



# TEXT LEVELS



(Adapted from *Matching Books to Readers* by Fountas & Pinnell)

By examining how the book supports the developing reader and what challenges are present, students can be matched to appropriate books for small group instruction to help them progress as readers.

Grade level appropriate books for Grades K–5 are designated by the following list of criteria. The characteristics provide a guide to help teachers select the best text to use for instructional purposes.

## **KINDERGARTEN TEXT CHARACTERISTICS (Levels A-D)**

- One–Two lines of text (focus on print, directionality, return sweep)
- Large spaces between words
- Sentence structure similar to students' language
- Some books have repeated words or patterns
- Includes basic sight words
- Pictures are highly supportive
- Topics are familiar to children
- Most focus on a single idea, with straightforward characters and story plots.
- Punctuation includes periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and some commas.

## **FIRST GRADE TEXT CHARACTERISTICS (Levels E-I)**

- Longer, more complex stories
- Genres include realistic fiction, fantasy, simple folktales and nonfiction (simple informational text)
- Topics range beyond the familiar
- More variety in the language including some literary language.
- Greater variety of high frequency words
- Large number of decodable words with regular and irregular patterns
- Pictures support and extend meaning
- Frequent dialogue and full range of punctuation
- Story events require interpretation
- Readers are expected to remember information and action over a longer period of time.

## **SECOND GRADE TEXT CHARACTERISTICS (Levels J – M)**

- Short and easy chapter books, longer picture books with interesting vocabulary
- Characters in series books
- Increase in dialogue, speakers identified
- New genres, such as legends, folktales, and biographies
- Illustrations that enhance the text but offer less support for understanding text meaning
- Range of punctuation
- Longer and more complex sentences with adjectives and adverbs
- One main plot with several episodes
- Automatic recognition of a large number of words beyond high–frequency words
- Three and four syllable words
- Informational text: short text with strong text feature support (i.e., illustrations, bold print, captions)

### THIRD GRADE TEXT CHARACTERISTICS (Levels M – P)



- New genre is introduced through longer, complex picture books.
- Chapter books of about 70 – 80 pages; each chapter ranges from 5 – 15 pages
- Several new genres, such as fables, realistic fiction, historical fiction, mysteries
- Several different characters, actions and interactions must be followed.
- More sophisticated plots with characters that are developed throughout the text
- Events build upon each other, requiring the reader to keep track of information.
- More dialogue; speaker not always identified
- Higher level of conceptual understanding
- Many conventions of text are introduced.
- Sentences are complex and contain multi-syllable and technical words.
- Words are used for a range of connotative meanings.
- Print size is more varied.

### FOURTH GRADE TEXT CHARACTERISTICS (Levels P – S)

- Longer chapter books that present a range of problems; multiple episodes related to a single plot
- Themes require interpretation and understanding.
- Multiple characters; development shown through what they say and do
- New genre introduced: autobiographies
- Vocabulary/terminology is sophisticated and varied, requiring interpretations of meaning
- New multi-syllable words requiring a quick analysis
- Highly complex sentences require a full range of punctuation important to understanding the meaning of the text.
- Informational text: several organizational patterns and multiple text features

### FIFTH GRADE TEXT CHARACTERISTICS (LEVELS S-W)

- Variety of informational and literary text
- Small print and reduced word spacing
- Different text organizations
- Variety and complexity of text structures, such as problem-solution, chronological order
- Text requiring readers to retain and recall information for an extended period of time
- Complex ideas, more sophisticated language, including figurative language
- Longer descriptive narratives
- Density of text increases
- Meaning at a literal and figurative level
- More sophisticated themes, abstract and complex topics
- New genre, such as science fiction

