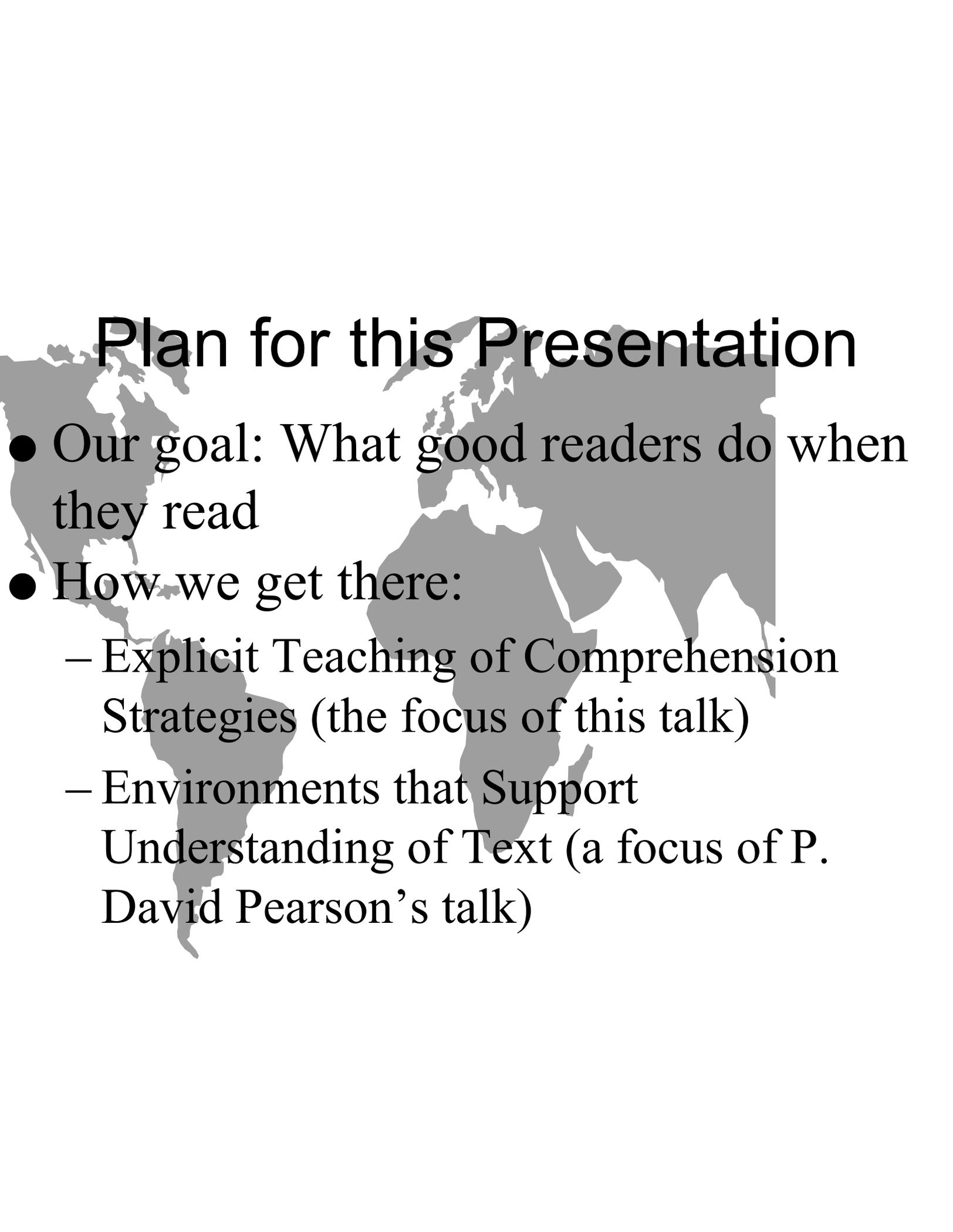




Building Comprehension through Explicit Teaching of Comprehension Strategies

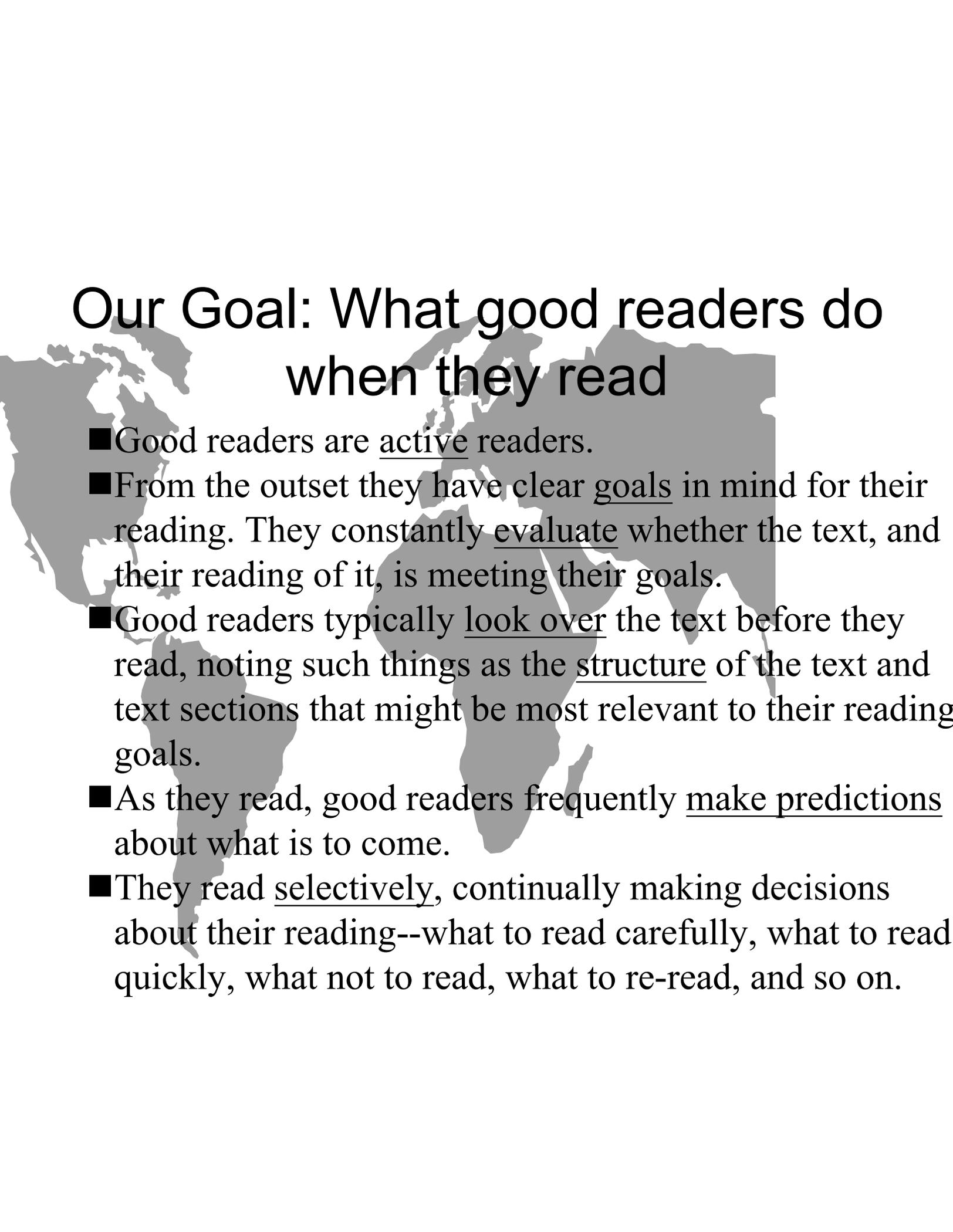
Presentation to the Second Annual MRA/CIERA Conference
September 22, 2001

