Readers at **Level A:**

At level A, readers are just beginning to learn how print works and to construct the *alphabetic principle* (understand that there are relationships between sounds and letters). They are learning to look (aided by the finger) left to right across words and across one line of print. They are learning to search for and use information from pictures and to use simple language structures to help them learn about print. They differentiate print from pictures and begin to notice the distinctive features of letters, attaching names to them. They are learning to read one line sentences with simple words and on familiar topics. They are learning how to match one spoken word with one word in print. As they read, they begin to learn some easy, high frequency words, to notice and use visual signposts of some words, and to notice mismatches. They use what they know (for example, a sound and related letter) to begin to self-monitor reading. Reading and rereading these very simple texts will help them gain gradual control of ways to look at and work with print.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Some simple factual texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction

Forms
- Picture books

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Very simple narratives with stories carried by pictures

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Underlying text structure (description)
- Present one simple category of information
- Some texts with sequential information

CONTENT
- Familiar, easy content (family, play, pets, school)
- All concepts supported by picture information

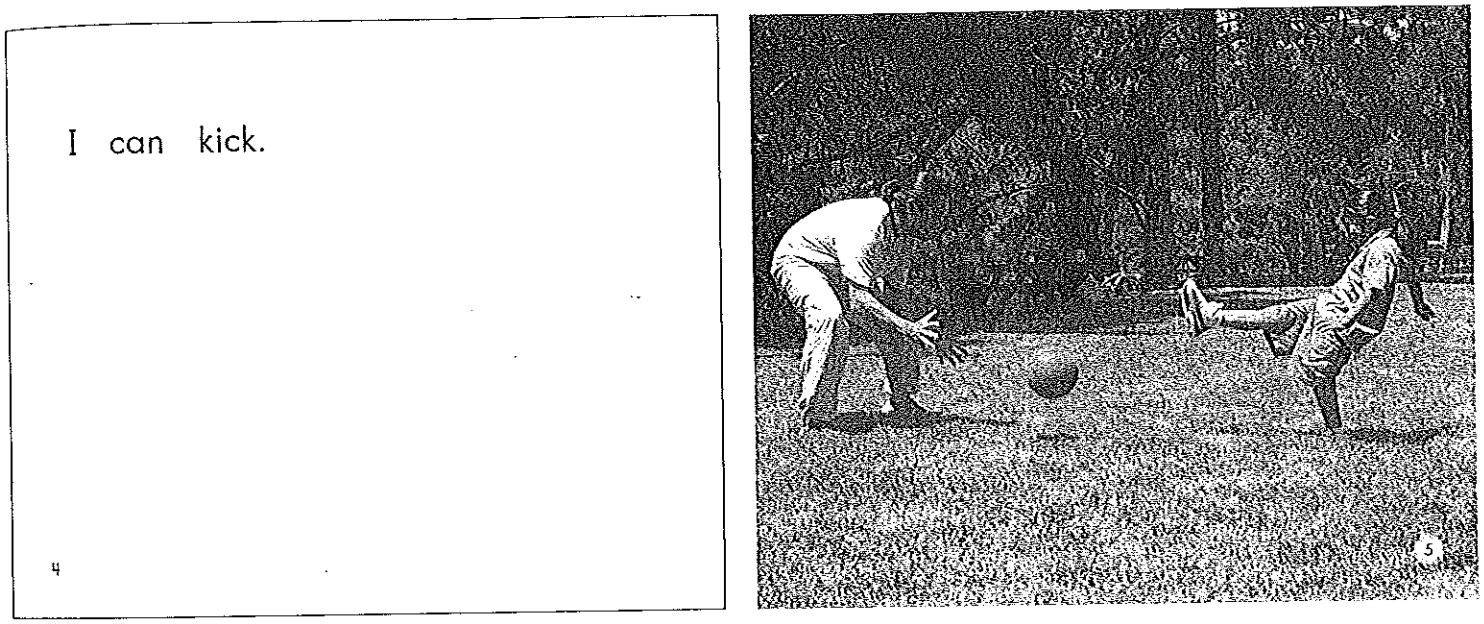
THEMES AND IDEAS
- Very familiar themes and ideas

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Mostly nameless, flat characters
- Repeating language patterns (simple three to six words on each page)
- Texts with familiar settings close to children's experience
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Short, predictable sentences that are close to oral language
- Simple sentences (no embedded phrases or clauses)
- Subject preceding verb in most sentences
- Simple sentences (subject and predicate)

VOCABULARY
- Almost all vocabulary familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Word meanings illustrated by pictures

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



WORDS

- Mostly one-syllable words with very easy and predictable letter-sound relationships
- Some simple plurals
- Repeated use of a few easy high-frequency words
- Some words with *-s* and *-ing*
- Many words with easy, predictable letter-sound relationships (decodable)
- Words with easy spelling patterns

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Illustrations that match print very closely
- Clear illustrations that fully support meaning
- Illustrations that support each page of text
- Very simple illustrations with no distracting detail
- Consistent layout of illustrations and print

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- One line of text on each page
- Very short, usually eight pages of print and illustrations

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Print clearly separated from pictures
- Consistent placement of print (layout)

Punctuation

- Period only punctuation in most texts

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level B:**

At level B, readers are learning how print works, particularly developing the concepts of left-to-right directionality across words and across lines of print. They are firming up voice-print match while reading texts with two or more lines of print. Readers may recognize repeating language patterns in texts that have very simple stories and focus on a single idea, as well as learn more about the distinctive features of letters and the connections between sounds and letters. It is very important that they begin to self-monitor their reading and attempt to self-correct as they notice the mismatches and check one source of information against another. They are beginning to notice and use visual signposts and are expanding their core of simple high-frequency words.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Some simple factual texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction

Forms
- Picture books

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Simple narratives with stories carried by pictures

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Underlying text structure (description)
- Present one simple category of information
- Some texts with sequential information

CONTENT
- Familiar, easy content (family, play, pets, school)
- All concepts supported by picture information

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Very familiar themes and ideas

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Mostly nameless, flat characters
- Repeating language patterns (simple three to seven words in a sentence)
- Texts with familiar settings close to children's experience
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Short, predictable sentences that are close to oral language
- Mostly simple sentences (no embedded phrases or clauses)
- Subject preceding verb in most sentences
- Simple sentences (subject and predicate often with phrases at the end)

VOCABULARY
- Almost all vocabulary familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Word meanings illustrated by pictures

© 2011, 2008 by Cay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

My little dog likes to run with me.

6

7

WORDS

- Mostly one-syllable words with very easy and predictable letter-sound relationships
- Some simple plurals
- Repeated use of a few easy high-frequency words
- Some words with *-s* and *-ing*
- Many words with easy, predictable letter-sound relationships (decodable)
- Words with easy spelling patterns

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Illustrations that match print very closely
- Clear illustrations that fully support meaning
- Illustrations that support each page of text
- Very simple illustrations with little distracting detail
- Consistent layout of illustrations and print

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Very short, usually eight pages of print and illustrations
- Two or more lines of text on each page

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Sentences turn over one or more lines
- Print clearly separated from pictures
- Consistent placement of print and illustrations (layout)
- Line breaks match ends of phrases and sentences

Punctuation

- Period only punctuation in most texts

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level C:**

At level C, readers encounter simple stories and familiar topics in texts that usually have two to six lines of print on each page. They smoothly and automatically move left to right across words and across lines of print, sweeping back to the left margin for each new line and reading print on both left and right pages. Reading is becoming smooth, allowing for some expression, and the eyes are taking over the process of matching the spoken word to the printed word. Readers are moving away from needing to point and are showing phrased reading. Readers are noticing quotation marks and reflecting dialogue with the voice. They are developing a larger core of high-frequency words that they recognize quickly and easily. At this level, readers are consistently monitoring their reading and cross-checking one source of information against another. Overt self-correction reveals readers' growing control of the ability to process print.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Some simple factual texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction

Forms
- Picture books

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Simple narratives with several episodes (usually similar or repetitive)

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Underlying text structure (description)
- Present one simple category of information
- Some texts with sequential information

CONTENT
- Familiar, easy content (family, play, pets, school)
- All concepts supported by pictures

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Familiar themes and ideas

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing one-dimensional characters
- Repeating natural language patterns
- Texts with familiar settings close to children's experience
- Simple dialogue (assigned by *said* in most texts)
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Simple, predictable sentence structure but varied patterns
- Sentences that are questions
- Many sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives
- Subject preceding verb in most sentences
- Simple sentences (subject and predicate)

VOCABULARY
- Almost all vocabulary familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Word meanings illustrated by pictures
- Some variation in words used to assign dialogue (mostly *said*)

© 2011, 2008 by Cay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

She was sleeping
on the rug.
I said,
"Wake up, Socks!"

