

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Engaging Non-Fiction Readers

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension

Practice: Engage Students With Text

### Highlights

- Second- and third-grade teacher Margaret Barns uses a framework called CORI to teach reading comprehension skills to her students at Rosalyn Heights Elementary School. Developed by Dr. John Guthrie, CORI stands for Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction.
- Organized mostly around non-fiction books, each thematic reading unit guides students to develop their own questions, read books to find answers, and integrate what they have learned in order to share with their class.

### About the Source

The Reading Rockets series is a production of WETA. Major funding for Reading Rockets comes from the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. For author interviews, recommended reading lists, and information about teaching kids to read, please visit us online at [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org).

## Full Transcript

Narrator: If a change in the weather is coming, these students at Roslyn Heights Elementary School will be among the first to know it.

Student: There's no wind.

Student: There's no wind, and the wind is sort of blowing, and it's...the temperature—

Student: That's the temperature.

Student: The temperature is about 30.

Narrator: These kids are becoming avid readers and not just of thermometers and barometers.

Student: Hey, you guys, it's time to go back to class.

[Students squealing and running]

Margaret Barnes: So I have got this really great book, and it's called *Storm Chasers*.

Narrator: Teacher Margaret Barnes uses a framework called CORI to teach reading comprehension skills to second and third graders. CORI, developed by Dr. John Guthrie, stands for *Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction*. Organized mostly around non-fiction books, each 18-week reading unit guides kids to come up with their own questions, dig up facts, integrate the findings, and share the highlights with the class.

Student: And when they go over the water, they turn into waterspouts.

Narrator: Students pursue their own interests with hands-on experiences, which research shows boosts motivation more than, say, simply looking at pictures. Kids are also encouraged to ask their own questions.

Mairead: The questions I am trying to answer are cloud questions. My first one is: How many clouds are there, and how do clouds float?

Narrator: Key to CORI is a large collection of irresistible books, from haikus to history.

Mairead: I like to have a lot of books to choose from so that I can get information, but it's hard to choose from because there are so many. And I like tornado books, but I have to look at cloud books so that I can get information.

Emily Swan: We know that choice is one of those intrinsic motivators. Social interaction is an intrinsic motivation. But when children have choice to find their books and then be able to talk with their friends about what they found, and maybe someone will share, "Hey, I found this about tornadoes. Why don't you read this book?" and they can recommend a book, then that just lends itself to more engagement.

Narrator: CORI offers explicit strategies for plucking information from a book. By thinking aloud Ms. Barnes shows kids how to spot the factual diamonds among the less brilliant stones.

Barnes: “Wee-o, wee-o, sirens blare. People hurry to a radio or TV and quickly flick it on.” Hmm. I wonder why they’re doing that. See I am starting to think about this. As you read, do you think about things and kind of start to make questions in your mind?

Narrator: Ms. Barnes has also shown her students how to find information by using an index, glossary, or table of contents.

Student: Let’s check in the index.

Narrator: After the students’ own questions have been posed and researched, and after the facts have been sifted and connected, kids can then communicate their findings to the class.

Mairead: My report’s on wacky weather. Did you know it can snow pink snow? Well, it can. Because when wind picks up dark pink gusts, it carries it to snow clouds, and then it snows pink snow.

Swan: Being able to communicate to others is an aspect of CORI that’s important because it validates that children are learning for the sake of learning. And when they ask their own questions and find answers, and are able to express that and communicate that to others, it validates that they’re a learner, that they’re a thinker and a reader and a writer.

Mairead: Nate?

Nate: Did anything break in the farm?

Mairead: Well, I think that the farm got knocked down and stuff, but not those three things.

Narrator: Research shows that CORI works. Kids in CORI classrooms are not only more motivated and curious than those who get traditional instruction; they also score higher on reading achievement and conceptual knowledge. For kids who don’t enjoy fiction—many boys don’t—CORI offers a new route to reading engagement through non-fiction topics. CORI’s impact can last far beyond elementary school.

Swan: I’ve watched children’s lives change because they may never have thought of themselves as a good reader. It changes the way they see schools. It changes the way they see themselves as readers and writers. They remember it always. They remember the experiences they have in CORI classrooms forever.

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