December 2012/January 2013 | Volume **70** | Number **4**   
**Common Core: Now What?** Pages 10-16

**The Common Core Ate My Baby and Other Urban Legends**

*Timothy Shanahan*

An excerpt from the article listed above.

**Prereading and Rereading**

So to clarify, there simply is no ban on prereading in the Common Core State Standards. However, that doesn't mean that the shape and scope of reading lessons haven't greatly changed. They have.

In the past, the usual practice was to read a text thoroughly a single time in a guided or directed reading lesson. However, the new standards require something different—that students read more challenging texts and engage in "close reading" lessons, in which *rereading* is a hallmark. Although it may have made sense to thoroughly prepare students to get everything they could from a text they were going to read a single time, that kind of preparation isn't as necessary if students will be going back to the well two or three times. Letting kids give the text a try without over preparing them is not unreasonable if you can add needed information back into the equation between a first and second read.

The benefit of the prereading controversy is that it's getting educators to take a hard look at how best to send students into a book—and this rethinking can help us clean up our prereading act. I've viewed many lessons in which the preparation to read a story is far more extended than the story itself. Too often, teachers assume that their students lack appropriate background knowledge to make sense of a text; and too often, their notion of how to address such gaps has been to tell students what the text is going to say rather than offer information that might help students interpret the author's message on their own.

Preparing students to read a text is perfectly reasonable, and it's compatible with the Common Core State Standards. But such preparation should be brief and should focus on providing students with the tools they need to make sense of the text on their own. Some texts may require providing students with a context to minimize interpretive problems; with other texts, it might make more sense to *not* provide background but to carefully observe as students confront the information, querying them about the potentially confusing stuff and adding any necessary explanation before a second reading.