8

9

WORDS

- Mostly one or two-syllable words
- Simple plurals
- Some simple contractions and possessives (words with apostrophes)
- Greater range of easy high-frequency words
- Some words with *-s* and *-ing*
- Many words with easy, predictable letter-sound relationships (decodable)
- Some words used in different language structures (*said Mom; Mom said*)
- Words with easy spelling patterns

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Illustrations that match print very closely
- More meaning carried in the text and less with picture support
- Illustrations on every page or every other page
- Very simple illustrations with little distracting detail
- Consistent layout of illustrations and print

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Very short, usually eight pages of print
- Two to five lines of text on each page

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Some words in bold or larger font for emphasis
- Sentences turn over one or more lines
- Print clearly separated from pictures
- Consistent placement of print (layout)
- Line breaks match ends of phrases and sentences

Punctuation

- Ellipses in some texts to create expectation
- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, and question marks in most texts

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level D:**

At level D, readers follow simple stories of fiction and fantasy and easy informational texts. They can track print with their eyes (not pointing) over two to six lines per page and process texts with more varied language patterns (and those patterns that exist are more complex). They notice and use a range of punctuation and read dialogue, reflecting the meaning through phrasing. Readers can solve many regular easy two-syllable words, usually those with inflectional endings (*-ing*) and simple compound words. Voice-print match is smooth and automatic, and pointing is rarely needed (only at difficulty). The core of known high-frequency words is expanding. Readers consistently monitor their reading and cross-check one source of information with another.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Some simple factual texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- A few very simple retellings of traditional tales

Forms
- Picture books

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Simple narratives with several episodes (usually similar or repetitive)

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Underlying text structure (description)
- Present one simple category of information
- Some texts with sequential information

CONTENT
- Familiar, easy content (family, play, pets, school)
- Most concepts supported by pictures

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Familiar themes and ideas

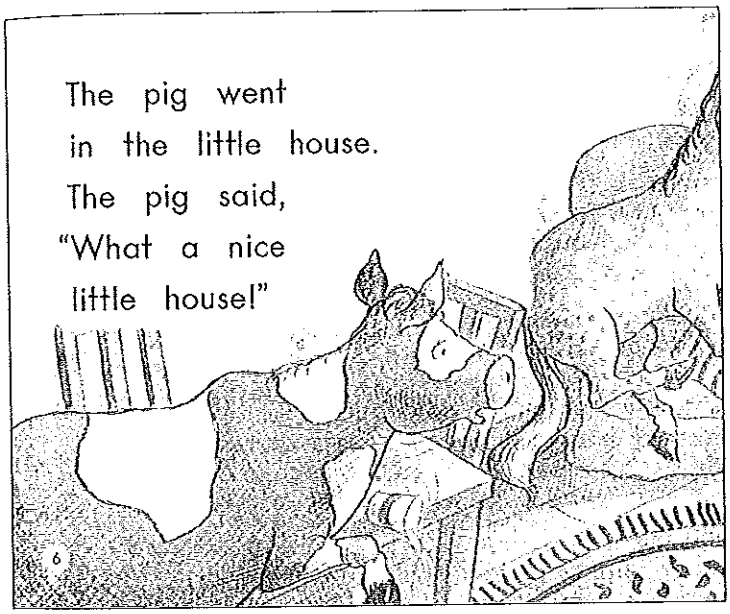
LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing or engaging one-dimensional characters
- More complex repeating language patterns
- Greater variety of language structures
- Texts with familiar settings close to children's experience
- Simple dialogue and some split dialogue
- Simple dialogue assigned to speaker
- Variety in assignment to speaker (other than *said*)
- Simple sequence of events (often repeated)
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

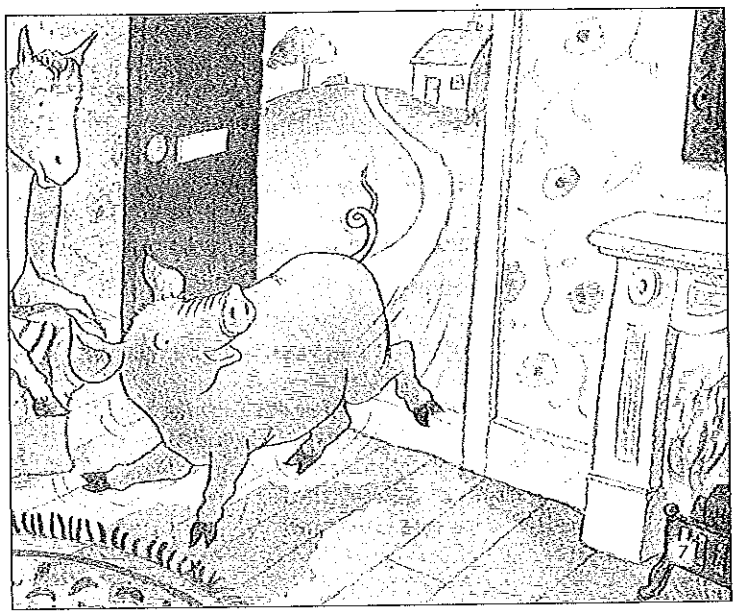
SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Some longer sentences (some with more than six words)
- Some sentences that are questions
- Many sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives
- A few sentences beginning with phrases
- Mostly simple sentences (subject and predicate)
- Language structures of text not repetitious

VOCABULARY
- Almost all vocabulary familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Word meanings illustrated by pictures
- Variation in words used to assign dialogue
- Greater range of vocabulary and multi-syllable words
- Large numbers of high-frequency words
- Complex word solving required to understand meaning

WORDS
- Mostly one- to two-syllable words
- Simple plurals
- Many high-frequency words
- Some words with *-s* and *-ing*
- Some words with inflectional endings (*-ing*)
- Many words with easy, predictable letter-sound relationships (decodable)
- Some words used multiple times in different language structures (*said Mom; Mom said*)
- Mostly simple spelling patterns

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.





ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Highly supportive illustrations that generally match the text
- Illustrations on every page or every other page
- More details in the illustrations

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Very short, usually eight pages of print
- Mostly two to six lines of print per page (but variable)

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Some words in bold or larger font for emphasis
- Some sentences that turn over one or more lines
- Sentences beginning on the left in most texts
- Print clearly separated from pictures
- Line breaks match ends of phrases and sentences

Punctuation

- Ellipses in some texts to create expectation
- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, and question marks

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level E:**

At level E, readers encounter texts that usually have three to eight lines of print per page. They are flexible enough to process texts with varied placement of print and a full range of punctuation. Texts have more subtle ideas and complex stories and require more attention to understand, but other processes are becoming automatic for readers. They take apart longer words with inflectional endings and read some sentences that carry over two to three lines or even across two pages. Readers are relying much more on the print as they encounter texts with less supportive pictures. Left-to-right directionality and voice-print match are automatic and effortless and oral reading demonstrates fluency and phrasing with appropriate stress on words. They read without pointing, bringing in the finger only occasionally at point of difficulty. They recognize a large number of high-frequency words and easily solve words with regular letter-sound relationships as well as a few irregular words.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- A variety of informational texts on easy topics
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Some very simple retellings of traditional tales

Forms
- Picture books
- Simple plays

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Narrative texts with clear beginning, series of events, and ending

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Underlying text structure (description)
- Present one simple category of information
- Some texts with sequential information

CONTENT
- Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school
- Most concepts supported by pictures

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Themes related to typical experiences of children
- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Concrete, easy-to-understand ideas

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing or engaging one-dimensional characters
- More literary stories and language
- Texts with familiar settings close to children's experience
- Both simple and split dialogue, speaker usually assigned
- Some longer stretches of dialogue
- Simple sequence of events (often repeated)
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