Nell K. Duke
Michigan State University



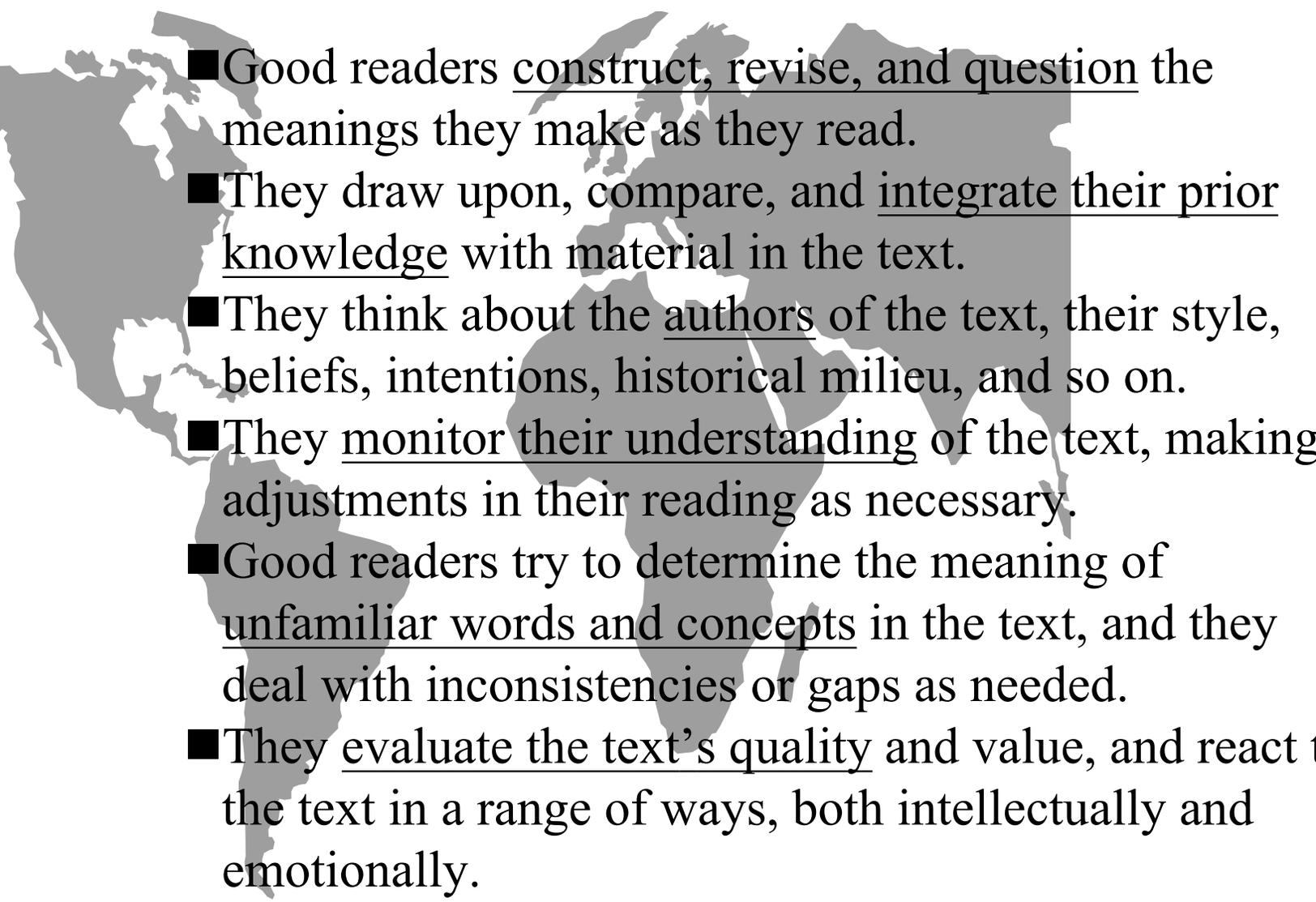
Plan for this Presentation

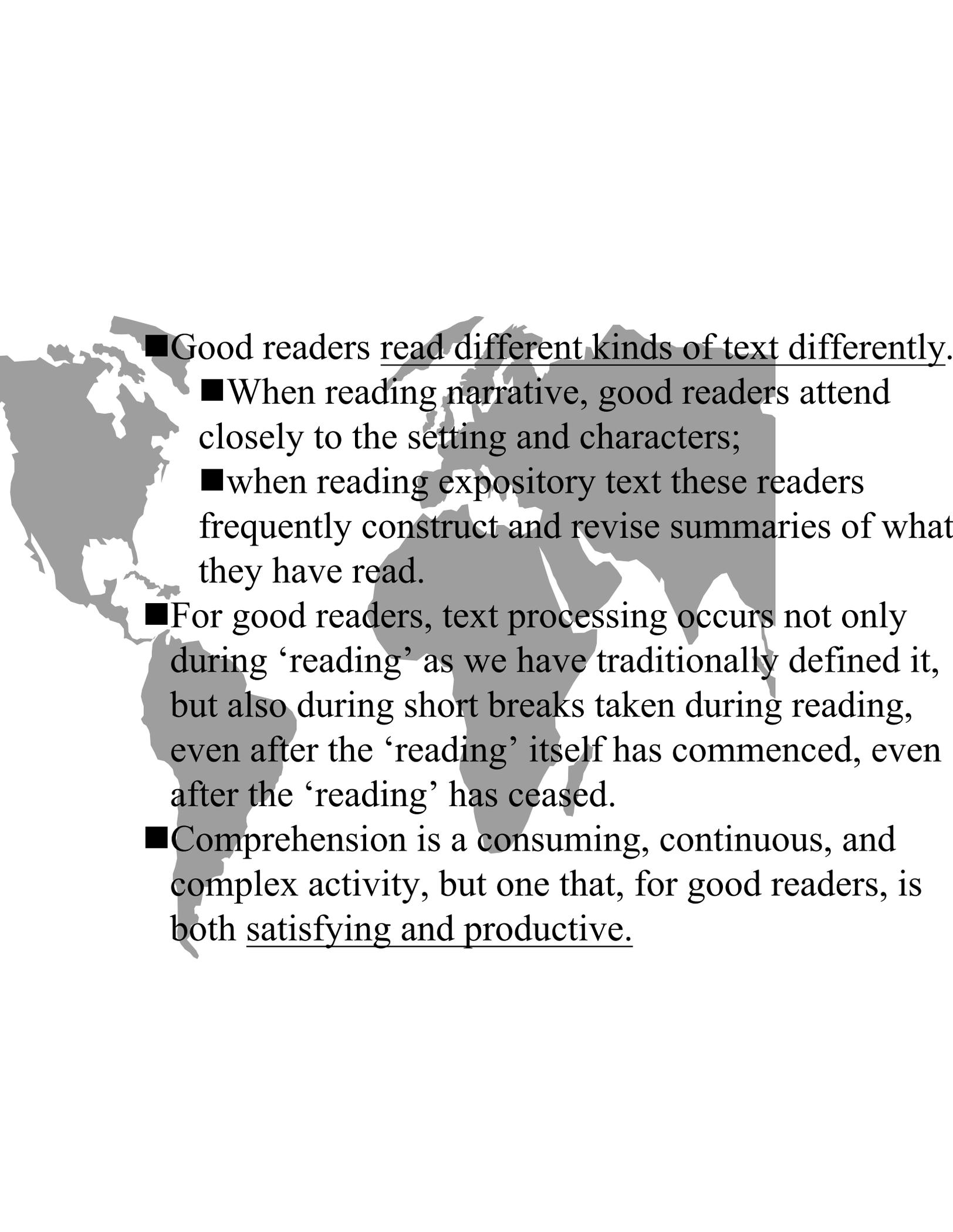
- Our goal: What good readers do when they read
- How we get there:
 - Explicit Teaching of Comprehension Strategies (the focus of this talk)
 - Environments that Support Understanding of Text (a focus of P. David Pearson's talk)



Our Goal: What good readers do when they read

- Good readers are active readers.
- From the outset they have clear goals in mind for their reading. They constantly evaluate whether the text, and their reading of it, is meeting their goals.
- Good readers typically look over the text before they read, noting such things as the structure of the text and text sections that might be most relevant to their reading goals.
- As they read, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come.
- They read selectively, continually making decisions about their reading--what to read carefully, what to read quickly, what not to read, what to re-read, and so on.

- 
- Good readers construct, revise, and question the meanings they make as they read.
 - They draw upon, compare, and integrate their prior knowledge with material in the text.
 - They think about the authors of the text, their style, beliefs, intentions, historical milieu, and so on.
 - They monitor their understanding of the text, making adjustments in their reading as necessary.
 - Good readers try to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts in the text, and they deal with inconsistencies or gaps as needed.
 - They evaluate the text's quality and value, and react to the text in a range of ways, both intellectually and emotionally.



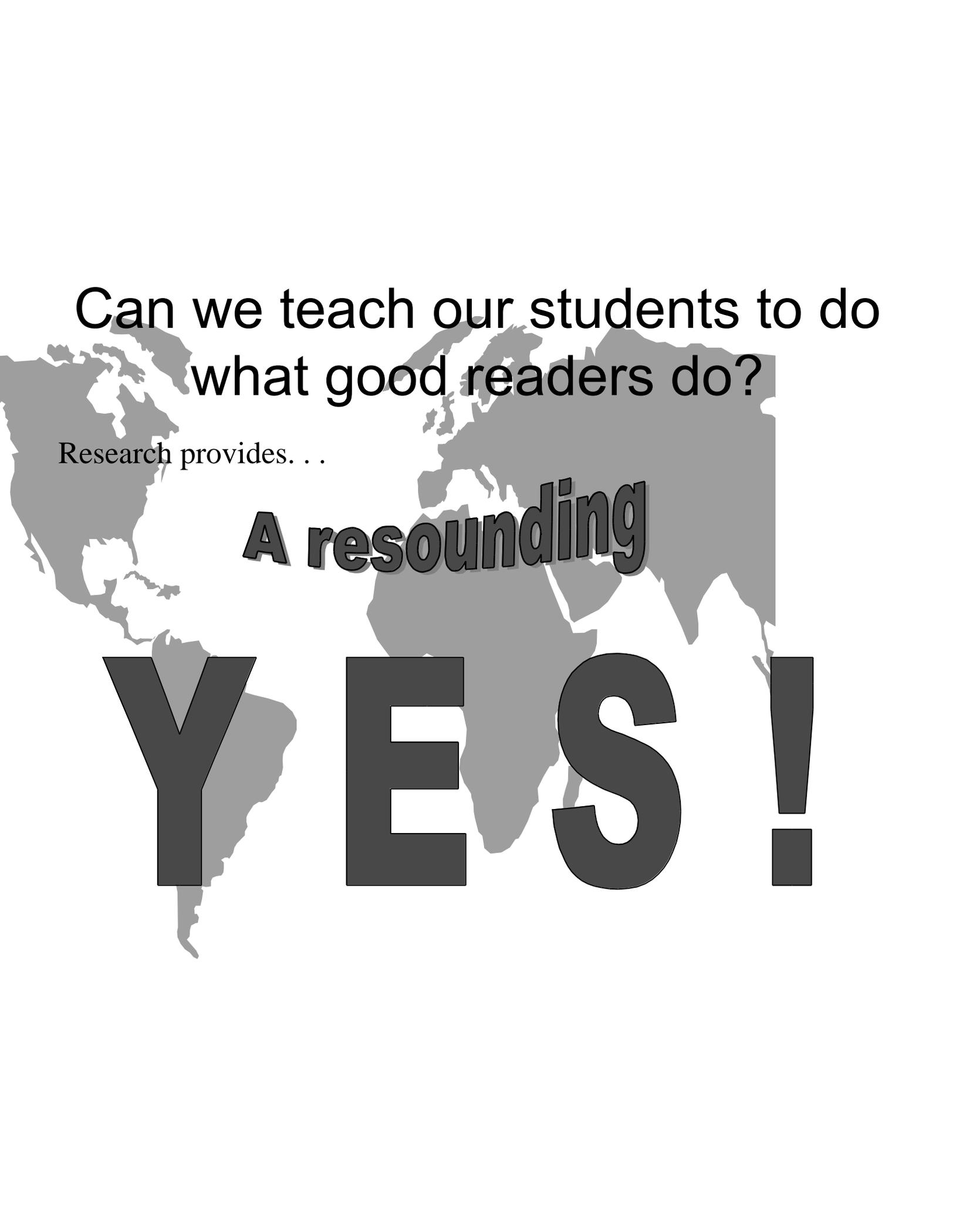
■ Good readers read different kinds of text differently.

■ When reading narrative, good readers attend closely to the setting and characters;

■ when reading expository text these readers frequently construct and revise summaries of what they have read.

■ For good readers, text processing occurs not only during ‘reading’ as we have traditionally defined it, but also during short breaks taken during reading, even after the ‘reading’ itself has commenced, even after the ‘reading’ has ceased.

■ Comprehension is a consuming, continuous, and complex activity, but one that, for good readers, is both satisfying and productive.



Can we teach our students to do
what good readers do?

Research provides. . .

A resounding

YES!



