

# The Reading Fluency Challenge

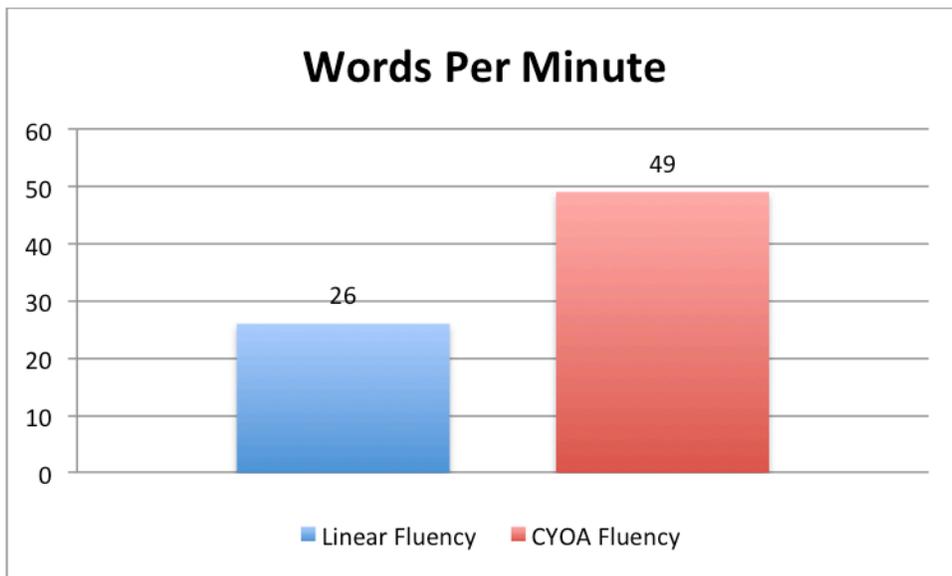
By Megan Hofmann, Reading Intervention Specialist | May 5, 2016

**Abstract: The expectation for rapid reading development has become a stressor for parents, educators, and kids. Classroom research in a new study shows that students who used Choose Your Own Adventure® interactive books gained on average 17% more comprehension than students using traditional linear books in the same amount of time.**

The United States Department of Education reports that 6.4 million or 13% of the school age population are identified as having a disability. The most prevalent skill deficit is in reading. When parsed further, this reading deficiency often hinges on inadequate fluency. Faced with this harsh reality, teachers must use the most highly effective tools at their disposal to help their students achieve fluency as quickly as possible. Our research has shown that *Choose Your Own Adventure* interactive multiple choice, multiple ending books are precisely the means that teachers need to reach their most critical learners.

Reading fluency is a skill that impacts typical students beginning in first grade and is targeted through sixth grade (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). When students fall below benchmark, this skill may be targeted throughout one’s educational career.

Time for targeted intervention is always a hurdle for education professionals. Any student who is not meeting benchmark standards has no time to waste. A targeted classroom research study was conducted to determine the impact of interactive books versus linear books with reluctant readers (see research abstract). Students using Choose Your Own Adventure interactive books gained an average of 23 more words per minute than those using linear books. The seemingly minor change of using interactive stories over traditional linear narratives made a significant impact on reading fluency.



Frequent practice is one of the most impactful strategies for improving students' reading skills (Torgesen, 2001). Teachers rely on this tried and true method as a staple in their toolbox of methods to advance readers' skills. Historically, we have been required to hand students pages of plain black and white leveled passages to practice and assess. Cold, warm, and hot reads are only broken up by the exhaustive moans and groans from bored students.

*Choose Your Own Adventure* books afford the readers the opportunity to change the story assuring students will never tire despite revisiting the text. After each ending in the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series, the reader circles back to the beginning. This forces the reader to reread and unknowingly provides teachers an opportunity to target students' rate, phrasing, or accuracy in reading (Connor & Compton, 2014). The built in repeated reading is masked by the chance to begin again and choose a different path.

Students are filled with the urge to make sense of the words in front of them. After they achieve fluency, they can then begin to develop deeper understanding and comprehension. Educators can *tell* students about making connections, questioning, visualizing, determining importance, inferring, and synthesizing (Kintsch, 1998). Not until students have the chance to jump in and grapple with it do they truly READ. "It just makes sense, it's like in life you get to make choices, and change things. Regular books don't give kids the chance to make it how we want it," explains an expert third grader. The clever third grade student goes on to explain, "It is kind of like I am the character so it is easy to remember what 'I' did in certain parts of the book."

