


Strategies on Reading an Original English Textbook

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November 25, 2011






If you have come here to hear me tell you a secret “short cut” to reading original texts, you will be disappointed... because there are NO short cuts! But, there are some tips that I can give you.

Much of what I’m going to tell you, you already know. But **knowing** and **doing** what you know is right are two very different things...

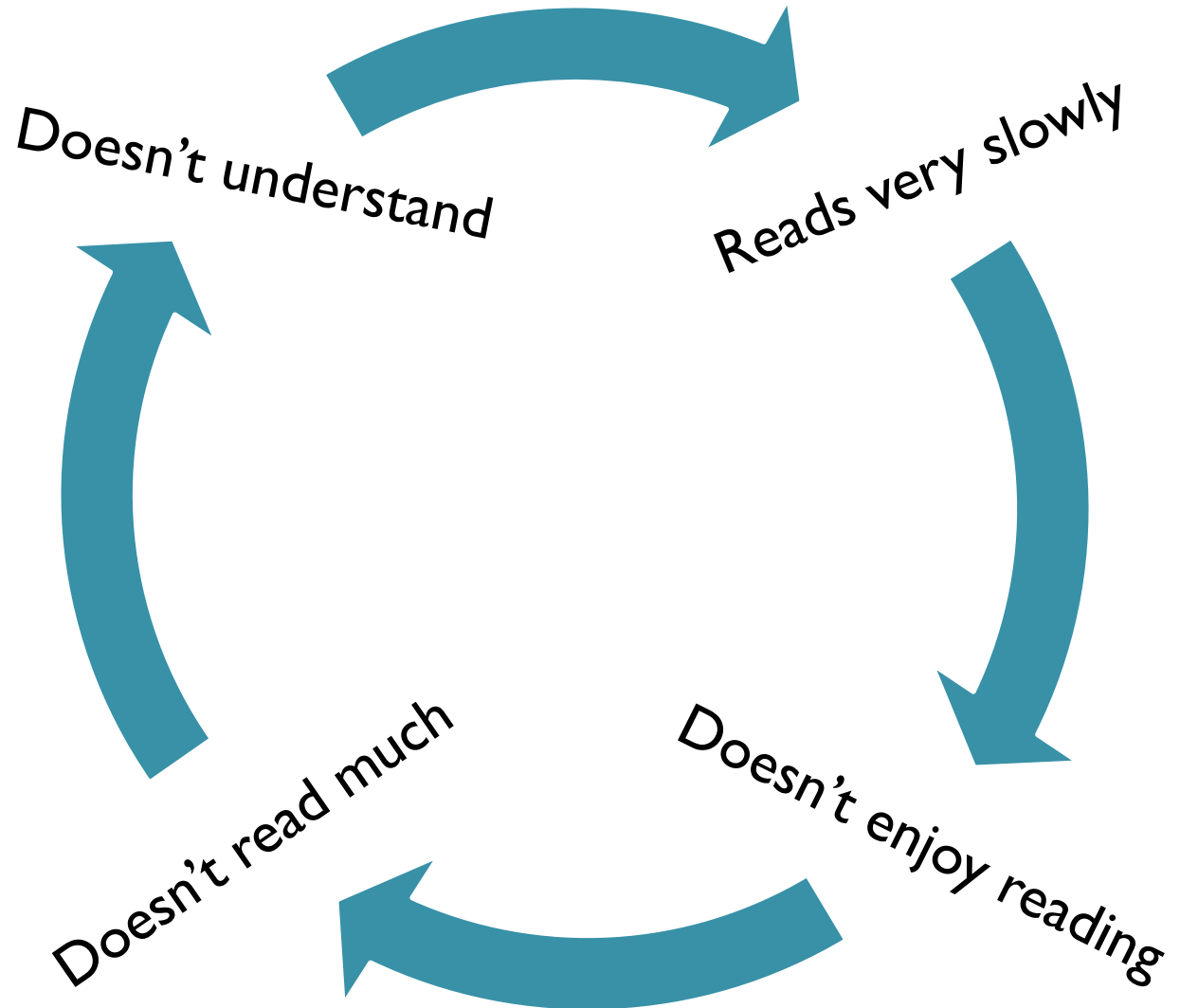


There are, however, some “reminders” that I can go over with you. You’ve probably heard them all before but it won’t hurt to be reminded again how important they are to you!