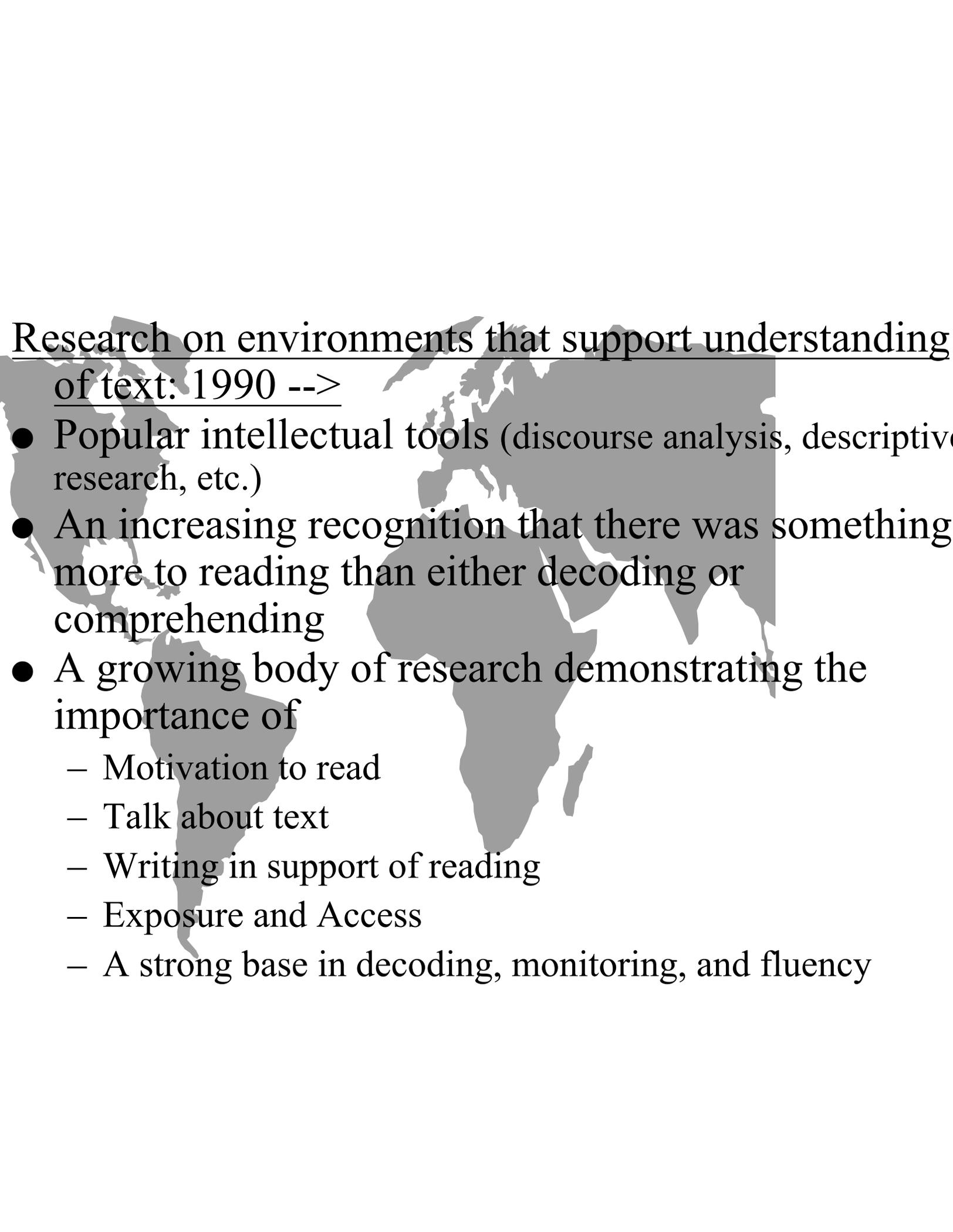
Research indicates that we build comprehension through:

- Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies
- Environments that support understanding of text

Where did this research come from?

Research on explicit teaching of comprehension strategies: The comprehension revolution 1970 - 1990

- New intellectual tools (psycholinguistics, cognitive science, etc.)
- An increasing recognition that there was something more to reading than decoding
- A growing body of research demonstrating
 - what good readers do when they read,
 - comprehension strategies worth teaching,
 - effective approaches to comprehension strategy instruction



Research on environments that support understanding of text: 1990 -->

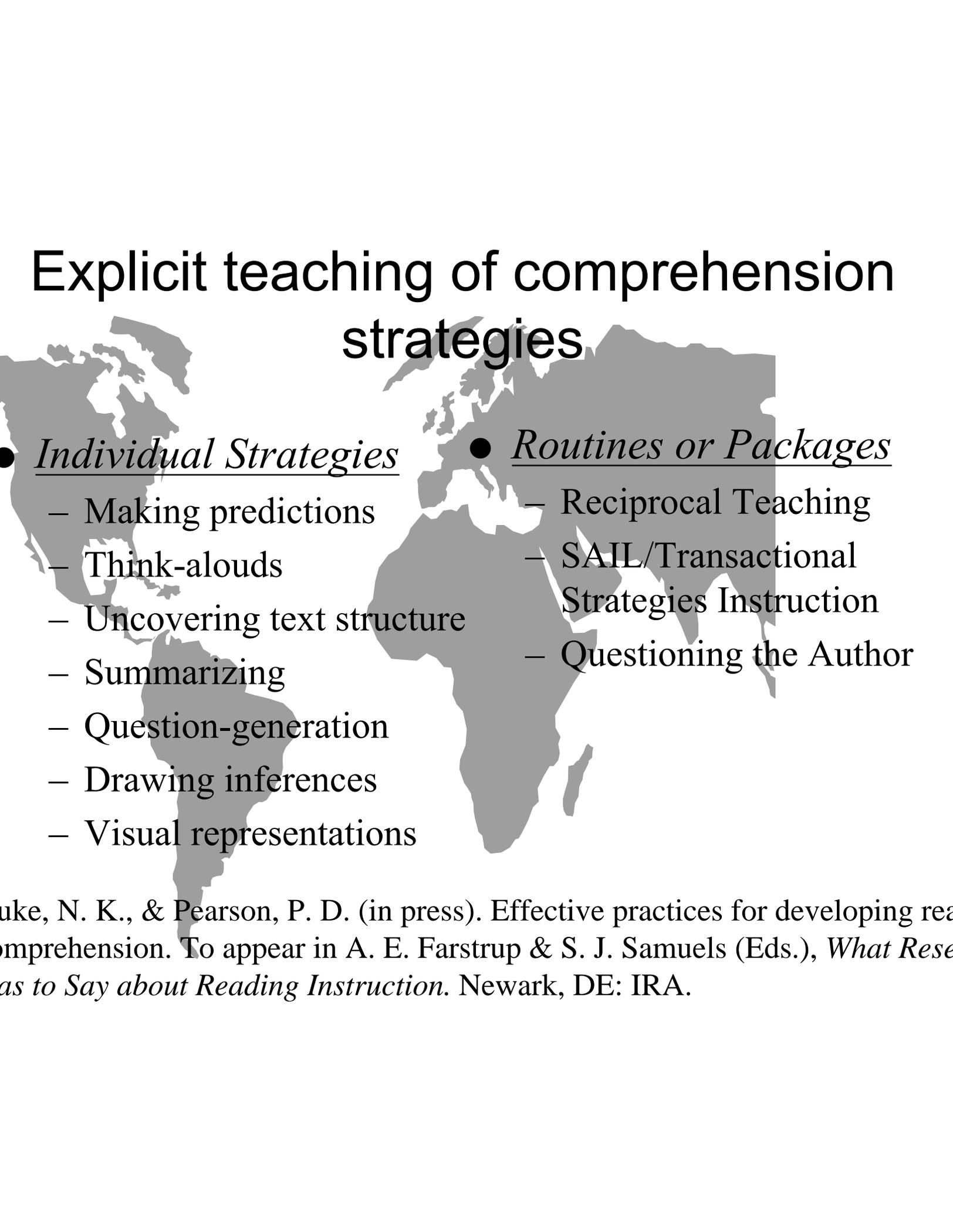
- Popular intellectual tools (discourse analysis, descriptive research, etc.)
- An increasing recognition that there was something more to reading than either decoding or comprehending
- A growing body of research demonstrating the importance of
 - Motivation to read
 - Talk about text
 - Writing in support of reading
 - Exposure and Access
 - A strong base in decoding, monitoring, and fluency

Why hasn't much of this research made its way into practice?

No, it really hasn't. . .

- Durkin's embarrassing little study (1978)
 - Some 4,000 minutes of classroom observation
 - 11 minutes devoted to comprehension instruction
 - Lots of testing and lots of questioning during discussion
- Pressley et al. work of today
- The usual suspects. . .
- The overall climate. . .
 - Whole language found the tradition of explicit instruction in comprehension strategies a little too “skillsy” in feel.
 - “New phonics” was focused on word recognition and held a ‘simple view’ of reading { $RC = [LC * Dec]$ }.

Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies



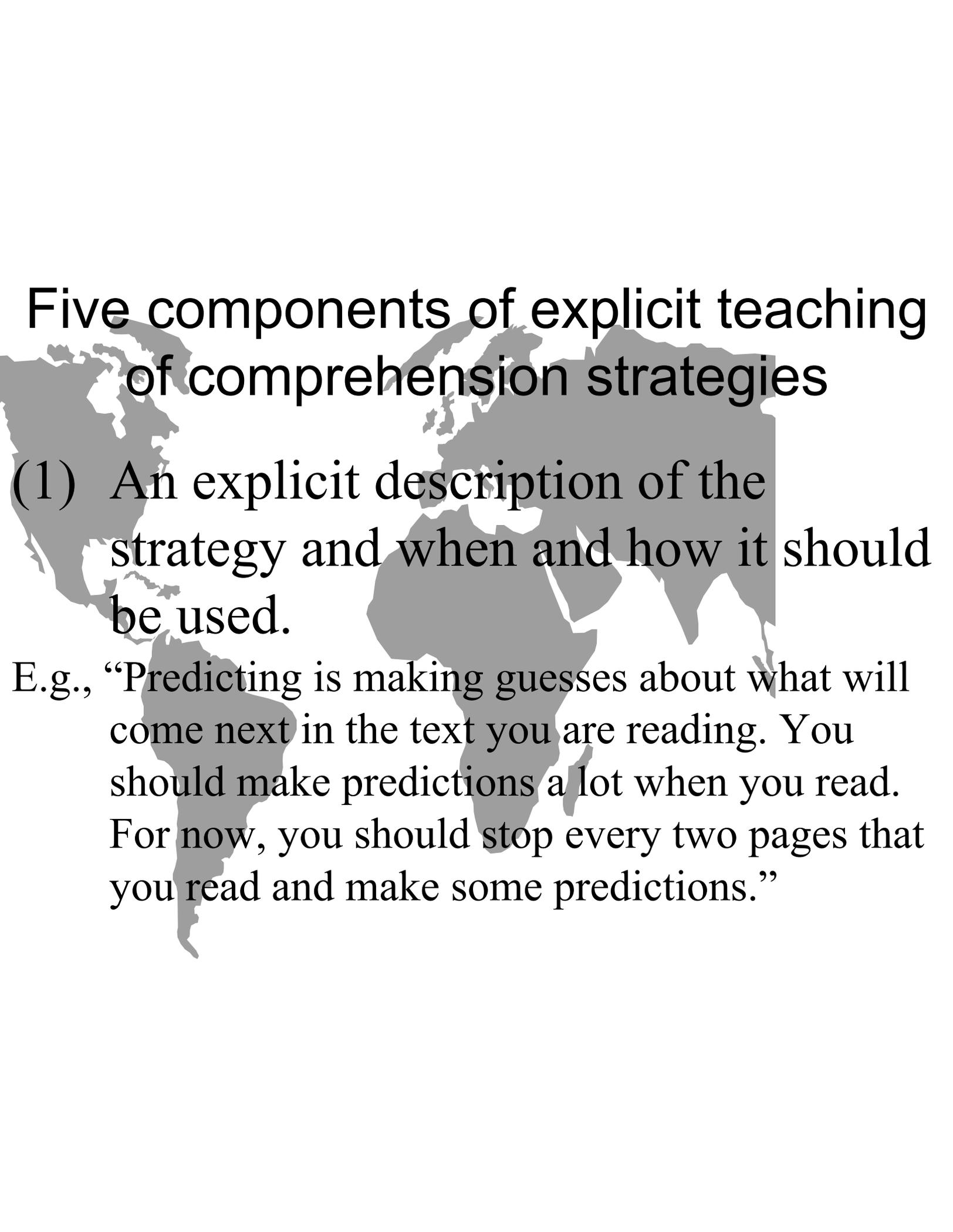
● Individual Strategies

- Making predictions
- Think-alouds
- Uncovering text structure
- Summarizing
- Question-generation
- Drawing inferences
- Visual representations

● Routines or Packages

- Reciprocal Teaching
- SAIL/Transactional Strategies Instruction
- Questioning the Author

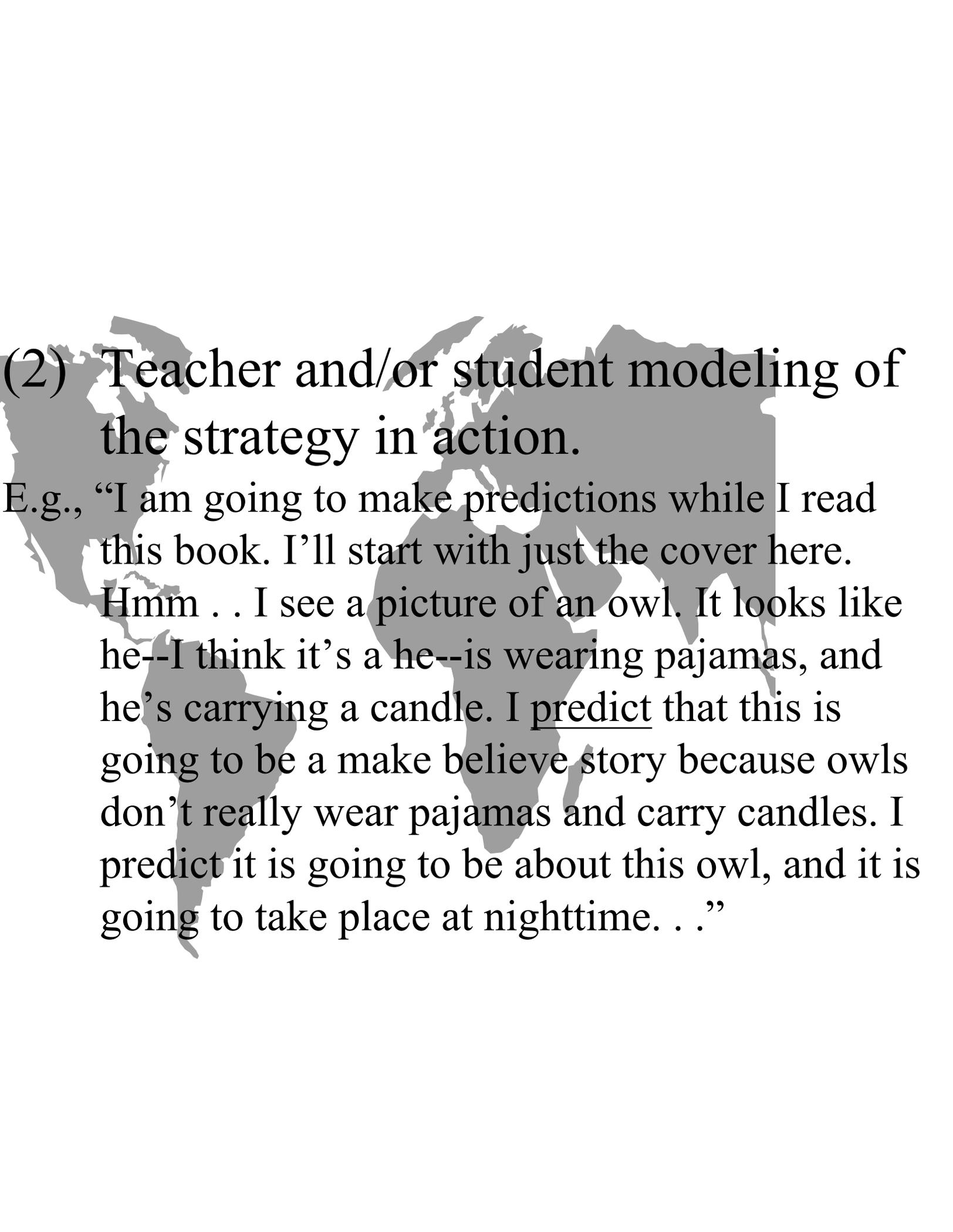
Stipek, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (in press). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. To appear in A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What Research has to Say about Reading Instruction*. Newark, DE: IRA.



Five components of explicit teaching of comprehension strategies

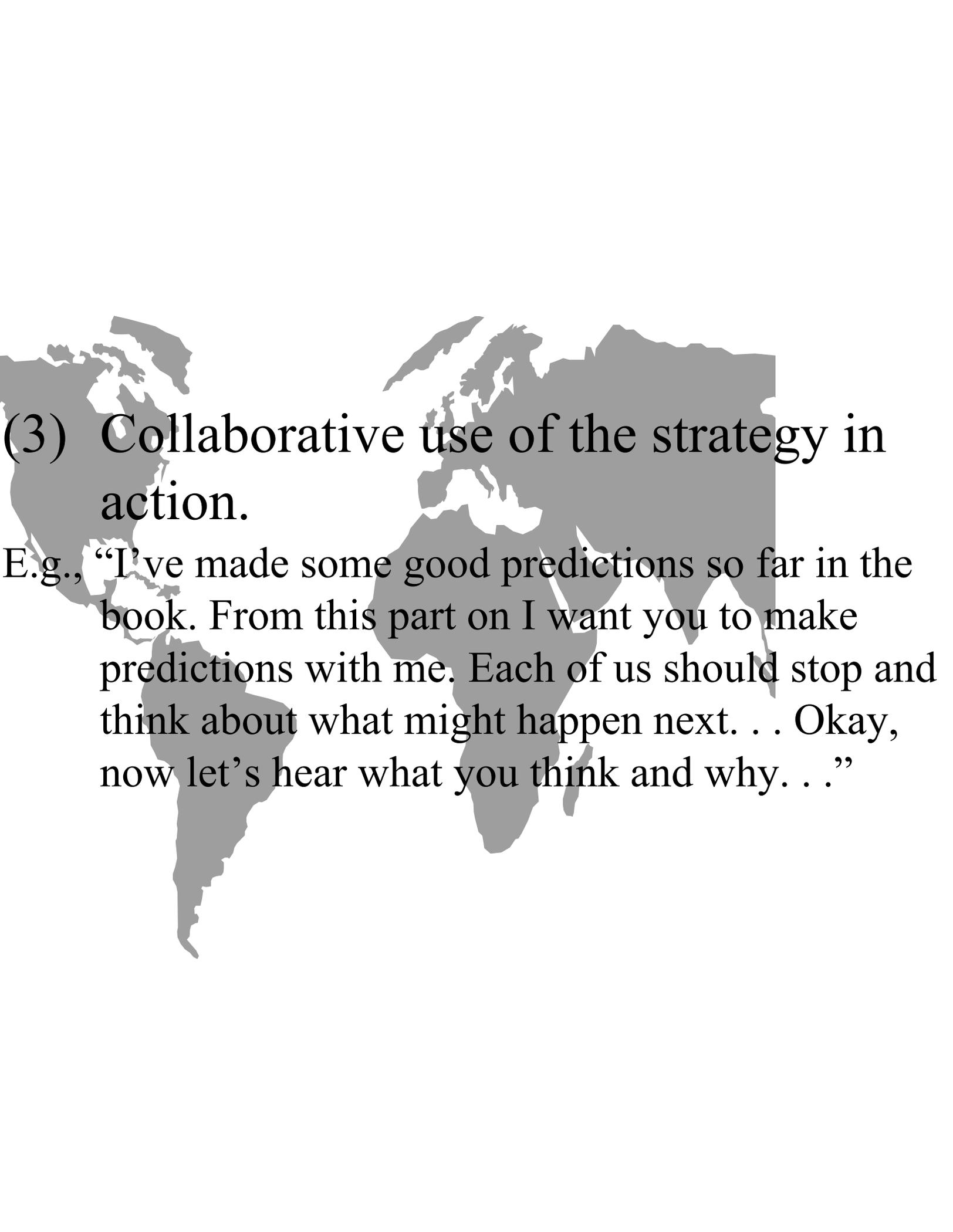
- (1) An explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used.

E.g., “Predicting is making guesses about what will come next in the text you are reading. You should make predictions a lot when you read. For now, you should stop every two pages that you read and make some predictions.”



