Text Characteristics

Level J

- Narratives have short chapters that may or may not have titles
- One or two characters are generally featured
- Characters do not show a great deal of change or development
- Plots are relatively simple and texts are not long
- One main plot and several episodes that take place at different points in time
- Most stories cover the period of one day
- Most stories contain dialogue that is assigned to the speaker
- Print is in larger font with clear spaces between words and lines
- Some books offer a large amount of print with easy words and language while others are more challenging because they present new information or use literary language
- Full range of punctuation present
- Many longer and complex sentences
- Many adjectives and adverbs included to make sentences more complicated and therefore require more interpretation on the part of the reader
- Illustrations are on most pages
- Sentences usually return to the left margin to start
- Texts contain many frequently encountered words and technical and unfamiliar words
- Technical words are explained in the text and illustrations are used to help the reader
- Informational texts are short and focus on topics that are familiar
- Word solving requires automatic recognition of a large number of words and quick solving of new words (including words with three or four syllables)

Level K

- Simple but slightly longer chapter books with more text to read and more characters
- Chapters are short
- Illustrations include interesting artwork that enhance the enjoyment of the story
- Multiple episodes are related to a single plot that may cover a longer period of time (more to remember)
- One or two characters with little development
- Dialogue is sometimes unassigned and several characters can be talking on one page
- Reader is required to follow the dialogue to determine what is going on in the plot
- Some stories are based on concepts that are distant in space and time
- Readers will use text to expand their understanding of cultures beyond their experiences
- Layout is friendly
- Sentences usually start at the left margin
- Print is large, in a clear font with clear spaces between words and lines
- Greater variety in writing styles
- Words not usually used in speaking will be present
- Exploring connotations of words and analyzing language for humor
- Some technical language in informational text that is clearly explained in the text
- Informational text has supportive illustrations
- Informational topics tend to be concrete
- Informational texts are shorter but difficult because difference concepts are presented on each page or in each section

Level L

- May include longer picture books
- Chapter books are longer and more complex with more sophisticated plots
- Characters develop and change in response to the events in the story
- Readers have to follow actions and interactions of the characters
- Stories take place over longer periods of time
- Events build on each other
- Books require a higher level of conceptual understanding
- Some stories have abstract or symbolic themes
- Many conventions of text are introduced
- More multisyllable words that are new labels for familiar concepts are used
- Easy and harder frequently encountered words
- Some illustrations are included but readers are less dependent on them
- Layout is more difficult
- Sentences end in the middle of the lines and continue on the next line
- Font is generally smaller
- More print on a page
- New concepts are present in informational text that can be connected to background knowledge
- Vocabulary support may need to be provided
- Number of new concepts presented is limited
- Shorter informational text is difficult because a different concept is presented on each page or in each section
- Simple biographies are told in temporal sequence and tell stories of past times

Level M

- Variety of formats with many different conventions used to organize text and convey meanings
- Black and white illustrations are scattered throughout the text to extend meaning and enjoyment
- Longer chapter books may feature everyday adventures while shorter books are more literary or contain new information
- Chapters are longer
- Themes are more complex (respecting differences, loneliness, etc.)
- Narrower word spacing and a great deal of text
- Greatly expanded vocabulary including many multisyllable and technical words
- Vocabulary words are specific to context and may be introduced to create feeling or mood
- Writer's style may be clearly marked by use of words, sentence structure, description of characters, or humor
- Texts have subtle meaning that require interpretation and more background knowledge
- Many texts require an understanding of character development and more complex, expanded plots
- Dialogue is not always assigned
- Informational text topics are widely varied from known topics to new topics students are expected to study and learn
- Sections of informational text may provide different information but there is elaboration to help the reader
- Most technical terms are explained and illustrated
- Sections of informational text may provide different information but there is elaboration
- Text features such as indexes, glossaries, and timelines may be used
- Real biographies force readers to think about historical concepts

Level N

- Longer text that is organized in a variety of ways
- Topics go well beyond reader's personal experience
- Complex and sophisticated themes (immigration, death, slavery, etc.)
- Characters are well-developed and change in response to events in the story
- Characters are revealed through what they think and say and through what others say about them
- Books still have one main plot and an episodic structure
- Episodes take place over time
- Texts offer an opportunity for readers to feel empathy for characters
- Stories provide opportunities to experience suspense and mystery
- Writers use devices such as irony and whimsy to create interest and communicate the nature of characters
- Vocabulary is more challenging and requires the reader to attend to word meanings in new ways
- Many books require a cultural or historical context for interpretation
- Informational titles are generally shorter and may present social issues
- Informational text requires more content knowledge
- More technical words are used and they are usually explained in the text
- Biographies are longer and they focus on less well-known subjects
- Students are expected to learn about subjects through reading

Level O

- Longer chapter books present a range of problems
- Multiple characters revealed through what they say, think, or do or through what others say about them
- Characters encounter everyday experiences
- Some characters deal with serious problems (war, death)
- Wide variety of genres (realistic fiction, historical fiction, biographic, science fiction, traditional literature)
- Themes are sophisticated and require more interpretation and understanding
- Books help students learn about the lives of others
- Black and white illustrations or photographs are sparse
- Vocabulary is sophisticated and varied
- Many multisyllable words are used
- Most of the words in readers' decoding control
- Readers must form new meanings for known words
- Highly complex sentences that have a range of punctuation necessary for understanding
- Readers are required to analyze many new words while maintaining a focus on meaning

Level P

- Wide variety of fiction and informational text
- Longer chapters
- Characters have issues related to growing up, family, and the problems of preadolescence
- More complex ideas, language, sophisticated vocabulary, figurative language and word play
- Detailed descriptions of setting
- Texts contain longer descriptive narratives
- More interpretation required to understand themes at several levels
- Length becomes less important than structural complexity, theme sophistication and necessary background experience
- Readers must sustain interest and attention and retain information over several days
- Informational texts and biographies contain information that may be unfamiliar
- Technical language is used