

# Level O

## Characteristics of Texts

- Informational texts, simple fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, chapter books with sequels
- Multiple characters are developed through what they say, think, and do or what others say about them
- Characters deal with everyday experiences and more serious problems such as war or death
- Characters with both good and bad traits, who change and develop over time
- Chapter books have between fifty and two hundred pages
- Texts have few illustrations - usually black and white drawings or photographs
- 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
- Descriptive and figurative language that is key to understanding the plot
- New vocabulary in fiction texts largely unexplained
- Highly complex sentences employ a wide range of punctuation necessary for understanding the text

## Characteristics of Readers

- 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 contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text
- 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 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
- Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading
- Demonstrate all aspects of smooth, fluent processing

## Text Examples

*Beezus and Ramona (Ramona series), Boxcar Children (series), Sable, Pippi Longstocking, Clementine, Chocolate Fever*

# Level P

## Characteristics of Texts

- Informational texts, fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, chapter books with sequels, genre combinations (hybrids)
- Fiction texts include novels with longer chapters
- Characters are often concerned with issues related to growing up and family relationships
- Settings are very detailed
- Informational texts and biographies present complex ideas
- Topics may be unfamiliar
- Longer texts require readers to sustain interest and attention over several days
- Structural complexity, theme sophistication, and necessary background experience increases
- Content requiring the reader to take on diverse perspectives (race, language, culture)
- Ideas and themes requiring taking a perspective not familiar to the reader
- Some more challenging themes (war, the environment)
- Multiple characters to know and understand
- Extensive use of descriptive and figurative language that is key to understanding the plot
- Building suspense through events of the plot
- Many complex content-specific words in nonfiction, mostly defined in text, illustrations, or glossary
- More difficult layout of informational text, and some fiction text, with denser format

## Characteristics of Readers

- Can identify the characteristics of a full range of genres, including biographies on less well-known subjects and hybrid 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 contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) to help navigate through text
- 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 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
- Word solving is smooth and automatic with both oral and silent reading
- Demonstrate all aspects of smooth, fluent processing

## Text Examples

*Encyclopedia Brown (series), Wayside School (series), Fantastic Mr. Fox, George's Marvelous Medicine, Stone Fox, Who Stole the Wizard of Oz?, Time Warp Trio*

# Level Q

## Characteristics of Texts

- Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries
- Fiction texts include novels with longer chapters
- Longer texts require readers to sustain interest and attention over several days
- Characters are often concerned with issues related to growing up and family relationships
- Settings are very detailed
- Informational texts and biographies present complex ideas
- Topics may be unfamiliar
- More mature themes, focusing on problems of society as they affect children
- 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
- Texts contain difficult words to solve, often including words from other languages
- 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 Readers

- 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

## Text Examples

*James and the Giant Peach, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, Mr. Popper's Penguins, Dear Mr. Henshaw, The Homework Machine, Dexter the Tough, Spiderwick Chronicles*

# Level R

## Characteristics of Texts

- Informational texts, more complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction, short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries
- Mature themes include family problems, war, and death
- Readers must connect concepts and themes to political and historical events or environmental information
- 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 Readers

- 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

## Text Examples

*Because of Winn-Dixie, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Midnight Fox, Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, Sarah, Plain and Tall, Hatchet, Shiloh, Strider, Frindle, The Trumpet of the Swan, Stuart Little, Caddie Woodlawn, Charlotte's Web, Miracles on Maple Hill, Indian in the Cupboard (series)*

# Level S

## Characteristics of Texts

- 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
- Texts present settings from that are distant from students' own experiences
- Literary selections offer opportunities for readers to make connections with previously read texts as well as historical events
- 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 Readers

- 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 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
- 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

## Text Examples

*Matilda, A Taste of Blackberries, From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankenweiler, The Great Gilly Hopkins, The Cricket in Times Square, Poppy, Flying Solo, The Pinballs, The Voyage of the Frog, The War With Grandpa*

# Level T

## Characteristics of Texts

- 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
- Readers need more prior knowledge of political and historical events and about the problems of different culture and racial groups
- Themes include growing up, demonstrating courage, and experiencing hardship and prejudice
- Nonfiction texts with multiple topics and categories and subcategories within them
- Themes focusing on the problems of preadolescents
- Many texts focusing on human problems (war, hardship, economic issues)
- Themes that evoke alternative interpretations
- Some more complex fantasy elements, some showing conflict between good and evil
- Some obvious symbolism
- Wide range of declarative, imperative, or interrogative sentences
- Many words with affixes (prefixes and suffixes, multisyllable proper nouns that are difficult to decode)
- Words used in regional or historical dialects
- Some words from languages other than English
- Most texts with no or only minimal illustrations

