## Reading Benchmark

Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading Text Level Descriptions  
*Adapted from the Continuum of Literacy Learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level A:</th>
<th>Characteristics of Texts at Level A:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text and concepts highly supported by pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One line of text on each page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familiar, easy content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeating language patterns (3-6 words per page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short, predictable sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost all vocabulary familiar to children – strongly sight-word based</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- Just beginning to learn how print works
- Just beginning to learn the alphabetic principle – the relationship between letters and sounds
- Learning to use 1-1 matching
- Learning to follow text from left to right
- Differentiating between print and pictures
- Beginning to notice each letter’s distinct features
- Learning some easy, high-frequency words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level B:</th>
<th>Characteristics of Texts at Level B:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple, one-dimensional characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text and concepts highly supported by pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two or more lines of text on each page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeating language patterns (3-7 words per page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very familiar themes and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short, predictable sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost all vocabulary familiar to children – strongly sight-word based</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- Recognize and apply repeating language patterns
- Stronger awareness of left-to-right directionality
- Stronger awareness of 1-1 matching
- Learning concept of return sweep (moving from one line of text to the next)
Able to distinguish and identify more letters according to their distinct features
Developing stronger understanding of the connection between sounds and letters
Expanding their core of easy, high-frequency words

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>D: Characteristics of Texts at Level D:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple factual texts, animal fantasy and realistic fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusing one-dimensional characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar, easy content, themes, and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple dialogue (some split dialogue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some longer sentences (some with more than six words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some simple contractions and possessives (words with apostrophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two to six lines of text on each page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some sentences turn over to the next line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some words with –s and –ing endings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer repetitive language patterns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characteristics of Early Emergent Readers (Reading at Level D):
Eyes can track print over two to six lines per page
Can process texts with fewer repeating language patterns
Voice-print match is smooth and automatic; finger pointing is rarely needed, if ever
Notices and uses a range of punctuation and read dialogue, reflecting the meaning through phrasing
Can solve many regular two-syllable words, usually with inflectional endings (-ing).
Consistently monitors reading and cross-checks one source of information against another; self-corrects

E: Characteristics of Texts at Level E:
Simple informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, very simple retellings of traditional tales, simple plays
Some texts with sequential information
Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school
Most concepts supported by pictures
More literary stories and language
Concrete, easy-to-understand ideas
Some longer sentences – more than ten words
Some three-syllable words
Some sentences with verb preceding subject
Variation of words to assign dialogue in some texts (said, cried, shouted)
Easy contractions
Mostly words with easy, predictable spelling patterns
Two to eight lines of print per page

Characteristics of Emergent Readers (Reading at Level E):
Flexible enough to process texts with varied placement of print and a full range of punctuation
Attend to more subtle ideas and complex stories
Solve longer words with inflectional endings
Read sentences that carry over 2-3 lines or over two pages
Rely much more on the print; pictures are becoming less supportive
Left-to-right directionality and voice-print match are automatic
Oral reading demonstrates fluency and phrasing with appropriate stress on words
Read without finger pointing, bringing in finger only at point of difficulty
Recognize a large number of high-frequency words
Easily solve words with regular letter-sound relationships, as well as a few irregular words

F: Characteristics of Texts at Level F:
Simple informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, very simple retellings of traditional tales, simple plays
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Emergent Readers (Reading at Level F):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning to build knowledge of the characteristics of different genres of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read stretches of both simple and split dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize a large number of high-frequency words quickly and automatically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use letter-sound information to take apart simple, regular words as well as some multisyllable words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process and understand text patterns that are particular to written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning to read fiction with more well-developed characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-to-right directionality and voice-print match are completely automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read without pointing and with appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level G):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to internalize more and deeper knowledge of different genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early reading behaviors now completely automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize a large number of high-frequency words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to attend to more complex storylines and ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use a range of word-solving strategies (letter-sound information, making connections between words, using word parts) to read unknown words
Read texts with some content-specific words
Demonstrate appropriate rate, phrasing, intonation, and word stress

