

# **Text Characteristics and Book Lists**



### **Text Characteristics at Level A, B**

- o A single word, phrase or simple sentence on each page
- o Patterned and predictable text
- o Larger, easy to read font
- o Exaggerated spacing between words
- o Illustrations are highly supportive of text, most of meaning conveyed through the illustrations.
- o One or two familiar words (“sight words”) anchor children to the text.
- o Consistent placement of the text, preferably top left to right or bottom left to right

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Carries the pattern in a predictable text
- o Using the picture as a source of information
- o Using left to right directionality to read one line of print
- o Matching spoken words with printed words with one-to-one matching
- o Locating one or two known words on a page

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*1,2,3 in the Box (Tarlow)*  
*A Birthday Cake (Cowley)*  
*Cat on the Mat (Wildsmith)*  
*Flowers Have Colors (Cherrington)*  
*Growing Colors (McMillan)*  
*How Many Fish? (Gosset)*  
*I Can Write (Williams)*  
*I See Fish (Curry)*  
*In the Woods (Gibson)*  
*Jungle Walk (Tafari)*  
*Kittens (Curry)*  
*Mommy, Where Are You? (Ziefert)*  
*My Book (Maris)*  
*My Garden (Ostrow)*  
*Nikki's Walk (Tanner)*  
*The Circus (Carle)*  
*The Gift (Prater)*  
*We Play Together (Blevins)*

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### **Text Characteristics at Level C, D**

- o One to three short, simple sentences on each page
- o Existence of slight pattern change at some point in the book
- o Consistent placement of text with one or two minor changes
- o Good spacing and larger font
- o Highly support illustrations with few extraneous details
- o A few high frequency words appear throughout the book
- o Sentences are more varied, full range of punctuation

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Getting the mouth ready for the initial sound of a word
- o Using left to right directionality and return sweep to next line of print
- o Locating one or two known words on a page
- o Monitoring for meaning, checking to make sure it makes sense

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*A Cat's Day (Twig)*  
*All Fall Down (Wildsmith)*  
*Biscuit Visits the Big City (Capucilli)*  
*Brown Bear, Brown Bear (Martin)*  
*Footprints in the Snow (Benjamin)*  
*I Went Walking (Williams)*  
*Kites (Ling)*  
*Little Sister (Mitchell)*  
*Mud (Lewison)*  
*Rain (Kalan)*  
*Rainbow of My Own (Freeman)*  
*Shoes (Winthrop)*  
*Sleepy Dog (Ziefert)*  
*Then and Now (Berger)*  
*Wake up! Wake up! (Wildsmith)*  
*What Time Is It? (Moriarty)*  
*What's for Lunch? (Carle)*  
*Where's Al? (Barton)*  
*Where's The Fish (Gomi)*

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### **Text Characteristics at Level D, E**

- o More variation in the placement of text on the page
- o Sentences are longer and more complex
- o Readers must rely on graphophonics across the whole word
- o Opening and closing sentences vary
- o Moderate to high support from illustrations that contact details related to the meaning of the whole text
- o Some repetition of phrases, words or sentences.
- o Children will need to use sight words to help with unknown words, using parts of the familiar words as examples to help them unlock unfamiliar words.

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Rereading and self-correction behaviors common
- o Reading with some fluency
- o Cross checking one source of information against another
- o Monitoring for meaning: checking to make sure what has been read makes sense and sounds right
- o Recognizes common chunks of words

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Bears in the Night (Berenstain)*  
*Beautiful Bugs (Fleming)*  
*Blue Bug Goes to School (Twig)*  
*Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed (Christelow)*  
*Foot Book (Eastman)*  
*Footprints in the Snow (Benjamin)*  
*Fur (Mark)*  
*Go, Dog, Go (Eastman)*  
*Henry's Busy Day (Campbell)*  
*It Looked Like Spilt Milk (Shaw)*  
*Mrs. Wishy Washy (Cowley)*  
*Mud (Lewison)*  
*My Doll (Yukish)*  
*Shoes (Winthrop)*  
*Sleepy Dog (Ziefert)*  
*Taking Care of Rosie (Salem)*  
*Wake up! Wake up! (Wildsmith)*  
*What Time Is It? (Moriarty)*