## Characteristics of Readers

- 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 words
- Read and understand texts in a variety of layouts and formats

## Text Examples

*Abel's Island, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Narnia series), Sign of the Beaver, Bridge To Terabithia, George Washington's Socks, The Tiger Rising, Sammy Keyes (series), Sounder*

# Level U

## Characteristics of Texts

- Informational texts, complex fantasy, realistic fiction, traditional literature (folktales), biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, mysteries, historical fiction , short stories, genre combinations (hybrids), diaries
- Illustrations require interpretation and connection to the text
- Narratives are complex with plots and subplots
- Readers need to understand symbolism and themes which are more abstract
- Creative text formats are used
- 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
- 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
- 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 Readers

- 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

## Text Examples

*Julie of the Wolves, The Secret Garden, Wringer, Number the Stars, The Watsons Go to Birmingham -1963, Loser, My Side of the Mountain, Queenie Peavy, The BFG*

# Level V

## Characteristics of Texts

- 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
- Biographies go beyond simple narratives to provide significant amount of historical information and focus on harsh themes and difficult periods of history
- Science fiction presents sophisticated ideas and concepts
- Full appreciation of the texts requires noticing aspects of the writer's craft
- Texts have print in a small font
- Novels may be two hundred to three hundred pages long
- 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 (racism, 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 Readers

- 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

## Text Examples

*Chasing Redbird, Crash, Rascal, The Westing Game, Yolanda's Genius, The Cay, Esperanza Rising, Island of Blue Dolphins, Old Yeller, Pictures of Hollis Woods, Series of Unfortunate Events (series), Harry Potter (series), Holes, Heat*



# Level W

## Characteristics of Texts

- 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)
- Fiction and nonfiction text present characters who suffer hardship and learn from it
- Text have print in a small font
- Readers must have an awareness of social and political issues to comprehend texts
- Fantasy and science fiction introduce heroic characters, moral questions, and contests between good and evil
- Informational texts may present complex graphic information and require a whole range of content knowledge
- Readers must understand all the basic nonfiction organizational structures
- Narrative biographies include many details and prompt readers to make inferences about what motivated the subject's achievements
- 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
- Critical thinking required to judge authenticity of informational texts, historical fiction, and biography
- 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)
- 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 Readers

- 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
- 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

## Text Examples

*Hoot, Maniac Magee, Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry, Crispin, The Phantom Tollbooth, Tuck Everlasting, Walk Two Moons, A Wrinkle in Time, City of Ember, The Witch in Blackbird Pond*

# Level X

## **Characteristics of Texts**

- 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
- Science fiction incorporates technical knowledge as well as high fantasy depicting quests and the struggle between good and evil
- Readers are required to go beyond the literal meaning of the text to construct implied meaning by a writer's use of symbolism
- 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 un signaled, 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 Readers**

- 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

## **Text Examples**

*The Wednesday Wars, The Little Prince, Where the Red Fern Grows, Al Capone Does My Shirts, Out of the Dust, The Egypt Game, The Yearling*

# Levels Y/Z

## Characteristics of Texts

- 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
- Include a whole range of social problems as themes with more explicit details (e.g., details about death or prejudice)
- Texts include irony and satire, literary devices requiring readers to think beyond the literal meaning
- Fantasies are complex, depicting hero figures and heroic journeys
- Readers required to discern underlying lessons and analyze texts for traditional elements
- 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
- Informational books deal with controversial social concepts and political issues and include detailed historical accounts of periods less well-known
- Readers learn new ways of finding technical information
- Informational texts include complex examples of the basic organizational structures
- 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

## Characteristics of Readers

- Understand and process a wide range of texts, including all genres
- Read very long texts with complex sentences and paragraphs, with many multisyllable words
- Identify classical motifs such as “the quest” and moral issues
- 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

## Text Examples

**Level Y:** *The Giver*, *My Brother Sam is Dead*, *Call of the Wild*, *Red Pyramid*, *The Upstairs Room*

**Level Z:** *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Outsiders*, *The Golden Compass*, *War Horse*, *Black Beauty*, *Fever 1793*, *Johnny Tremain*, *Shadow Children (series)*