If they don't read much... 30 years later.

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Thirty years ago (1977) I had a paper, “If they don't read much, how they ever gonna get good?”, published in the *Journal of Reading*. That paper has become the most frequently cited paper I've ever written. The paper appeared during the last heyday of skills instruction and the last time that research was going to solve the problem of many readers struggling to learn to read. It followed upon the heels of another paper that challenged the prevailing view that learning to read primarily involved the sequential mastery of hierarchical set of subskills (Johnson & Pearson, 1975).

Given the return to an emphasis on mastery of reading sub-skills in the design of federally-funded reading interventions, it seems time to revisit the questions raised in my original paper.

That paper simply reported on some not very rigorous observations of reading instruction in elementary schools (However, later, more rigorous studies verified the original findings: Allington, 1980; 1983, 1984; Hiebert, 1983, Thurlow, et al, 1984; Vaughn, et al, 1998). I noted that struggling readers read very little during either classroom or remedial reading lessons. My question was a simple one: Should reading lessons for struggling readers include greater opportunities to actually engage in reading connected text.

In this paper I revisit the original question and note that the question may be more complicated in that the nature of the reading activity (teacher-directed vs. student directed) seems to play an important role in determining the relative progress made by good and poor readers. Additionally, the role of motivated and deliberate reading activity (Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004) needs to be better delineated in accounting for the effects of reading practice.

**Bibliography.**