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

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

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

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

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

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

**K: Characteristics of Texts at Level K:**
Informational texts, simple animal fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales),
some
simple biographies on familiar subjects
Beginning chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)
Varied organization in nonfiction text formats (question/answer, boxes, legends, etc.)
Some texts with plots, situations, and settings outside what a child would typically find familiar
Longer (more than fifteen words), more complex sentences
Variety of words used to assign dialogue, with verbs and adverbs essential to meaning
Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
Longer stretches of print without the support of pictures

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level K):**
Able to accommodate the higher-level processing of several fiction texts with multiple episodes
connected to a single plot
Read about and understand characters that are increasingly more complex
Able to process a great deal of dialogue within a story
Challenged to read stories based on concepts that are distant in time and space and reflect diverse cultures
Have a large, expanding sight-word vocabulary
Able to quickly apply word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words,
and words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives
Read silently during independent reading
Oral reading fully demonstrates all aspects of fluent reading

**L: Characteristics of Texts at Level L:**
Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), simple biographies, simple mysteries
Underlying organizational structures (description, compare and contrast, problem and solution)
Some technical content that is challenging and not typically known
Some texts with plots, settings, and situations outside typical experience
Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
Some new vocabulary and content-specific words in nonfiction text introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
New vocabulary in fiction texts (largely unexplained)
Chapter books (sixty to one hundred pages of print)

**Characteristics of Developing Readers (Reading at Level L):**
Able to process easy chapter books, including some series books, with more sophisticated plots
and few illustrations, as well as shorter informational texts
Adjust reading to process a variety of genres
Understand that chapter books have multiple episodes connected to a single plot
Bring background knowledge to new reading in order to process and learn new information
Begin to recognize themes across texts (friendship, courage)
Able to understand some abstract ideas
Able to see multiple perspectives of characters through description
Able to flexibly apply word-solving strategies for complex spelling patterns, multisyllable words,
and words with inflectional endings, plurals, contractions, and possessives
Read silently during independent reading
Oral reading fully demonstrates all aspects of fluent reading

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>N:</strong> Characteristics of Texts at Level N:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), simple biographies, simple mysteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of multiple topics that represent subtopic of a larger topic or theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various ways of showing characters’ attributes (description, dialogue, thoughts, others’ perspectives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex plots with numerous episodes and time passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple characters to understand and notice how they develop and change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variety in sentence length and complexity
Many two-to-three-syllable words; some words with more than three syllables
Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
Words with prefixes and suffixes
Some new vocabulary and content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the Text

 Characteristics of Early Independent Readers (Reading at Level N):
Know the characteristics of and can process the full range of genres
Developing preferences for specific forms of reading (mysteries, biographies)
Can understand and process narratives with more elaborate plots and multiple characters that
develop and change over time
Able to identify and use underlying organizational structures (description, compare and
contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text
Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading
Reader will slow down to problem solve or search for information, then resume normal
reading pace
Most word solving is unconscious and automatic; little overt problem solving needed
Can read and understand descriptive words, some complex content-specific words, and some
technical words

O: Characteristics of Texts at Level O:
Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales),
biographies,
mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, chapter books with sequels
Prior knowledge needed to understand content in many informational texts
Presentation of multiple topics that represent subtopic of a larger topic or theme
Content requiring the reader to take on perspectives from diverse cultures and bring cultural
knowledge to understanding
Multiple characters to know and understand
Characters revealed by what they say, do, think, and by what others say or think about them
Descriptive and figurative language that is key to understanding the plot
Characters with both good and bad traits, who change and develop over time
Some words used figuratively
New vocabulary in fiction texts largely unexplained
Some words with connotative meanings that are essential to understanding the text
Some multisyllable proper nouns that are challenging to take apart or decode

