

# Reading Text Levels: Description and Examples

Teaching reading to young children is a complex process. Young children develop reading skills and strategies at different rates and reach benchmarks at different times. This document provides examples and characteristics of texts at levels D, I, M, P, and S. Text levels are used to plan and deliver reading instruction.

## Elementary Reading Text Level Description

Leveled texts are an arrangement of books, both literary and informational, from easiest to hardest defined by a set of characteristics. Literary texts are stories, poems, and plays. Informational texts convey or explain. Assigning levels to texts assists teachers in selecting books that match readers' skills to the supports and challenges in the text.

Text characteristics determine whether a text is easy or hard for a student to read. There is a degree of variation within each level. The challenge of one book might be figurative language, while the challenge of another book at the same level might be sentence length, vocabulary, or advanced concepts.

In PISD, one leveling system is used:

- Guided Reading (Fountas and Pinnell) Text Levels AA–Z

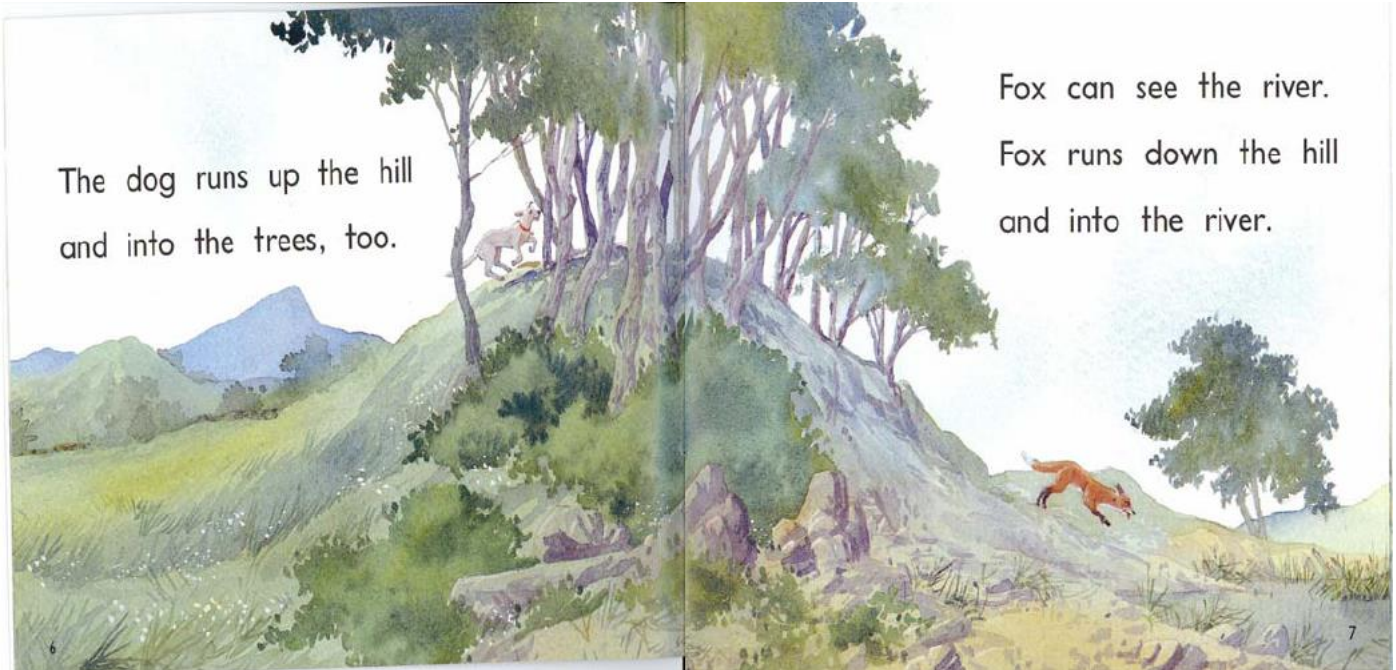
Text levels indicate a progression from easiest to most challenging and are not limited to a specific grade level. However, to provide guidance to teachers, a Reading Targets Text Level Chart has been developed.

## Reading Level Benchmarks

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> 9 Weeks</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> 9 Weeks</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> 9 Weeks</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> 9 Weeks</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	A	B	C	D
<b>First Grade</b>	E	F-G	G-H	I-J
<b>Second Grade</b>	J	K	L	M
<b>Third Grade</b>	M	N	O	P-Q
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	P-Q	Q	R	S-T

# End of Year Benchmark Kinder Text Level D- Literary Text

Sample text from *Clever Fox*.



