

FROM CONCEPTION TO THE PRESS:  
CONSIDERATIONS FOR PUBLISHING AN EMERGENT READER SERIES

by

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A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This report is meant as a guideline for publishers interested in creating a series of emergent reader books. It addresses some of the various concerns a publisher will face in the process of producing a line of early reader texts, including concerns related to the determining of book levels, editing, and design and production. It provides detailed descriptions of the various readability and levelling techniques available to publishers, and critiques of each system. It also provides a comprehensive look at many of the editorial matters a publisher needs to consider when planning an emergent reader series, including information on decodability, predictability, and accessibility. Finally, it offers a summary of design and production conventions, with detailed discussions on print specifications and cover and interior design.

**Keywords:** emergent reader; early reader; levelled reader; publishing; levelling; readability

**Subject Terms:** Children's literature -- Publishing -- Canada; Children's literature -- Publishing; Book leveling; Reading (Elementary); Children -- Books and reading

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



### **The Purpose of this Report**

Emergent reader books are a curious phenomenon within the publishing industry. While they are educational in nature and purpose, they are often produced by trade publishers and sold to parents, teachers, and librarians through traditional trade channels such as bookstores, book fairs, and toy stores. Although there are a few emergent reader book publishers, such as Scholastic USA and Kids Can Press, that publish both trade and educational titles, the majority of emergent reader publishers remain strictly in the trade sector. In theory, the fact that educationally focused books such as emergent reader series are produced by trade publishers could be seen as a benefit, as trade publishers might bring a different aesthetic to them than educational publishers, one presumably focused more on literary value than educational value.

But trade publishers' lack of knowledge and experience in the educational field could also be problematic, as it could lead to oversights in the educational quality of the books being produced. Since series for emergent readers are meant as aids in teaching children how to read, the books within these series should support the process of learning to read as much as possible in order to provide beginning readers with a solid foundation for learning. This means that publishers should take educational research into account when producing books for emergent readers. But for trade publishers without much experience in the educational sector, this is easier said than done. There is a vast amount of research on emergent readers, and it would take a considerable amount of time and study to gain

the knowledge necessary to create materials that would fully support children in the process of learning to read.

However, while there are many scholarly studies that focus on teaching children to read using emergent reader books, there are considerably fewer studies that deal with the emergent reader books themselves. This makes the process of publishing books for emergent readers even more challenging, as it is difficult to apply the framework of these teaching theories onto the process of creating books. Publishing books for emergent readers is a daunting task for trade publishers, not only because of the in-depth knowledge of educational theories that is needed in order to create books that are effective literacy tools, but also because of the complex understanding of intricate readability and levelling techniques and design and production standards that is necessary to be successful.

This report is meant to help remedy the problems described above. While it is by no means a comprehensive study of all of the educational research available on the topic of emergent reading, this report is meant as a guide for publishers, both trade and educational, who plan on launching a series of emergent reader books. It cites a broad range of research on emergent readers and books aimed at emergent readers, and deals with topics that are critical to attend to when producing an emergent reader series, from readability scoring techniques to the proper use of illustrations. It addresses most of the concerns publishers would face during the process of creating such a series, from editorial concerns to readability and levelling concerns to design and production concerns, and provides publishers with a detailed compilation of the technical information necessary to

obtain and understand in order to make informed decisions about the publishing process for emergent reader books.

This report does not act as a “how-to” guide with step-by-step instructions for publishing a series of emergent reader chapter books (such a guide would not only be severely limiting, but also entirely impractical). However, it does attend to many of the questions that will inevitably arise during the process of publishing an emergent reader series, from “What literacy strategies need to be taken into account when editing an emergent reader book?” to “How does the levelling process work?” to “What does an emergent reader series generally look like?” The report begins with an explanation of the plans that Raincoast Books had for publishing an emergent reader series, as well as a brief description of what emergent readers are and what an emergent reader series is, giving detailed definitions of what these terms mean in the context of this report. Then, in chapters two through four, it acts as a guide, and provides publishers with a generalized look at the technical information they require to understand the concerns regarding editing, levelling, and designing an emergent reader series, and to make decisions based on this information. Finally, in the conclusion, it uses the information provided in the previous chapters to present recommendations specific to Raincoast’s particular project.