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*Where's Al? (Barton)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level F, G**

- o Text contains more challenging vocabulary
- o Repetition of three or more phrases or sentence patterns throughout the book
- o Illustrations provide moderate support
- o Language structure and patterns may be more varied and complex; they may also contain more literacy "book language"
- o The content may often include a single character or story line throughout the book

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Rereading and self-correction behaviors common
- o Reading with fluency
- o Uses a repertoire of strategies to figure out words and phrases
- o Cross-checking different cues (meaning, word structure, grammar)
- o Can use known word parts to figure out unknown words
- o Uses increasingly different chunks within words

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Amy Loves the Snow (Hoban)*

*Are You There, Bear? (Maris)*

*Biscuit (Capucilli)*

*Biscuit Finds a Friend (Capucilli)*

*Cookie's Week (Ward)*

*Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother, Too? (Carle)*

*Each Pear, Each Plum (Ahlberg)*

*Just for You (Mayer)*

*More Spaghetti, I Say (Gelman)*

*Not Me, Said the Monkey (West)*

*Rosie's Walk (Hutchins)*

*SHHH (Henkes)*

*Shoveling Snow (Cummings)*

*Spot's First Walk (Hill)*

*The Carrot Seed (Krauss)*

*The Teeny, Tiny Woman (O'Connor)*

*Tiger is a Scaredy Cat (Phillips)*

*Titch (Hutchins)*

*What Daddies Do Best (Numeroff)*

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### **Text Characteristics at Level H, I**

- o Sentence Patterns are longer, varied and more complex
- o Greater use of literary or story language: Once upon a time...Long, long ago...
- o May include repeated pattern in cumulative form with more and more text added to each page
- o Low picture support
- o There will be more unfamiliar and often complex vocabulary

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Rereading and self-correcting regularly
- o Reading with fluency
- o Integrating a balance of sources of information
- o Monitoring for meaning: checking to make sure what has been read makes sense and sounds right and what looks right
- o Demonstrate fluent phrasing of longer passages
- o Uses a repertoire of graphophonic (letter/sound) strategies to problem solve through text

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Albert the Albatross (Hoff)*  
*Are You My Mother (Eastman)*  
*Because a Little Bug Went Ka-choo (Stone)*  
*Big Dog, Little Dog (Eastman)*  
*Charlie Needs a Cloak (DePaola)*  
*Danny and the Dinosaur (Hoff)*  
*Father Bear Comes Home (Minarik)*  
*George Shrinks (Joyce)*  
*Goodnight Moon (Brown)*  
*Grizzwold (Hoff)*  
*Hattie and the Fox (Fox)*  
*Morris the Moose (Wiseman)*  
Most Titles in the *Little Critters Series* (Mayer)  
*Mrs. Brice's Mice (Fox)*  
*Old Hat, New Hat (Berenstain)*  
*Ten, Nine, Eight (Bang)*  
*The Big Hungry Bear (Wood)*  
*The Very Busy Spider (Carle)*  
*We are Best Friends (Alike)*

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*We're Going on a Bear Hunt (Rosen)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level J, K**

- o Longer, slightly more complex chapter books with more characters
- o Most vocabulary words known by children through oral language or reading
- o Variety in layout, reflecting different genres
- o Wide range of high frequency words
- o Some complex spelling patterns
- o Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs
- o Ample space between lines
- o Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- o Print and illustrations integrated in many texts

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Use letter sound relationships in sequence to solve more complex words
- o Use known words to solve new words
- o Follow and remember a series of events over a longer text in order to understand the ending
- o Bring knowledge from personal experiences to the interpretation of characters and events.
- o Connect words that mean the same or almost the same to help in understanding
- o Read dialogue with phrasing and expression
- o Summarize a longer narrative text with multiple episodes.
- o Demonstrates fluent phrasing of longer passages

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Arthur the Moose Series (Hoban)*