The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a variety of sentences with up to eight to ten words.</li> <li>• many familiar words that students need to read quickly.</li> <li>• words with basic phonetic patterns: consonants, digraphs, and short vowel sounds.</li> <li>• words with inflectional endings (-s, -ed, -ing).</li> <li>• some compound words.</li> <li>• Some irregular past tense verbs (ran, came).</li> <li>• Pictures that support a storyline with real problems and solutions in narrative text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and write 40 or more high frequency words (e.g., is, up, little)</li> <li>• check accuracy of familiar words as he/she reads and makes corrections as needed</li> <li>• read without pointing to words</li> <li>• use illustrations and/or photographs to support understanding</li> <li>• use basic phonetic skills, such as beginning and ending consonant sounds, digraphs (e.g.-sh, ch, th), and short vowel sounds to read unfamiliar words</li> <li>• think about, while reading: "Does the word make sense? Does the word sound right? and Does the word look right?"</li> <li>• reread to self-correct errors</li> <li>• use punctuation to read sentences smoothly and accurately</li> <li>• ask and answer questions about key details in text</li> <li>• retell familiar stories including key details</li> <li>• read with appropriate accuracy, rate, and expression</li> </ul>

# End of Year Benchmark Kinder Text Level D- Informational Text

Sample text from *How Machines Help*.

A screwdriver will help you  
turn the screw.



A screwdriver is a machine.

12

Can you cut paper with  
your fingers?



13

## The Book Has...

- information that is familiar to students
- a variety of sentences with up to eight to ten words
- many familiar words that students need to read quickly
- words with basic phonetic patterns, such as beginning and ending consonant sounds, digraphs (e.g.-sh, ch, th), and short vowel sounds (e.g.-the a in the word cat)
- words with inflectional endings (-s, -ed, -ing)
- some compound words
- some irregular past tense verbs (ran, came).
- pictures or photographs of facts presented in the text
- additional text features, such as labels, bold print, headings, or table of contents

## The Student Is Learning to...

- read and write 40 or more high frequency words
- check accuracy of familiar words as he/she reads and makes corrections as needed
- read without pointing to words
- use illustrations and/or photographs to support understanding
- use basic phonetic skills, beginning and ending consonant sounds, digraphs (e.g.-sh, ch, th), and short vowel sounds to read unfamiliar words
- think about, while reading: "Does the word make sense? Does the word sound right? and Does the word look right?"
- reread to self-correct errors
- use punctuation to read sentences smoothly and accurately
- ask and answer questions about key details in text
  - retell facts that were learned, including key details
  - read with appropriate accuracy, rate, and expression

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 1

## Text Level I- Literary Text

Sample text from *The Tale of the Turnip*.

One day,  
the old man said,  
“Let us have some turnip soup.”

And he went out into the garden  
to pull up the enormous turnip.

