We have a lot of idioms in our English language and when we begin a new job sometimes people might say, “well it'll take some time to learn the ropes or to be successful you need to find someone to show you the ropes.” Fortunately, in the reading world we have someone who's showing us the reading rope. Dr. Hollis Scarborough Reading Rope and if you'll notice the two domains are here; word recognition and language comprehension and she's broken these domains into different strands so we can understand them a little bit better.
According to the Reading Rope metaphor, skilled reading is like a rope woven of many strands.
In my district we make pipe cleaner Reading Ropes and we color code the strands so we can more easily discuss their importance. You may use string or yarn but be sure to tie them together or tape them on the table top so you can weave or braid.

I'll start with the bottom **word recognition**. **Phonological awareness**, it's light green, and this is our entry into reading the code. We must understand the sounds of our language in order to know what sound a letter represents. David Kilpatrick suggested we probably stop teaching and assessing phonological awareness way too soon. we need to teach it well past first grade perhaps third fourth grade or maybe even to the higher-grades. Phonological awareness is the awareness of all levels of our speech-sound system.

This refers to the awareness a reader has of the sound systems in language, including knowledge of syllables, and sentence intonation (arise invoice when asking a question, for example). Knowledge and experience of Rhymes seems especially important in developing this awareness.

Then we move to **decoding and spelling** and it's **dark green**. As we become more aware of the sounds of our language we can progress to knowing how to spell the sound, what letter or letters represent that sound, we're moving to a healthy dark green. This includes an understanding of the alphabetic principle, that is that a letter of the alphabet represents a sound, and then these letters / sounds can be blended together to make words. This is somewhat trickier in English than in some other languages English has about 44 sounds (phonemes) but only 26 letters in the alphabet. Thus, the relationship between letters and sounds cannot be one to one. Let's begin to braid the components as we add more.

And the bottom strand is **sight recognition** it's **brown**. In order to be accurate fluent readers, we must build a big bank of sight words. Some of these words were first decoded words but as we become more familiar with reading them we don't have to break them into sounds first, we just recognize them by sight. Other words have to be learned by sight because they aren't decodable. We want rich soil filled with sight words. We braid these three strands and if you'll notice they become increasingly automatic.
Some words are recognized when reading without the reader needing to decode them: you just know them. Research tells us that, in fact, most adult reading is like this. It is quite rare for us to have to read words we have never seen before, and thus do not know. Children need to build up their repertoire of sight words and the more they can read by sight, the more efficient the reading becomes

Let's move to the top strands, **language comprehension**.
The first strand, **background knowledge,** is **blue**. The sky's the limit! We want a lot of background to pull from when we read. This is the knowledge a reader already has about the information being read which needs to be applied in order to make sense of this new information. The knowledge about the word which children possess is, it seems, fairly crucial to them reading effectively. We will begin to weave the components of this set as we add.

Next is **vocabulary knowledge** and it's **gold**. But words are gold! We want to know multiple meanings of words as well as the individual meaning in a specific context. This refers to the breadth of a reader's vocabulary. Obviously the more words a reader knows in a text, the more fluent his/her reading of that text is likely to be.

Next we have **language structures** and that strand is **red**. When we are reading we encounter sentences that are complex or pronouns that we have to keep up with. We have to stop and think or even go back and re-read; thus red for stop.
A reader needs at least an implicit understanding of how language is structured, that is, grammar. The debate has been about whether that knowledge needs to be explicit. Most children (and adults) sense when a sentence is not grammatically correct without being able to explain what the problem is.

Next we have **verbal reasoning** and it's **purple**. This is a royal skill. So important for being able to comprehend the text. We have to infer or understand metaphors. Sometimes teaching verbal reasoning is difficult. But it is essential for comprehension. Readers need to be able to make inferences and construct meanings from the text: that is, they need to be able to think logically about what they read in they are to understand it, and its implications.

And the last strand in language comprehension is **literacy knowledge**. It's **white**. This includes everything from print concepts to genre knowledge. These 5 strands are wound together and become increasingly strategic.
It sounds obvious, but it is clearly important for child readers to understand concepts of print such as reading from left to right and top to bottom, how to hold a book, and that. Complete one sentence (unit of meaning) before the text moves on. These things do not work in the same way in other languages, so they probably need to be taught somehow to English-speaking (and reading) children.

Now we will weave the two portions together.
With practice, weaving the main lower, word recognition strand becomes more and more automatic, until it is done effortlessly and unconsciously.
At the same time, language skill development, practice and life experience allows you to weave the upper strand in an increasingly strategic way.
If any other strands are weak or not tight enough, this affects the strength of the whole rope. Language disorder significantly weakened the upper strand, which is one of the reasons most children with language disorders struggle with reading (as well as listening, speaking and writing).
Poor phonemic awareness and spelling pattern knowledge lead to a weaker lower strand, again weakening the whole rope and making fluent skilled reading for meaning difficult.
When all the strands in both domains are working well together we able to reach skilled reading.