The recommendations that I have made in the conclusion section of this report are based on my personal knowledge of the Raincoast publishing program, which was gleaned from a four-month internship in the publishing and marketing/publicity departments of Raincoast Books. The topic of the report was suggested by my supervisors at Raincoast,

who felt that my background in children's educational publishing and my experience working as an English teacher would give me a good foundation for conducting the research that was necessary.<sup>1</sup> It was also a fitting subject for me based on the work I did during my internship at Raincoast, which was largely within the children's publishing sector. During my time at Raincoast, I worked closely with the children's editor, Tonya Martin, and was able to gain a detailed understanding of the emergent reader series that she envisioned publishing. The suggestions that I have made regarding the editing, levelling, design, and production of the Raincoast emergent reader series are founded upon both the research conducted for this report and my understanding of Martin's editorial vision for the series, which is underlined in the following section.

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to my entrance into the Master of Publishing program, I worked as an editor at Rubicon Publishing, a medium-sized educational publisher in Oakville, Ontario, specializing in high-interest textbooks for reluctant readers. I have also been employed as an English teacher at Toronto International College, a private high school in Toronto, Ontario.

### **Puddle Jumpers: Raincoast's Foray into Emergent Reader Books**

At the beginning of 2007, the children's division of Raincoast Books underwent a significant change in direction. Under the supervision of Tonya Martin, the recently hired children's editor, Raincoast made plans to launch a number of new series. Among these new series was a line of emergent reader books called *Puddle Jumpers*. Martin decided to publish the series because, based on the increase in board-book sales over the past two years, she predicted that the market for emergent reader books would be expanding to meet the needs of children as they graduated from baby books and began the process of learning how to read (Martin). Coming from her previous role as an executive editor at Scholastic U.S., Martin was familiar with the process of publishing books for emergent readers, and was thus well-equipped to spearhead Raincoast's venture into an otherwise murky territory.

The Puddle Jumpers series was to be a collection of levelled books aimed at children in the preliminary stages of independent reading. The first two books in the series were to be released in Spring 2009, and Martin planned to add more titles to the line at the rate of one book per season. The series was to include an even number of fiction and non-fiction titles divided into three levels of difficulty (Martin).

The series would be targeted at the English-language North American market, and would include titles by both Canadian and American authors. Martin hoped that the final products would be "amazing-looking and fun" and would be a "bookstore go-to for

parents, teachers, and librarians,” positioning Raincoast as a recognizable entity in the emergent reader market and generating healthy sales figures (Martin).

Unfortunately, Martin never had the opportunity to take the Puddle Jumpers series further than the initial planning stage. In January 2008, the owners and managers of Raincoast Books announced that they had decided to dismantle the company’s publishing program in order to, as their press release stated, “get back to basics” and focus on the distribution sector of the company (MacDonald). The decision had nothing to do with the Puddle Jumpers series; Jamie Broadhurst, the marketing director at Raincoast, attributed it to the rapidly rising Canadian dollar, increasing pressures to reduce book prices, and the inability of the publishing program to remain profitable (MacDonald). There was also industry speculation that the decision was due in part to the conclusion of the immensely profitable Harry Potter series, of which Raincoast had been the Canadian publisher. Spring 2008 was Raincoast’s last publishing season, and all of the books slated to be published in future seasons, including those in the Puddle Jumpers series, were cancelled.

Shortly after Raincoast’s announcement, Martin accepted a position as the editorial director of House of Parlance Media in Vancouver. While she does plan to re-acquire some of the titles she had been working on at Raincoast, there are no definite plans to continue with the Puddle Jumpers series at present.

### What is an Emergent Reader?

The term *emergent reader*, although seemingly self-explanatory, is difficult to define. An international study conducted by Stergios Botzakis and Jacquelynn A. Malloy in 2006 polled literacy experts from fourteen countries around the world, posing the question, “How is *emergent reader* defined in your region?” Botzakis and Malloy received a different answer from nearly every country that responded (394). In Canada, the respondents stated that the term *emergent reader* “is generally used in reference to children from birth to age nine or to students from kindergarten to first grade who are developing reading skills and strategies such as tracking print, making sound-to-letter correspondences, and using picture information” (Botzakis and Malloy 400).

