Why Use Decodable Stories and Structured Literacy?

Structured literacy is the method where students are taught the five building blocks of reading, writing and spelling in a structured, systematic way that is cumulative. Structured literacy builds upon past concepts and introduces new concepts in a systematic way. Because English is such a complex language, made up of many languages - Latin, Greek, German, Anglo-Saxon, and French, to name just a few, it is a complex language to teach.

Structured Literacy is not just decoding, phonemic awareness exercises, and what critics call "drill and kill." Structured literacy includes not only phonics and phonemic awareness activities, but also vocabulary building, read alouds of good literature, discussion of texts, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, fluency practice and learning to spell at the same time the student is learning to read.. It includes all of what is good about reading, as well as teaching "the code" so students can become readers of excellent literature, writers with good vocabulary and accurate spelling, that reflects their opinions and feelings of what they've read.

The rules for English reading and spelling are confusing until we learn the system. And even then, "the system" doesn't always follow its own rules because our language has evolved over thousands of years through many kinds of technologies. Spelling rules created for handwritten documents were kept even after we moved to printing presses and computers, and we have not systematically "cleaned our language up." Accents between British, Scottish, Australian and US countries also differ in how we pronounce some words (dy-na-sty versus dyn - a sty) So, we have exceptions to our reading and spelling rules. Many of our spelling rules were created so words looked better in "calligraphy" for bible transcription and for cursive writing. We do not use the letter /u/ next to m's, n's, or v's very often because scribes thought the letter u looked funny next to these letters in cursive (some, come, dove, love, front, etc.) The changing of the u to an o was called "[Scribal O." Youtube it by clicking here for more information.](#)

So, teaching children to read in English is more complicated, and decodable texts allow children to practice newly learned skills. Decodable readers used to be the standard for beginning readers, but they fell out of favor because "they weren't as interesting to teach and discuss." However, they are vitally important for new readers. A study by Jennifer Cheatham and Jill Allor reviewed seven studies conducted using decodable texts and found that "decodability is a critical characteristic of early reading text as it increases the likelihood that students will use a decoding strategy and results in immediate benefits, particularly with regard to accuracy." The study also found that decodable books are the key strategy in readers learning the complex code of English, but other books and stories should not be neglected [(Cheatham and Allor, 2021)](#)

There is a shortage of decodable texts, and as I have taught students over the years, I have made additional stories for them to read when I have run out of my supply of purchased decodable readers.

My decodable stories are about travel, hunting, pet sitting, rip sticking and other activities elementary children, and even middle school children enjoy. Please feel free to download and use my stories to help your students!

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