



PODCAST LISTENING GUIDE:

High School



Hi Teacher Friends!

Welcome to the Podcast Listening Guide!

We know the Science of Reading can sometimes feel big and overwhelming. That's why we started the Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast. Each week, we talk with researchers, teachers, and literacy experts who break down the research and share ideas you can try right away.

This guide pulls those conversations together around one focused topic. Use it for:

- **your own learning**
- **team discussions**
- **school-wide PD**

You'll find:

- **episodes grouped by topic**
- **conversation starters and classroom takeaways**
- **space to jot down notes or next steps**

There's never enough time in a teacher's day. Between lessons, kids who need you, and stacks of grading, it is a lot. Podcasts make learning feel doable. You can listen in the car, while setting up your room, or when you finally have a quiet moment to yourself at home.

However you use it, we hope this guide helps you feel encouraged, supported, and ready to try something new.

We can't wait to keep learning with you,

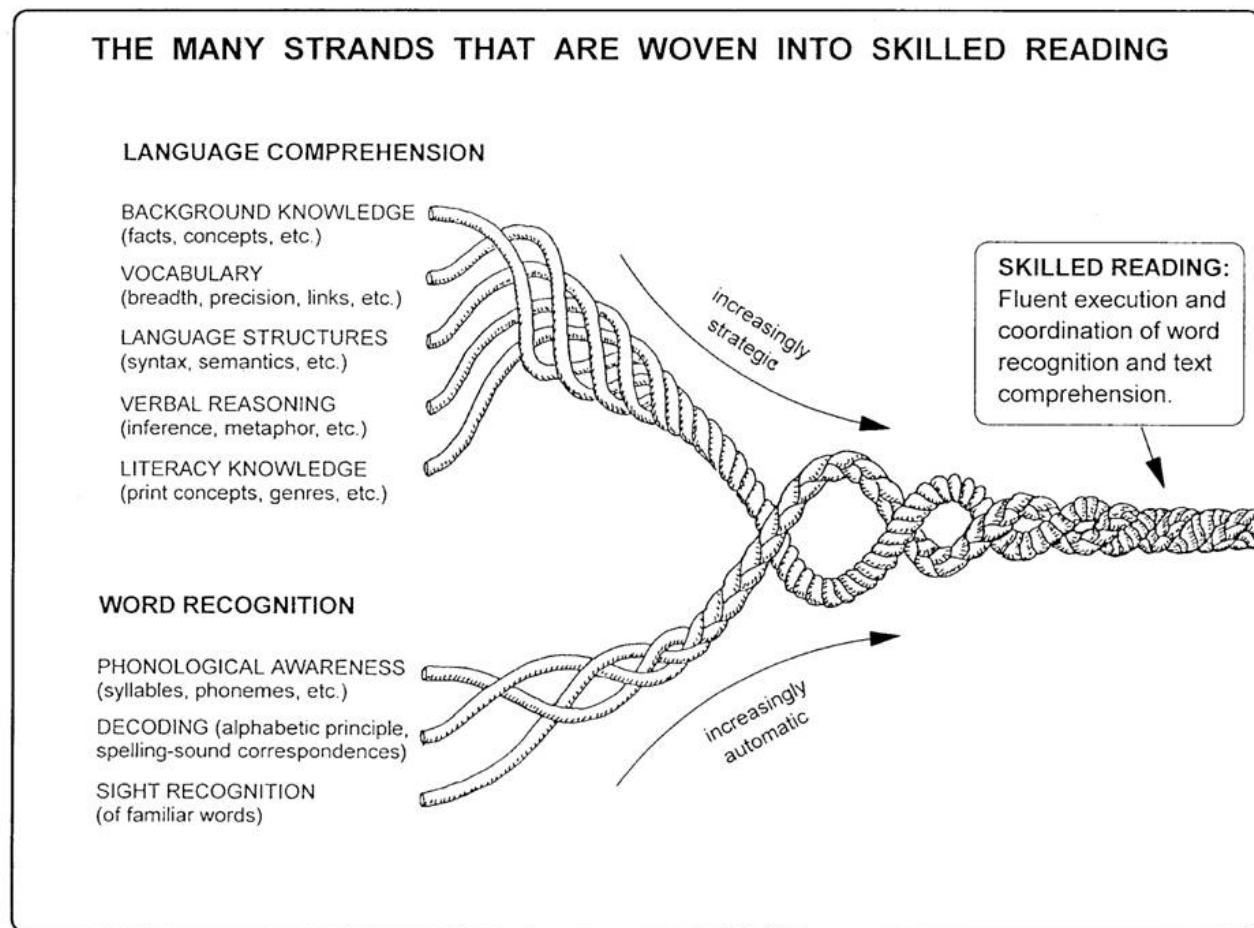
♥ *Melissa & Lori*



High School

Why is high school literacy important?

By high school, most of the demand shifts to the language comprehension strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope: background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning. Texts get denser and less supported by pictures or simple sentence structure, so students need real instruction in how to work through them, not just more time with a book. Some students also still have gaps in word recognition strands that were never resolved, and for them, general comprehension strategies aren't enough. They need intervention that addresses what's actually missing.