The discrepancies between the age ranges for an emergent reader within the definitions given by the Canadian literacy authorities are a good indicator of just how much opinions vary on the subject of emergent readers. While some experts define *emergent reader* as “children from birth to age nine,” a broad age range that includes children of many different reading ability levels, others pinpoint a very specific developmental period in a child’s life, “from kindergarten to first grade,” a time after most students have learned the fundamentals of reading, such as recognizing letters and understanding the way text is laid out on a page, but before they are able to read fluently.

The problem of defining the term *emergent reader* has become further complicated in recent years as the average age of the commencement of reading instruction has varied in different schools and homes according to beliefs about the appropriateness of beginning

literacy development at the preschool level. Various educators and literacy experts have been at odds over the supposed benefits of commencing reading instruction earlier in a child's life. In 2005, the International Reading Association addressed this problem, issuing a position statement on preschool literacy development that outlined the benefits of early age literacy instruction and supported the move toward helping children develop literacy strategies in the preschool years (International Reading Association). Meanwhile, other literacy experts are fighting this movement, arguing that attempting to teach children literacy strategies too early in their lives can have a negative effect on their development if they are unable to master these strategies at such a young age (Curtis). Lilian Katz, a professor of education at the University of Illinois and former president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, agrees with the latter party, arguing, "Teaching younger children can look okay in the short term but in the long term children who are taught early are not better off. For a lot of children five will be too early" (Curtis). Katz contends that many children, particularly boys, shouldn't begin formal reading training until the age of seven (Curtis). Largely due to the opposing views on early age reading instruction described above, there has been much inconsistency in the age when literacy skills commence being taught throughout the English-speaking world, which makes it even more difficult to pinpoint any specific age or ability level of an "emergent reader."

The cause for the discrepancies in the definitions of the term *emergent reader* can also be attributed to a lack of consistency within the educational and publishing fields when it



comes to labelling young readers and the books they use. While some educational experts and series publishers break the stages of learning how to read down into very specific categories, using terms like *beginning reader*, *early reader*, *transitional reader*, or *advanced reader* to describe the various levels of proficiency (Fountas and Pinnell 6), others use *emergent reader* as a comprehensive term that refers to children in all stages of learning process (Botzakis and Malloy 400). These discrepancies further complicate the process of exacting a specific definition of the term *emergent reader*.

For the purposes of this report, the term *emergent reader* will be used in the broad sense, and will refer to a child in any of the stages of learning how to read, from emergent literacy (recognizing letters; “reading” using cues from the illustrations; “reading” by memorizing) to fluent literacy (reading for meaning; minimal sounding out of words; solving problems encountered in the text) (Johnson). Throughout this report, the term *emergent reader* will be used interchangeably with the terms *beginning reader*, *young reader*, and *early reader*. While it is important to note that every child progresses differently, and thus no estimation of age or ability can be entirely accurate, the average grade range of an emergent reader in the terms of this report is between kindergarten and grade three, and the average age is between four and nine years. This range was selected because it represents the time period when children generally progress from the early stages of learning to read to become fluent readers, and also because this is the age range that most emergent reader series are targeted toward.

### What is an Emergent Reader Book?

An emergent reader book, also known as an *early reader*, *easy reader*, or *levelled reader*, is a text used to aid children in the process of learning how to read. Emergent reader books are aimed at children who are starting to read on their own, and are meant to help them transition from picture books to novels and longer non-fiction titles (Bean), although there is quite a bit of overlap between these various book forms when it comes to the reading habits of children of this age range. Emergent reader books are usually between forty-eight and sixty-four pages in length, and resemble a children's chapter book<sup>2</sup> in most ways, except that they usually have less text per page and often include simple illustrations on each page (Broerman). Characteristics of emergent reader books include the use of simple language that is easy to sound out; rhyme and repetition; sentences without multiple clauses; short line lengths; and high-interest topics and themes (Broerman).