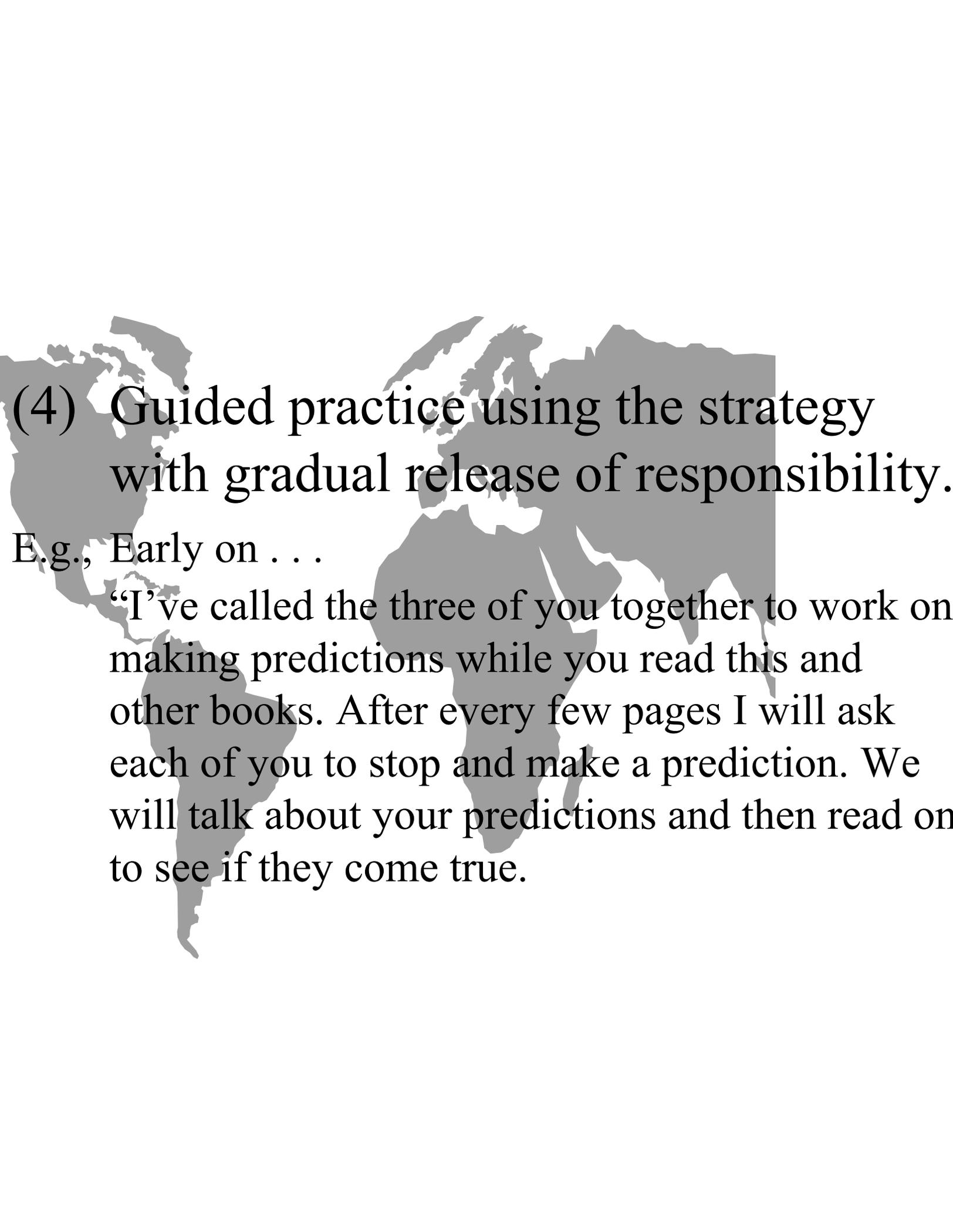
(2) Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action.

E.g., “I am going to make predictions while I read this book. I’ll start with just the cover here. Hmm . . . I see a picture of an owl. It looks like he--I think it’s a he--is wearing pajamas, and he’s carrying a candle. I predict that this is going to be a make believe story because owls don’t really wear pajamas and carry candles. I predict it is going to be about this owl, and it is going to take place at nighttime. . . .”



(3) Collaborative use of the strategy in action.

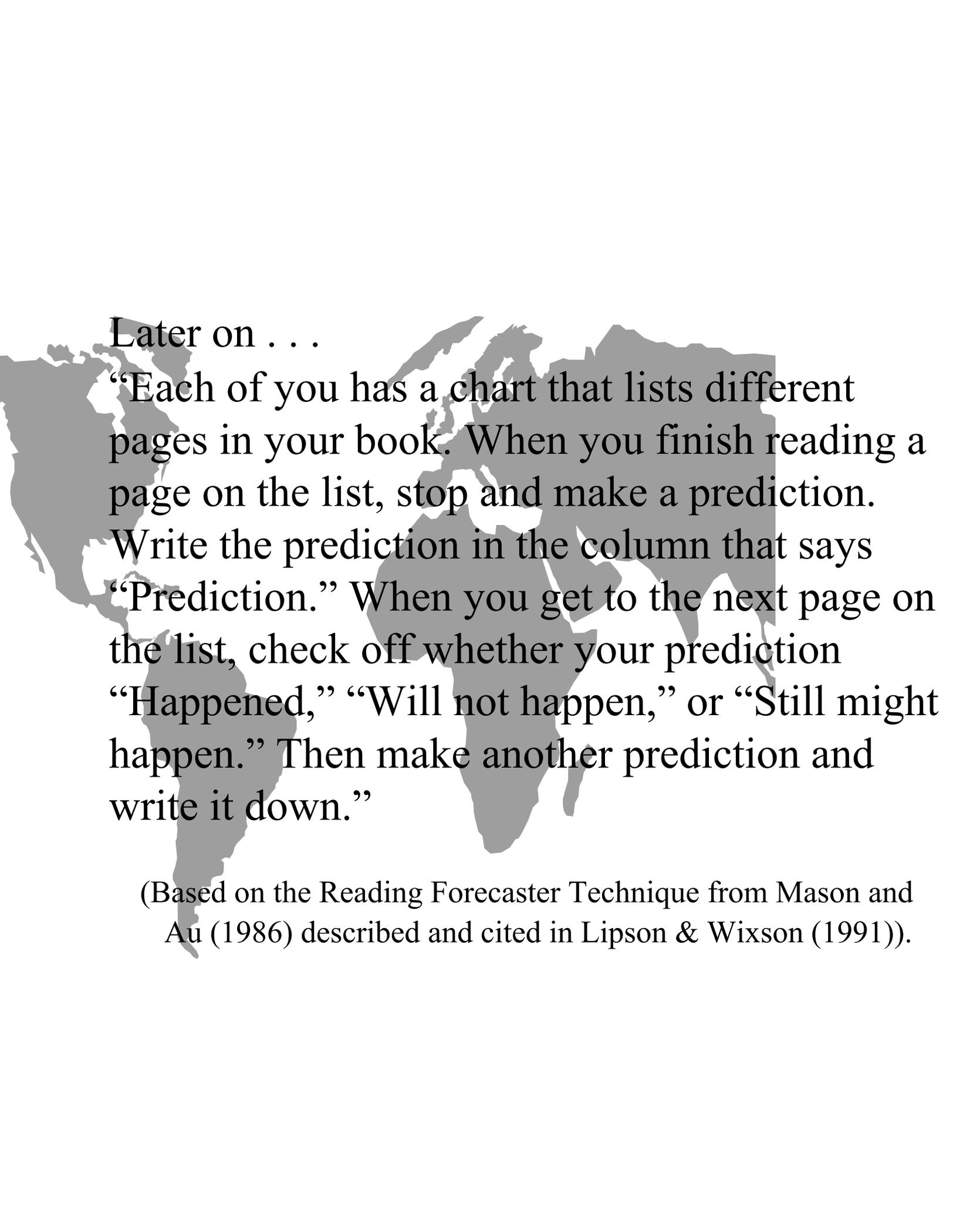
E.g., “I’ve made some good predictions so far in the book. From this part on I want you to make predictions with me. Each of us should stop and think about what might happen next. . . Okay, now let’s hear what you think and why. . .”



(4) Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility.

E.g., Early on . . .

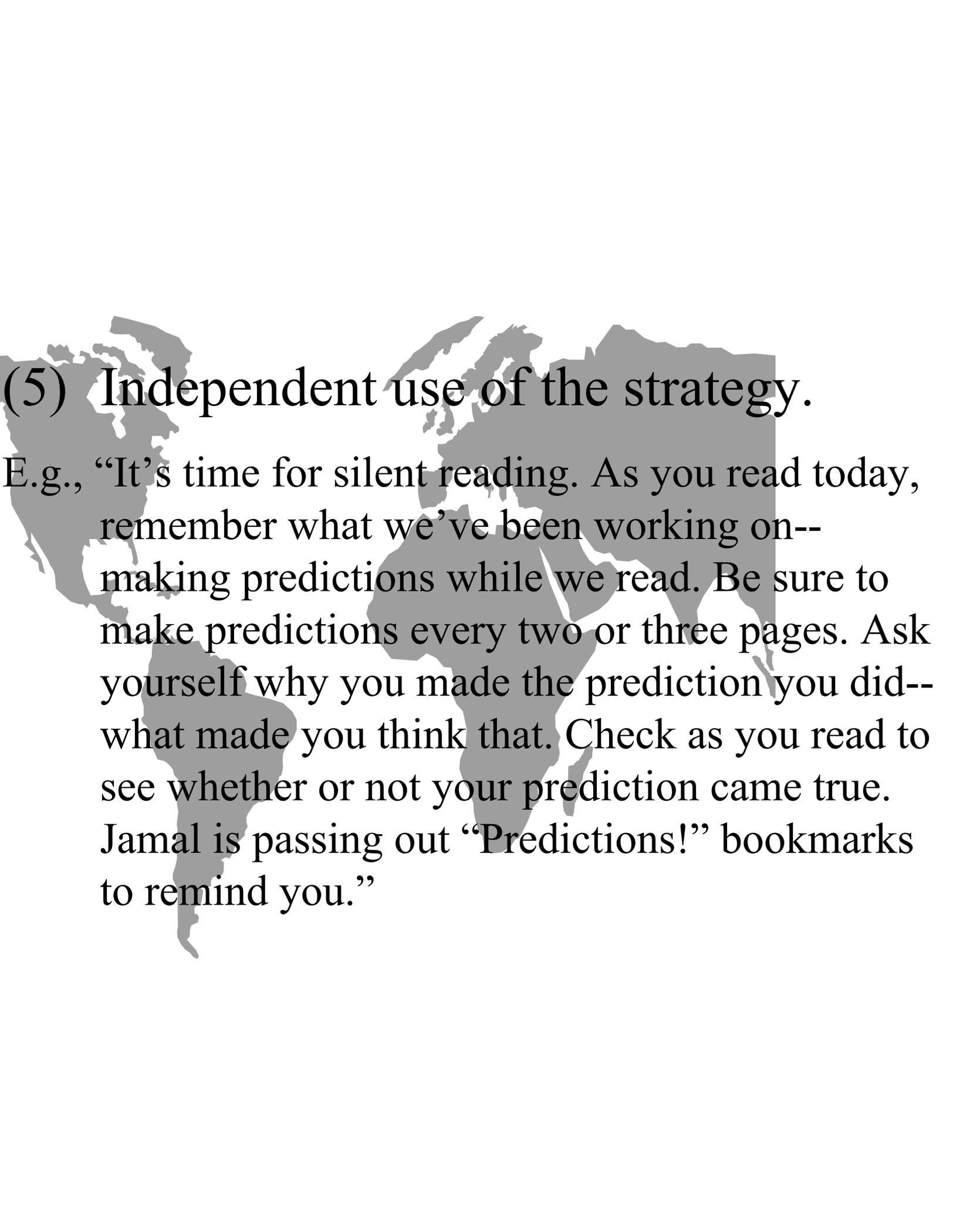
“I’ve called the three of you together to work on making predictions while you read this and other books. After every few pages I will ask each of you to stop and make a prediction. We will talk about your predictions and then read on to see if they come true.



