Leveled Reader Characteristics

Level A Books: Emergent Readers

- Large print
- Text consistently placed
- Repetition of phrases and patterns
- 1-2 word changes
- High frequency words are introduced
- Text is predictable
- Illustrations have strong support
- Simple books with one line of one to six words per page, easy to see print, and ample space between words
- Children can focus on print and gradually increase their control over words
- Most books focus on topics familiar with children

Level B Books: Emergent Readers

- Large print
- Text consistently placed
- Repetition of phrases and patterns
- 1-2 word changes
- High frequency words are introduced
- Text is predictable
- Illustrations have strong support
- Books focus on a simple story line or single idea, with direct correspondence between text and pictures
- Many books at this level feature repeating patterns in the text
- One or two lines of print per page, with a variety of punctuation

Level C Books: Beginning Readers

- Longer sentences, more lines of text on the page
- Change in sentence patterns
- 2-3 word changes
- Change in punctuation
- Illustrations are some support
- Some repetition
- More attention to print is needed
- Larger range of high frequency words
- Increase in vocabulary
- Stories explore familiar topics in a variety of ways to offer new viewpoints to readers
- Simple sentences may have introductory clauses set off by punctuation
- Texts may be patterned but not as predictable as Levels A & B

Level D Books: Beginning Readers

- Longer and difficult sentence patterns
- Oral and written language structures
- 3-4 word changes
- Text increases
- Illustrations less support
More attention to print is required
Less repetition
Word patterns and opportunities for word work
Larger range of high frequency words
Increase in vocabulary
Tense in sentences change
Stories cover familiar topics but may introduce new, more abstract ideas
Text contains more compound and multi-syllable words in a full range of punctuation

**Level E Books: Transitional Readers**

- Medium to small print size
- Variety of fonts
- More complete story
- Illustrations not much support
- Contains a problem and solution
- Use of descriptive language
- Concepts and themes are familiar
- Complex sentences
- Dialogue
- Stories have more or longer episodes; informational books present more complex ideas
- Books are longer than previous levels, with more lines of text on each page
- Sentences carry several pages, with more complex punctuation

**Level F Books: Transitional Readers**

- Medium to small print size
- Variety of fonts
- More complete story
- Illustrations not much support
- Contains a problem and solution
- Use of descriptive language
- Concepts and themes are familiar
- Complex sentences
- Dialogue
- Concepts presented in books at this level are more distant from familiar topics
- Larger variety of frequently used words, and many more new words
- Texts reflect patterns of written, rather than oral, language

**Level G Books: Transitional Readers**

- Medium to small print size
- Increase use of multisyllabic and compound words
- Vocabulary may need the use of context clues
- Wide range of sentence patterns
- Story has episodes
- Has a problem and solution
- Illustrations not much support
- Word analysis
- Wide range of punctuation
- Dialogue
- Wide range of word tenses
- Descriptive and literary language
- Technical vocabulary when dealing with concepts
- Language changes on each page, rather than repeating in patterns
- Books offer challenges in ideas and vocabulary, with some introduction to technical language
- Variety of print styles and text layout require reader’s close attention and flexibility

**Level H Books: Transitional Readers**

- Medium to small print size
- Increase use of multisyllabic and compound words
- Vocabulary may need the use of context clues
- Wide range of sentence patterns
- Story has episodes
- Has a problem and solution
- Illustrations not much support
- Word analysis
- Wide range of punctuation
- Dialogue
- Wide range of word tenses
- Descriptive and literary language
- Technical vocabulary when dealing with concepts
- Books are similar in difficulty to level G, but the texts vary more widely in terms of size of print, length of sentences, and type of language, include some poetic and literary language
- Texts are less repetitious in events and language structures, with expanded vocabulary

**Level I Books: Fluent Readers**

- Medium to small print size
- Variety of fonts and text patterns
- Increase use of multisyllabic and compound words
- Wide range of sentence patterns
- Story has episodes
- Has a problem and solution
- Illustrations very little support
- Characters are beginning to develop
- Wide range of punctuation
- Point of view
- Wide range of word tenses
- Descriptive and literary language
- Longer and more complex stories than Level G and H, with more highly elaborated episodes or events
- Multisyllabic words arranged in longer sentences and paragraphs require complex word solving