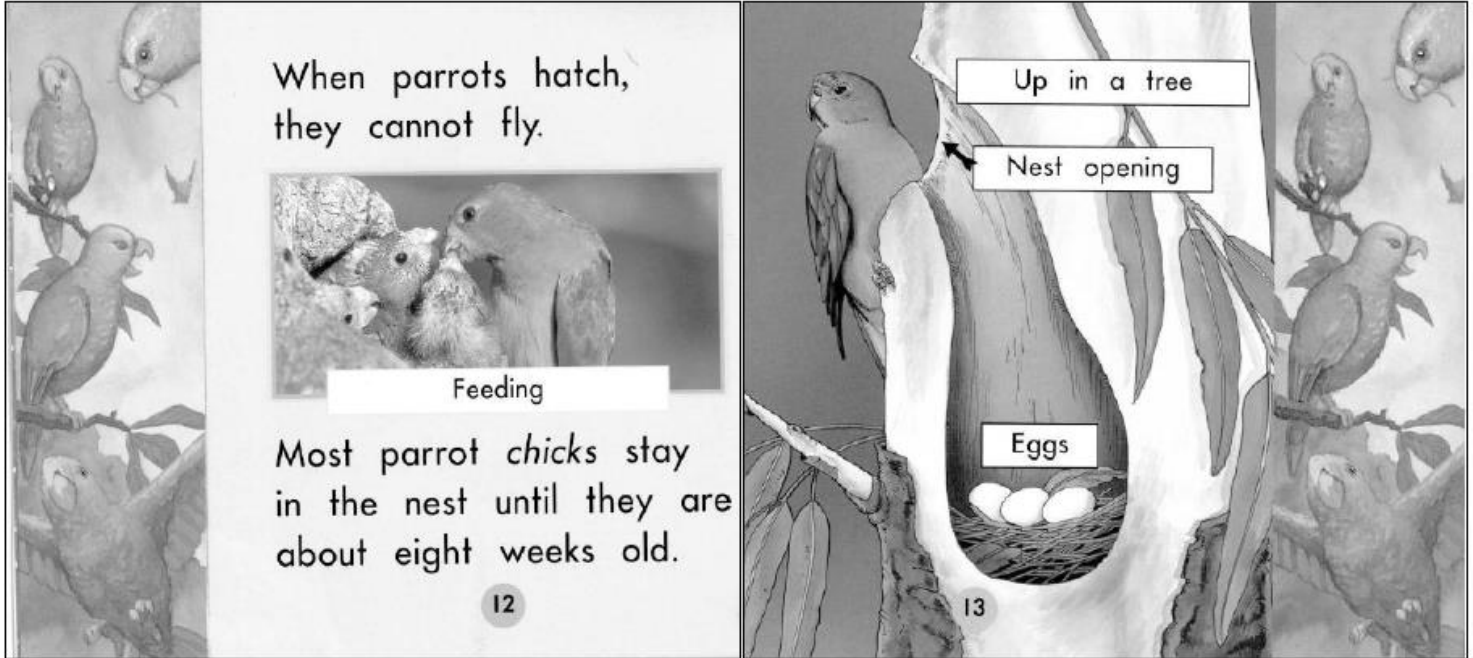
He pulled  
and he pulled  
but the enormous turnip  
would not come up  
out of the ground.



The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• longer simple sentences and longer compound sentences that may include clauses and prepositional phrases.</li> <li>• a wide range of familiar words.</li> <li>• many multisyllable words, generally easy to take apart to decode.</li> <li>• many words with endings (-s, -ed, -ing), plurals, contractions, compound words, and possessives.</li> <li>• more detailed episodes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read texts independently</li> <li>• make the transition from reading aloud to silent reading</li> <li>• read a variety of materials and genres</li> <li>• ask questions about key details to clarify meaning</li> <li>• check accuracy of words as he/she reads and makes corrections as needed</li> <li>• flexibly uses a variety of strategies to independently read unknown words</li> <li>• discuss what is stated directly and what is implied in text</li> <li>• rely less on illustrations for meaning</li> <li>• read with appropriate accuracy, rate, and expression</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level I:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Angus and the Cat</i>, Marjorie Flack</li> <li>• <i>Are You My Mother?</i>, P.D. Eastman</li> <li>• <i>A Color of His Own</i>, Leo Lionni</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Henny Penny</i>, Paul Goldone</li> <li>• <i>Leo the Late Bloomer</i>, Robert Kraus</li> </ul>

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 1 Text Level I- Informational Text

Sample text from *Look Inside by: Avelyn Davidson.*



The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• longer simple sentences and longer compound sentences that may include clauses and prepositional phrases.</li> <li>• a wide range of high frequency words.</li> <li>• many multisyllable words, generally easy to take apart to decode.</li> <li>• many words with endings (-s, -ed, -ing), plurals, contractions, compound words, and possessives.</li> <li>• abstract ideas and unfamiliar concepts within informational text.</li> <li>• a variety of additional features, such as labels, bold print, headings, glossary, insets, table of contents, index,</li> <li>• challenging concepts and vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read texts independently</li> <li>• make the transition from reading aloud to silent reading</li> <li>• read a variety of materials and genres</li> <li>• ask questions about key details to clarify meaning</li> <li>• check accuracy of words as he/she reads and makes corrections as needed</li> <li>• flexibly uses a variety of strategies to independently read unknown words</li> <li>• discuss what is stated directly and what is implied in text</li> <li>• notice and interpret the graphic features of informational text (e.g., tables of contents, photographs, index, etc.)</li> <li>• understand how informational texts are organized (e.g., by chapters, subjects, etc.)</li> <li>• read with appropriate accuracy, rate, and expression</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level I:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ambulances, Marcia Freeman</i></li> <li>• <i>Red-EyedTree Frog, Joy Cowley</i></li> <li>• <i>What is Matter?, Don L. Curry</i></li> </ul>	

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 2

## Text Level M- Literary Text

Sample text from *The One in the Middle is the Green Kangaroo*.



Finally, the day of the play came. The whole family would be there. Some of their neighbors were coming too.

