



**READING & WRITING  
TOGETHER**

LAURENT CLERC NATIONAL DEAF EDUCATION CENTER

## Guided Reading

<b>LEVEL A</b>	<b>LEVEL B</b>	<b>LEVEL C</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple books with one line of one to six words per page easy-to-see print, and ample space between words.</li> <li>• Children can focus on print and gradually increase their control over words.</li> <li>• Most of the books in Level A focus on topics familiar to children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books focus on a simple story line or single idea, with direct correspondence between text and pictures.</li> <li>• One or two lines of print per page, with a variety of punctuation.</li> <li>• Many books at this level feature repeating patterns in the text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories explore familiar topics in a variety of ways, to offer new viewpoints to the reader.</li> <li>• Simple sentences may have introductory clauses set off by punctuation.</li> <li>• Text may be patterned but is not as predictable as in Levels A &amp; B.</li> </ul>
<b>LEVEL D</b>	<b>LEVEL E</b>	<b>LEVEL F</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories cover familiar topics but may introduce new, more abstract ideas.</li> <li>• Illustrations support the text but more attention to print is required.</li> <li>• Text contains more compound and multisyllable words and a full range of punctuation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories have more or longer episodes; informational books present more complex ideas.</li> <li>• Books are longer than in previous levels, with more pages or more lines of text on each page.</li> <li>• Sentences carry over several pages, with more complex punctuation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concepts represented in books at this level are more distant from familiar topics.</li> <li>• Larger variety of frequently used words, and many more new words.</li> <li>• Text reflects patterns of written, rather than oral, language.</li> </ul>
<b>LEVEL G</b>	<b>LEVEL H</b>	<b>LEVEL I</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In books at this level, language changes on each page, rather than repeating in patterns.</li> <li>• Books offer challenges in ideas and vocabulary, with some introduction to technical language.</li> <li>• Variety of print styles and text layout require reader's close attention and flexibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books are similar in difficulty to level G, but the text vary more widely in terms of size of print, length of sentences, and type of language, and include some poetic and literary language.</li> <li>• Texts are less repetitious in events and language structures, with expanded vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer and more complex stories than in levels G and H, with more highly elaborated episodes or events.</li> <li>• Multisyllable words arranged in longer sentences and paragraphs require complex word solving.</li> <li>• Illustrations enhance meaning but provide little support for understanding the meaning of the text.</li> </ul>