Emergent reader books are most often sold as part of a series. Each series generally has three to five levels that become progressively difficult as they increase. As Joan Broerman, author of the 1998 article "Easy Reader and Early Reader Series: Targeting the Emergent Reader," explains, the early levels in the series contain books that are meant for readers who are just starting to read on their own. These books tend to be shorter than chapter books, with very few lines per page and more illustrations (Broerman). The higher levels in the series are meant for more experienced readers who are almost at the fluent

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<sup>2</sup> Childrens' chapter books are similar to novels, except that they tend to be shorter in length and have more chapter breaks. They sometimes incorporate a minimal number of line drawings, as well.

stage. These books are longer, with more advanced language and sentence structure, and fewer illustrations (Broerman).

The levels for emergent reader books are usually determined using established readability and levelling systems, which measure factors such as word and sentence length, decodability, text size and layout, language structure and predictability, vocabulary, and use of illustrations to determine their difficulty (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 5). There are many systems used to determine readability and level, and no single system is used universally by publishers and schools. Instead, publishers tend to use a variety of different systems to determine the level of each of their books, which helps them appeal to as wide an audience as possible. However, because each publisher uses different criteria to level its books, the levels chosen do not tend to be entirely consistent between different series. For example, a book that is marked level two in one series may be marked as level one or three in another series, depending on the criteria used to level the book. (For a detailed discussion of readability and levelling and the various systems used to determine book levels, see Chapter Three.)

CHAPTER TWO: EDITORIAL CONCERNS

### **Editorial Concerns**

Acquiring and editing titles for an early reader series can be a difficult undertaking, as editors need to take factors such as writing quality, marketability, and the balance of the list into account while also focusing on the educational aspects of a title and the literacy supports that it provides. The first step to establishing an emergent reader series is drafting an editorial plan and making decisions regarding the types of books that will be included in the series. Editors should make decisions regarding the genre of the books that they hope to publish, the age range and gender(s) the series will be targeted toward, the number of difficulty levels that will be included in the series, the target market for the books, the literacy supports that will be focused on (if any), how the series will fit in with the rest of the publishing house's list, and anything else that will contribute to their overall vision for the series. Having a clear vision in mind is imperative when choosing which titles to acquire; without a concrete plan for publishing series of this type, it is difficult to maintain any sense of balance or cohesiveness throughout the series.

It is also important for acquisitions editors to have an understanding of the emergent reader market and what competing publishers are producing in this field when planning to embark on a venture of this type. Publishers of emergent reader books range from large multinational corporations to smaller independent houses, and the type of books they publish vary greatly depending on their individual editorial visions, budgets, and locations. There are countless series of levelled readers currently in print throughout Canada and the United States, but some of the more prominent series include Random

House's "Step into Reading" series, HarperCollins's "I Can Read" series, Dorling Kindersley's "DK Readers" series, Puffin's "Easy-to-Read" series, and Scholastic USA's "Scholastic Readers" series. Emergent reader series published in Canada include Kids Can Press's "Kids Can Read" series, HarperCollins*Canada*'s "I Can Read" and "Festival Readers" series, and Orca Book Publishers' "Orca Echoes" series. (See Chapter Five for more detailed information about the specific types of books being published by these companies.)

While developing an editorial vision and acquiring appropriate texts both require a high degree of insight into emergent reader books and the emergent reader publishing industry, the actual editing of the titles is arguably the most challenging part of the publishing process for emergent reader books, as it requires an in-depth knowledge of a variety of complex literacy strategies. Texts for emergent readers are educational in nature, and their primary function is to act as a support for children learning how to read; unlike most children's trade books, literary value, though still important, is a secondary concern. In order for emergent reader books to be as effective as possible, editors must ensure that they support current educational theories and practices. This means that editors must understand the best ways to manage text features such as content, layout, and language in regards to the way emergent readers learn.

In the 1999 article "Text Matters in Learning to Read," Elfrieda H. Hiebert, a highly respected expert in emergent literacy, provides a detailed explanation of how books for emergent readers have changed over time, from the primers of the past, which often put

more emphasis on phonics support than literary value, to the literature-driven texts of the present, which often put more emphasis on literary value than phonics support (552–561). She also extends a call for change in texts of the future. The emergent reader books that she envisions for the future provide a balance between the texts of the past and present, offering both the foundations for word recognition and the literary value (Hiebert 563–565). These books would be educational and appropriate, and would display the three main characteristics of children’s literacy needs: decodability, predictability, and accessibility.