Mom hugged Freddy extra hard as he left for school. "We'll be there watching you, Green Kangaroo," she said.

After lunch Ms. Gumber called to Freddy. "Time to go now. Time to get into your costume." Ms. Gumber walked to the hall with Freddy.

26

Then she whispered, "We'll be in the second row. Break a leg."

"Break a leg?" Freddy said.

Ms. Gumber laughed. "That means good luck when you're in a play."

"Oh," Freddy said. "I thought you meant I should fall off the stage and *really* break a leg."

Ms. Gumber laughed again. She ruffled Freddy's hair.

Freddy went to Ms. Matson's room. The girls in the sixth grade had made his costume. They all giggled when Ms. Matson helped Freddy into it. His Green Kangaroo suit covered all of him. It even had green feet. Only his face stuck out. Ms. Matson put some green dots on it. "We'll wash them off later. Okay?"

27

The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sentences of varying length, with some that are long and complex</li> <li>• pages full of print with no illustrations or very small illustrations</li> <li>• small print</li> <li>• chapters with multiple events</li> <li>• characters, setting, and plot that are important to the understanding of the story</li> <li>• challenging vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read texts independently and silently while reading for meaning</li> <li>• read a variety of materials and genres</li> <li>• use a variety of reading strategies flexibly and successfully</li> <li>• think about what he/she already knows about the topic or subject, preview the text before reading, and make predictions</li> <li>• ask and answer questions while reading to check for understanding</li> <li>• demonstrate literal, inferential, and critical comprehension through discussion</li> <li>• determine and clarify the meaning of unknown words</li> <li>• demonstrate understanding of word relationships (e.g., multiple meanings of the same word)</li> <li>• determine central message, moral, or lesson</li> <li>• discuss themes, settings, and plots</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level M:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Picture Book of Thurgood Marshall</i>,</li> <li>• <i>David Adler</i></li> <li>• <i>Sharks</i>, Gail Gibbons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Chair for My Mother</i>, Vera Williams</li> <li>• <i>Junie B. Jones</i>, Barbara Park</li> <li>• <i>Blueberries for Sal</i>, Robert McCloskey</li> </ul>

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 2 Text Level M- Informational Text

## Sample text from *Seasons and Weather*.

### Introduction

As the year passes, the seasons change. In most places, there are four seasons: summer, autumn, winter, and spring.

During summer, we can play outside in the hot weather.



In autumn, the weather is cooler. The leaves on many trees change color and fall to the ground.

4

In some places, it snows in winter. The weather is very cold.



In spring, the weather gets warmer again. Plants grow now flowers and leaves.



There are changes all around us during the year.


5

The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sentences of varying length, with some that are long and complex</li> <li>• small print</li> <li>• familiar or unfamiliar content and may be organized by chapters or sections</li> <li>• a combination of graphics providing information that matches and extends the text, such as captions or photographs that provide important information to supplement the body of the text</li> <li>• challenging vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read texts independently and silently while reading for meaning</li> <li>• use a variety of reading strategies flexibly and successfully</li> <li>• think about what he/she already knows about the topic or subject, preview the text before reading, and make predictions</li> <li>• ask and answer questions while reading to check for understanding</li> <li>• demonstrate literal, inferential, and critical comprehension through discussion</li> <li>• determine and clarify the meaning of unknown words</li> <li>• demonstrate understanding of word relationships</li> <li>• use information gained from text features study structure of a text and determine how the different pieces fit together</li> <li>• identify the main idea of a text or section of text</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level M:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Picture Book of Thurgood Marshall</i>, David Adler</li> <li>• <i>Sharks</i>, Gail Gibbons</li> </ul>	

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 3

## Text Level P- Literary Text

Sample text from *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by: Roald Dahl

<p style="font-size: small;">DAHL, ROALD</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin: 20px 0;">2</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Mr. Fox</h2> <hr style="width: 10%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p>ON A HILL above the valley there was a wood.          In the wood there was a huge tree.          Under the tree there was a hole.          In the hole lived Mr. Fox and Mrs. Fox and their four Small Foxes.          Every evening as soon as it got dark, Mr. Fox would say to Mrs. Fox, "Well, my darling, what shall it be this time? A plump chicken from Boggis? A duck or a goose from Bunce? Or a nice turkey from Bean?" And when Mrs. Fox had told him what she wanted, Mr. Fox</p>	<p style="font-size: small;">FANTASTIC MR. FOX</p> <p>would creep down into the valley in the darkness of the night and help himself.</p>  <p>Boggis and Bunce and Bean knew very well what was going on, and it made them wild with rage. They were not men who liked to give anything away. Less still did they like anything to be stolen from them. So every night each of them would take his shotgun</p>
---	--