## Guided Reading

Level J	Level K	Level L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level J includes a variety of short informational texts on familiar topics, as well as easy narratives. The longer narratives have short chapters that may or may not have titles. Characters are usually well presented but don't show a great deal of change or development, since plots are relatively simple and texts are not long. Only one or two characters are generally featured.</li> <li>Most texts contain dialogue, which is usually assigned to the speaker by signal words like <i>said</i>, <i>cried</i>, and <i>answered</i>. Print is in a larger font, with clear spaces between words and lines. There are illustrations on most pages. Sentences usually return to the left margin to start. Informational texts focus on topics that are familiar to second graders.</li> <li>Some books offer a large amount of print with easy words and language; others offer challenge in that they present new information or use literary language. Texts have many frequently encountered words, as well as some technical words and unfamiliar words. Technical words are explained within the text, and there are clear illustrations to help the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At level K, chapter books are still simple but are slightly longer, presenting more text to read. Chapters are short; most pages have illustrations but they are less important to students' understanding of the meaning of the text. As with level J, stories have multiple episodes related to a single plot, but there will be more to remember. Texts feature only one or two characters, and there is little development. There is generally dialogue, sometimes unassigned (without identifying words like <i>said</i>).</li> <li>In most level K texts, the layout is still very friendly to the reader in that sentences usually start at the left margin; the print is in a large, clear font, and there are clear spaces between words and between lines.</li> <li>Illustrations include interesting artwork that enhances meaning. Readers will encounter greater variety in writing styles. Informational texts are like Level J in that they use some technical language that is clearly explained within the text and include supportive illustrations. Topics tend to be concrete—animals, plants, and other phenomena that will be familiar to students. Generally, informational texts are shorter but difficult, because different concepts are presented on each page or in each section.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter books at level L are longer and more complex. They have more sophisticated plots. Characters are likely to develop and change in response to the events in the story; one or two characters are featured. Vocabulary includes more multisyllable words that present challenges in terms of new labels for familiar concepts. These longer texts have many easy and harder frequently encountered words. There are illustrations on most pages, but there are some whole pages of print. A major change at level L is that the layout is more difficult. For most texts, sentences end in the middle of lines and continue from one line to the next. The font is generally smaller, and there is more print on the page.</li> <li>Informational books present some new concepts that students can connect with their own background knowledge; the number of new concepts presented is limited, but as in level K, even shorter informational texts are difficult because a different concept is presented on each page or in each section. Simple biographies, told in temporal sequence, tell the stories of past times.</li> </ul>
Level M	Level N	Level O
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A change at level M is that texts have many whole pages of print without illustrations. Illustrations are usually black-and-white drawings or photographs and are scattered throughout the text; they extend the meaning and enhance enjoyment. Chapters are longer. Most texts have a great deal of text in smaller print with narrower word spacing. Vocabulary is greatly expanded, including many multisyllable words and technical words.</li> <li>Topics of informational texts are widely varied, from subjects that are familiar to students to new topics that they are expected to study and learn. Sections of informational texts may provide different information but there is elaboration to help the reader. Most technical terms are explained and illustrated within the text. Real biographies, structured as simple narratives, require readers to think about historical concepts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level N includes longer texts organized in a variety of ways. Topics of informational texts and settings for narrative texts go well beyond readers' personal experience. Chapter books present memorable characters that are well developed and change in response to the events of the story. They also offer an opportunity to feel empathy for characters and to experience suspense. Writers use devices such as irony and whimsy to create interest. Characters are revealed through what they say, think, and do, as well as through what others say about them.</li> <li>Informational texts require much more content knowledge. There are many technical words, but these are usually explained within the text. Biographies are longer and focus on subjects that are less well known to students. They are expected to learn about these subjects through reading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of challenges are presented in chapter books at level O. Books have multiple characters who are revealed through what they say, think, and do or through what others say about them. Characters encounter everyday experiences; some must deal with serious problems such as war or death.</li> <li>This level includes a wide variety of genres, including realistic fiction, historical fiction, biography, science fiction, humor, and traditional literature. Most chapter books have between fifty and two hundred pages. Texts have only a few illustrations, and they are usually black-and-white drawings or photographs.</li> </ul>

## Guided Reading

<b>Level O (Cont.)</b>	<b>Level P</b>	<b>Level Q</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary is sophisticated and varied. There are many multisyllable words. Frequently encountered words, both easy and more difficult, are used; most words will be within reader's decoding control. Readers are expected to form new meanings for known words. Highly complex sentences require a full range of punctuation, which is important to accessing the meaning of the text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level P includes a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction. Informational texts and biographies present complex ideas on many different topics that may be unfamiliar. Technical language is evident. Fiction texts include novels with longer chapters. Characters are concerned with issues related to growing up and family relationships and the problems of preadolescence.</li> <li>In comparison to previous levels, in general, level P texts are longer, have more complex ideas and language, and use a more sophisticated vocabulary. They include more detailed descriptions of setting. More interpretation is required to understand themes at several levels. Many texts are long (over one hundred pages), requiring readers to sustain interest and attention over several days. At this level, length becomes less important than the structural complexity, theme sophistication, and necessary background experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A change at level Q is that most narrative texts will have very few illustrations. The cover illustrations contribute to readers' anticipation, but just about all understanding comes from print. Illustrations in informational books at this level carry a great deal of meaning and require interpretation.</li> <li>Chapter books at level Q employ a complex sentence structure and more difficult vocabulary, and themes. Themes require interpretation; characters are memorable and prompt empathy for and understanding of how they change. All texts contain difficult words, some from languages other than English, for readers to solve. Thoughts and perspectives of characters are revealed in a variety of ways—through dialogue and from the viewpoint of other characters. Books are generally quite long, requiring the reader to sustain interest and meaning over many days.</li> </ul>
<b>Level R</b>	<b>Level S</b>	<b>Level T</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Books in Level R, both fiction and nonfiction, represent a range of times in history. In general, these texts extend the skills needed for level Q over a wider variety of texts. Some very long books may require a great deal of sustained interest. Vocabulary is sophisticated, requiring understanding of the connotative shadings of meaning, and will challenge the reader.</li> <li>Literary devices such as simile and metaphor require background knowledge, as do some of the technical aspects of texts. Informational books such as biography and autobiography extend readers' understanding and take them to places distant in time and space. Books at this level may deal with mature themes like family problems, war, and death. Readers are required to connect concepts and themes with political or historical events or environmental information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texts at level S present complex ideas and information that will be a good foundation for group discussions. They reflect a wide variety of topics and cultures. At this level, words present many shadings of meaning that readers must construct from their interpretations of the text. Sentences and paragraphs are complex, requiring rapid and fluent reading with attention to meaning and automatic assimilation of punctuation.</li> <li>Many works of historical fiction are included in this level of the gradient; students at this age tend to find historical events interesting. There are also many more biographies. Texts present settings that are far distant from students' own experiences. Literary selections offer opportunities for readers to make connections with previously read texts as well as with historical events. This category includes chapter books in many genres. Picture books present complex ideas and information that will be a good foundation for group discussion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selections at level T include a variety of genres and text structures. Chapter books are long, with few illustrations, and they require the reader to recognize character development as well as symbolism. All selections contain many sophisticated, multisyllable words that readers will need to analyze in terms of both literal and connotative meaning.</li> <li>The range of books at level T incorporates fantasy, historical fiction, informational books, biographies, and realistic fiction. Readers need to know more about political and historical events and about the problems of different cultural and racial groups. Themes include growing up, demonstrating courage, and experiencing hardship and prejudice.</li> </ul>