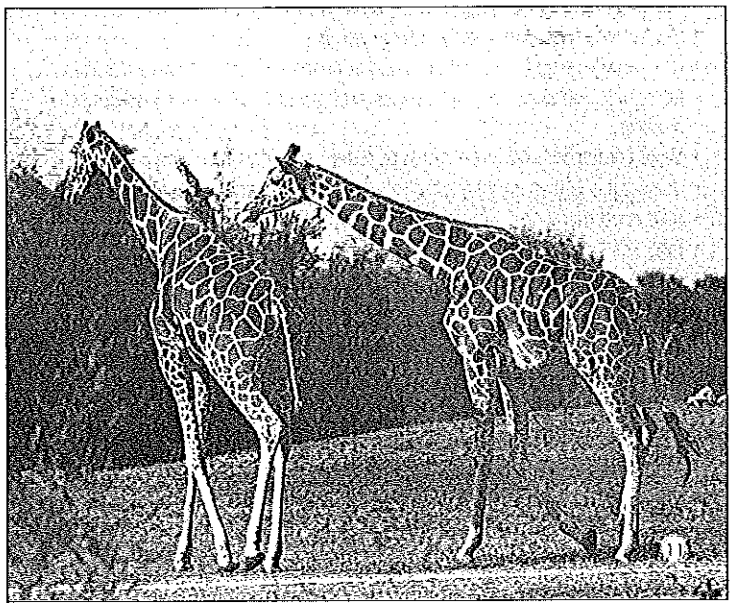
SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Some longer sentences (some with more than ten words)
- Some sentences that are questions
- Some complex sentences with variety in order of clauses
- Some sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives
- Some sentences with verb preceding subject
- Use of commas to set words apart (addressee in dialogue, qualifiers, etc.)
- Simple sentences (subject and predicate)
- Language structures of text not repetitious

VOCABULARY
- Almost all vocabulary familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Word meanings illustrated by pictures
- Variation in use of words to assign dialogue in some texts (*said, cried, shouted*)
- Greater range of vocabulary and multi-syllable words
- Large numbers of high-frequency words
- Complex word solving required to understand meaning

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

You can see giraffes
at the zoo.
Giraffes are tall animals.
They can eat leaves from the
tops of trees.

10



WORDS

- Mostly one- to two-syllable words
- Some three-syllable words
- Simple plurals and possessives
- Many high-frequency words
- Some words with inflectional endings (*-ing*)
- Mostly words with easy predictable letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns (decodable)
- Some words used multiple times in different language structures (*said Mom; Mom said*)
- Variety of easy spelling patterns
- Easy contractions

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Highly supportive illustrations that generally match the text
- Illustrations on every page or every other page
- More details in the illustrations

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Short, eight to sixteen pages of print
- Most texts two to eight lines per page

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Some words in bold or larger font for emphasis
- Some sentences turn over one line
- Sentences beginning on the left in most texts
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Print in most texts clearly separated from pictures
- Line breaks match ends of phrases and sentences
- Some limited variation in print placement

Punctuation

- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, and ellipses

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level F:**

At level F, readers are beginning to build knowledge of the characteristics of different genres of texts. They can read stretches of both simple and split dialogue. They quickly and automatically recognize a large number of high-frequency words and use letter-sound information to take apart simple, regular words as well as some multisyllable words while reading. They recognize and use inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives. They can also process and understand syntax that largely reflects patterns particular to written language, stories that have multiple episodes. In fiction, they are beginning to meet characters that are more developed, as well as some literary language. In informational texts, they are learning more new facts about topics. They read without pointing and with appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and word stress.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- A variety of informational texts on easy topics
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Some very simple retellings of traditional tales

Forms
- Picture books
- Simple plays

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Narrative texts with clear beginning, series of events, and ending

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Underlying text structure (description, comparison and contrast)
- Present one simple category of information
- Some texts with sequential information

CONTENT
- Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school
- Concepts accessible through text and illustrations

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Themes related to typical experiences of children
- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Concrete, easy-to-understand ideas

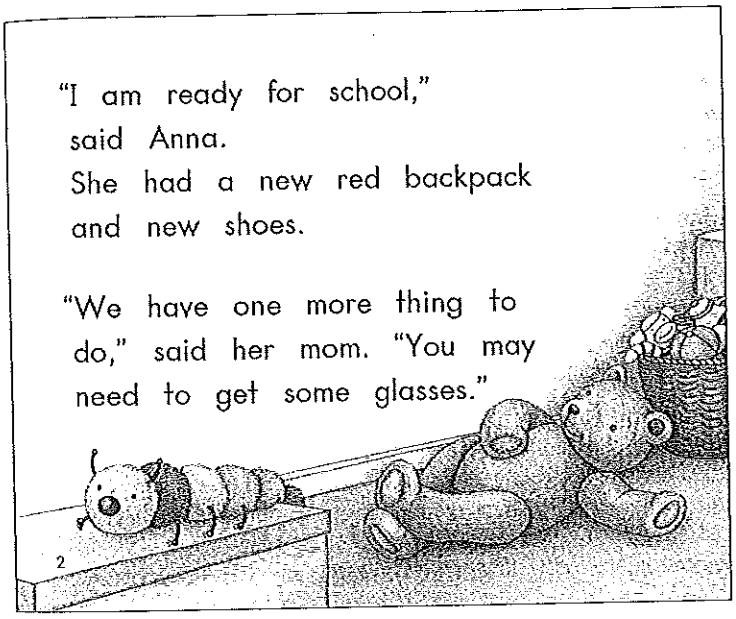
LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing or engaging one-dimensional characters
- More literary stories and language
- Texts with familiar settings close to children's experience
- Both simple and split dialogue, speaker usually assigned
- Some longer stretches of dialogue
- Simple sequence of events (often repeated)
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

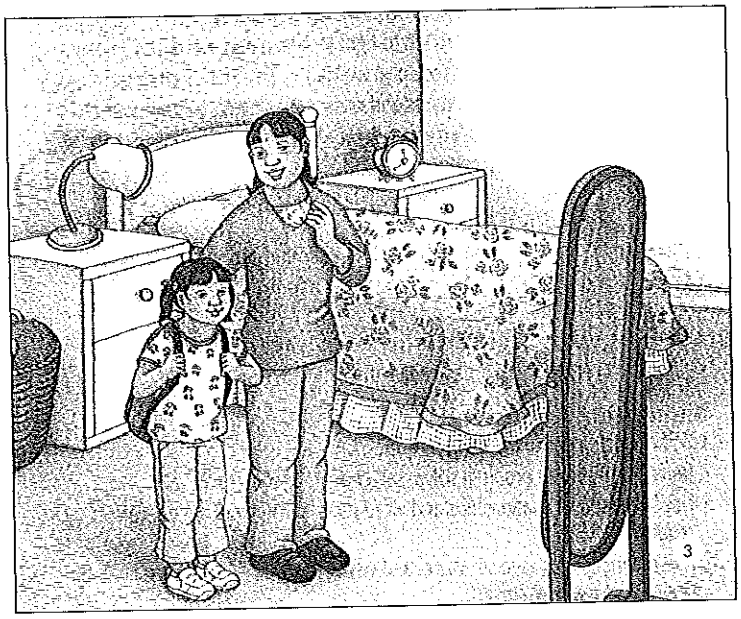
SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Some long sentences (more than ten words) with prepositional phrases, adjectives, and clauses
- Some sentences that are questions in simple sentences and in dialogue
- Some complex sentences with variety in order of clauses
- Sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives
- Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs
- Use of commas to set words apart (addressee in dialogue, qualifiers, etc.)
- Some compound sentences conjoined by *and*
- Language structures of text not repetitious

VOCABULARY
- Most vocabulary words familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Variation in use of words to assign dialogue in some texts (*said, cried, shouted*)
- Greater range of vocabulary and multi-syllable words
- Large numbers of high-frequency words
- Complex word solving required to understand meaning

WORDS
- Mostly one- to two-syllable words
- Some three-syllable words
- Plurals, contractions, and possessives
- Many high-frequency words
- Many words with inflectional endings
- Mostly words with easy predictable letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns (decodable)
- Some complex letter-sound relationships in words
- Some words used multiple times in different language structures (*said Mom; Mom said*)
- Variety of easy spelling patterns
- Easy contractions

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.





ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Highly supportive illustrations that generally match the text
- Illustrations that support the text but do not carry all important aspects of meaning
- Illustrations on every page or every other page in most texts
- More details in the illustrations

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Short, eight to sixteen pages of print
- Most texts three to eight lines of print per page

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Some words in bold or larger font for emphasis
- Some sentences turn over one line
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Longer sentences starting on left margin
- Some short sentences, starting middle of a line
- Print in most texts clearly separated from pictures
- Many texts with layout supporting phrasing
- Some limited variation in print placement

Punctuation

- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, and ellipses

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level G:**

At level G, readers encounter a wider range of texts and continue to internalize knowledge of different genres. They are still reading texts with three to eight lines of print per page, but print size is slightly smaller and there are more words on a page. With early reading behaviors completely under control and quick and automatic recognition of a large number of high-frequency words, they have attention to give to slightly more complex story lines and ideas. They are able to use a range of word-solving strategies (letter-sound information, making connections between words, and using word parts) as they go while attending to meaning. They read texts with some content-specific words, but most texts have only a few challenging vocabulary words. In their oral reading they demonstrate (without pointing) appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and word stress.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- A variety of informational texts on easy topics
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (mostly folktales)

Forms
- Picture books
- Simple plays

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Narrative texts with straightforward structure (beginning, series of episodes, ending) but more episodes included

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea/topic or series of related ideas/topics
- Include underlying text structures (description, comparison and contrast)
- Largely focused on one category of information
- Some longer texts with repeating longer and more complex patterns
- Some unusual formats, such as letters or questions followed by answers

CONTENT
- Accessible content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school
- Concepts accessible through text and illustrations

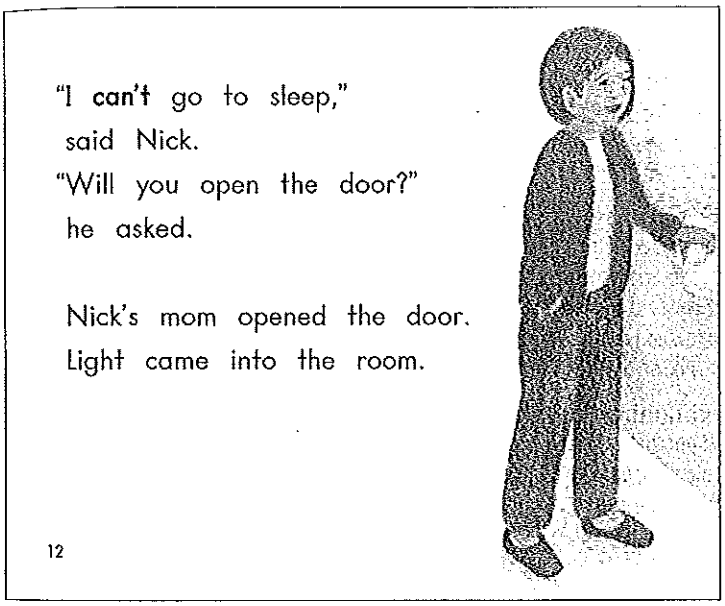
THEMES AND IDEAS
- Themes related to typical experiences of children
- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Concrete, easy-to-understand ideas

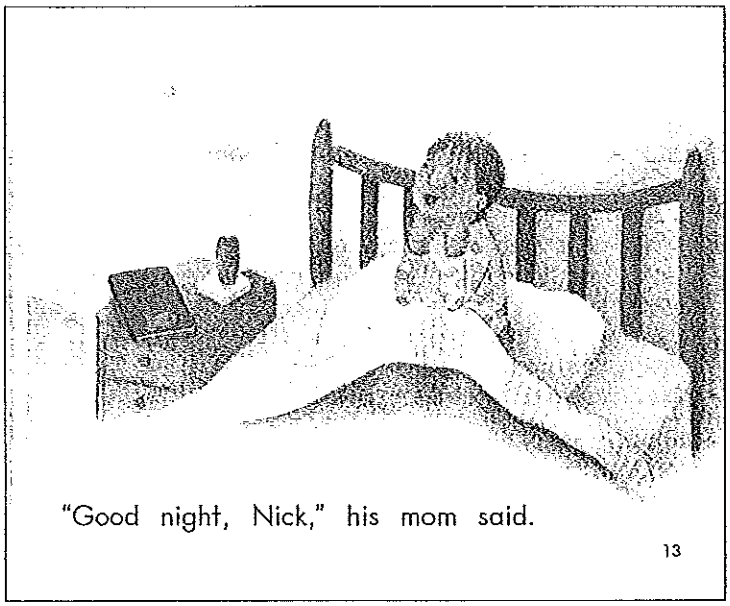
LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing or engaging one-dimensional characters
- More literary stories and language
- Some texts with settings that are not typical of many children's experience
- Variety in presentation of dialogue (simple with pronouns, split, direct, with some longer stretches of dialogue)
- Simple sequence of events (often repeated)
- A few simple elements of fantasy (for example, talking animals)

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Some long sentences (more than ten words) with prepositional phrases, adjectives, and clauses
- Some sentences that are questions in simple sentences and in dialogue
- Sentences with clauses and embedded phrases, some introductory
- Some complex sentences with variety in order of clauses, phrases, subject, verb, and object
- Language structures of text not repetitious

VOCABULARY
- Most vocabulary words familiar to children and likely to be used in their oral language
- Some content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- Variation in use of words to assign dialogue in some texts (*said, cried, shouted*)
- Greater range of vocabulary and multi-syllable words
- Large numbers of high-frequency words
- Complex word solving required to understand meaning

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.





WORDS

- Mostly one- to two-syllable words
- Some three-syllable words
- Plurals, contractions, and possessives
- Many high-frequency words
- Many words with inflectional endings
- Some complex letter-sound relationships in words
- Some words used multiple times in different language structures (*said Mom; Mom said*)
- Wide variety of easy spelling patterns
- Easy contractions

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Illustrations that support and extend meaning but do not carry all of the important information in the print
- Illustrations on every page or every other page in most texts
- Complex illustrations depicting multiple ideas

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Short, eight to sixteen pages of print
- Most texts three to eight lines of print per page

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Some texts in smaller font size
- Some words in bold or larger font for emphasis
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Longer sentences starting on left margin
- Some short sentences, starting middle of a line
- Print in most texts clearly separated from pictures
- Many texts with layout supporting phrasing
- Some limited variation in print placement

Punctuation

- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, and ellipses

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level H:**

At level H, readers encounter challenges similar to Level G; but the language and vocabulary are even more complex, the stories longer and more literary, and there is less repetition in the episodic structure. They process a great deal of dialogue and reflect it through appropriate word stress and phrasing in oral reading. Readers will find that plots and characters are more elaborate but are still simple and straightforward. They solve a large number of multisyllable words (many words with inflectional endings), plurals, contractions, and possessives. Readers automatically read a large number of high-frequency words in order to meet the demands for more in-depth thinking and also to solve words with complex spelling patterns. In order to achieve efficient and smooth processing, readers will begin to read more new texts silently. In oral reading, they demonstrate (without pointing) appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and word stress.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Informational texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (mostly folktales)

Forms
- Picture books
- Simple plays

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Narrative texts organized in predictable ways (beginning, series of repeated episodes, ending)
- Narratives with more episodes and less repetition

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea/topic or series of related ideas/topics
- Include underlying structures clearly (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution)
- Largely focused on one category of information
- Some longer texts with repeating longer and more complex patterns
- Some unusual formats, such as letters or questions followed by answers

CONTENT
- Accessible content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school
- Concepts accessible through text and illustrations

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Greater variety in themes (going beyond everyday events)

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing or engaging one-dimensional characters
- Some stretches of descriptive language
- Some texts with settings that are not typical of many children's experience
- Almost all dialogue assigned to speaker
- Full variety in presentation of dialogue (simple, simple using pronouns, split, direct)
- Use of dialogue for drama
- Multiple episodes taking place across time
- Simple, traditional elements of fantasy

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Some long sentences (more than ten words) with prepositional phrases, adjectives, and clauses
- Some sentences that are questions in simple sentences and in dialogue
- Some complex sentences with variety in order of clauses, phrases, subject, verb, and object
- Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs
- Language structures of text not repetitious

VOCABULARY
- Most vocabulary words known by children through oral language or reading
- Some content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- Wide variety in words used to assign dialogue to speaker
- Greater range of vocabulary and multi-syllable words
- Large numbers of high-frequency words
- Complex word solving required to understand meaning

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This truck picks up trash.
The trash goes in the back
of the truck.
The truck crushes the trash
to make it smaller.
Then the truck
carries the trash away.

