

Graded Reader Comparison

☐Time Required	Approximately 45 minutes
☐Key Skills	Scanning, critical thinking
☐Type	Individual→ Pairs/Groups (→Entire class)
☐Overview and Goals	
<p>One of the goals of this activity is to learn the differences between the original and retold versions and to deepen the understanding of the characteristics and meaning of the extensive reading books. The retold versions are rewrites that are usually shorter and easier-to-read versions of the longer, more challenging original stories for children; they can also be rewrites intended for second-language learners using vocabulary and grammar appropriate for their proficiency level. Many publishers have been producing retold versions of famous works for extensive reading in recent years. We can compare how the original has been rewritten by various authors and publishers to get a sense of the characteristics of the extensive-reading book series. Each of the retold versions differs in its illustrations and how it has been shortened, which can help you choose the series that suits your tastes. Additionally, reading the retold versions can help you discover the charm of the original stories and motivate you to read them.</p>	
☐Advance Preparation (Required Materials, Equipment, etc.)	
<p>Prepare several copies of the original and retold versions of works brought out by several publishers. Excerpts of pages and sections to be compared (in this case, <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i>).</p>	
☐Procedure	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Print and distribute excerpts of the original and the retold versions (3–4, if available). Excerpts from the beginning of the story should be easy to understand. Select a significant scene that multiple authors and publishers have rewritten so we can compare and contrast their versions with each other and the original. 2. Hand out worksheets with a list of things to compare. 3. Have the worksheets filled up. 4. Check in pairs, groups, or with the class. 	

[Application & Explanation]

Here, we use *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for comparison because it is well known to students and is often used in extensive reading books.

I chose a familiar scene from the beginning where the protagonist, Alice, first sees the white rabbit, who is hurrying and fretting about being late. I prepared a task to compare how this part is

expressed in the original and the retold versions.

The following is a comparison of the first sentence showing the rabbit's original lines and eight retold versions. (Students were asked to compare the opening sentences of the original and the Foxton Readers and E-future retold versions, which were accessible online when this task was carried out, and were then presented with a list of the various versions compiled by the teacher.)

Comparing the first sentence in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Version	YL	Word	1st line
Original	6.5	26000	Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and having nothing to do.
Foxton Readers	3.0	5400	Alice was bored. She was sitting next to the river with her sister.
E-future	--	2300	Alice was sitting by her sister on the bank of a river.
Oxford	3.0	5400	Alice was beginning to get very bored.
Penguin	2.4	7600	Alice and her big sister sat under a tree one sunny day.
Black Cat	3.0	6800	One beautiful day, Alice and her sister sat by a river.
LadyBird	2.7	3700	Alice was tired of sitting by her sister on the grassy bank and having nothing to do.
CosmoPier	1.8-2.	3800	A young lady sat under a tree on a river bank.
Happy Readers	2.5	5200	Alice felt too sleepy to play, and there was nobody to play with.

Comparing Rabbit's lines in "Alice in Wonderland"

Version	YL	Word	Rabbit's line
Original	6.5	26000	Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!
Foxton Readers	3.0	5400	Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!
E-future	--	2300	Oh dear! I shall be late!

Oxford	3.0	5400	Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!
Penguin	2.4	7600	Oh! Oh! I'm going to be late.
Black Cat	3.0	6800	Oh dear! Oh dear! I'll be late!
LadyBird	2.7	3700	Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be late!
CosmoPier	1.8-2.	3800	Oh dear! Oh dear! I will be too late!
Happy Readers	2.5	5200	Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be too late!

Even at a glance, you can see that publishers have made many changes to the original story, which was about 26,000 words long and written at a reading level of 6.5. Comparing the introductions of a few retold versions with the original highlights the differences between the retold versions and the original. However, providing a larger number of retold versions better illustrates how different authors and publishers have revised the text (and the illustrations) and how most of their attempts to simplify the original text may result in losing the deeper, richer expressions of the original version.

(Text: Megumi Kobayashi)