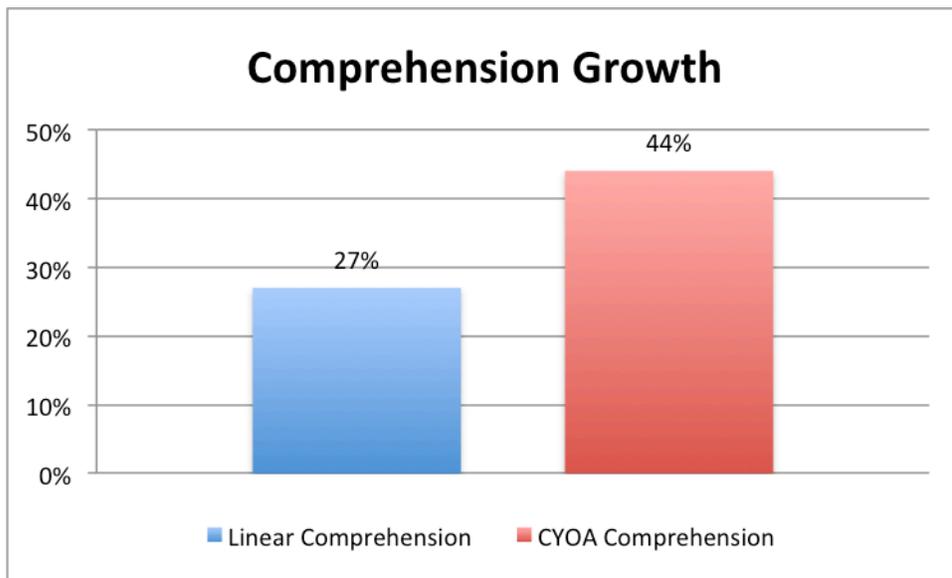


Teachers spend a dispiriting amount of time both inside and out of the classroom, searching for the right text to aid their students in applying their comprehension strategies. We have mentor texts but where do students actually get to execute these eloquently modeled strategies? In the end, they are left to present the district approved reading program's basal text. Hardbound towers of endless pages, students are "encouraged" to translate their understanding through dry and often fragmented traditional stories. *Classroom research shows that students who used interactive books*

gained on average 17% more comprehension than students using traditional linear books in the same amount of time.

Students can pick up any CYOA story and step inside a text that offers multitudes of opportunities for comprehension practice. Every time a student picks up a CYOA, they are granted numerous ways to engage in a deeper and more thoughtful experience with the writing. The structured manuscript provides educators a framework to concentrate comprehension instruction while granting students the freedom they instinctively desire. This makes every ending a chance for educators to pull in strategy work with the meat of a full plot minus an exorbitant number of pages that the traditional basal texts require.

“The *Choose Your Own Adventure* texts made my students gain a deeper understanding of plot structure. My students were able to tell me precisely the events and choices they made that impacted the resolution. They felt empowered to be able to go back and change what happened and get a different outcome, which supported cause and effect relationships as well,” one experienced teacher affirmed. This is the insight and opportunity educators are looking to provide to a well-rounded reader.



*Choose Your Own Adventure* books are the precise tool educators have been searching for to reach reluctant readers. Typical basal stories leave the learner powerless and unmotivated. Classroom research shows exponential growth in reading skills in a control group given CYOA only versus that of students using traditional linear books. With the right direction, students can be off on their own quest to authentic and proficient reading through *Choose Your Own Adventure* books.

The *Choose Your Own Adventure* book series intertwines the repeated reading that is required for fluency acquisition while enhancing comprehension strategies. Comprehension is constructed in the magical world where students meld text with their own experience and knowledge, propelled by the act of making a choice in the reading.

## About Megan Hofmann

Megan Hofmann began work in education while completing her B.S. in Educational Psychology from Miami University. She has taught a range of students in different settings, ranging from instructing an emotionally disturbed self-contained classroom in an urban public school district to teaching graduate students at Miami University. She currently is partnered in a co-taught closed classroom at Talawanda City Schools, where she uses authentic learning situations to research and problem-solve issues in education.

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### *Classroom research abstract*

Targeted classroom research was conducted in an elementary school in Ohio during the 2015-2016 school year. Students involved in the research are third-fifth grade students, all of whom are reluctant readers and/or having been identified as having a reading disability. Students were given baseline nationally normed progress monitoring probes. The control group used traditional linear books while the treatment group used *Choose Your Own Adventure* books as the text used to instruct reading intervention. Results are reported above.

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