<b>The Book Has...</b>	<b>The Student Is Learning to...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chapters with small print and multiple detailed events</li> <li>• little to no illustrations</li> <li>• complex themes</li> <li>• complex plot and sub plots</li> <li>• challenging vocabulary</li> <li>• cultural or historical contexts (e.g., settings, situations, perspectives)</li> <li>• sophisticated language and humor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read silently</li> <li>• use reading strategies flexibly and smoothly to understand text</li> <li>• sustain reading longer texts in multiple genres, which require several days or weeks to read</li> <li>• analyze words in order to read new multisyllable words</li> <li>• build background knowledge and use prior knowledge to understand stories</li> <li>• identify with characters in books and see themselves in the events of the stories</li> <li>• connect ideas in multiple texts</li> <li>• examine the craft and structure of a text</li> <li>• ask and answer questions while reading to check for understanding</li> <li>• demonstrate literal, inferential, and critical comprehension through discussion</li> <li>• demonstrate understanding of word relationships (e.g., multiple meanings of the same word)</li> <li>• determine central message, moral, or lesson</li> <li>• discuss themes, settings, and plots</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level P:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bunnicula</i>, James Howe</li> <li>• <i>Koya Delaney and the Good Girl Blues</i>, Eloise Greenfield</li> <li>• <i>Who Stole the Wizard of Oz</i>, Avi</li> </ul>	



# End of Year Benchmark Grade 3 Text Level P- Informational Text

Sample text from *If you Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King* by: Ellen Levine

## *What else was segregated?*

When Martin Luther King was growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, and into the 1950s, almost all public places in the South were segregated by law. If you walked out of your house or apartment, any place you could think of was probably segregated.

Everywhere you would see signs: WHITES ONLY, or COLORED ONLY, or NO NEGROES.

At the movies, black people had to sit in the back and usually upstairs. Sometimes they had to go to separate black theaters.

White people could get on a bus, put their money in the box, and take a seat. Blacks in many cities climbed aboard buses and put their money in. Then they had to leave the bus and get on again through the back door.

When you went to the doctor or dentist, whites waited in one room; blacks had to wait in a separate,

smaller room. Blacks and whites sat at separate lunch counters and went to separate restrooms. They even had to drink at separate water fountains.

There were white restaurants and black restaurants, white hotels and black hotels, white elevators and black elevators, and separate public beaches.



The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chapters with small print and multiple detailed events</li> <li>• academic vocabulary</li> <li>• new and complex ideas, concepts, or topics</li> <li>• cultural or historical contexts (e.g., settings, situations, perspectives)</li> <li>• complex text structures</li> <li>• sophisticated language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read silently</li> <li>• use reading strategies flexibly and smoothly to understand text</li> <li>• sustain reading longer texts with many pages which require several days or weeks to read</li> <li>• analyze words in order to read new multisyllable words</li> <li>• interpret and use information from a wide variety of visual aids</li> <li>• build background knowledge and use prior knowledge to understand new ideas, concepts, or topics</li> <li>• connect concepts and ideas in multiple texts read</li> <li>• examine the craft and structure of a text</li> <li>• ask and answer questions while reading to self-monitor for meaning</li> <li>• demonstrate literal, inferential, and critical comprehension through discussion</li> <li>• determine main idea</li> <li>• summarize key details</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level P:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Star Messenger: Galileo Galilei, Peter Sis</i></li> <li>• <i>The Magic School Bus: At the Waterworks, Joanne Cole and Bruce Degen</i></li> </ul>	

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 4 Text Level S/T- Literary Text

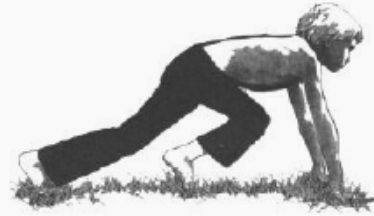
Sample text from *Bridge to Terabithia* by: Katherine Paterson (S)

PATERSON, KATHERINE

BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

every which way. He had never learned to run properly, but he was long-legged for a ten-year-old, and no one had more grit than he.