**Level J Books: Fluent Readers**

- Print size decreases
- Stories are longer and may be divided into chapters
- High interest level
- Wide range of genres
- Language patterns more complex
- Illustrations very little support
- More development of characters
- Beginning chapter books appear for the first time at this level, requiring readers to recall characters and story lines over more than one sitting
- Some chapter books include whole pages of text with fewer illustrations
Level K Books: Fluent Readers

- Print size decreases
- Paragraphs
- Chapter books
- Increase use of strategies to figure out words
- Variety of genres
- Details are important to the story
- Use of similes and metaphors
- This level includes chapter books, short informational books with difficult concepts, and literary texts
- Readers learn about characters and events outside their own experiences
- Readers need to use a variety of strategies to figure out different writing styles

Level L Books: Fluent Readers

- Print size decreases
- Paragraphs
- Chapter books
- Increase use of strategies to figure out words
- Variety of genres
- Details are important to the story
- Use of similes and metaphors
- Chapter books at this level are much longer and more complex, with more sophisticated plots
- Nonfiction books include biography
- Longer texts include many multisyllabic words and expand reader’s vocabulary
- Some stories have abstract or symbolic themes

Level M Books: Fluent Readers

- Decreased print size
- Chapter books
- Illustrations may include photos, diagrams, and graphs (non-fiction only)
- Complex vocabulary
- Challenging high frequency words
- Increase amount of dialogue
- Complex sentence structures
- Several episodes in the stories
- Characters become more interactive
- Abstract themes may be included
- Literary selections have complex language and subtle meanings that require readers to make interpretations
- Most books at this level have greatly expanded vocabulary
- Many books at this level have smaller print with narrower spacing

Level N Books: Fluent Readers

- Decreased print size
- Chapter books
- Illustrations may include photos, diagrams, and graphs (non-fiction only)
- Complex vocabulary
- Challenging high frequency words
- Increase amount of dialogue
- Complex sentence structures
Several episodes in the stories
- Characters become more interactive
- Abstract themes may be included
- Vocabulary continues to expand and go beyond reader’s own irony and whimsy to create memorable characters
- Variety of texts offer readers a chance to experience mystery and suspense, and to interpret texts and speculate on alternate meanings

**Level O Books: Fluent Readers**

- Decreased print size
- Chapter books (series)
- Illustrations may include photos, diagrams, and graphs (non-fiction only)
- Well developed story line
- Longer and more developed paragraphs
- Prepositional phrases
- Figurative language
- Challenging high frequency words
- Increase amount of dialogue
- Complex vocabulary
- Complex sentence structures (multiple phrases in one sentence)
- Several episodes in the story
- Characters become more interactive
- Abstract themes may be included
- Complex characters and events
- Longer chapter books at this level present varied vocabulary that will require readers to interpret the meaning of the text
- Texts have more sophisticated themes and more complex sentence structure
- Children’s literature selections allow for further exploration and discussion

**Level P Books: Fluent Readers**

- Decreased print size
- Chapter books (series)
- Illustrations may include photos, diagrams, and graphs (non-fiction only)
- Well developed story line
- Longer and more developed paragraphs
- Prepositional phrases
- Figurative language
- Challenging high frequency words
- Increase amount of dialogue
- Complex vocabulary
- Complex sentence structures (multiple phrases in one sentence)
- Several episodes in the story
- Characters become more interactive
- Abstract themes may be included
- Complex characters and events
- Informational texts at this level include history and biography, enabling readers to learn how to gain information from a variety of structures
- Chapter books explore issues of early adolescence

**Level Q Books: Fluent Readers**

- Children’s literature selections contain humor and themes to foster group discussion
Relationships of illustration to text also offer opportunities for exploration and discussion. Texts contain difficult words, some from language other than English.

**Level R Books: Fluent Readers**

- Books in this level contain sophisticated vocabulary to challenge readers.
- Some of the longer chapter books at this level require sustained reading effort over several sittings.
- Books represent a range of times in history.

The system is summarized from Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, pp. 117–126.