6

7

WORDS

- Mostly one- to two-syllable words
- Some three-syllable words
- Plurals, contractions, and possessives
- Wide range of high-frequency words
- Many words with inflectional endings
- Some complex letter-sound relationships in words
- Some complex spelling patterns
- Multisyllable words that are generally easy to take apart or decode
- Some easy compound words

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Complex illustrations depicting multiple ideas
- Illustrations on every page or every other page in most texts

Fiction

- Some texts with only minimal illustrations
- Illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, set mood but are not necessary for understanding

Nonfiction

- One kind of graphic on a page
- Some simple graphics (illustrations with labels)

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Short, eight to sixteen pages of print
- Most texts three to eight lines of print per page
- A few easy chapter books with more pages

Print and Layout

- Ample space between words and lines
- Italics indicating unspoken thought
- Some texts in smaller font size
- Words in bold and italics that are important to meaning and stress
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Longer sentences starting on left margin
- Some short sentences, starting in the middle of a line
- Print in most texts clearly separated from pictures
- Many texts with layout supporting phrasing
- Some limited variation in print placement

Punctuation

- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, dashes, and ellipses in some texts

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level I:**

At level I, readers will be processing texts that are mostly short (eight to sixteen pages), as well as some easy illustrated chapter books (forty to sixty pages) that require them to sustain attention and memory over time. They will meet some long sentences of more than ten words that contain prepositional phrases, adjectives, and clauses. They will also encounter compound sentences. They can effectively process complex sentences when required by a text. In addition to automatically recognizing a large number of words, they are using word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words, and many words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives. They read many texts silently, following the text with their eyes and without pointing. In oral reading, they reflect appropriate rate, word stress, intonation, phrasing, and pausing.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Informational texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (mostly folktales)

Forms
- Picture books
- Simple plays

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Narratives with multiple episodes and little repetition of similar episodes
- Narratives with more elaborated episodes
- Some very short chapter books with the same characters across chapters

Nonfiction
- Focused on a single idea/topic or series of related ideas/topics
- Underlying structures used and presented clearly (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution)
- Texts organized into a few simple categories
- Some longer texts that repeat longer and more complex patterns
- Some unusual formats, such as letters or questions followed by answers

CONTENT
- Familiar content and some new content that typically children would not know
- Concepts accessible through text and illustrations

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Some ideas that are new to most children
- Themes accessible given typical experiences of children
- A few abstract ideas which are highly supported by text and illustrations

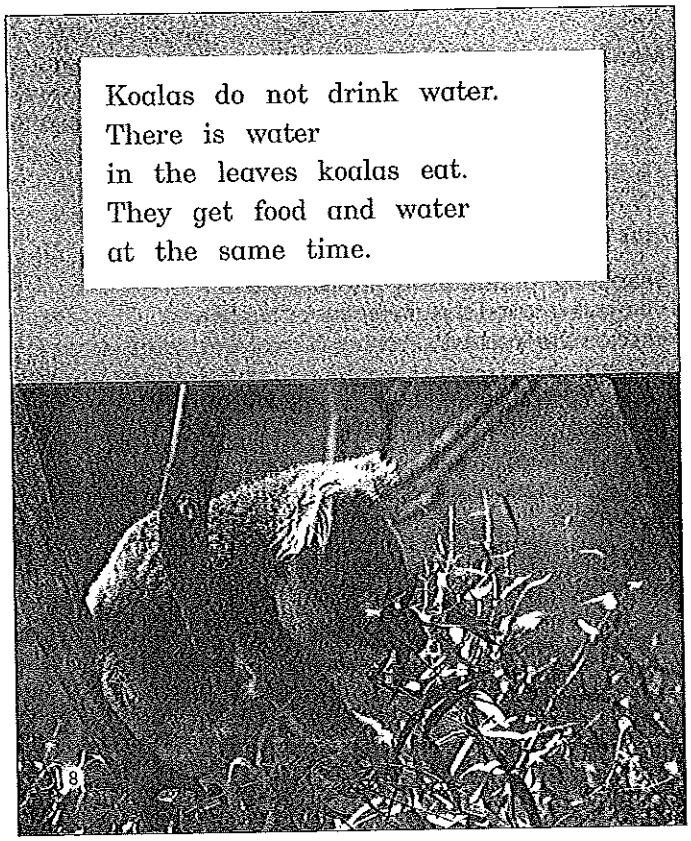
LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Amusing or engaging one-dimensional characters
- More elaborated description of character attributes
- Language characteristic of traditional literature in some texts
- Some texts with settings that are not typical of many children's experience
- Variety of dialogue (between more than two characters in many texts)
- Multiple episodes taking place across time
- Simple, traditional elements of fantasy
- Most texts told from a single point of view with some texts showing more than one

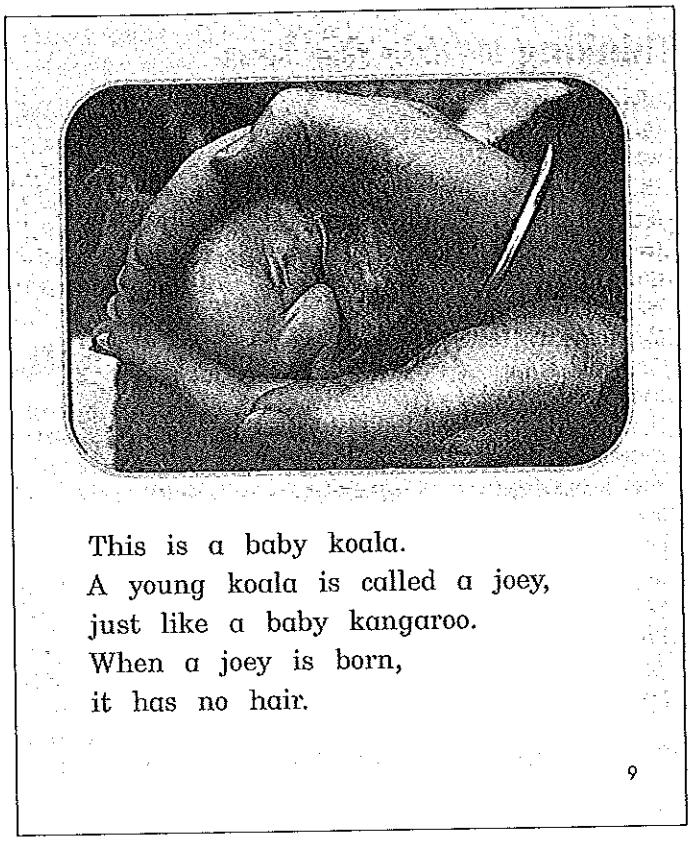
SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Some long sentences (more than ten words) with prepositional phrases, adjectives, and clauses
- Many sentences with embedded clauses and phrases
- Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs
- Use of commas to set words apart (addressee in dialogue, qualifiers, etc.)
- Sentences with nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in series, divided by commas
- Many compound sentences

VOCABULARY
- Most vocabulary words known by children through oral language or reading
- Some content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- Wide variety of words to assign dialogue (*said, cried, shouted, thought, whispered*) and adjectives describing the dialogue (*quietly, loudly*)

WORDS
- Many two- to three-syllable words
- Plurals, contractions, and possessives
- Wide range of high-frequency words
- Many words with inflectional endings
- Some complex letter-sound relationships in words
- Some complex spelling patterns
- Multisyllable words that are generally easy to take apart or decode
- Some easy compound words

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.





ILLUSTRATIONS

General
- Two or more kinds of graphics on a page
- Some illustrations complex with many ideas

Fiction
- Some texts with no illustrations, black and white minimal illustrations, or symbolic illustrations
- Some texts requiring readers to infer the story from pictures with minimal text or dialogue only
- Illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, set mood but are not necessary for understanding

Nonfiction
- One or two kinds of graphics on a page
- Some simple graphics (illustrations with labels)

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length
- Short, eight to sixteen pages of print
- Most texts three to eight lines of print per page
- Some easy illustrated chapter books of fifty to sixty pages

Print and Layout
- Ample space between words and lines
- Print in large plain font
- Italics indicating unspoken thought
- Some texts in smaller font size
- Words in bold and italics that are important to meaning and stress
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Longer sentences starting on left margin
- Some short sentences, starting middle of a line
- Print in most texts clearly separated from pictures
- Some limited variation in print placement

Punctuation
- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, dashes, and ellipses

Tools
- Some informational texts with a table of contents
- Some informational texts with a simple glossary

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level J:**

At level J, readers process a variety of texts, including short informational texts on familiar topics, short fiction texts, and longer illustrated narratives that have short chapters. They adjust their reading strategies to process not only realistic fiction and informational texts but to read very simple biographies. In fiction, characters generally do not change since the plots are relatively simple and texts are not long. Readers process an increased number of longer and more complex sentences (those with more than ten words containing prepositional phrases, adjectives, clauses, and many compound sentences). Readers are able to automatically recognize a large number of words, and can quickly apply word-solving strategies to multisyllable words with inflectional endings, suffixes, and prefixes. They can read a wide range of plurals, contractions, and possessives. In oral reading, they reflect appropriate rate, word stress, intonation, phrasing, and pausing (recognizing and using a range of punctuation). They read silently in independent reading and while reading individually in guided reading

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre

- Informational texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (mostly folktales)
- Some simple biographies on familiar subjects

Forms

- Picture books
- Plays
- Beginning chapter books with illustrations
- Some series books
- Some graphic texts

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction

- Narratives with little repetition of similar episodes
- Narratives with more elaborated episodes
- Some beginning chapter books with short chapters
- Chapters connected by character
- Chapters usually connected to a longer plot