The following diagram shows a typical vicious circle (惡性循環) among many students who are having problems reading original texts, whether it be a novel, an article in the newspaper, magazine or a textbook chapter.

Vicious Circle for Poor Readers



Outline

1. Problems students encounter
2. Evidence of the problem
3. Possible solutions /study tips
4. Result – Better Grades and a Sense of Accomplishment (成就感)
5. Conclusion

Problems Students Encounter

Vocabulary

- “Not knowing enough vocabulary words is my biggest problem;
- “There are too many words that I don’t know;
- “I spend too much time looking up words in the dictionary;
- “A word may have more than one definition;
- “I try to guess the word from the context but I still look the word up in the dictionary because I want to know the word completely.

Comprehension (understanding)

- “I can’t understand the sentence/paragraph/article completely;
- “Even if I know every word in the sentence/paragraph, I still can’t understand what the author is trying to tell me;
- “I read the article two or three times but I still can’t understand the main point of the article;

Length of time to read an article

- “I read so slowly;
- “There’s too much to read and it’s so long; I can’t finish my assignment;
- “I have no patience to read for a long time;
- “I can’t remember what I read before; therefore, I can’t make the connection between what was read and what I’m reading...
- “It takes too long to read the article/unit in English.

Motivation

- I just don't see the need to read it in English;
- I don't feel like reading it;
- I'm not interested in the subject/topic; it's boring;
- I don't know why but I'm just not motivated to improve my English; I've given up...
- Why do I have to learn English? I don't see myself using English in my career.

Miscellaneous

- “I can’t even understand the exercises in the unit, how can I follow the explanation/lesson;
- “There’s a lot of cultural references which I don’t understand and therefore, I miss the complete meaning of what the textbook is trying to describe;
- “I’m not able to “read between the lines,””
(can’t make inferences or draw conclusions)

Evidence of Problem

- Students avoid reading an original text in English; skip the reading and go directly to the assignment
- English is regarded as an end (to pass tests), rather than a means to an end;
- Students associate every English text with “grammar analysis” or “new vocabulary words” to look up;

Evidence (cont'd)

- Boredom in the classroom; lack of attention and concentration – mind beginning to drift, daydreaming and maybe, falling asleep in class...
- Do poorly on their tests



We've looked at:

- Problems students are encountering;
- Evidence of this problem.

Now, let's look at:

- Some possible solutions to the problem of reading an original text in English

Need Changes in **Attitude** towards Reading English in its Original Text

- Change from “I CAN’T do it”

to

“I CAN do it;”

- Be willing and aware that you need to get rid of old habits;

Attitude (con't)

- Commitment to change – telling yourself that you can no longer find excuses for yourself; for example, “My English is poor,” “I’m shy,” “Other people will laugh at my poor English” and the like.
- Be willing to put in time on previewing and reviewing every lesson;
- Don’t try to seek “instant gratification;”
不要求“立竿見影”的效果
- Be open/tolerant to incompleteness and ambiguity;

Need changes in **action**/getting rid of old habits

- Get organized – with planners, binders, notebooks, stickers, highlighters;
- Take notes in class;
- Make use of your waiting time;
- Begin to **ask questions** (during break, after class, during office hours);
- Be willing to help others in class;
- Start from easy and work up to difficult ones; be patient, knowing that it'll take time;



How much do I need to do?



The more you do, the more you learn...