LISTEN: [Ep. 178: The Simple View and Scarborough's Reading Rope with Hugh Catts](#)

High School

Here are three big takeaways about teaching reading in high school from Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast straight from the voices of researchers and real classrooms:

1

Complex Texts Need Explicit Instruction

Comprehension gets harder to teach as texts get harder to read. General comprehension questions that work for simpler texts often fall apart against dense or unfamiliar material. Students need explicit instruction in how to work through a difficult text.

2

Access to Grade-Level Texts Takes Scaffolding

Not every high school student can access grade-level texts without support. Scaffolding gives students a way into the real text while they build the skills to read it independently. That access matters for keeping all students working with grade-level material.

3

Whole Books Build Different Skills

Reading full books gives students something excerpts and passages can't: sustained practice tracking character, plot, and argument across hundreds of pages. That kind of stamina only develops through long stretches of continuous reading, not short pieces pulled from a text. High school classrooms that lean heavily on excerpts may be leaving this skill underdeveloped.



Together, the podcast episodes in this guide help you see high school literacy as its own set of demands, not a smaller version of what came before. The episodes feature researchers and classroom teachers, with research and real practice you can bring into your own classroom.

Rethinking Reading Comprehension

with Hugh Catts



EPISODE: 118

Rethinking Reading Comprehension

with Hugh Catts



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Researcher Hugh Catts discusses his influential article “Rethinking How to Promote Reading Comprehension.” He describes reading comprehension as “thinking with a book in your hand.”

Hugh explains how comprehension depends on the interaction of the reader, the text, and the task. He highlights the role of knowledge and implications for instruction and assessment.

Episode Resources

Read the article behind the podcast episode:

“Rethinking How to Promote Reading Comprehension.”

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for moments that shift or stretch your thinking about what comprehension is.</i>	<i>Notice how the role of the text and task affects what comprehension means in different situations.</i>

What the Research Says about Difficult Texts

with Kristin Conradi-Smith, John Strong, and Steve Amendum



EPISODE: 230

What the Research Says About Difficult Texts

with Kristin Conradi-Smith, John Strong, & Steve Amendum

[▶ LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

This episode unpacks what makes a text difficult and why scaffolding (not simplification) allows students access to complex material.

Three experts explain the difference between text complexity and text difficulty and share practical strategies for meeting diverse student needs. You'll walk away with clear, research-based ideas to support all learners.

Episode Resources

Read STOP Write is a research-based intervention designed for grades 4-9 that integrates foundational reading skills with comprehension and writing instruction using authentic informational texts.

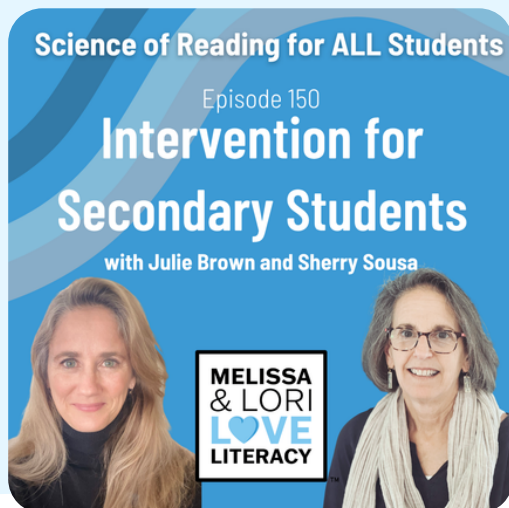
While You Listen

What I Want to Remember

Listen for what actually makes a text complex.

What I Want to Try

Pay attention to before, during, and after reading supports you could experiment with.



EPISODE: 150

Intervention for Secondary Students

with Julie Brown & Sherry Sousa

 [LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

Two Vermont educators, a superintendent and a structured literacy teacher, describe how they built a secondary reading intervention program that moved students out of special education and into AP classes, grouping teens by skill rather than grade and pairing explicit phonics instruction with peer connection and belonging.

Episode Resources

Check out [The Reading League's six-step lesson plan](#), which Julie Brown's structured literacy classes follow, at thereadingleague.org.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Notice the specific things Sherry and Julie built into their program for secondary students.</i>	<i>Listen for how Julie describes a typical lesson.</i>

Supporting Readers as Texts Get More Complex

with Luke Morin



EPISODE: 252

Supporting Readers as Texts Get More Complex

with Luke Morin



[LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

Teacher and coach Luke Morin explains why complex texts overwhelm students even when a strategy worked fine on easier books, and argues that rigor means guiding students through hard text rather than withdrawing support. Drawing on his own shift away from standards-based worksheets, he lays out "collective close reading" and "lily pad" moments, planned points of heavy support that let students establish meaning before analyzing it, so they build stamina for reading independently.

Episode Resources

Luke Morin's blog, [the Middle School Literacy Project](#), where he shares annotated text examples referenced in the episode.