 Characteristics of Early Independent Readers (Reading at Level O):
Know the characteristics of and can process the full range of genres
Read a wide range of texts: chapter books, shorter fiction and informational text, including
special forms such as mysteries, series books, and short stories
Able to identify and use underlying organizational structures (description, compare and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>P: Characteristics of Texts at Level P:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informational texts, fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, chapter books with sequels, genre combinations (hybrids)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics that go well beyond readers’ personal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content requiring the reader to take on diverse perspectives (race, language, culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and themes requiring taking a perspective not familiar to the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some more challenging themes (war, the environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many ideas and themes requiring understanding of cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple characters to know and understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters revealed by what they say, do, think, and by what others say or think about them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive use of descriptive and figurative language that is key to understanding the plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building suspense through events of the plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some more complex fantasy elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many complex content-specific words in nonfiction, mostly defined in text, illustrations, or glossary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisyllable proper nouns that are challenging to take apart or decode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More difficult layout of informational text, and some fiction text, with denser format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

Many abstract themes requiring inferential thinking to derive
Texts with deeper meanings applicable to important human problems and social issues
Some more challenging themes (war, the environment)
Many new vocabulary words that depend on readers’ tools (such as glossaries)
Many new vocabulary words for readers to derive meaning from context
Extensive use of figurative language (idioms, simile, metaphor)
Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode
Many technical words that are difficult to decode
Nonfiction may contain a variety of complex graphics, often more than one on a page
Some nonfiction texts with graphics that have scales or legends that require understanding and Interpretation

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

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

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

Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries
Some collections of short stories that have interrelated themes or build a single plot across the book
Fiction – settings requiring knowledge of content (history, geography, etc.)
Complex ideas on many different topics requiring real or vicarious experiences
Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding the setting and characters
Some long strings of unassigned dialogue from which story action must be inferred
Settings distant in time and space from students’ experiences
Many new vocabulary words for readers to derive meaning from context
Extensive use of figurative language (idioms, simile, metaphor)
Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns
Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>T: Characteristics of Texts at Level T:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>informational texts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand perspectives different from their own as well as settings and people far distant in time and space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to process lengthy, complex sentences, containing prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, and lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve new vocabulary words, some defined in the text and some unexplained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most reading is silent, but fluency and phrasing in oral reading are well-established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers are challenged by many longer descriptive words and by content-specific/technical words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to take apart multisyllable words and use a full range of word-solving skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently search for information in illustrations and increasingly complex graphics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

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

Understand perspectives different from their own

Understand settings and people far distant in time and space

Readers are challenged by many longer descriptive words and by content-specific/technical
Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

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

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

Variety of underlying structures often combined in complex ways (description, comparison and contrast, temporal sequence, problem and solution, etc.)
Topics that go well beyond readers’ personal experiences and content knowledge
Content particularly appealing to adolescents
Many themes presenting mature issues and the problems of society (racism, war)
Many texts focusing on human problems (war, hardship, economic issues)
Themes that evoke alternative interpretations
Texts requiring inference to understand characters and why they change
Many complex narratives that are highly literary
Some literary devices (for example, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)
Fantasy and science fiction showing struggle between good and evil
Some words from languages other than English
Long, multisyllable words requiring attention to roots to read and understand
Most fiction texts with no illustrations other than the cover jacket
A wide variety of complex graphics that require interpretation (photos with legends, diagrams, labels, cutaways, graphics, maps)

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

Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.
Able to read longer texts and remember information and connect ideas over many days of reading
Read and interpret complex fantasy, myths, legends that contain symbolism
Understand perspectives different from their own
Understand settings and people far distant in time and space
Most reading is silent, but fluency and phrasing in oral reading are well-established
Able to take apart multisyllable words and use a full range of word-solving skills
Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats
Able to search for and use information in an integrated way, using complex graphics and texts that present content requiring background knowledge