*Blackboard Bear (Alexander)*

*Bony-Legs (Cole)*

*Cat in the Hat (Suess) Cat in the Hat, Green Eggs, Hop on Pop (Suess)*

*Commander Toad (Yolen)*

*Farmer Boy Birthday, A (Wilder)*

*Frog and Toad Series (Lobel)*

*Froggy Learns to Swim (London)*

*Harry Hates Shopping! (Armitage)*

*Home in the Sky (Backer)*

*Hooray for the Golly Sisters! (Byars)*

*Jamaica Series (Havill)*

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*Little Bear Series (Minarik)*  
*Little Bill Series (Cosby)*  
*Mitchell is Moving (Cole)*  
*Nate the Great Series (Sharmat)*  
*Poppleton, Henry and Mudge Series (Rylant)*  
*There's Something in My Attic (Mayer)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level L, M**

- o Episodic and cumulative chapters
- o Limited picture support
- o Limited spacing
- o Multiple story lines and characters
- o More complex themes and characters to follow and develop
- o Question in dialogue (fiction) and questions and answers (nonfiction)
- o Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns
- o Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing
- o Variety in the layout of the print

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Solve content specific words, using graphics and definitions in the text
- o Use chapter titles to foreshadow content
- o Summarize a longer narrative, either orally or in writing
- o Bring knowledge from personal experiences to the interpretation of characters and events
- o Understand the relationship between the setting and the plot of a story
- o Differentiate between what is known and new information
- o Notice aspects of a writer's style
- o Infer the big ideas or message

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Amelia Bedelia Series (Parish)*  
*Arthur the Aardvark Series (Brown)*  
*Cam Jansen Series (Adler)*  
*George and Martha Series (Marshall)*  
*Horrible Harry Series (Kline)*  
*Jenny Archer Series (Conford)*  
*Junie B. Jones (Park)*  
*Look Who's Playing First Base (Christopher)*  
*Magic Treehouse Series (Osbourne)*

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*Most books by Matt Christopher (sports themes)*  
*Pinky and Rex Series (Howe)*  
*Polk Street School Series (Giff)*  
*Russell Series (Hurwitz)*  
*The Littles Series (Petersen)*  
*Three Smart Pals (Rocklin)*  
*Tooter Pepperday (Spinelli)*  
*Zack Files Series (Greenburg)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level N, O**

- o More complex sentence structure
- o New vocabulary in fiction texts largely unexplained
- o Complex spelling patterns complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing
- o Texts with multiple points of view revealed through characters behaviors
- o Use of words in italics, bold or all capitals to indicate emphasis, level of importance, or signal other meaning
- o Descriptive and figurative language that is important to understanding the plot
- o Black and white illustrations
- o Full range of punctuation
- o No or minimal illustrations

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Begin to notice new and interesting words, and add them to speaking or writing vocabulary
- o Process a wide range of dialogue
- o Respond to plot tension or suspense by reading on to seek resolution
- o Read dialogue with phrasing and expression that reflects understanding of characters and events
- o Make connections between texts and other texts that have been read or heard
- o Demonstrate changing perspective as events in a story unfold
- o See changes in characters across time and articulate possible reasons for development
- o Demonstrate understanding of characters, using evidence to support statements

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*A to Z Mysteries (Roy)*  
*Amber Brown Series (Danziger)*  
*Babysitters' Club Series (Martin)*

*Boxcar Children Series (Warner)*  
*Catwings Series (Le Guin)*  
*Chocolate Fever (Smith)*  
*Class Clown (Hurwitz)*  
*Enormous Crocodile, The (Dahl)*  
*Herbie Jones Series (Kline)*  
*Invisible Stanley (Brown)*  
*Julian and Huey Series (Cameron)*  
*Leftovers, The (Howard)*  
*Pony Pal Series (Betancourt)*  
*Ramona Series (Cleary)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level P, Q**

- o Texts with deeper meanings applicable to important human problems and social issues
- o Characters revealed by what they say, think, and do and what others say or think about them
- o Descriptive language providing details important to understanding the plot
- o Settings distant in time and space from students' experiences
- o Some words with connotative meaning that are essential to understanding the text
- o Full range of readers' tools (table of contents, headings, call-outs, index, etc.)

