

## Reading Benchmark

Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading Text Level Descriptions

*Adapted from the Continuum of Literacy Learning*

### **A: Characteristics of Texts at Level A:**

Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction

Picture books

Text and concepts highly supported by pictures

One line of text on each page

Familiar, easy content

Repeating language patterns (3-6 words per page)

Short, predictable sentences

Almost all vocabulary familiar to children – strongly sight-word based

### **Characteristics of Early Emergent Readers (Reading at Level A):**

Just beginning to learn how print works

Just beginning to learn the alphabetic principle – the relationship between letters and sounds

Learning to use 1-1 matching

Learning to follow text from left to right

Differentiating between print and pictures

Beginning to notice each letter's distinct features

Learning some easy, high-frequency words

### **B: Characteristics of Texts at Level B:**

Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction

Simple, one-dimensional characters

Picture books

Text and concepts highly supported by pictures

Two or more lines of text on each page

Repeating language patterns (3-7 words per page)

Very familiar themes and ideas

Short, predictable sentences

Almost all vocabulary familiar to children – strongly sight-word based

### **Characteristics of Early Emergent Readers (Reading at Level B):**

Recognize and apply repeating language patterns

Stronger awareness of left-to-right directionality

Stronger awareness of 1-1 matching

Learning concept of return sweep (moving from one line of text to the next)

Able to distinguish and identify more letters according to their distinct features  
Developing stronger understanding of the connection between sounds and letters  
Expanding their core of easy, high-frequency words

**C: Characteristics of Texts at Level C:**

Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction  
Picture books  
Amusing one-dimensional characters  
Familiar, easy content  
Introduction of dialogue (assigned by said in most cases)  
Many sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives  
Almost all vocabulary familiar to children – greater range of high-frequency words  
Some simple contractions and possessives (words with apostrophes)  
Two to five lines of text on each page  
Some bolded words  
Some ellipses, commas, quotation marks, question marks, and exclamation points

**Characteristics of Early Emergent Readers (Reading at Level C):**

Begin to move smoothly across the printed page when reading  
Begin to use some expression when reading  
Eyes are taking over the process of matching the spoken word to the printed word (removal of finger tracking)  
Developing phrased reading  
Noticing dialogue and punctuation and reflecting this with the voice  
Developing a larger core of high-frequency words  
Consistently monitoring reading and cross-checking one source of information against another;  
self-correcting

**D: Characteristics of Texts at Level D:**

Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction  
Picture books  
Amusing one-dimensional characters  
Familiar, easy content, themes, and ideas  
Simple dialogue (some split dialogue)  
Many sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives  
Some longer sentences (some with more than six words)  
Some simple contractions and possessives (words with apostrophes)  
Two to six lines of text on each page  
Some sentences turn over to the next line  
Some words with –s and –ing endings  
Fewer repetitive language patterns

**Characteristics of Early Emergent Readers (Reading at Level D):**

Eyes can track print over two to six lines per page

Can process texts with fewer repeating language patterns

Voice-print match is smooth and automatic; finger pointing is rarely needed, if ever

Notifies and uses a range of punctuation and read dialogue, reflecting the meaning through phrasing

Can solve many regular two-syllable words, usually with inflectional endings (-ing).

Consistently monitors reading and cross-checks one source of information against another; self-

corrects

**E: Characteristics of Texts at Level E:**

Simple informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, very simple retellings of traditional tales, simple plays

Some texts with sequential information

Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school

Most concepts supported by pictures

More literary stories and language

Concrete, easy-to-understand ideas

Some longer sentences – more than ten words

Some three-syllable words

Some sentences with verb preceding subject

Variation of words to assign dialogue in some texts (said, cried, shouted)

Easy contractions

Mostly words with easy, predictable spelling patterns

Two to eight lines of print per page

**Characteristics of Emergent Readers (Reading at Level E):**

Flexible enough to process texts with varied placement of print and a full range of punctuation

Attend to more subtle ideas and complex stories

Solve longer words with inflectional endings

Read sentences that carry over 2-3 lines or over two pages

Rely much more on the print; pictures are becoming less supportive

Left-to-right directionality and voice-print match are automatic

Oral reading demonstrates fluency and phrasing with appropriate stress on words

Read without finger pointing, bringing in finger only at point of difficulty

Recognize a large number of high-frequency words

Easily solve words with regular letter-sound relationships, as well as a few irregular words