- 1) it's better to read the text than not to read it;
- 2) it's better to read and mark than only to read;
- 3) it's better to read, mark, and take notes than
just to read and mark



Some Tips for Reading Original Textbook



Three Steps:

- 1) Skimming – to get an overview;
- 2) Active reading (in-depth reading) – making annotations (marking up the text) and taking notes;
- 3) Note-taking (summarizing) – write questions (pretending you are the teacher), testing yourself and review

Step I: *SKIMMING*


- a) Get an overview of what the chapter is going to teach by reading the introductory information at the beginning of the chapter and the summary section at the end of the chapter;
- b) Read the headings and subheadings of each section in the chapter;
- c) As you read the chapter, look for and highlighted or *italicized* definitions of key terms and examples of those definitions;

(show *Handling...*)

Step 2: ACTIVE READING ***(annotation and note-taking)***

Annotations

- ◆ Use the margins (書頁空白處) by numbering any lists of items, series of points with 1,2,3;
- ◆ Make a little notes in the margins (Chinese)
- ◆ Use circles, checks, stars and question marks, underlining, highlighting with markers, etc.

= , → , ★ , ? , 

Step 3: SUMMARIZING

Reviewing through your notes

Note-taking

- ◆ Reasons
- ◆ Cornell method
- ◆ Questions

Why take notes?

- use for reviewing for tests;
- enable you to focus your attention in class or while you are reading a chapter in textbook;
- helps your memory;
- use for a life-time



Take notes in class and then,
organize them using the **Cornell Method**
of note-taking...

Note-taking (Cornell Method)

Header (Class, Chapter, Date, etc.)	
Keywords/ Questions Take the headings and/or subheadings and keywords and turn them into questions	Notes
Summary	Make 3 or 4 sentences summarizing the chapter <u>in your own words</u>



Review – with questions

- ◆ Cover the notes on the right hand side and try to answer the questions in the left column.



More Possible Solutions

Vocabulary in Context

Speed Reading

Extensive Reading


Do you remember our problems with vocabulary?



Problems Students Encounter

Vocabulary

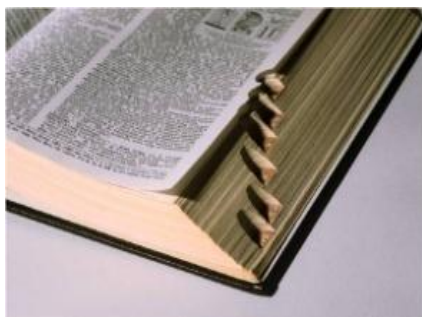
- Not knowing enough vocabulary words is my biggest problem;
- There are too many words that I'm not familiar with;
- I spend too much time looking up words in the dictionary;
- A word may have more than one definition;
- I try to guess the word from the context but I still look the word up in the dictionary because I want to know the word completely.



Here is a suggestion
for your
vocabulary problems

Vocabulary in Context

從上下文猜字義字義



Vocabulary in Context (cont'd)

1. I could not convince my friend to go on a picnic instead of to a restaurant. He was _____ in his desire to eat a formal meal.
2. Usually if restaurant food is poorly prepared, I don't criticize the waiter. Instead, I _____ the manager.
3. After eating at bad restaurants, the meals at the Elite Café look wonderfully _____, as appealing as water to a person in a desert.

4. Knowing the slightest mistake meant losing his job, the waiter carried the expensive wine glasses _____ from the kitchen.
5. Restaurants sometimes keep food unrefrigerated until it is almost bad, until it smells _____ and looks _____.
6. The cooked meat was rotten and obviously _____.

Vocabulary in Context

1. I could not convince my friend to go on a picnic instead of to a restaurant. He was **adamant** in his desire to eat a formal meal.
2. Usually if restaurant food is poorly prepared, I don't criticize the waiter. Instead, I **reprimand** the manager.
3. After eating at bad restaurants, the meals at the Elite Café look wonderfully **enticing**, as appealing as water to a person in a desert.