Later on . . .

“Each of you has a chart that lists different pages in your book. When you finish reading a page on the list, stop and make a prediction. Write the prediction in the column that says “Prediction.” When you get to the next page on the list, check off whether your prediction “Happened,” “Will not happen,” or “Still might happen.” Then make another prediction and write it down.”

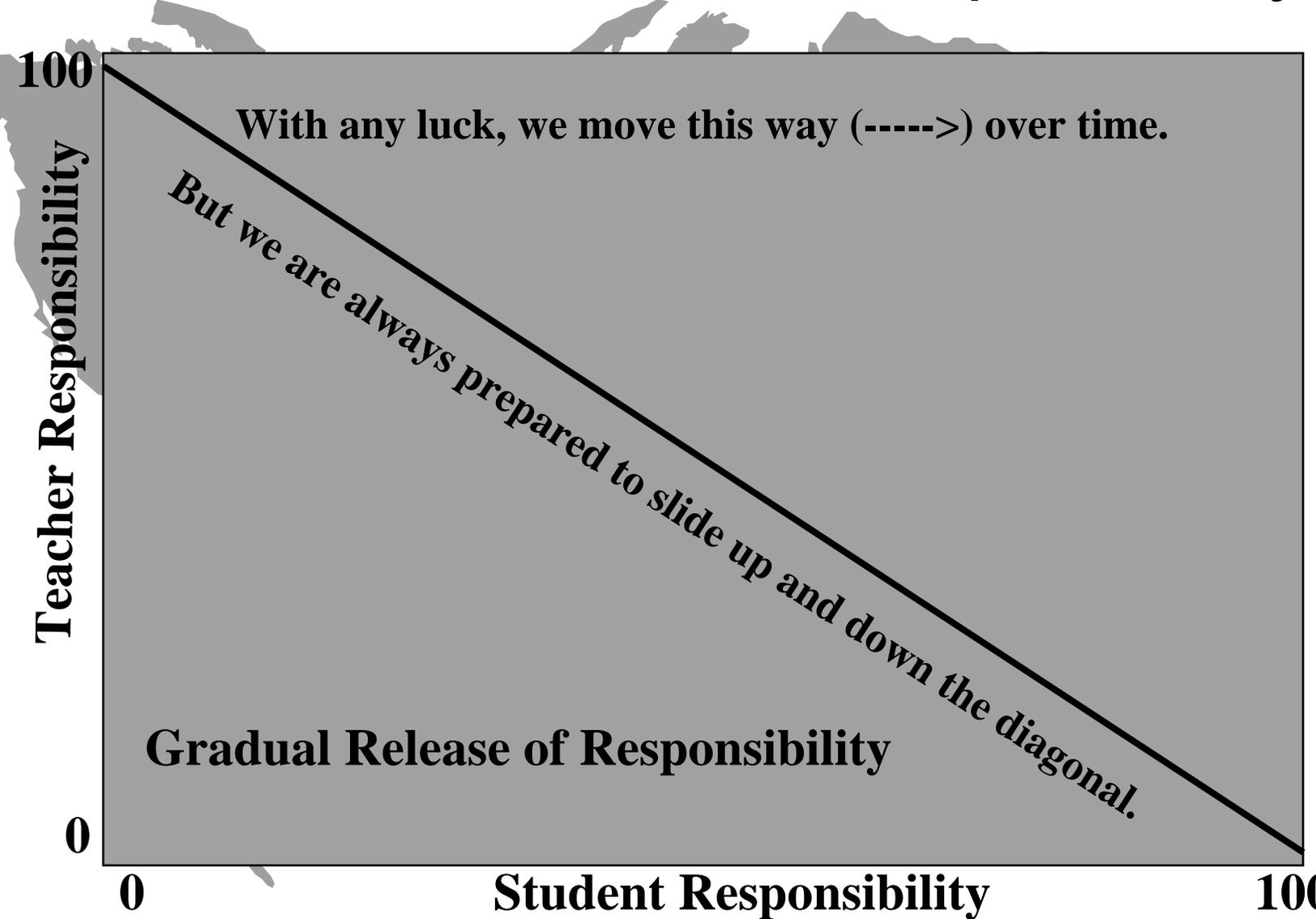
(Based on the Reading Forecaster Technique from Mason and Au (1986) described and cited in Lipson & Wixson (1991)).



(5) Independent use of the strategy.

E.g., “It’s time for silent reading. As you read today, remember what we’ve been working on--making predictions while we read. Be sure to make predictions every two or three pages. Ask yourself why you made the prediction you did--what made you think that. Check as you read to see whether or not your prediction came true. Jamal is passing out “Predictions!” bookmarks to remind you.”

Gradual Release of Responsibility



SAIL & Transactional Strategies Instruction

Table 2: Basic Components of TSI

Cognitive Strategies	Interpretive Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking aloud• Constructing images• <i>Summarizing*</i>• <i>Predicting (prior knowledge activation)*</i>• <i>Questioning*</i>• <i>Clarifying*</i>• Story grammar analysis• Text structure analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Character development• Imagining how a character might feel• Identifying with a character• Creating themes• Reading for multiple meanings• Creating literal/figurative distinction• Looking for a consistent point of view• Relating text to personal experience• Relating one text to another• Responding to certain text features, such as tone, or mood

*Note: strategies in *italics* are also a part of reciprocal teaching

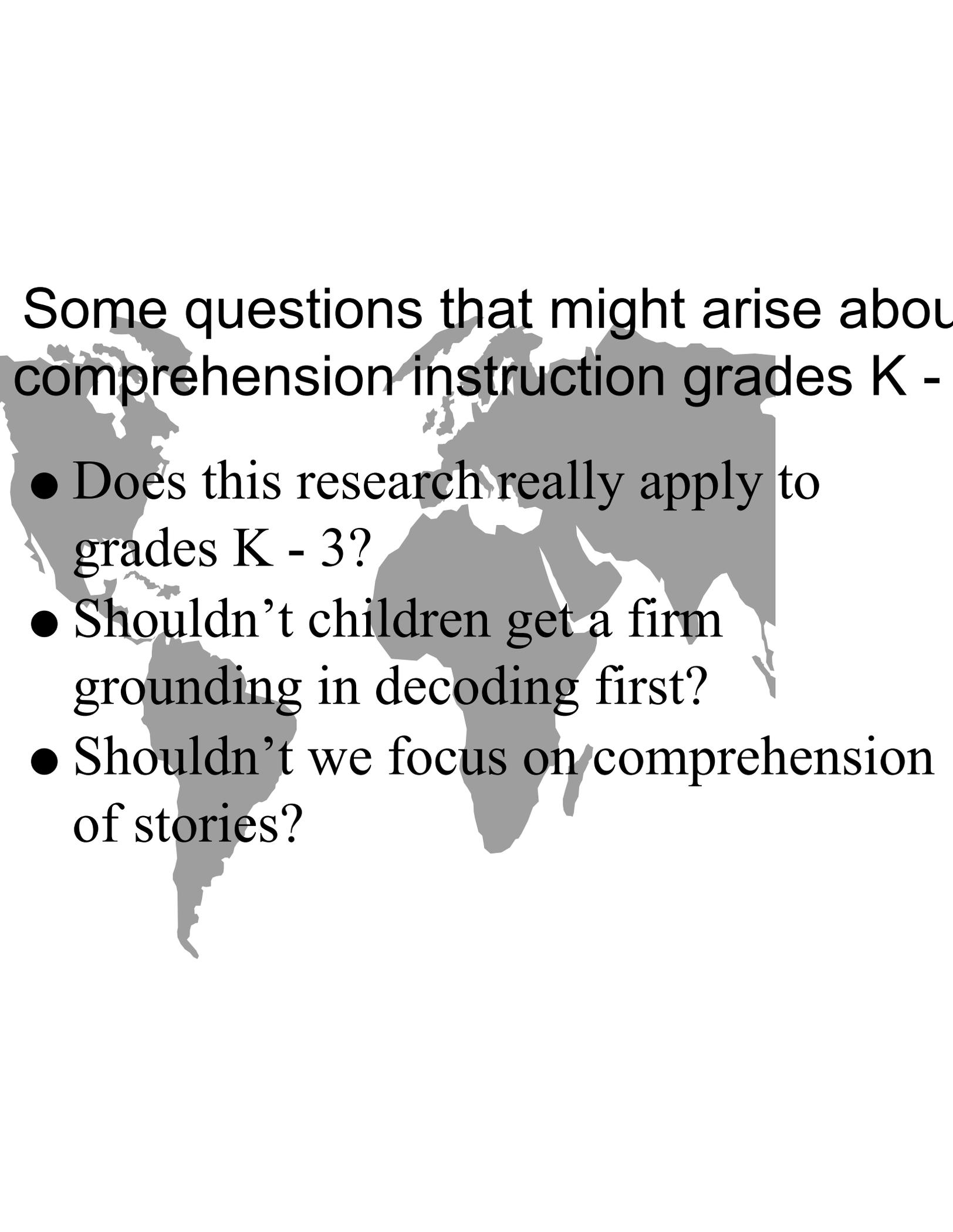
See, for example, Pressley, M., El-Dinary, P.B., Gaskins, I., Schuder, T., Bergman, R., Almasi, J., & Brown, R. (1992). Beyond direct explanation: Transactional instruction in reading comprehension strategies. *Elementary School Journal*, 92, 513-555.

