

## Text Characteristics

### Level A:

#### Major Text Characteristics:

- Very simple narratives with stories carried by pictures
- NF: focused on a single idea or one simple topic
- Familiar, easy content all supported by picture information
- Nameless, flat characters
- Repeating language patterns (three to six words on a page)
- Short, predictable sentences with familiar vocabulary that are close to oral language
- Simple sentences with subject preceding verb
- Mostly one-syllable words. Repeated use of high-frequency words
- Easy spelling patterns
- Illustrations match print and support each page of text
- One line of text on each page
- Ample space between words and lines and print in large plain font
- Print clearly separated from pictures
- Period only punctuation in most texts

### Level B:

#### New Text Characteristics:

- Mostly simple sentences often with phrases at the end
- Adjective and prepositions
- Two or more lines of text on each page
- Sentences turn over one or more lines
- Line breaks match ends of phrases and sentences

### Level C:

- Simple dialogue (assigned by *said* in most texts)
- Many sentences with prepositional phrases and adjectives
- Some two-syllable words
- Adverbs
- Some simple contractions and possessives
- Greater range of easy high frequency words
- Some words used in different language structures (said Mom; Mom said)
- More meaning carried in the text and less with picture support
- Two to five lines of text on each page
- Some words in bold or larger font for emphasis
- Ellipses, commas, quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks

### Level D:

- More complex repeating language patterns
- Some split dialogue and Variety in assignment to speaker (other than said)
- Some longer sentences (some with more than six words)
- A few sentences beginning with phrases
- Many high-frequency words
- Some words with inflectional endings (-ing)
- Mostly simple spelling patterns
- More details in illustrations and Mostly two to six lines of print per page

## Text Characteristics

### Level E:

- Narrative texts with clear beginning, series of events, and ending
- Familiar content that expands beyond home, neighborhood, and school
- Some longer stretches of dialogue
- Some longer sentences with more than ten words
- Some complex sentences with variety in order of clauses
- Some sentences with verb preceding subject
- Use of commas to set words apart                      Some three-syllable words
- Sentences carrying over two to three lines and some over two pages

### Level F:

- 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)
- Sentences with clauses and embedded phrases, some introductory
- Some content-specific words introduced, explained, and illustrated in the text
- Complex illustrations depicting multiple ideas
- Some texts in smaller font size

### Level G:

#### New Text Characteristics:

- More episodes and less repetition
- Greater variety in themes (going beyond everyday events)
- Some stretches of descriptive language
- Use of dialogue for drama
- Multiple episodes taking place over time
- Multisyllable words that are generally easy to take apart or decode
- Some easy compound words
- Most texts with no or only minimal illustrations
- Illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, set mood but are not necessary for understanding
- NF: one kind of graphic on a page. Some simple graphics (illustrations with labels)
- Italics indicating unspoken thought dashes

### Level H:

#### New Text Characteristics:

- More episodes and less repetition
- Greater variety in themes (going beyond everyday events)
- Some stretches of descriptive language
- Use of dialogue for drama
- Multiple episodes taking place over time
- Multisyllable words that are generally easy to take apart or decode
- Some easy compound words
- Most texts with no or only minimal illustrations
- Illustrations that support interpretation, enhance enjoyment, set mood but are not necessary for understanding
- NF: one kind of graphic on a page. Some simple graphics (illustrations with labels)
- Italics indicating unspoken thought dashes

## Text Characteristics

### Level I:

#### New text characteristics:

- Some new content that typically children would not know
- Some ideas that are new to most children
- A few abstract ideas that are highly supported by text and illustrations
- More elaborated description of character attributes
- Language characteristic of traditional literature in some texts
- Variety of dialogue (between more than two characters in many texts)
- Some texts may show more than one point of view
- Many sentences with embedded clauses and phrases
- Many compound sentences
- Two or more kinds of graphics on a page
- Some informational texts with a table of contents or simple glossary

### Level J:

#### New Text Characteristics:

- Some simple biographies on familiar subjects
- Beginning chapter books with illustrations and short chapters (forty to seventy-five pages)
- Chapters connected by character or broad theme
- Chapters usually connected to a longer plot
- Amusing or engaging characters, some of which have more than one dimension
- Occasional use of parenthetical material embedded in sentences
- Content words illustrated with pictures or other graphics
- Many lines of print on a page (three to twelve lines)
- Chapter titles
- Some texts with headings in bold to show sections

### Level K:

#### New Text Characteristics:

- NF: presentation of multiple topics, variety in organization and topic, legends, and call-outs
- New content requiring prior knowledge to understand in some informational texts
- A few abstract ideas, supported by the text but with less illustration support
- Texts with universal themes illustrating important human issues (friendship)
- Some complex and memorable characters & some figurative language (metaphor, simile)
- Setting important to understanding the plot in some texts
- Longer (more than fifteen words), more complex sentences
- Prepositional phrases, introductory clauses, lists of nouns, verbs, or adjectives
- Wide variety of words to assign dialogue, with verbs and adverbs essential to meaning
- Multisyllable words that are challenging to take apart or decode
- Some long stretches of text with no illustrations or graphics
- Some texts with illustrations that are essential to interpretation
- Chapter books with 60 -100 pages of print -up to fifteen lines of print on a page
- Use of words in italics, bold, or all capitals to indicate emphasis or level of importance

