Telltale Heart*, *The Gold Bug* or any other scary short story read during the summer.

Category 2: Create an audio, video or live “reading” or re-enactment of a real-life scary story told by a parent, relative or friend.

Category 3: Create an audio, video or graphic advertisement for *The Telltale Heart*, *The Gold Bug* or any other scary short story read during the summer.

- **Resources to get them started:**
 - If time and resources allow, save both audio files (*The Telltale Heart* and *The Gold Bug*) to CD and make a copy for each student.
 - Give the printed text for each of the stories and the accompanying audio CD to each learner. If your students will have access to a computer during the summer and you want to save paper, save the PDF files on the CD as well and instruct them to save the PDFs onto their computer to read while they listen to the audio from the CD. (Adobe Acrobat Reader required to read PDFs. It is free to download.)
 - Provide a list of additional reading resources. A short list of Start-to-Finish print/audio/computer books and scary story internet sites are listed below to get you started. Please note that Don Johnston Incorporated does not endorse or guarantee quality of internet resources.
- **Entering the Contest:**
 - Encourage learners to enter the contest alone, with a friend or with a group of friends... whatever engages and motivates THEM!
- **Submitting Entries:**
 - If possible, provide a way for learners to submit recordings (audio or video) via email, US mail or a drop-off location at the school during the summer months so participants can submit their stories as soon as they complete them.
 - Set a final submission date (during the summer or during the first week of class in the Fall).
- **Kick off the new school year with a storytelling festival.**
 - Have the audience vote on the “best in show” for each category.

Scary Stories on the Internet:

[Project Gutenberg—Books by Edgar Allen Poe](#)
[Project Gutenberg—The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving](#)
[A list of scary stories for Elementary-level readers](#)
[American Folklore](#)

More Scary Stories Available from Start-to-Finish:

[Frankenstein](#) (Gold Library, 2-3 reading level)
[The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde](#) (Gold Library, 2-3 reading level)
[The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Rip Van Winkle: Short Stories by Washington Irving](#) (Blue Library, 4-5 reading level)

If you use this idea at your school, I'd love to hear how it went!

[Email Carol Seibert: cseibert@donjohnston.com](mailto:cseibert@donjohnston.com)

References

Brewster, C. & Fager, J. (October, 2000). *Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time-on-Task to Homework*. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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http://www.donjohnston.com/research/articles/SummerReading_JS_CS_LLMay07.html

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