**F: Characteristics of Texts at Level F:**

Simple informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, very simple retellings of traditional tales, simple plays

Some texts with sequential information  
Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school  
Both simple and split dialogue, speaker usually assigned  
Some longer stretches of dialogue  
Some longer sentences – more than ten words – with prepositional phrases, adjectives, and dialogue  
Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs  
Some compound sentences conjoined by and  
Many words with inflectional endings  
More details in the illustrations  
Most texts three to eight lines of text per page  
Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, and ellipses

**Characteristics of Emergent Readers (Reading at Level F):**

Beginning to build knowledge of the characteristics of different genres of texts  
Read stretches of both simple and split dialogue  
Recognize a large number of high-frequency words quickly and automatically  
Use letter-sound information to take apart simple, regular words as well as some multisyllable words  
Process and understand text patterns that are particular to written language  
Beginning to read fiction with more well-developed characters  
Left-to-right directionality and voice-print match are completely automatic  
Read without pointing and with appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and stress

**G: Characteristics of Texts at Level G:**

Informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales)  
Some longer texts with repeating longer and more complex patterns  
Some unusual formats, such as questions followed by answers or letters  
Some texts with sequential information  
Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school  
Some texts with settings that are not typical of many children's experience  
Some sentences that are questions in simple sentences and in dialogue  
Sentences with clauses and embedded phrases  
Some complex letter-sound relationships in words  
Some content-specific words introduced, explained and illustrated in the text  
Complex illustrations depicting multiple ideas  
Most texts three to eight lines of print per page  
Slightly smaller print

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level G):**

Able to internalize more and deeper knowledge of different genres  
Early reading behaviors now completely automatic  
Recognize a large number of high-frequency words  
Able to attend to more complex storylines and ideas

Use a range of word-solving strategies (letter-sound information, making connections between words, using word parts) to read unknown words  
Read texts with some content-specific words  
Demonstrate appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and word stress

### **H: Characteristics of Texts at Level H:**

Informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales)  
Narratives with more episodes and less repetition  
Accessible content that expands beyond home, school and neighborhood  
Multiple episodes taking place across time  
Some stretches of descriptive language  
Wide variety in words used to assign dialogue to speaker  
Some complex letter-sound relationships in words  
Some complex spelling patterns  
Some easy compound words  
Most texts with no or only minimal illustrations  
Italics indicating unspoken thought  
Most texts three to eight lines of print per page

### **Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level H):**

Encounter more complex language and vocabulary  
Read longer, more literary stories  
Able to process a great deal of dialogue and reflect it through appropriate word stress and phrasing  
Solve a large number of multisyllable words, plurals, contractions, and possessives  
Able to read a larger and larger number of high-frequency words  
Able to think at increasingly deeper levels  
Solve words with complex spelling patterns  
Begin to read more new texts silently, in order to achieve efficient and smooth processing

### **I: Characteristics of Texts at Level I:**

Informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales)  
Some informational texts with a table of contents and/or a glossary  
Narratives with multiple episodes and little repetition of similar episodes; more elaborated episodes  
Underlying organizational structures used and presented clearly (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution)  
Some unusual formats, such as letters or questions followed by answers  
Both familiar content and some new content children may not know  
Contain a few abstract concepts that are highly supported by text and illustrations  
Longer sentences that can carry over to two or three lines, and some over two pages  
Many two-to-three-syllable words from all parts of speech  
Some complex spelling patterns

Some complex letter-sound relationships in words  
Eight to sixteen pages of print (some easy chapter books of fifty to sixty pages)  
Three to eight lines of text per page

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level I):**

Able to process mostly short texts (eight to sixteen pages); some easy illustrated chapter books  
Able to sustain attention and memory over longer periods of time  
Can process longer (ten words or more) and more complex sentences  
Have a large sight-word vocabulary  
Able to use word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words, and words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives  
Read many texts silently, following text with their eyes and without pointing  
Oral reading reflects appropriate rate, stress, intonation, phrasing, and pausing

