

Parents Guide to Guided Reading — Levels W,X,Y, and Z

What are Guided Reading Levels?

Guided Reading is a highly effective form of small-group instruction. Based on assessment, the teacher brings together a group of readers who are similar in their reading development. The teacher supports the reading in a way that enables students to read a more challenging text with effective processing. Guided Reading Levels reflect a continuum of levels from A–Z (grades K–8). Teachers continuously progress monitor students to see how they're moving along the reading continuum.

What are characteristics of Level W,X,Y, and Z Readers?

At levels W,X,Y, and Z readers have developed knowledge of content, including scientific information and historical events and apply prior understandings in a critical way when reading fiction and nonfiction texts.

What are characteristics of W,X,Y, and Z texts?

Although many texts are long and have complex sentences, they vary greatly because readers are expected to understand and respond to mature themes such as sexuality, abuse, poverty, and war. Complex fantasy, myths, and legends offer added challenge and require readers to identify classical motifs such as “the quest” and to identify moral issues. Biographies offer a range of individuals who may not be previously known to readers and may not be admirable, requiring critical thinking on the part of readers. In addition, readers will encounter abstract special forms of literature, such as satire and irony. Additional challenges may include parody, allegory, or monologue. Themes and characters are multi-dimensional, may be understood on many levels, and are developed in complex ways.

Young readers must spend time interacting with texts that are “Just Right” for them.



Level W

Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery
by Russell Freedman

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J. K. Rowling
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by J. K. Rowling
Hoot by Carl Hiaasen

The Lost Colony of Roanoke by Jean Fritz
Missing May by Cynthia Rylant
Mister Monday by Garth Nix
Nightjohn by Gary Paulsen

Level X

Golden Compass by Philip Pullman
Matilda Bone by Karen Cushman
The Midwife's Apprentice by Karen Cushman
Dolphin Song by Lauren St. John
Over Sea, under Stone by Susan Cooper

The Matchless Six by Ron Hutchkiss
Oceans by Johnna Rizzo
How to Train Your Dragon series by Cressida Cowell
Cool Stuff 2.0 and how it works by Chris Woodford
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Levels Y and Z

The Call of the Wild by Jack London
The Giver by Lois Lowry
Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket
Tracking Tyrannosaurs by Christopher Sloan
The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton
Ultimate Guide to Baseball by James Buckley
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee



- What connections can you make between social or moral issues of today and those presented in the text?
- Evaluate the author's character and plot development. (i.e. believability, depth)
- What new information has been added to what you already knew about the topic?
- After reading, has the new information changed your thinking about the topic?
- What descriptive language did the author use to add to the enjoyment of the text?
- What do you think is the most important part of the story? Why?



Parental Caution!

Books at the upper guided reading levels address sophisticated and often mature themes. Even though some accelerated readers are able to read these levels in the early grades, the content of these books may not be appropriate for very young children.

Always preview the books your child is reading and monitor the storyline. Our goal is not to race readers through the levels, but rather to allow advanced readers to dig more deeply into each level along the way so the books they are reading parallel their social-emotional development.

Strategies to Help Develop Reading Skills at Home

Encourage your child to:

Notice and interpret satire and irony and how it adds to the understanding of the text.

Recognize a full range of literary devices (for example, flashback, stories within stories, symbolism, and figurative language).

Use reader's tools such as indexes, and embedded definitions to understand content-specific and technical words.

Recognize unusual text organizations (flashback, flash forward, time lapses).

Select a variety of texts in different layouts and formats such as plays, memoirs, graphic novels, newspaper articles, manuals, etc.

*"Today a reader,
tomorrow a leader"*

- Margaret Fuller



*A book is the most effective
weapon against intolerance
and ignorance."*

- Lyndon Baines Johnson



Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Department of Instruction
Elementary Reading Office

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*"Parents are a child's first and
most important teacher."
- Ran and Ramey*