## Text Characteristics

### Level L:

#### New Text Characteristics:

- Simple mysteries
- Multiple characters to understand and follow development
- Various ways of showing characters' attributes (description, dialogue, thoughts, other's perspectives)
- Plots with numerous episodes building toward problem resolution
- Texts with multiple points of view revealed through characters' behaviors and dialogue
- Sentences with nouns, verbs, or adjectives in series, divided by commas
- New vocabulary in fiction texts (largely unexplained)
- Words with suffixes and prefixes
- Words with a wide variety of very complex spelling patterns
- Many lines of print on a page (five to twenty-four lines; more for fiction)

### Level M:

#### New text characteristics:

- Most of content carried by the print rather than pictures
- Some abstract themes requiring inferential thinking to derive
- Multiple characters to understand and notice how they develop and change over time
- Black and white illustrations
- NF: diagrams, cutaways, scales, captions

### Level N:

#### New text characteristics:

- Content requiring the reader to take on perspectives from diverse cultures and bring cultural knowledge to understanding
- Social issues
- Descriptive and figurative language that is important to understanding the plot
- Building suspense through events of the plot
- Some words with connotative meanings that are essential to understanding the text
- Some multisyllable proper nouns that are difficult to decode
- Some words divided (hyphenated across lines)

### Level O:

#### New text characteristics:

- Chapter books with sequels
- Short stories
- Some more challenging themes (war, the environment)
- Memorable characters, with both good and bad traits
- Pronunciation guides

## Text Characteristics

Level P:

New text characteristics:

- Texts with multiple topics and categories within them
- Topics that go well beyond readers' personal experiences and content knowledge
- Ideas and themes requiring taking a perspective not familiar to the reader
- Many ideas and themes requiring understanding of cultural diversity
- Extensive use of figurative language that is important to understanding the plot
- Specific descriptions of settings that provide important information for understanding the plot
- Settings distant in time and space from students' experiences
- Some more complex fantasy elements
- Many new vocabulary words that depend on readers' tools
- Many new vocabulary words that readers must derive meaning from context
- Large variation among print styles and font size (related to genre)

Level Q:

New text characteristics:

- Genre: more complex fantasy, memoir, and autobiography, diaries and logs, graphic texts
- Fiction – settings requiring knowledge of content (history, geography, etc.)
- Complex ideas on many different topics requiring real or vicarious experiences (through reading)
- Many words with affixes (prefixes and suffixes)
- Many technical words that are difficult to decode
- Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode

Level R:

New text characteristics:

- Some collections of short stories that have interrelated themes or build a single plot across the book
- Some long strings of unassigned dialogue from which story action must be inferred

Level S:

New text characteristics:

- Plots with subplots
- Some complex plots with multiple story lines
- Content particularly appealing to preadolescents
- Many complex plurals, contractions, and compound words
- Nonfiction: some texts with graphics that are complex and not fully explained
- Occasional use of less common punctuation (colon, semicolon)

## Text Characteristics

### Level T:

#### New text characteristics:

- Genre: myths and legends
- Themes focusing on the problems of preadolescents, mature issues, problems of society (racism)
- Themes focusing on human problems (war, hardship, economic issues)
- Themes that evoke alternative interpretations
- Longer, complex sentences structures (some more than 20 words)
- Wide range of declarative, imperative, or interrogative sentences
- Words used in regional or historical dialects
- Some words from languages other than English

### Level U:

#### New text characteristics:

- Historical fiction settings may differ from students' own cultural histories
- Multidimensional characters that develop over time
- Science fiction showing struggle of good and evil
- Many highly technical words that require background knowledge and are not defined in the text
- Long, multisyllable words requiring attention to roots to read and understand
- Most texts with no illustrations other than the cover jacket or symbolic decoration on margins or at chapter headings
- NF: some texts with graphics that are dense and challenging
- Many texts with very small font

### Level V:

#### New text characteristics:

- Genre: satire (literary narrative in which human failures are portrayed and ridiculed)
- Many texts requiring knowledge of history
- Content particularly appealing to preadolescents and adolescents
- 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
- Interpretation of characters essential to understanding the theme
- Some switching from setting to setting, including time change
- Full range of literary devices
- Words used figuratively or with unusual or hard-to-understand connotations
- Archaic (past) words or words from languages other than English that do not follow conventional pronunciation patterns

## Text Characteristics

Level W:

New text characteristics:

- Genre: high fantasy and science fiction Form: Photo essays
- Content particularly appealing to adolescents
- Many texts requiring knowledge of world events
- Many texts presenting mature societal issues (family issues, growing up, sexuality)
- Many texts presenting multiple themes that may be understood in many layers
- Wide range or challenging themes that build social awareness and reveal insights into the human condition
- Some texts with heroic or larger-than-life characters who represent the symbolic struggle of good and evil
- Some texts with archaic language, included for authenticity
- Fantasy incorporating classical motifs (such as "the quest")
- Use of symbolism to convey meaning
- Words that offer decoding challenges because they are archaic, come from regional dialect, or from languages other than English
- Some text layouts in columns

Levels X-Z

New text characteristics:

X: Some very long sentences (some with more than 30 words) Many archaic words

Y: flashforward, time lapses, texts with unusual structures for presenting information, many texts with the complex structure of adult-level reading

Z: embedded, diverse stories, texts that explicitly present mature issues such as sexuality, murder, abuse, nuclear war