**J: Characteristics of Texts at Level J:**

Informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), some simple biographies on familiar subjects  
Beginning chapter books with illustrations (forty to seventy-five pages)  
Underlying organizational structures used and presented clearly (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution)  
Some unusual formats, such as letters or questions followed by answers  
Some ideas new to most children  
Some texts with settings that are not familiar to most children  
Varied placement of subject, verb, adjectives and adverbs in sentences  
Contain some abstract concepts that are highly supported by text and illustrations  
Some complex spelling patterns and letter-sound relationships in words  
Many lines of print on a page

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level J):**

Able to process a variety of texts (short fiction texts, short informational texts, and longer narrative texts that have illustrations and short chapters)  
Adjust reading strategies as needed to process different genres  
Process increasingly more complex sentences  
Have a large, expanding sight-word vocabulary  
Able to quickly apply word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words, and words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives  
Read silently during independent reading  
Oral reading reflects appropriate rate, stress, intonation, phrasing, and pausing

**K: Characteristics of Texts at Level K:**

Informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales),

some

simple biographies on familiar subjects

Beginning chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)

Varied organization in nonfiction text formats (question/answer, boxes, legends, etc.)

Some texts with plots, situations, and settings outside what a child would typically find familiar

Longer (more than fifteen words), more complex sentences

Variety of words used to assign dialogue, with verbs and adverbs essential to meaning

Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode

Longer stretches of print without the support of pictures

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level K):**

Able to accommodate the higher-level processing of several fiction texts with multiple episodes

connected to a single plot

Read about and understand characters that are increasingly more complex

Able to process a great deal of dialogue within a story

Challenged to read stories based on concepts that are distant in time and space and reflect diverse cultures

Have a large, expanding sight-word vocabulary

Able to quickly apply word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words,

and words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives

Read silently during independent reading

Oral reading fully demonstrates all aspects of fluent reading

**L: Characteristics of Texts at Level L:**

Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), simple biographies, simple mysteries

Underlying organizational structures (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution)

Some technical content that is challenging and not typically known

Some texts with plots, settings, and situations outside typical experience

Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode

Some new vocabulary and content-specific words in nonfiction text introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text

New vocabulary in fiction texts (largely unexplained)

Chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level L):**

Able to process easy chapter books, including some series books, with more sophisticated plots

and few illustrations, as well as shorter informational texts

Adjust reading to process a variety of genres

Understand that chapter books have multiple episodes connected to a single plot

Bring background knowledge to new reading in order to process and learn new information  
Begin to recognize themes across texts (friendship, courage)  
Able to understand some abstract ideas  
Able to see multiple perspectives of characters through description  
Able to flexibly apply word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words,  
and words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives  
Read silently during independent reading  
Oral reading fully demonstrates all aspects of fluent reading

**M: Characteristics of Texts at Level M:**

Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), simple biographies, simple mysteries  
Most of the content carried by print, rather than pictures  
Some abstract themes requiring inferential thinking to derive  
Texts with multiple points of view revealed through characters' behaviors  
Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing  
Multiple characters to understand and notice how they develop and change  
Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode  
Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the Text

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level M):**

Know the characteristics of a range of genres  
Developing preferences for specific forms of reading (mysteries, biographies)  
Can understand and process narratives with more elaborate plots and multiple characters that develop and change over time  
Able to identify and use underlying organizational structures (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text  
Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading  
Can read and understand descriptive words, some complex content-specific words, and some technical words

**N: Characteristics of Texts at Level N:**

Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), simple biographies, simple mysteries  
Presentation of multiple topics that represent subtopic of a larger topic or theme  
Various ways of showing characters' attributes (description, dialogue, thoughts, others' perspectives)  
Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing  
Multiple characters to understand and notice how they develop and change

Variety in sentence length and complexity

Many two-to-three-syllable words; some words with more than three syllables

Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode

Words with prefixes and suffixes

Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the Text

**Characteristics of Early Independent Readers (Reading at Level N):**

Know the characteristics of and can process the full range of genres

Developing preferences for specific forms of reading (mysteries, biographies)

Can understand and process narratives with more elaborate plots and multiple characters that develop and change over time

Able to identify and use underlying organizational structures (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text

Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading

Reader will slow down to problem solve or search for information, then resume normal reading

pace

Most word solving is unconscious and automatic; little overt problem solving needed

Can read and understand descriptive words, some complex content-specific words, and some technical words

**O: Characteristics of Texts at Level O:**

Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies,

mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, chapter books with sequels

Prior knowledge needed to understand content in many informational texts

Presentation of multiple topics that represent subtopic of a larger topic or theme