4. Knowing the slightest mistake meant losing his job, the waiter carried the expensive wine glasses **gingerly** from the kitchen.
5. Restaurants sometimes keep food unrefrigerated until it is almost bad, until it smells **gamy** and looks **raunchy**.
6. The cooked meat was rotten and obviously **inedible**.

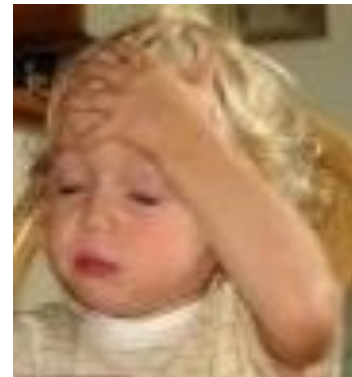


You need to practice this skill...

According to research, in order to remember a vocabulary word, one needs to be exposed to it for at least 32 times in his/her various readings. This means you must read a lot. There is **NO** short cut!

Other problems –

- Comprehension
- Length of time spent reading



Comprehension (understanding)

- “I can’t understand the sentence/paragraph/article completely;
- “Even if I know every word in the sentence/paragraph, I still can’t understand what the author wants to say;
- “I read the article two or three times but I still can’t understand the main point of the article;

Length of time to read an article

- “I read so slowly;
- “I have no patience to read for a long time;
- “I can’t remember what I read before; therefore, I can’t make the connection between what was read and what I’m reading...
- “It takes too long to read the article in English.


A possible solution –

Speed Reading




Speed Reading Skill

- By getting an overall idea of the story/article through its title / picture(s) / subtitles;
- By reading the:
first two paragraphs,
first sentence of each successive paragraphs,
last paragraph;
- By gathering prior knowledge on the topic;
- By learning to cluster words.



Most students think that the faster they read, the more their level of comprehension is likely to diminish. This is true to a sense but not completely. You need to find the right speed whereby you are still comprehending and taking in the information efficiently.



Many students believe that they have to read every word in the article/story in order to understand it completely. This is NOT true.

Let me show you...

This is how most of you read ~



Reading



word



for



word



one



word



at



a



time



slowly,



carefully,



as



you



are



doing



now



is



not



a



very



effective



way



to



understand



the



meaning



of



a



sentence



but,



it



is



very



easy



to



understand



a



meaning



of




a



word.



PAINFUL!?!



By reading clusters of words, your reading speed will increase and your understanding will pick up too.

Let's practice this with some numbers...



Speed Reading Tests Available Online

FREE OF CHARGE!!!

<http://www.rocketreader.com/>

(10-day trial on different techniques for reading skills)

<http://www.freereadingtest.com/free-reading-test.html>

(Reading test to find out your reading speed-wpm)

More Speed Reading tips (cont'd)

- Do not try to read every word;
- No fingers or movement of the head;
- No sub-vocalization (閱讀時喉嚨不要跟著念);
- Push your eye down the page;
- Do not re-read.

Other Problems – motivation and others




Motivation

- I just don't see the need to read it in English;
- I don't feel like reading it;
- I'm not interested in the subject/topic;
- I don't know why but I'm just not motivated to improve my English;
- Why do I have to learn English? I don't see myself using English in my career.

Miscellaneous

- “There’s a lot of cultural references (文化意涵) which I don’t understand and therefore, I miss the complete meaning of what the author is trying to describe;
- I’m not able to “read between the lines,” (can’t make inferences or draw conclusions, 無法推論)



First, you'll need to ask yourself some questions:

What I am interested in?

How can I find something I'm interested in?

Do I really need to learn English?

A possible solution -

pleasure reading
extensive reading

Remember! You need to read A LOT...
How? What? Where?






Reading Vocabulary Knowledge

unknown words
general vocabulary
sight vocabulary



The big black dog ran after the cat
before I could stop it.



People think amusement parks is an American invention, but they originally come from Europe.



How to read a book you don't want to read!