Nonfiction

- Focused on a single idea/topic or series of related ideas/topics
- Underlying structures used and presented clearly (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution)
- Texts organized into a few simple categories of information
- Some longer texts with repeating longer and more complex patterns
- Some unusual formats, such as letters or questions followed by answers

CONTENT

- Familiar content and some new content that typically children would not know
- New content accessible through text and illustrations

THEMES AND IDEAS

- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Some ideas new to most children
- Themes accessible given typical experiences of children
- A few abstract ideas that are highly supported by text and illustrations
- Some texts (graphic novels) requiring readers to infer the story from pictures with minimal text or dialogue only

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES

- Amusing or engaging characters, some of which have more than one dimension
- Elaborated description of character traits
- Language characteristic of traditional literature in some texts
- Some texts with settings that are not typical of many children's experience
- Variety of dialogue (may be between more than two characters in many texts)
- Multiple episodes taking place across time
- Simple, traditional elements of fantasy
- Most texts told from a single point of view, with some having several points of view

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY

- Many longer (more than ten words), more complex sentences (prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives)
- Many sentences with embedded clauses and phrases
- Occasional use of parenthetical material embedded in sentences
- Sentences with nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in a series, divided by commas
- Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs
- Many compound sentences

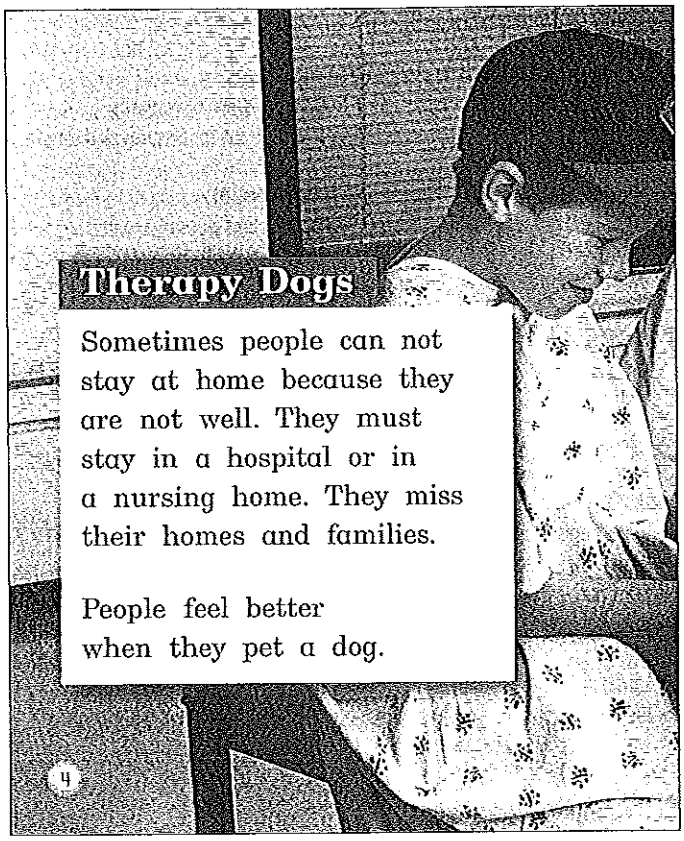
VOCABULARY

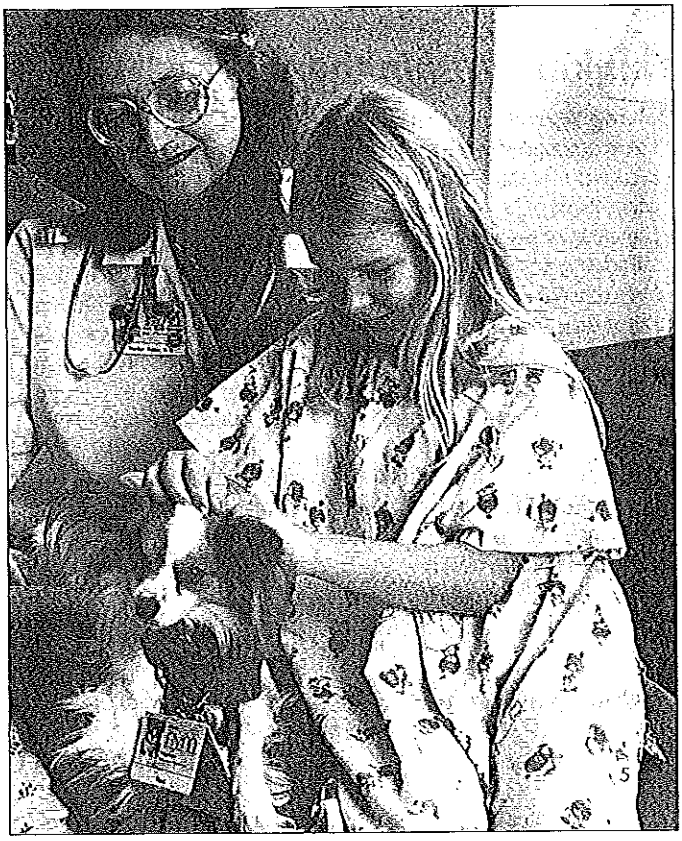
- Most vocabulary words known by children through oral language or reading
- Content words illustrated with pictures or other graphics
- Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced that are explained and illustrated in the text
- Wide variety of words to assign dialogue (*said, cried, shouted, thought, whispered*) and adjectives describing the dialogue (*quietly, loudly*)

WORDS

- Many two- to three-syllable words
- Plurals, contractions, and possessives
- Wide range of high-frequency words
- Many words with inflectional endings
- Many words with complex letter-sound relationships
- Some complex spelling patterns

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.





- Multisyllable words that are generally easy to take apart or decode
- Some easy compound words

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- Two or more kinds of graphics on a page
- Some illustrations complex with many ideas

Fiction

- Many texts with minimal illustrations and some with none
- Some complex and artistic illustrations that communicate meaning to match or extend the text
- Illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, set mood but are not necessary for understanding

Nonfiction

- More than one kind of graphic on a page
- Many simple graphics (illustrations with labels)

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Chapter books (most approximately forty to seventy-five pages)
- Many lines of print on a page (approximately three to twelve lines)
- Shorter (most approximately twenty-four to thirty-six pages of print) texts on single topics (usually nonfiction)

Print and Layout

- Ample space between lines
- Italics indicating unspoken thought
- Some texts in smaller font size
- Words in bold and italics that are important to meaning and stress
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Longer sentences starting on left margin in most texts
- Some sentences, starting middle of a line
- Print in most illustrated texts clearly separated from pictures
- Variety in layout, reflecting different genres

Punctuation

- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, dashes, and ellipses

Tools

- Some texts with a table of contents
- Some texts with a simple glossary
- Chapter titles in some books
- Some texts with headings in bold to show sections

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level K:**

At level K, readers process a wider range of genres (realistic fiction, animal fantasy, traditional literature, some simple biographies, and more informational texts). They read many illustrated chapter books (including some series books). Most fiction texts have multiple episodes related to a single plot but the demand on the reader's memory is higher than previous levels. They read about characters that change very little but are at the same time more complex; texts have multiple characters. Readers process a great deal of dialogue, some of it unassigned, and are challenged to read stories based on concepts that are distant in time and space and reflect diverse cultures. Readers solve many content-specific words and some technical words in informational texts. They automatically recognize a large number of words and quickly apply word-solving strategies to multisyllable words with inflectional endings, and to words with suffixes and prefixes. They can read a wide range of plurals, contractions, and possessives. They read silently in independent reading, but when reading orally they demonstrate all aspects of fluent reading.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre
- Informational texts
- Simple animal fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (mostly folktales)
- Some simple biographies on familiar subjects

Forms
- Picture books
- Plays
- Beginning chapter books with illustrations
- Series books
- Some graphic texts

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction
- Narratives with many episodes
- Some beginning chapter books with short chapters
- Chapters connected by character or broad theme
- Chapters usually connected to a longer plot
- Simple, straightforward plots

Nonfiction
- Presentation of multiple topics
- Underlying structures (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, cause and effect)
- Texts organized into a few simple categories
- Variety in organization and topic
- Some longer texts with sections presenting different information
- Variety in nonfiction formats (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, and call-outs)

CONTENT
- Familiar content and some new content that typically children would not know
- New content requiring prior knowledge to understand in some informational texts
- Some texts with plots and situations outside typical experience
- Some texts with settings outside children's typical experience
- New content accessible through text and illustrations

THEMES AND IDEAS
- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Some ideas new to most children
- Themes accessible given typical experiences of children
- A few abstract ideas, supported by the text but with less illustration support
- Texts with universal themes illustrating important human issues and attributes (friendship, courage)
- Some texts (graphic novels) requiring readers to infer the story from pictures with minimal text or dialogue only