Content requiring the reader to take on perspectives from diverse cultures and bring cultural knowledge to understanding

Multiple characters to know and understand

Characters revealed by what they say, do, think, and by what others say or think about them

Descriptive and figurative language that is key to understanding the plot

Characters with both good and bad traits, who change and develop over time

Some words used figuratively

New vocabulary in fiction texts largely unexplained

Some words with connotative meanings that are essential to understanding the text

Some multisyllable proper nouns that are challenging to take apart or decode

**Characteristics of Early Independent Readers (Reading at Level O):**

Know the characteristics of and can process the full range of genres

Read a wide range of texts: chapter books, shorter fiction and informational text, including special forms such as mysteries, series books, and short stories

Able to identify and use underlying organizational structures (description, compare and

contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text  
Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives  
Solve new vocabulary words, some defined in the text and some unexplained  
Most word solving is unconscious and automatic; little overt problem solving needed  
Can read and understand descriptive words, some complex content-specific words, and some technical words  
Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading  
Demonstrate all aspects of smooth, fluent processing

**P: Characteristics of Texts at Level P:**

Informational texts, fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, chapter books with sequels, genre combinations (hybrids)  
Topics that go well beyond readers' personal experience  
Content requiring the reader to take on diverse perspectives (race, language, culture)  
Ideas and themes requiring taking a perspective not familiar to the reader  
Some more challenging themes (war, the environment)  
Many ideas and themes requiring understanding of cultural diversity  
Multiple characters to know and understand  
Characters revealed by what they say, do, think, and by what others say or think about them  
Extensive use of descriptive and figurative language that is key to understanding the plot  
Building suspense through events of the plot  
Some more complex fantasy elements  
Many complex content-specific words in nonfiction, mostly defined in text, illustrations, or glossary  
Multisyllable proper nouns that are challenging to take apart or decode  
More difficult layout of informational text, and some fiction text, with denser format

**Characteristics of Early Independent Readers (Reading at Level P):**

Can identify the characteristics of a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects and hybrid genres  
Read a wide range of texts: chapter books, shorter fiction and informational text, including special forms such as mysteries, series books, and short stories  
Able to identify and use underlying organizational structures (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text  
Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives  
Solve new vocabulary words, some defined in the text and some unexplained  
Most word solving is unconscious and automatic; little overt problem solving needed  
Can read and understand descriptive words, some complex content-specific words, and some technical words  
Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading  
Demonstrate all aspects of smooth, fluent processing

**Q: Characteristics of Texts at Level Q:**

Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries

Many abstract themes requiring inferential thinking to derive

Texts with deeper meanings applicable to important human problems and social issues

Some more challenging themes (war, the environment)

Many new vocabulary words that depend on readers' tools (such as glossaries)

Many new vocabulary words for readers to derive meaning from context

Extensive use of figurative language (idioms, simile, metaphor)

Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode

Many technical words that are difficult to decode

Nonfiction may contain a variety of complex graphics, often more than one on a page

Some nonfiction texts with graphics that have scales or legends that require understanding and Interpretation

**Characteristics of Developing Independent Readers (Reading at Level Q):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies, hybrid genres,

fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.

Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives

Solve new vocabulary words, some defined in the text and some unexplained

Most reading is silent, but fluency and phrasing in oral reading are well-established

Readers are challenged by many longer descriptive words and by content-specific/technical words

Able to take apart multisyllable words and use a full range of word-solving skills

Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

Consistently search for information in illustrations and increasingly complex graphics

**R: Characteristics of Texts at Level R:**

Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries

Some collections of short stories that have interrelated themes or build a single plot across the book

Fiction – settings requiring knowledge of content (history, geography, etc.)