Some Samples of Graded Readers

分級讀本樣本

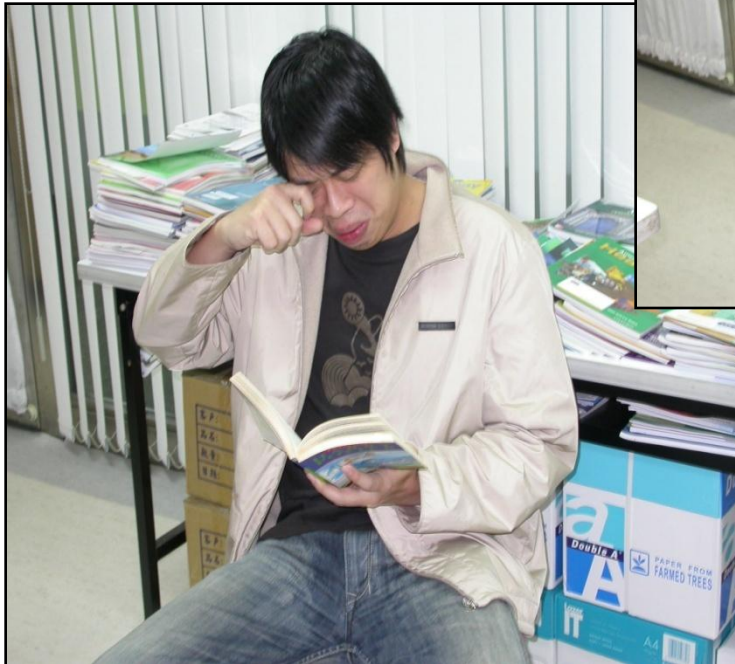


Some Samples of Novels

一般小說讀本樣本



**Learn to read faster and
you'll have time for a good laugh and a good cry**



Other ways to study well ~

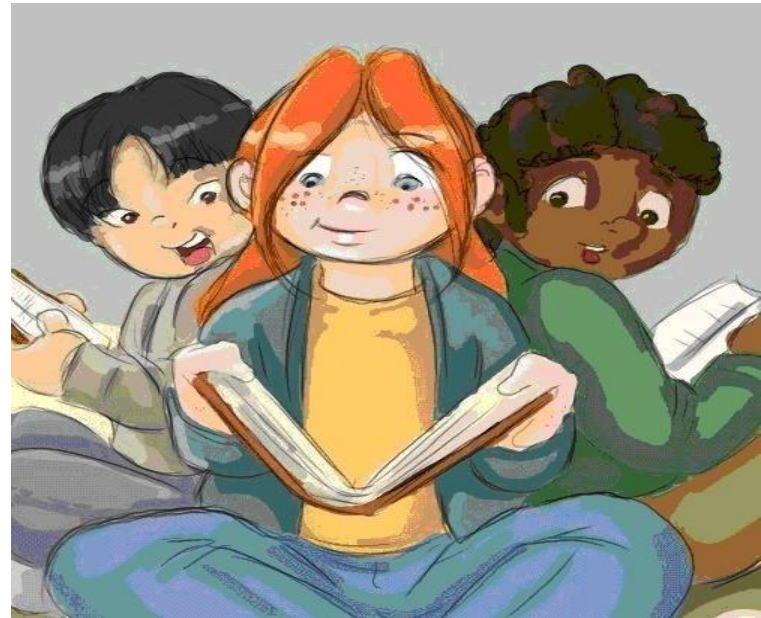
- make a “to do” list for yourself everyday...
(computer – for the day, week, month and semester)
- flash cards (questions on front, answers on the back);
- photocopy a few pages (use 10 min here and 10 min there);
- go for 20 minutes at a time in studying and then, take a break;
- anticipate the test questions;
- record the teacher’s lecture in class and listen again when you get home


Remember:

Rome was not build in a day.

All things are difficult before they become easy.

