


December 2008 — Volume 12, Number 3

Well Read 3: Skills and Strategies for Reading, Student Book		
Author:	Mindy Pasternak and Elisaveta Wrangell (2008)	
Publisher:	New York: Oxford University Press	
Pages	ISBN	Price
Pp. xiii+186	\$26.50 U.S.	978-0-19-476104-8 (Paper)



Well Read is a four-level series of classroom textbooks that reinforces crucial reading skills and vocabulary strategies. At each level, in addition to the Student Book, there is a *Well Read Instructor's Pack* (separate price), which includes a PowerPoint® Teaching Tool, ExamView Pro® Test Generator with customizable tests and quizzes, and Answer Key.

This review focuses on the third level, *Well Read 3*, which targets intermediate-level ESL/EFL learners. Judging from the topics and the activities, the targeted audience is young adults or adults who have academic purposes. The goal of *Well Read 3* is to help learners develop their reading skills strategically. While reading the thematic content, learners are gradually introduced linguistic content including reading skills and vocabulary strategies throughout the textbook. Its approach to strategy learning is comprehensive, and the activities used in this textbook seem to help raise the metacognitive awareness of learners to become strategic readers who make use of a wide repertoire of strategies in combination (Grabe & Stoller, 2001).

Well Read 3 consists of eight chapters, each with central theme: “Survival Psychology,” “The Musical Mind,” “The Sociology of Food,” “Temporary Art,” “Redefining Activism,” “Marine Behavior,” “Medical Technology,” and “The Science of Addiction.” Each chapter is divided into seven sections: “Chapter Introduction,” “Text 1,” “Text 2,” “Text 3,” “Text 4,” “Putting It On Paper,” and “Taking It Online.”

Each “Chapter Introduction” begins with photographs and questions to activate learners’ background knowledge on the central theme of each chapter, followed by four texts. Although the four texts are grouped under the same central theme, every text is different in

topic and formality. The subject matters of the texts cover a variety of topics, and the texts include a wide range of genres, such as newspaper articles, online texts, magazine articles, tables, charts, and graphs. Taking Chapter 8, for example, the central theme is “The Science of Addition.” The subsequent text titles and genres are “Addicted to the Internet,” a newspaper article; “Work-Out Addiction,” a magazine article; “Television Addiction,” a table; and “Cell Phone Addiction,” an academic text. Also, the texts presented in this textbook are authentic. For example, you can read the article “Taiwan’s Marathon Man,” Text 4 in Chapter 5, online. The fourth text is followed by “Putting It On Paper,” which provides an opportunity for learners to integrate reading and writing skills. Two writing prompts based on the chapter’s theme are provided to write a paragraph, letter, or essay, with heuristic questions that appear to promote learners’ writing. At the end of each chapter is “Taking It Online.” This section enables learners to access external links to further explore the theme of each chapter while working on the tasks using the Internet.

Under the four different reading texts, Texts 1 through 4, there are smaller activities: “Getting Started,” “Active Previewing and Skimming,” “Reading and Recalling,” “Understanding the Text,” “Reading Skills,” “Vocabulary Strategies,” and “Discussing the Issues.” These activities form a pre-, during-, and post-reading framework that seems to contribute to developing learners’ reading strategies. Among the activities, I like the idea of the “Active Previewing and Skimming,” which asks learners to read only brief and selected parts of the texts, such as “Preview the academic text below. Underline the title, the first sentence of each paragraph, and the last sentence of the text as you preview.” This activity also encourages learners to read for general comprehension with very simple questions such as “What is the topic of this text?” I also like the way in which Well Read 3 integrates the introduction and practice of reading skills, vocabulary strategies, and the reading comprehension tasks. The “Reading Skills” activity introduces learners to the idea of the topic, main idea, and supporting details step by step through the book. The “Vocabulary Strategies” activity introduces learners to reading without a dictionary through such topics as skipping words, synonyms, contrast, and context clues. These skills and strategies will help learners to become autonomous readers. The skills and strategies are practiced with the sentences or paragraphs taken from the texts of each chapter, while the comprehension tasks are given in the “Understanding the Text” activity. In addition, I found the “Reading and Recalling” activity interesting. This activity, which seems to be derived from the perspective of cognitive psychology, asks learners to practice retaining information with their short-term memories and eventually aims to have them process it holistically.

One of the other features to be mentioned is the length of the texts in a variety of genres. The texts might be rather long for some intermediate learners. Taking Chapter 1 for example, Text 1, an online article, is 542 words long, Text 2, a magazine article, is 632 words long, Text 3, a graph, is 43 words long, and Text 4, an academic text, is 822 words long. This might provide a good opportunity for learners to experience a lot of reading. In spite of the length, the activities still seem doable for intermediate learners, for they set very specific goals, with the tasks focusing on strategy learning.

In addition to the well-synthesized activities of the skills and strategies and the reading comprehension, *Well Read 3* is very user-friendly. The photographs used are current and sharp, and their size and the number are appropriate. The layout and the box frames of the texts provide learners with visual cues for the genres of the texts. The content page, where the title, page number, genre, reading skill, vocabulary strategy, and graphics are listed, is well organized. Also, a “Vocabulary Index” and “Skills and Strategies Index” are given at the end of the book, which is very helpful for both the learners and the teachers.

There are only a few concerns with this textbook if actually used for intermediate learners. Low-intermediate learners might have some difficulty in completing the reading tasks because of the size of their lexicons. Even though vocabulary strategies are introduced to learners and explanations of the crucial words are given in footnotes, readers still seem to be required to have a comparatively large vocabulary in order to read the texts and complete the tasks, which requires teachers to arrange the tasks or help their learners to understand the vocabulary. Also, compared to the level of vocabulary required for understanding the reading texts, some tasks in the “Vocabulary Strategies” activity might be rather easy for learners of this level, such as what subject and object pronouns refer to.

Overall, even though there might be room for improvement, I can highly recommend *Well Read 3: Skills and Strategies for Reading, Student Book*. This classroom textbook will prove beneficial both for ESL/EFL students and teachers. This textbook can help the students to address strategy learning over a long period of time with the necessary skills and strategies systematically introduced and practiced. Especially for ESL/EFL learners who lack fluency in reading and have difficulty going beyond sentence-level comprehension, *Well Read 3* will be quite helpful by encouraging them to enjoy the reading without worrying about understanding the meaning of every word. For teachers, this is an excellent tool because it can suggest a lot of pathways for the instruction of strategy learning.

References

Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2001). Reading for academic purposes: Guidelines for the ESL/EFL teacher. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 187-203). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

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