Complex ideas on many different topics requiring real or vicarious experiences

Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding the setting and characters

Some long strings of unassigned dialogue from which story action must be inferred

Settings distant in time and space from students' experiences

Many new vocabulary words for readers to derive meaning from context

Extensive use of figurative language (idioms, simile, metaphor)  
Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns  
Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode

**Characteristics of Developing Independent Readers (Reading at Level R):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.  
Understand perspectives different from their own as well as settings and people far distant in time and space  
Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives  
Solve new vocabulary words, some defined in the text and some unexplained  
Most reading is silent, but fluency and phrasing in oral reading are well-established  
Readers are challenged by many longer descriptive words and by content-specific/technical words  
Able to take apart multisyllable words and use a full range of word-solving skills  
Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats  
Consistently search for information in illustrations and increasingly complex graphics

**S: Characteristics of Texts at Level S:**

Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries  
Some collections of short stories that have interrelated themes or build a single plot across the book  
Content particularly appealing to adolescents  
Some fiction settings requiring knowledge of content (history, geography, etc.)  
Complex ideas on many different topics requiring real or vicarious experiences  
Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding the setting and characters  
Some long strings of unassigned dialogue from which story action must be inferred  
Many new vocabulary words that depend on readers' tools (such as glossaries)  
Many new vocabulary words for readers to derive meaning from context  
Extensive use of figurative language (idioms, simile, metaphor)  
Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns  
Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode  
Many words with affixes (prefixes and suffixes, multisyllable proper nouns that are difficult to decode)  
Increasingly difficult layout of informational texts, with dense content and format

**Characteristics of Developing Independent Readers (Reading at Level S):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters,

informational texts, etc.

Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives

Understand perspectives different from their own as well as settings and people far distant in time and space

Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives

Solve new vocabulary words, some defined in the text and some unexplained

Most reading is silent, but fluency and phrasing in oral reading are well-established

Readers are challenged by many longer descriptive words and by content-specific/technical words

Able to take apart multisyllable words and use a full range of word-solving skills

Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

Consistently search for information in illustrations and increasingly complex graphics

### **T: Characteristics of Texts at Level T:**

Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries

Some collections of short stories that have interrelated themes or build a single plot across the book

Nonfiction texts with multiple topics and categories and subcategories within them

Themes focusing on the problems of preadolescents

Many texts focusing on human problems (war, hardship, economic issues)

Themes that evoke alternative interpretations

Some more complex fantasy elements, some showing conflict between good and evil

Some obvious symbolism

Wide range of declarative, imperative, or interrogative sentences

Many words with affixes (prefixes and suffixes, multisyllable proper nouns that are difficult to decode)

Words used in regional or historical dialects

Some words from languages other than English

Most texts with no or only minimal illustrations

### **Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level T):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.

Able to read longer texts and remember information and connect ideas over a long period of time (a week or two)

Read and interpret complex fantasy, myths, legends that contain symbolism

Understand perspectives different from their own

Understand settings and people far distant in time and space

Readers are challenged by many longer descriptive words and by content-specific/technical

words

Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

**U: Characteristics of Texts at Level U:**

Informational texts, complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction , short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries

Variety of underlying structures often combined in complex ways (description, comparison and

contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, etc.)

Topics that go well beyond readers' personal experiences and content knowledge

Content particularly appealing to adolescents

Many themes presenting mature issues and the problems of society (racism, war)

Many texts focusing on human problems (war, hardship, economic issues)

Themes that evoke alternative interpretations

Texts requiring inference to understand characters and why they change

Many complex narratives that are highly literary

Some literary devices (for example, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language

Fantasy and science fiction showing struggle between good and evil

Some words from languages other than English

Long, multisyllable words requiring attention to roots to read and understand

Most fiction texts with no illustrations other than the cover jacket

A wide variety of complex graphics that require interpretation (photos with legends, diagrams, labels, cutaways, graphics, maps)

**Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level U):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.

Able to read longer texts and remember information and connect ideas over many days of reading

Read and interpret complex fantasy, myths, legends that contain symbolism

Understand perspectives different from their own

Understand settings and people far distant in time and space

Most reading is silent, but fluency and phrasing in oral reading are well-established

Able to take apart multisyllable words and use a full range of word-solving skills

Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

Able to search for and use information in an integrated way, using complex graphics and texts that present content requiring background knowledge

**V: Characteristics of Texts at Level V:**

Informational texts, complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries

Variety of underlying structures often combined in complex ways (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, etc.)  
Topics that go well beyond readers' personal experiences and content knowledge  
Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography  
Heavy content load in many texts, both fiction and nonfiction, requiring study  
Many themes presenting mature issues and the problems of society (racism, war)  
Many texts focusing on human problems (war, hardship, economic issues)  
Themes that evoke alternative interpretations  
Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often unsignaled, or signaled only by dialogue)  
Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)  
Many complex narratives that are highly literary  
Words used figuratively or with unusual or hard-to-understand connotations  
Archaic words or words from languages other than English that do not follow conventional pronunciation patterns  
Introduction to more abstract literary forms, such as satire

**Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level V):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.  
Able to read longer texts and remember information and connect ideas over many days of reading  
Read and interpret complex fantasy, myths, legends that contain symbolism  
Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire)  
Understand perspectives different from their own  
Understand settings and people far distant in time and space  
Readers can be very expressive when presenting poetry or readers' theater  
Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats  
Able to search for and use information in an integrated way, using complex graphics and texts that present content requiring background knowledge

**W: Characteristics of Texts at Level W:**

Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (myths, legends), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries, satire  
Unusual text organizations (e.g. flashbacks)  
Many texts presenting mature societal issues, especially those important to adolescents (family issues, growing up)  
Wide range of challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the

human condition

Character interpretation essential to understand the theme

Fantasy incorporating classical motifs (such as “the quest”)

Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography

Heavy content load in many texts, both fiction and nonfiction, requiring study

Themes that evoke alternative interpretations

Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often un signaled, or signaled only by dialogue)

Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)

Words used figuratively or with unusual or hard-to-understand connotations

Archaic words or words from languages other than English that do not follow conventional pronunciation patterns

Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English

### **Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level W):**

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.

Able to read longer texts and remember information and connect ideas over many days of reading

Read and interpret complex fantasy, myths, legends that contain symbolism and classical motifs

(“the quest”)

Encounter mature themes that expand their knowledge of social issues

Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire), and literary devices, such as

irony

Understand multidimensional themes on several different levels

Understand settings and people far distant in time and space

Readers can be very expressive when presenting poetry or readers’ theater

Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

Apply background knowledge of historical events, archaic language and/or regional dialects when reading

### **X: Characteristics of Texts at Level X:**

Informational texts, high fantasy and science fiction, realistic fiction, traditional literature (myths, legends), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries, satire

Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography

Many texts presenting mature societal issues, especially those important to adolescents

(family

issues, growing up)

Wide range of challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the human condition

Many texts presenting multiple themes that may be understood in many layers

Some texts with heroic or larger-than-life characters who represent the symbolic struggle between good and evil

Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding setting and characters Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)

Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often un signaled, or signaled only by dialogue)

Some very long sentences (more than thirty words)

Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English

**Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level X):**

Understand and process a wide range of texts, including all genres

Able to read very long texts with complex sentences and paragraphs, with many multisyllable words

Understand and respond to mature themes such as poverty and war

Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire), and literary devices, such as

irony

Read and understand texts with multidimensional characters, texts that can be interpreted on several levels, and that are developed in complex ways

Most reading is silent; fluency and phrasing in oral reading is well-established

Challenged by a heavy load of content-specific and technical words that require using embedded definitions, background knowledge, and reader's tools (glossaries, indexes, etc.)

Apply prior understandings in a critical way when reading both fiction and nonfiction texts

**Y/Z: Characteristics of Texts at Levels Y/Z:**

Informational texts, high fantasy and science fiction, realistic fiction, traditional literature (myths, legends), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries, satire

Many texts with the complex structure of adult reading

Unusual text organizations (flashback, flash forward, time lapses)

Many new vocabulary words that readers must derive meaning from context or use glossaries or

dictionaries

Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography

Many texts presenting mature societal issues, especially those important to adolescents (family

issues, growing up)

Wide range of challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the human condition

Many texts presenting multiple themes that may be understood in many layers

Some texts with heroic or larger-than-life characters who represent the symbolic struggle between good and evil

Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding setting and characters Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)

Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often un signaled, or signaled only by dialogue)

Some very long sentences (more than thirty words)

Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English

**Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Levels Y/Z):**

Understand and process a wide range of texts, including all genres

Read very long texts with complex sentences and paragraphs, with many multisyllable words

Identify classical motifs such as “the quest” and moral issues

Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire), and literary devices, such as

irony

Read and understand texts with multidimensional characters, texts that can be interpreted on several levels, and that are developed in complex ways

Most reading is silent; fluency and phrasing in oral reading is well-established

Challenged by a heavy load of content-specific and technical words that require using embedded definitions, background knowledge, and reader’s tools (glossaries, indexes, etc.)

Apply prior understandings in a critical way when reading both fiction and nonfiction texts