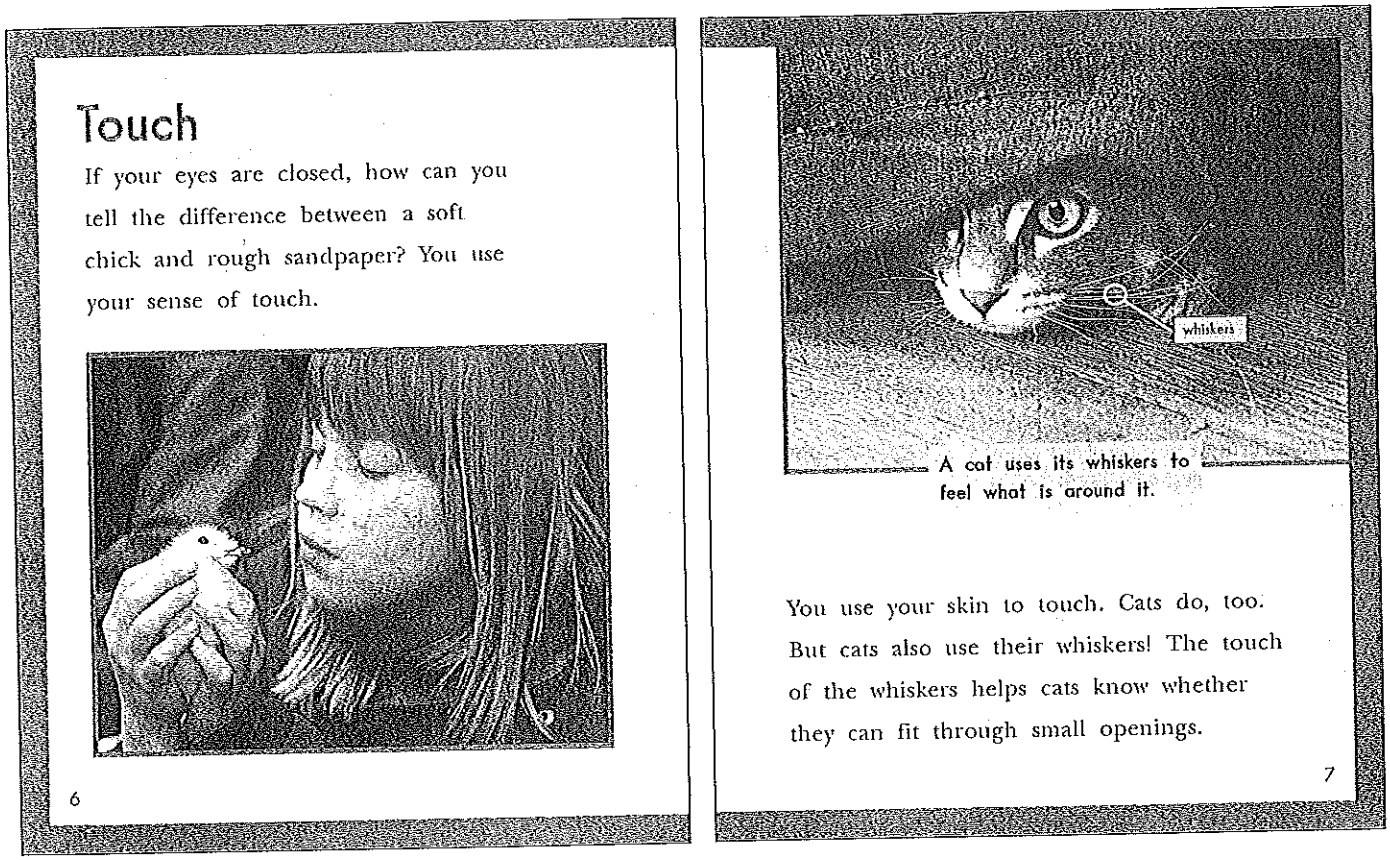
LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES
- Some complex and memorable characters
- Some figurative language (metaphor, simile)
- Some texts with settings that are not typical of many children's experience
- Setting important to understanding the plot in some texts
- Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing
- Simple, traditional elements of fantasy
- Most texts told from a single point of view
- May have more than one point of view within one text

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY
- Variety in sentence length and complexity
- Longer (more than fifteen words), more complex sentences (prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives)
- Many complex sentences with embedded phrases and clauses
- Variation in placement of subject, verb, adjectives, and adverbs
- Wide variety of words to assign dialogue, with verbs and adverbs essential to meaning

VOCABULARY
- Content words illustrated with pictures or other graphics
- Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- Wide variety of words to assign dialogue, with verbs and adverbs essential to meaning

WORDS
- Many two- to three-syllable words
- Plurals, contractions, and possessives
- A wide range of high frequency words
- Many words with inflectional endings
- Many words with complex letter-sound relationships
- Some complex spelling patterns
- Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
- Some easy compound words

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



ILLUSTRATIONS

General
- Two or more kinds of graphics on a page
- Some long stretches of text with no illustrations or graphics

Fiction
- Some texts with no or only minimal illustrations
- Some texts with illustrations that are essential to interpretation
- Some illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, set mood but are not necessary for understanding

Nonfiction
- More than one kind of graphic on a page
- Combination of graphics providing information that matches and extends the text
- In most texts, graphics that are clearly explained (simple diagrams, illustrations with labels, maps, charts)
- Variety in the layout of print in nonfiction texts (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, call-outs)

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length
- Many lines of print on a page (three to fifteen lines; more for fiction)
- Chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)

Print and Layout
- Ample space between lines
- Print and font size vary with some longer texts in small fonts
- Use of words in italics, bold, or all capitals to indicate emphasis, level of importance, or signal other meaning
- Variety in print and background color
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages
- Print and illustrations integrated in many texts
- Variety in layout, reflecting different genres
- Usually friendly layout in chapter books, with many sentences starting on the left

Punctuation
- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, dashes, and ellipses in most texts

Tools
- Readers' tools (table of contents, captions, a few headings, glossary, chapter titles, bold print, author's notes)

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level L:**

At level L, readers process easy chapter books including some series books, with more sophisticated plots and few illustrations, as well as shorter informational and fiction books. They adjust their reading to process a range of genres (realistic fiction, simple fantasy, informational texts, traditional literature, and biography, as well as some special types of texts, for example, shorter series books, very simple mysteries, and graphic texts). They understand that chapters have multiple episodes related to a single plot. They learn some new content through reading and are required to bring more prior knowledge to the process; but the content is usually accessible through the text and illustrations. At this level, readers are beginning to recognize themes across texts (friendship, courage), and they understand some abstract ideas. They see multiple perspectives of characters as revealed through description, what they say, think, or do, and what others say about them. They process complex sentences with embedded clauses and figurative language. They recognize and/or flexibly solve a large number of words, including plurals, contractions, possessives, many multisyllable words, many content-specific words, and some technical words. They read silently in independent reading; in oral reading, they demonstrate all aspects of smooth, fluent processing.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre

- Informational texts
- Simple fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (folktales, fables)
- Biography, mostly on well-known subjects
- Simple mysteries
- Some graphic novels
- Simple hybrid texts

Forms

- Picture books
- Plays
- Beginning chapter books with illustrations
- Series books
- Graphic texts

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction

- Narrative structure including chapters with multiple episodes related to a single plot
- Simple, straightforward plots
- Some embedded genres such as directions or letters

Nonfiction

- Presentation of multiple topics
- Underlying structures (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, cause and effect)
- Texts organized into a few simple categories
- Some longer texts with sections presenting different information
- Variety in organization and topic
- Variety in nonfiction formats (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, and call-outs)

CONTENT

- New content requiring prior knowledge to understand
- Some texts with plots, settings, and situations outside typical experience
- Some technical content that is challenging and not typically known
- New content accessible through text and illustrations

THEMES AND IDEAS

- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Some ideas that are new to most children
- Themes accessible given typical experiences of children
- Texts with universal themes illustrating important human issues and attributes (friendship, courage, challenges)
- Some texts (graphic novels) requiring readers to infer the story from pictures with minimal text or dialogue only

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES

- Some complex and memorable characters
- Multiple characters to understand and follow development
- Various ways of showing characters' attributes (description, dialogue, thoughts, others' perspectives)
- Figurative language and descriptive language
- Setting important to understanding the plot in some texts
- Wide variety in showing dialogue, both assigned and unassigned
- Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing
- Plots with numerous episodes, building toward problem resolution
- Simple, traditional elements of fantasy
- Texts with multiple points of view revealed through characters' behaviors and dialogue

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY

- Variety in sentence length and complexity
- Longer (more than fifteen words), more complex sentences (prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives)
- Questions in dialogue (fiction) and questions and answers (nonfiction)
- Sentences with nouns, verbs, or adjectives in series, divided by commas
- Assigned and unassigned dialogue

VOCABULARY

- Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- Wide variety of words to assign dialogue, with verbs and adverbs essential to meaning
- New vocabulary in fiction texts (largely unexplained)
- Words with multiple meanings

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

"So what are you investigating, Harry?" ZuZu asked.