## Guided Reading

Level U	Level V	Level W
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informational texts at level U cover a wide range of topics and present specific technical information. As with earlier levels, illustrations require interpretations and connection to text. Narrative texts are complex; there are plots and subplots. Texts typically have several different themes and many characters. Characters, too, are complex, with multiple dimensions to their personalities. Writers use symbolism, and themes are more abstract. Creative formats are also used (for example, short stories connected by common characters).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biographies at this level go beyond simple narratives to provide a significant amount of historical information. Many biographies are not “fictionalized” for easier reading; they focus on harsh themes and difficult periods of history. Other longer biographies are told in narrative style but present complex themes.</li> <li>Fiction includes science fiction that presents sophisticated ideas and concepts. In many of the works of realistic or historical fiction, the writer is conveying a significant message beyond the specific. Texts require readers to think critically. Full appreciation of texts requires noticing aspects of the writer’s craft. Most long texts have print in a small font; texts may be two hundred to three hundred pages but contain many more words than texts with larger print.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texts at level W have themes that explore the human condition, with the same kinds of challenges mentioned at earlier levels. Fiction and nonfiction texts present characters who suffer hardship and learn from it. The writing is sophisticated, with complex sentences, literary language, and symbolism. Texts vary in length; print is generally small. Comprehending texts at this level requires awareness of social and political issues; through these texts, readers come to understand social problems at deeper levels.</li> <li>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 wide 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..</li> </ul>
Level X	Level Y	Level Z
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Books at level X include science fiction that 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. There is a continuing increase in the sophistication of vocabulary, language, and topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Books categorized as level Y present subtle themes and complex plots. As with earlier levels, they include a whole range of social problems as themes, but more explicit details (for example, about death or prejudice) are provided. Texts also include irony and satire, literary devices that require readers to think beyond the literal meaning of the text. Books at level Y include many more complex works of fantasy that depict hero figures and heroic journeys. Readers are required to discern underlying lessons and also to analyze texts for traditional elements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informational books deal with controversial social concepts and political issues and include detailed historical accounts of periods that are less well known generally. They also provide a great deal of technical information; readers learn new ways of finding technical information and encounter complex examples of the basic organizational structures for informational texts. Fiction texts explore a wide range of mature themes relative to the human condition. High fantasy presents heroic quests, symbolism, and complex characters. Some texts provide graphic details of hardship and violence.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children (1996); Matching Book to Readers (1999); Guided Reader and Writers (2001); and Leveled Books for Readers (2002) by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas, Heinemann Books, Portsmouth, NH.