倒吃甘蔗

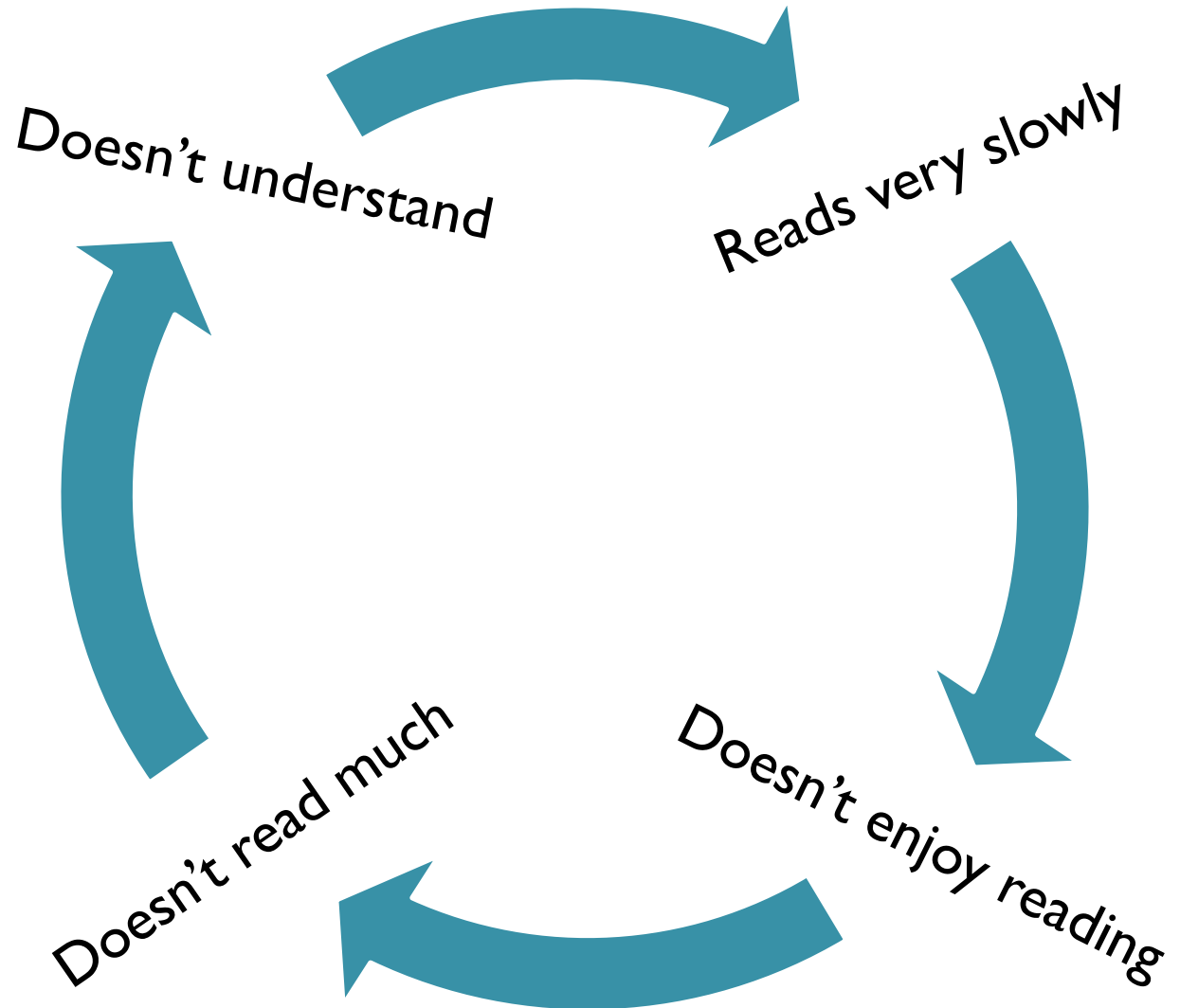




I can't do everything but I can do something. I must not fail to do the something that I can do.