Questioning the Author

Table 3: Questions to guide the discussion in Questioning the Author

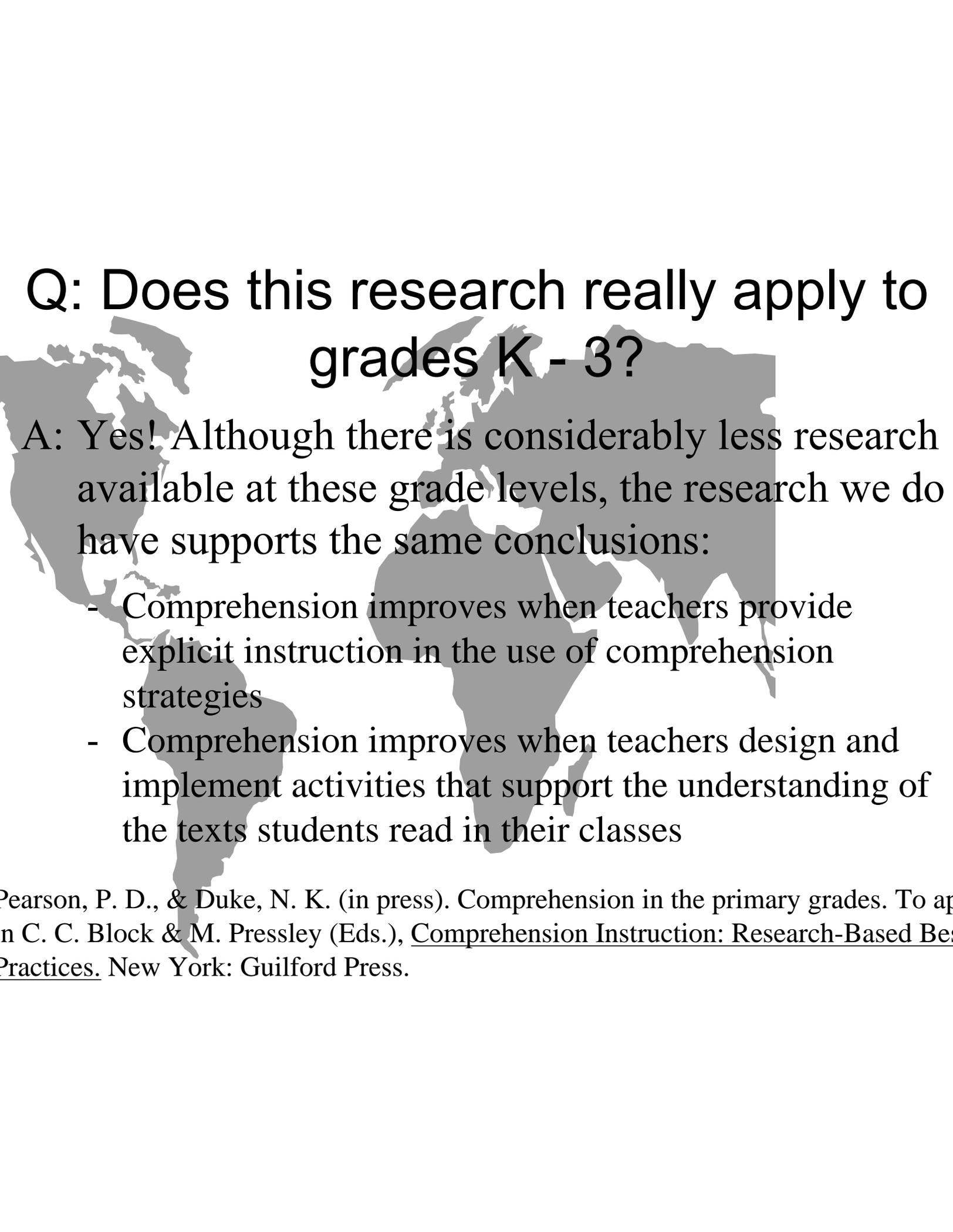
Goal	Candidate Questions
Initiate the discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author trying to say? • What is the author's message? • What is the author talking about?
Help students focus on the author's message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That is what the author says, but...
Help students link information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does that connect with what we know? • What information has the author provided that connects to or fits in with?
Identify difficulties with the way the author has presented information or ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does that make sense? • Is that said in a clear way? • Did the author explain that clearly? What's missing? What do we need to know?
Encourage students to refer to the text either because they've misinterpreted a text statement or to help them recognize that they've made an inference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the author tell us that? • Did the author give us the answer?

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., Hamilton, R. L., & Kucan, L. (1997). *Questioning the author: An approach to enhancing student engagement with text*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.



Some questions that might arise about
comprehension instruction grades K -

- Does this research really apply to grades K - 3?
- Shouldn't children get a firm grounding in decoding first?
- Shouldn't we focus on comprehension of stories?

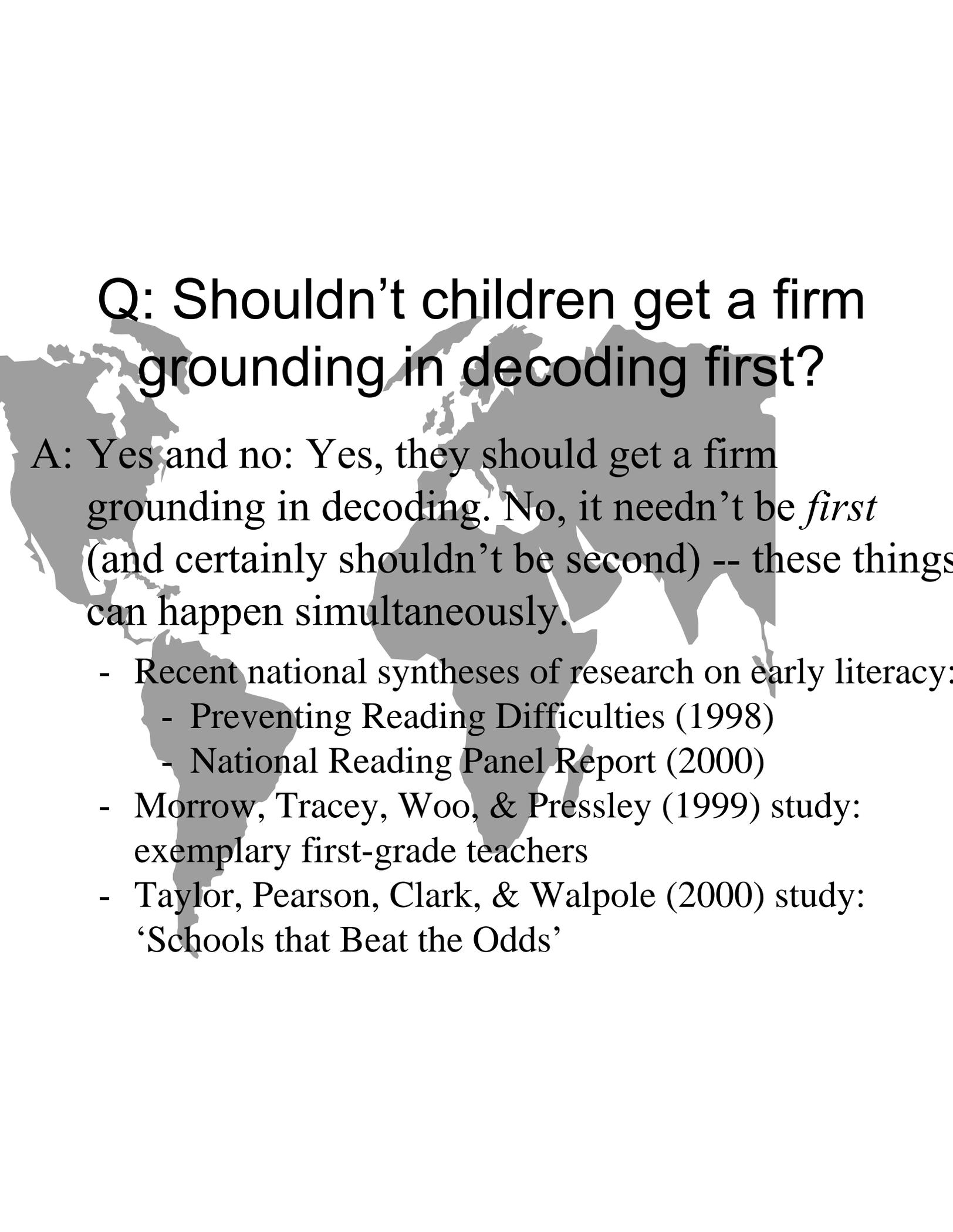


Q: Does this research really apply to grades K - 3?

A: Yes! Although there is considerably less research available at these grade levels, the research we do have supports the same conclusions:

- Comprehension improves when teachers provide explicit instruction in the use of comprehension strategies
- Comprehension improves when teachers design and implement activities that support the understanding of the texts students read in their classes

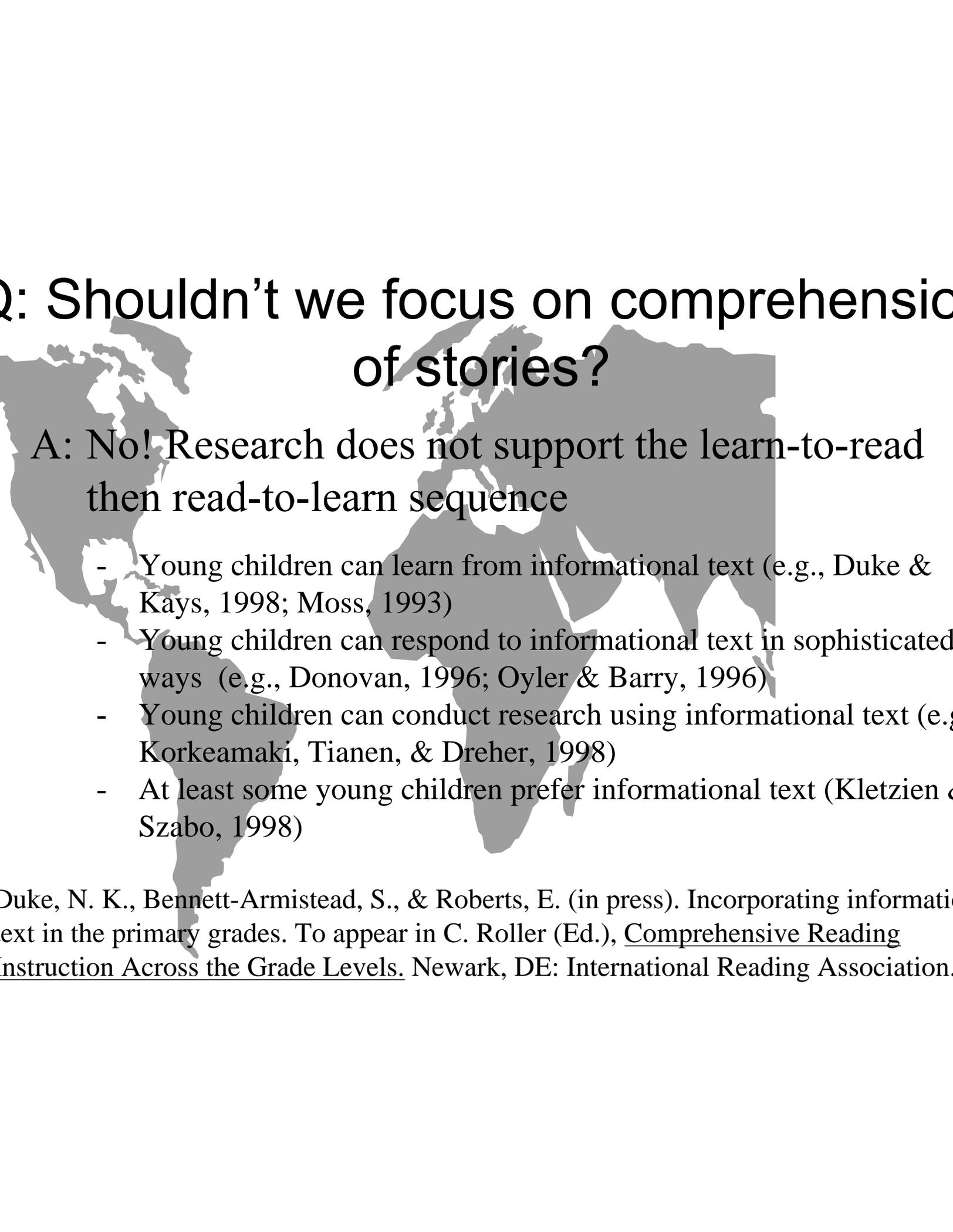
Pearson, P. D., & Duke, N. K. (in press). Comprehension in the primary grades. To appear in C. C. Block & M. Pressley (Eds.), Comprehension Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices. New York: Guilford Press.