Harry took off both caps and hung them up on a hook. "Well, that's the problem, Zu. I don't have a case yet. But when I do, I'll be ready!"

Oh, boy, I thought. *I hope it's an easy one.* I didn't want Harry to botch up two cases in a row. His reputation as a detective was on the line!

As soon as we said the pledge and heard the morning announcements, we got a surprise visitor. It was Mrs. Funderburke, our school cook!

She was holding a blue plastic lunch tray with a carton of milk in the upper right-hand compartment. Harry flashed a toothy smile. He loves her. "Hi, Mrs. Funderburke!" he said. "What are you doing out of the kitchen?"

WORDS

- Wide variety of high frequency words
- Many two- to three-syllable words
- Some words with more than three syllables
- Words with suffixes and prefixes
- Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns
- Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
- Many plurals, contractions, and compound words

ILLUSTRATIONS

General

- A variety of complex graphics, often more than one on a page
- Some long stretches of text (usually a page or two) with no illustrations or graphics

Fiction

- Many texts with no or only minimal illustrations
- Some complex and artistic illustrations that communicate meaning to match or extend the text
- Some texts with illustrations that are essential to interpretation
- Some illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, and set mood but are not necessary for understanding
- Much of setting, action, and characters shown in pictures (graphic texts)

Nonfiction

- More than one kind of graphic on a page
- Combination of graphics providing information that matches and extends the text
- Graphics that are clearly explained in most texts
- A variety of graphics: photos, drawings, maps, cutaways, tables, graphs)
- Variety in the layout of print in nonfiction texts (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, maps, charts, call-outs, illustrations with labels and legends)

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length

- Chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)
- Shorter texts (most approximately twenty-four to forty-eight pages of print) on single topics (usually nonfiction)
- Many lines of print on a page (five to twenty-four lines; more for fiction)

Print and Layout

- Ample space between lines
- Print and font size varying with some longer texts in small fonts
- Use of words in italics, bold, or all capitals to indicate emphasis, level of importance, or signal other meaning
- Variety in print and background color
- Some sentences continuing over several lines or to the next page
- Print and illustrations integrated in many texts
- Variety in layout reflecting different genres
- Usually friendly layout in chapter books, with many sentences starting on the left
- Bubbles, strips or print, and other print/picture combinations in graphic texts
- Variety in layout of nonfiction formats (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, call-outs)

Punctuation

- Periods, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, dashes, and ellipses in most texts

Tools

- A variety of readers' tools: table of contents, glossary, punctuation guide, titles, labels, headings, subheadings, sidebars, legends

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Readers at **Level M:**

At level M, readers know the characteristics of a range of genres (realistic fiction, simple fantasy, informational texts, traditional literature, and biography). Some fiction texts are chapter books and readers are becoming interested in special forms, such as longer series books and mysteries. Fiction narratives are straightforward but have elaborate plots and multiple characters that develop and show some change over time. They read shorter nonfiction texts, mostly on single topics, and are able to identify and use underlying structures (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, cause and effect). They can process sentences that are complex, contain prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives. Word solving is smooth and automatic in both silent and oral reading and can read and understand descriptive words, some complex content-specific words, and some technical words. They read silently and independently. In oral reading, they demonstrate all aspects of smooth, fluent processing.

Selecting Texts: Characteristics of Texts at This Level

GENRE/FORMS

Genre

- Informational texts
- Simple fantasy
- Realistic fiction
- Traditional literature (folktales, fables, legends, tall tales)
- Biography, mostly on well-known subjects
- Simple mysteries
- Hybrid texts combining more than one genre

Forms

- Picture books
- Plays
- Beginning chapter books with illustrations
- Series books
- Graphic texts

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fiction

- Narrative structure including chapters with multiple episodes related to a single plot
- Simple, straightforward plots
- Much of setting, actions, and characters provided in pictures in graphic texts

Nonfiction

- Presentation of multiple topics
- Underlying structures (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, cause and effect)
- Texts organized into a few simple categories
- Variety in organization and topic
- Variety in nonfiction formats (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, and call-outs)

CONTENT

- Some technical content that is challenging and not typically known
- Most of content carried by the print rather than pictures
- Content supported or extended by illustrations in most informational texts

THEMES AND IDEAS

- Many light, humorous stories, typical of childhood experiences
- Most ideas supported by the text but with less illustration support
- Texts with universal themes illustrating important human issues and attributes (friendship, courage)
- Some abstract themes requiring inferential thinking to derive
- Some texts (graphic texts) requiring readers to infer the story from pictures with minimal text or dialogue only
- Some texts with moral lessons

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY FEATURES

- Some complex and memorable characters
- Various ways of showing characters' attributes (description, dialogue, thoughts, others' perspectives)
- Multiple characters to understand and notice how they develop and change over time
- Figurative and descriptive language
- Setting important to understanding the plot in some texts
- Various perspectives revealed through dialogue
- Wide variety in showing dialogue, both assigned and unassigned
- Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing
- Plots with numerous episodes, building toward problem resolution
- Simple, traditional elements of fantasy
- Texts with multiple points of view revealed through characters' behaviors

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY

- Some longer (more than fifteen words), more complex sentences (prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives)
- Variety in sentence length, with some long and complex sentences
- Questions in dialogue (fiction) and questions and answers (nonfiction)
- Sentences with parenthetical material
- Sentences with nouns, verbs, or adjectives in series, divided by commas

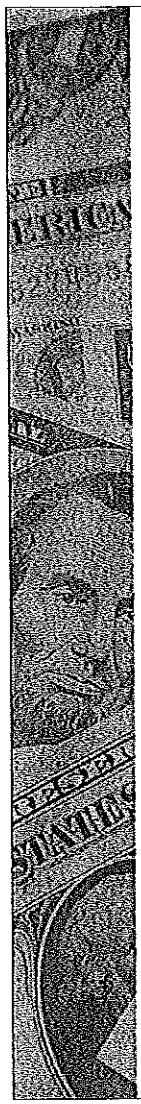
VOCABULARY

- Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- New vocabulary in fiction texts largely unexplained

WORDS

- Many two- to three-syllable words
- Some words with more than three syllables
- Words with suffixes
- Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns
- Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
- Many plurals, contractions, and compound words

© 2011, 2008 by Cay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



Saving Up

by Kitty Colton

I really, really wanted to get a dog. But Mom said I wasn't responsible enough to take care of a pet.

"I'm very responsible!" I said.

"Hmm. Okay, Mr. Responsible. I hate to disagree with you, Danny. But how many times did I tell you to clean your room this week?" asked Mom.

"Well, cleaning my room is totally boring! Taking care of a dog would be totally fun!"

Mom said, "Dogs are a lot of work!" She said I'd have to prove I

1

ILLUSTRATIONS

General
- A variety of complex graphics, often more than one on a page
- Some long stretches of text with no illustrations or graphics

Fiction
- Most texts with no illustrations, minimal black and white illustrations, or symbolic illustrations
- Some highly complex and artistic illustrations that communicate meaning to match or extend the text
- Black and white illustrations in most texts

Nonfiction
- More than one kind of graphic on a page
- Combination of graphics providing information that matches and extends the text
- Variety of graphics (diagrams, labels, cutaways, maps, scales with legends, illustrations with labels, maps, charts)
- In most texts, graphics that are clearly explained
- Variety in the layout of print in nonfiction texts (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, call-outs)

BOOK AND PRINT FEATURES

Length
- Short texts
- Some chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)

Print and Layout
- Ample space between lines
- Print and font size varying with some longer texts in small fonts
- Use of words in italics, bold, or all capitals to indicate emphasis, level of importance, or signal other meaning
- Variety in print and background color
- Many sentences continuing over several lines or to the next page
- Print and illustrations integrated in many texts
- Captions under pictures that provide important information
- Usually friendly layout in chapter books, with some sentences starting on the left
- Variety in layout of nonfiction formats (question and answer, paragraphs, boxes, legends, call-outs)

Punctuation
- Full range of punctuation, including dashes and ellipses

Tools
- A variety of readers' tools: table of contents, glossary, punctuation guide, titles, labels, headings, subheadings, sidebars, legends

© 2011, 2008 by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.