Helen Keller

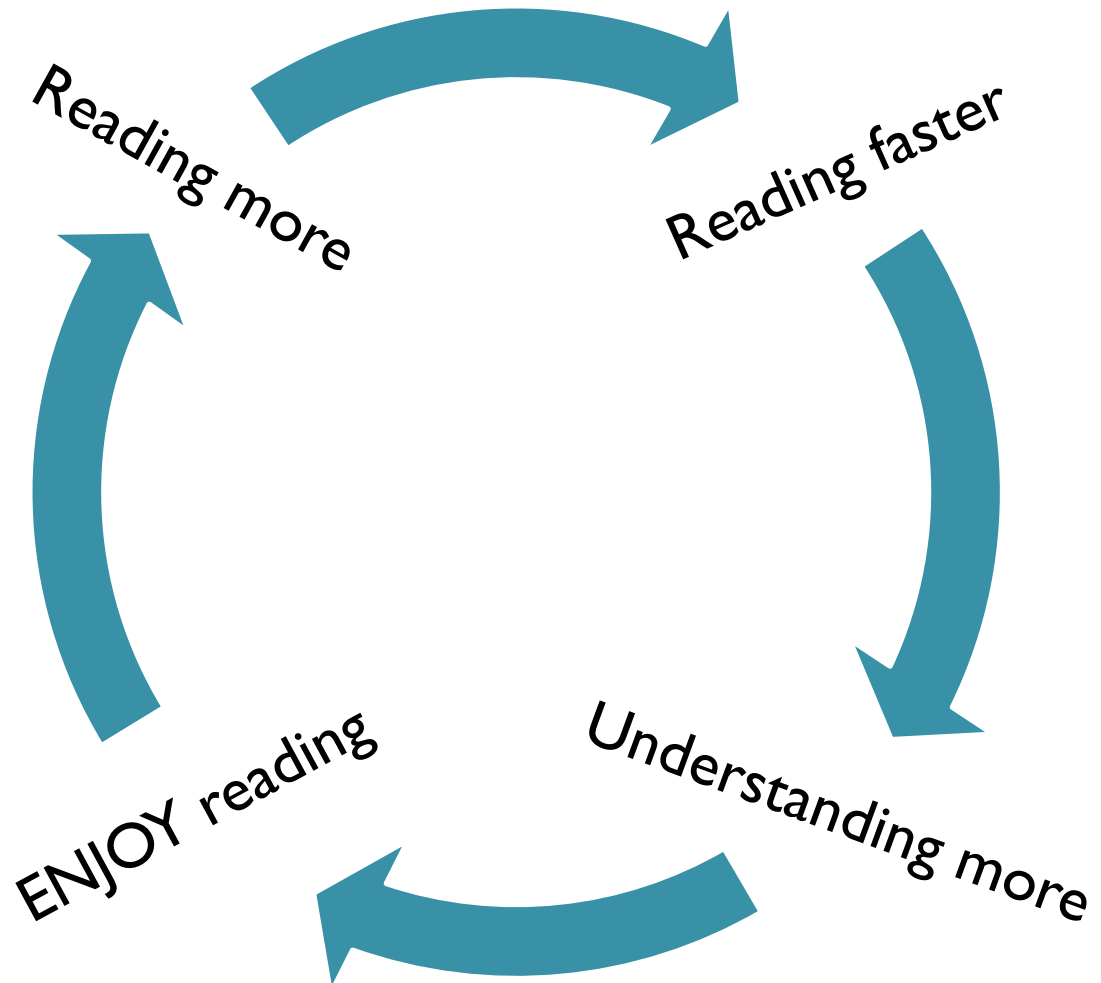
Vicious Circle for Poor Readers





can be changed to...

Wonderful Circle for Better Readers




ENJOY READING
for
the rest of your life!





Keep the following in mind...



**“You're the same today as you'll be in
five years except for the people you
meet and the books you read.”**

Charlie Jones