Lark Creek Elementary was short on everything, especially athletic equipment, so all the balls went to the upper grades at recess time after lunch. Even if a fifth grader started out the period with a ball, it was sure to be in the hands of a sixth or seventh grader before the hour was half over. The older boys always took the dry center of the upper field for their ball games, while the girls claimed the small top section for hopscotch and jump rope and hanging around talking. So the lower-grade boys had started this running thing. They would all line up on the far side of the lower field, where it was either muddy or deep crusty ruts. Earle Watson who was no good at running, but had a big mouth, would yell "Bang!" and they'd race to a line they'd toed across at the other end.



One time last year Jesse had won. Not just the first heat but the whole shebang. Only once. But it had put into his mouth a taste for winning. Ever since he'd been in first grade he'd been that "crazy little kid that draws all the time." But one day—April the twenty-second, a drizzly Monday, it had been—he ran ahead of them all, the red mud slooching up through the holes in the bottom of his sneakers.

For the rest of that day, and until after lunch on the next, he had been "the fastest kid in the third, fourth, and fifth grades," and he only a fourth grader. On Tuesday, Wayne Pettis had

The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small print and reduced word spacing</li> <li>• minimal illustrations</li> <li>• complex ideas, figurative language, long descriptive narratives, sophisticated themes, and abstract/complex topics</li> <li>• cultural or historical contexts (e.g., settings, situations, perspectives)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read silently</li> <li>• sustain reading in multiple genres, which require several days or weeks to read with understanding</li> <li>• use understandings of how words work to read a wide range of unknown words (e.g.- using analogy to known word parts, word roots, base words, and affixes)</li> <li>• acquire new vocabulary through reading</li> <li>• use reading as a tool to build knowledge across all content areas (e.g., science, social studies, health)</li> <li>• connect ideas in several texts for greater understanding and finer interpretations</li> <li>• form interpretations and apply understandings in other areas</li> <li>• notice and comment on aspects of the writer's craft</li> <li>• determine theme(s)</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level S/T:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Cricket in Times Square, George Selden (S)</i></li> <li>• <i>Harriet the Spy, Louise Fitzhugh (T)</i></li> </ul>	

# End of Year Benchmark Grade 4

## Text Level S/T- Informational Text

Sample text from *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* by: Jean Fritz (T)



After the Revolutionary War most people in America were glad that they were no longer British. Still, they were not ready to call themselves Americans. The last thing they wanted was to become a nation. They were citizens of their own separate states, just as they had always been: each state different, each state proud of its own character, each state quick to poke fun at other states. To Southerners, New Englanders might be "no-account Yankees." To New Englanders, Pennsylvanians might be "lousy Buckskins." But to everyone the states themselves were all important. "Sovereign states," they called them. They loved the sound of "sovereign" because it meant that they were their own bosses.

George Washington, however, scoffed at the idea of "sovereign states." He knew that the states could not be truly independent for long and survive. Ever since the Declaration of Independence had been signed, people had referred to the country as the United States of America. It was about time, he thought, for them to act and feel united.

Once during the war Washington had decided it would be a good idea if his troops swore allegiance to the United States. As a start, he lined up some troops from New Jersey and asked them to take such an oath. They looked at Washington as if he'd taken leave of his senses. How could they do that? they cried. New Jersey was their country!



So Washington dropped the idea. In time, he hoped, the states would see that they needed to become one nation, united under a strong central government.

But that time would be long in coming. For now, as they started out on their independence, the thirteen states were satisfied to be what they called a federation, a kind of voluntary league of states. In other words, each state legislature sent delegates to a Continental Congress which was supposed to act on matters of common concern.

The Book Has...	The Student Is Learning to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small print and reduced word spacing</li> <li>• a variety of complex text structures, such as problem-solution, chronological order, cause-effect</li> <li>• sophisticated content vocabulary</li> <li>• abstract and complex topics or content with historical, scientific, or technical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read silently</li> <li>• sustain reading longer texts which require several days or weeks to read with understanding</li> <li>• use understandings of how words work to read a wide range of unknown words (e.g.- using analogy to known word parts, word roots, base words, and affixes)</li> <li>• acquire new vocabulary through reading</li> <li>• use reading as a tool to build knowledge across all content areas (e.g., science, social studies, health)</li> <li>• connect ideas in several texts for greater understanding and finer interpretations</li> <li>• go beyond the text read to form interpretations and apply understandings in other areas</li> <li>• determine main idea(s)</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar books—Level S/T:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To Fly: The Story of the Wright Brothers, Wendie C. Old (S)</i></li> <li>• <i>For the Love of Chimps: The Jane Goodall Story, Martha Kendall (S)</i></li> </ul>	