Q: Shouldn't children get a firm grounding in decoding first?

A: Yes and no: Yes, they should get a firm grounding in decoding. No, it needn't be *first* (and certainly shouldn't be second) -- these things can happen simultaneously.

- Recent national syntheses of research on early literacy:
 - Preventing Reading Difficulties (1998)
 - National Reading Panel Report (2000)
- Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley (1999) study: exemplary first-grade teachers
- Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole (2000) study: 'Schools that Beat the Odds'



Q: Shouldn't we focus on comprehension
of stories?

A: No! Research does not support the learn-to-read
then read-to-learn sequence

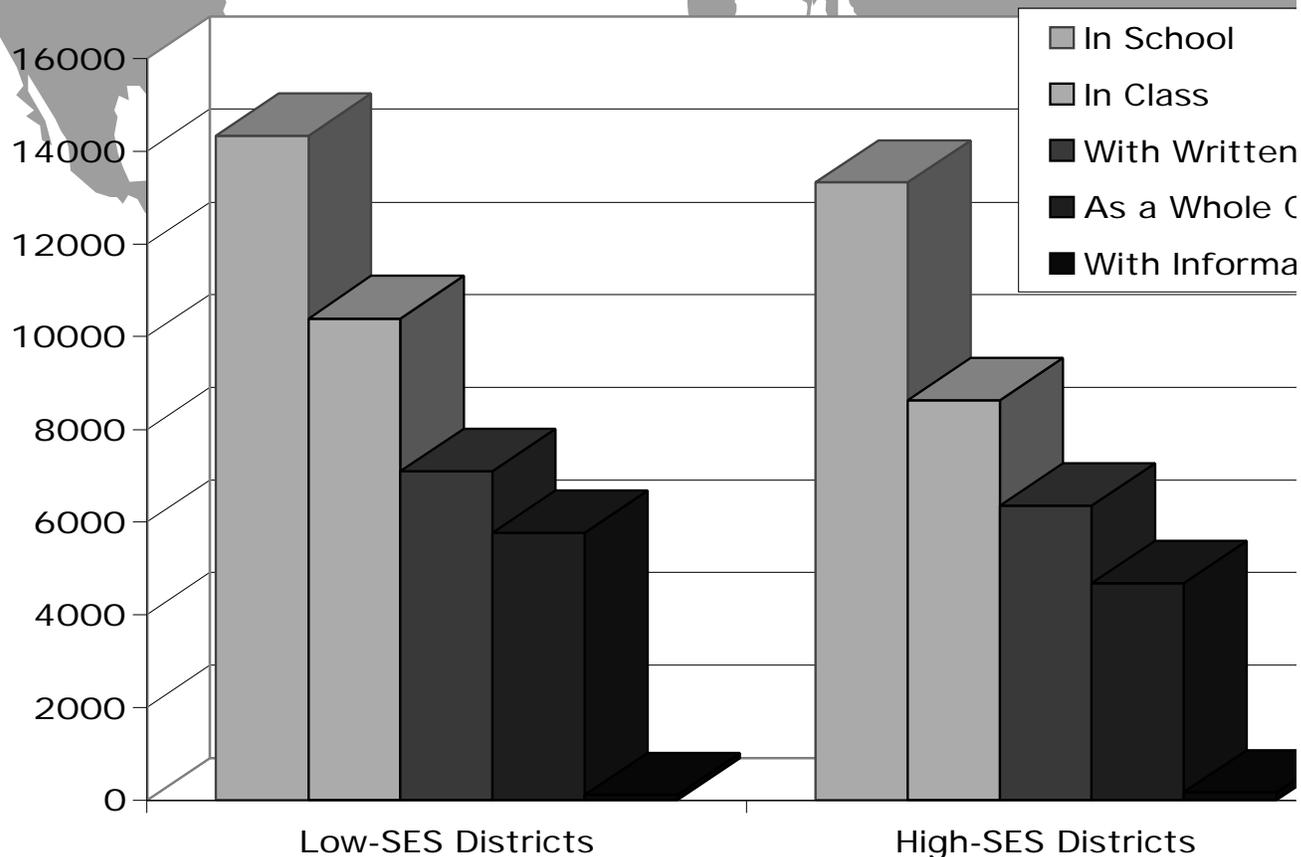
- Young children can learn from informational text (e.g., Duke & Kays, 1998; Moss, 1993)
- Young children can respond to informational text in sophisticated ways (e.g., Donovan, 1996; Oyler & Barry, 1996)
- Young children can conduct research using informational text (e.g., Korkeamaki, Tianen, & Dreher, 1998)
- At least some young children prefer informational text (Kletzien & Szabo, 1998)

Duke, N. K., Bennett-Armistead, S., & Roberts, E. (in press). Incorporating informational text in the primary grades. To appear in C. Roller (Ed.), Comprehensive Reading Instruction Across the Grade Levels. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

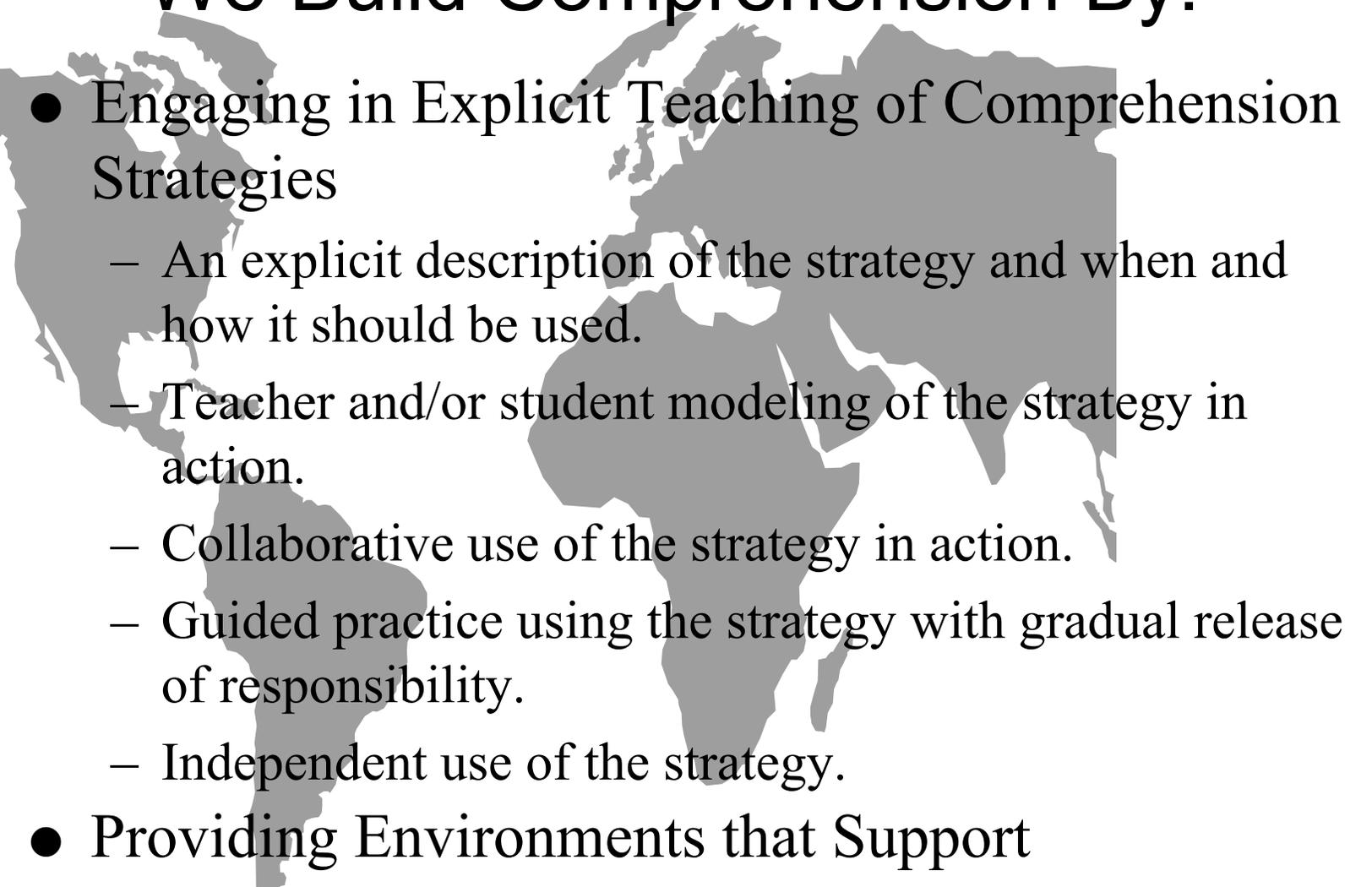
That having been said . . .

There is *very* little research on how to teach comprehension of informational text in grades K - 3.

There is *very* little informational text in grades K - 3!



We Build Comprehension By:

- 
- Engaging in Explicit Teaching of Comprehension Strategies
 - An explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used.
 - Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action.
 - Collaborative use of the strategy in action.
 - Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility.
 - Independent use of the strategy.
 - Providing Environments that Support Understanding of Text

Some other resources on comprehension instruction:

- Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. New York: Guilford Press.
- Keene, E. O., & Zimmerman, S. (1997). Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a readers' workshop. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Coming soon. . . Pressley, M. & Block, C. C. Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices. New York: Guilford Press.
- CIERA 10 Principles for Effective Comprehension Instruction (draft available now)
- Coming in 2002. . . Support materials for CIERA 10 Principles for Effective Comprehension Instruction