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Develop deeper understanding of words that have been encountered before but are not familiar
- o Form implicit questions and search for answers while reading
- o Summarize a text at intervals during the reading of a longer text
- o Demonstrate phrased, fluent oral reading
- o Justify predictions using evidence
- o Infer cause and effect in influencing characters' feelings or underlying motives
- o Specify the nature of connections (topic, content, type of story, writer)
- o Adjust reading to process texts with difficult and complex layout

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*American Girls Series (Most Titles)*  
*Anastasia Series (Lowry)*  
*Best Enemies (Leverich)*  
*Bunnicula (Howe)*

*Encyclopedia Brown Series*  
*Hardy Boys Series (Dixon)*  
*If You Lived in the Time of...History series*  
*James and the Giant Peach (Dahl)*  
*Little House on the Prairie (Wilder)*  
*Magic School Bus Series*  
*Minpins, The (Dahl)*  
*Mr. Popper's Penguins (Atwater)*  
*Nancy Drew Series (Keene)*  
*Not-Just-Anybody Family, The (Byars)*  
*Sarah Morton's Day (Waters)*  
*Stone Fox (Gardiner)*  
*The Dragonling (Koller)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level R, S**

- o Varied space between lines, with some text having dense print
- o Full range of punctuation
- o Memorable characters, with both good and bad traits, who change and develop over time
- o Complex plots and numerous episodes and time passing
- o Content requiring the reader to take on diverse perspectives

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Make a wide range of predictions based on personal experiences, content knowledge and knowledge of similar texts
- o Make connections between characters in different texts
- o Mentally form categories of related information and revise them as new information is acquired across the text
- o Infer cause and effect in influencing characters' feelings or underlying motives
- o Identify significant events and tell how they are related to the problem of the story or the solution

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Because of Winn-Dixie (DiCamillo)*  
*Castle in the Attic, The (Winthrop)*  
*Cat Walk (Stolz)*  
*Celery Stalks at Midnight, The (Howe)*  
*Charlotte's Web (White)*  
*Devil's Bridge (DeFelice)*  
*Dunc and Amos Go to the Dogs (Paulsen)*

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*Hatchet (Paulsen)*  
*House of Wings, The (Byars)*  
*How To Eat Fried Worms (Rockwell)*  
*Island, The (Paulsen)*  
*Little House on the Prairie (Wilder)*  
*Matilda (Dahl)*  
*Nasty, Stinky Sneakers (Bunting)*  
*Phoebe The Spy (Griffin)*  
*Pioneer Girl, The Story of Laura Ingalls Wilder (Anderson)*  
*Poppy (Avi)*  
*The Celery Stalks at Midnight (Howe)*  
*The Cricket in Times Square (Selden)*

### **Text Characteristics at Level T, U>**

- o Variety in print
- o Full range of punctuation, and readers tools
- o Many ideas and themes requiring understanding of cultural diversity
- o Texts with deeper meanings applicable to important human problems and social issues
- o Multidimensional characters that develop over time
- o Words with connotative meaning relevant to meaning

### **Characteristics of the Reader**

- o Make a wide range of predictions based on personal experiences content knowledge and knowledge of similar texts
- o Infer characters' or objects' thinking process and struggles at key decision points in their lives
- o Express changes in ideas or perspective across the reading after reading a text
- o Notice the way writers use regional dialect and discuss how it adds to the authenticity of the text and characters

### **Sample Titles at this Level**

*Abel's Island (Steig)*  
*Bridge to Teribithia (Paterson)*  
*Girl in a Cage (Yolen)*  
*Harriet the Spy (Fitzhugh)*  
*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (Rowling, J. K.)*  
*Harry Potter Sorcerer's Stone (Rowling)*  
*Hobby: The Young Merlin Trilogy (Yolen)*

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*James and the Giant Peach (Dahl)*  
*Julie of the Wolves (George)*  
*Mr. Tucket (Paulsen)*  
*Number the Stars (Lowry)*  
*Pool of Fire, The (Christopher)*  
*Ragweed (Avi)*  
*Soldier's Heart (Paulsen)*  
*Souder (Armstrong)*  
*The Cat Ate My Gymsuit (Danziger)*  
*The Secret Garden (Burnett) The Cay (Taylor)*  
*The Secret of Nimh (O'Brien)*

Reference:

Fountas, I.C. and Pinnell, G.S. (2005). *Leveled books, k-8: Matching texts to readers for effective teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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