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

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

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

**W: Characteristics of Texts at Level W:**
Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (myths, legends), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries, satire
Unusual text organizations (e.g. flashbacks)
Many texts presenting mature societal issues, especially those important to adolescents (family issues, growing up)
Wide range of challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the
human condition
Character interpretation essential to understand the theme
Fantasy incorporating classical motifs (such as “the quest”)
Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography
Heavy content load in many texts, both fiction and nonfiction, requiring study
Themes that evoke alternative interpretations
Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often unsigned, or signaled only by dialogue)
Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)
Words used figuratively or with unusual or hard-to-understand connotations
Archaic words or words from languages other than English that do not follow conventional pronunciation patterns
Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English

Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level W):
Automatically read and understand a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects, hybrid genres, fiction with elaborate plots and complex characters, informational texts, etc.
Able to read longer texts and remember information and connect ideas over many days of reading
Read and interpret complex fantasy, myths, legends that contain symbolism and classical motifs
(“the quest”)
Encounter mature themes that expand their knowledge of social issues
Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire), and literary devices, such as irony
Understand multidimensional themes on several different levels
Understand settings and people far distant in time and space
Readers can be very expressive when presenting poetry or readers’ theater
Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats
Apply background knowledge of historical events, archaic language and/or regional dialects when reading

X: Characteristics of Texts at Level X:
Informational texts, high fantasy and science fiction, realistic fiction, traditional literature (myths, legends), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries, satire
Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography
Many texts presenting mature societal issues, especially those important to adolescents
Wide range of challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the human condition
Many texts presenting multiple themes that may be understood in many layers
Some texts with heroic or larger-than-life characters who represent the symbolic struggle between good and evil
Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding setting and characters Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)
Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often unsigned, or signaled only by dialogue)
Some very long sentences (more than thirty words)
Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English

Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Level X):
Understand and process a wide range of texts, including all genres
Able to read very long texts with complex sentences and paragraphs, with many multisyllable words
Understand and respond to mature themes such as poverty and war
Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire), and literary devices, such as irony
Read and understand texts with multidimensional characters, texts that can be interpreted on several levels, and that are developed in complex ways
Most reading is silent; fluency and phrasing in oral reading is well-established
Challenged by a heavy load of content-specific and technical words that require using embedded definitions, background knowledge, and reader’s tools (glossaries, indexes, etc.)
Apply prior understandings in a critical way when reading both fiction and nonfiction texts

Y/Z: Characteristics of Texts at Levels Y/Z:
Informational texts, high fantasy and science fiction, realistic fiction, traditional literature (myths, legends), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries, satire
Many texts with the complex structure of adult reading
Unusual text organizations (flashback, flash forward, time lapses)
Many new vocabulary words that readers must derive meaning from context or use glossaries or dictionaries
Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography
Many texts presenting mature societal issues, especially those important to adolescents
(family
issues, growing up)  
Wide range of challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the human condition  
Many texts presenting multiple themes that may be understood in many layers  
Some texts with heroic or larger-than-life characters who represent the symbolic struggle between good and evil  
Long stretches of descriptive language that are important to understanding setting and characters  
Full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language)  
Some switching from setting to setting, including time change (often unsignaled, or signaled only by dialogue)  
Some very long sentences (more than thirty words)  
Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Independent Readers (Reading at Levels Y/Z):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand and process a wide range of texts, including all genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read very long texts with complex sentences and paragraphs, with many multisyllable words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify classical motifs such as “the quest” and moral issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to read and interpret more abstract forms of literature (satire), and literary devices, such as irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and understand texts with multidimensional characters, texts that can be interpreted on several levels, and that are developed in complex ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most reading is silent; fluency and phrasing in oral reading is well-established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenged by a heavy load of content-specific and technical words that require using embedded definitions, background knowledge, and reader’s tools (glossaries, indexes, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply prior understandings in a critical way when reading both fiction and nonfiction texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>