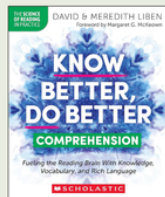
While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Notice the difference Luke draws between establishing meaning and analyzing meaning, and where lily pad moments fall in a lesson.</i>	<i>Listen for how Luke decides where to place a lily pad moment in a text.</i>

Episode 200

Know Better, Do Better: Comprehension

with David & Meredith Liben



EPISODE: 200

Know Better Do Better Comprehension

with David and Meredith Liben



[LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

David and Meredith Liben, authors of *Know Better, Do Better: Comprehension*, join us to unpack the power of well-crafted questions, what close reading should and shouldn't look like, and why decades of comprehension strategy instruction has outpaced its research base. They also revisit mistakes from their own Common Core years, including how foundational skills got left out of the conversation.

Episode Resources

Know Better, Do Better: Comprehension, David and Meredith Liben's book in Scholastic's Science of Reading in Practice series.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember

Notice the distinction David draws between teaching comprehension strategies in isolation and asking text-dependent questions that address specific features of a text.

What I Want to Try

Listen for how David and Meredith describe the difference between a first read and a second read during close reading.

Scaffolding Challenging Texts for All Readers

with Christina Cover



EPISODE: 231

Scaffolding Challenging Texts for All Readers

with Christina Cover



[LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

High school teacher Christina Cover shares how she supports secondary students who struggle with complex texts like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Night*, and *The 57 Bus*. She walks through Get the Gist for summarizing, explicit vocabulary and morphology instruction adapted from Rewards, collaborative strategic reading for metacognition, and The Writing Revolution routines as a comprehension check, then discusses how these evidence-based strategies relate to test prep and where each fits in a secondary classroom.

Episode Resources

The Get the Gist strategy, developed by researcher James Cunningham, which Christina uses to teach students to identify the who/what and most important information in a passage before writing a summary statement.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
Notice the specific steps Christina uses to teach the Get the Gist strategy, including how she varies it by sentence level or paragraph level depending on students' needs.	Listen for how Christina distinguishes comprehension instruction from test prep and where she sees a place for both.

Helping Students Read Entire Books

with Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs, & Erica Woolway



EPISODE: 239

Helping Students Read Entire Books

with Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs, and Erica Woolway

 [LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs, and Erica Woolway, authors of *Teach Like a Champion Guide to the Science of Reading*, argue that whole books are quietly disappearing from classrooms in favor of short passages and excerpts. They make the case for why full-length books build knowledge, empathy, and cognitive endurance in ways excerpts can't, and offer concrete guidance on choosing worthy texts, using purposeful read-alouds, and close reading a sentence or passage within the context of a whole novel rather than in isolation.

Episode Resources

Teach Like a Champion Guide to the Science of Reading, by Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs, and Erica Woolway.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
Notice how the authors distinguish between choosing a text simply to practice close reading and choosing a rich, whole book where a passage becomes worth studying closely.	Listen for the specific techniques the authors describe for making read-alouds purposeful.

COMING SOON

The Science of Reading Goes to High School

with Kristen McQuillan and Vaishali Joshi



EPISODE: 266

Science of Reading Goes to High School

with Kristen McQuillan and Vaishali Joshi

▶ LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Kristen McQuillan and Vaishali Joshi of Knowledge Matters join the podcast to unpack the organization's new High School Review Tool, built to extend their K-8 ELA framework into grades 9-12. They discuss what changes when ELA becomes its own discipline in high school, how knowledge-building looks different when it's rooted in a coherent volume of content-rich texts across four years, and what they learned field-testing the tool on a real high school program.

Episode Resources

Check out the Knowledge Matters' [High School Review Tool](#).

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember

Notice the distinction Kristen and Vaishali draw between a topic-driven unit that pulls in other disciplines and one driven by the literary discipline itself.

What I Want to Try

Listen for what the test prep versus growth data suggests about where instructional time is best spent in high school.

Bringing It Together...



1 What's one idea from these episodes that stayed with you, and why that one?

2 Several guests describe rigor as staying with students in hard text, not stepping back. What does that mean for how you scaffold texts?

3 How has your thinking shifted on whole books versus excerpts, or strategies versus text-grounded questions?

Making It Happen...



What's one specific classroom move from these episodes that you can picture yourself trying tomorrow, and why that one?



How will you build this into your classroom? What might it sound or look like in action?



What needs to be in place for this to go well?

Learn More: High School



Resources We Love

Looking to learn more? These resources connect closely to the ideas discussed in this listening guide:

- The IES Practice Guide, Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices, a free research-based guide from the National Center for Education Evaluation.
- Project for Adolescent Literacy phase one report at seekcommonground.org
- [AdLit.org](https://adlit.org), a resource hub from WETA specifically for adolescent literacy strategies and content.



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**HIGH SCHOOL LISTENING GUIDE
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You've shown your dedication to growing your knowledge and sharpening your practice. This achievement celebrates your commitment to learning, your curiosity about the science of reading, and your hard work turning insights into impact.

Date:

MELISSA & LORI LOVE LITERACY



Notes