While Hiebert’s model for these multiple-criteria books may sound ideal, she concedes that it may not be possible for any single text to fulfill all of the needs of an emergent reader (563–565). However, even though it may not be possible for one book to incorporate every one of the various types of supports recommended for young readers, it is undoubtedly possible to incorporate all of these supports into a series of books. The benefit of publishing a series of emergent reader books is that the separate books can work together to form a cohesive whole. Thus, while each book within a level may only focus on a few specific skills, when all of the books in that level are used together, they can provide a comprehensive set of literacy skills.

Whichever methods editors decide to use to support the needs of emergent readers, it is crucial for them to ensure that the books being published offer a solid educational foundation for children learning how to read. Features such as content, word choice, illustrations, text layout, and font choice can all affect a child’s reading experience, and

it is important for editors to understand how to use these features strategically to meet children's literacy needs. It is crucial that decodability, predictability, and accessibility, the three main measures of a text's difficulty and appropriateness, be taken into consideration when editing texts for emergent readers. Following is a detailed discussion of each of these concerns, the text features that affect them, and editorial strategies for dealing with them.

### Decodability

While literature-driven reading programs have been extremely popular recently, there has also been a resurgence of interest in highly decodable texts<sup>3</sup> as of late (Hiebert 552, 556). This is largely due to the results of recent studies, which have shown that although children's overall comprehension of texts varies only slightly between literature-based programs and phonics-based programs, there is a significant variation in word recognition between the two. Other studies cited by Isabel L. Beck and Connie Juel, authors of the 1992 article "The Role of Decoding in Learning to Read," have also shown that "Early attainment of decoding skill is important because this early skill accurately predicts later skill in reading comprehension" (2). Due to the results of studies such as those cited by Hiebert and Beck and Juel, many literacy experts are beginning to recommend that highly decodable books be required in reading instruction. For example, Beck and Juel conclude,

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<sup>3</sup> Decodable texts are books where the majority of words are easy for children to decipher by activating their prior knowledge of common words or letter-sound relationships.



Failure to teach [decoding] in the most straightforward manner (e.g., through good, explicit phonics instruction coupled with *reasonably constrained texts*) would leave many children without the key to unlock the printed message. Children without this key cannot independently enter the world of quality literature; some may learn to dislike reading entirely. [Emphasis added] (10)

In order for children to enhance their understandings of the spelling-to-speech mapping system, Hiebert suggests that books contain seventy to eighty percent decodable text, and warns that anything below fifty percent is insufficient (556). As James V. Hoffman, Nancy L. Roser, and their colleagues explain in the 2000 article “Text Leveling and Little Books in First-Grade Reading,” decodability is measured mainly by the recognizability of the words in a text, that is, by judging the regularity of their spellings and phonetic patterns (3). Factors taken into consideration in this measurement include number of high-content words, word frequency, and phonetic regularity of words, among other things (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 3). The following sections provide a more detailed look at each of these types of words and how they are best used in books for early readers.

*High-frequency words.* High-frequency words are those that are part of a list of the most commonly used words in the English language (Hiebert 553). The most well-known list of high-frequency words is the Dolch Sight Word list,<sup>4</sup> which contains 220 words and 95 nouns divided into five levels (Ramsay), but numerous other lists are also in use. High-frequency words are important because, according to James W. Cunningham, Stephanie A. Spadorcia, et al., authors of the article “Investigating the Instructional Supportiveness of Leveled Texts,” they can “foster the students’ word recognition—the ability to access

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix One for the complete Dolch Sight Words list.

pronunciations attached in memory to entire printed words” and “help [students] learn the particular pattern of letters that comprise each [word]” (414). In their article “Every Child a Reader: Applying Reading Research in the Classroom,” Hiebert, P. David Pearson, and their colleagues add to this argument, claiming, “rapid recognition of these words during the primary grades forms the foundation of fluent reading” and emphasizing that children who are unable to master high-frequency words in their primary years are unlikely to become good readers (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 30).

But teaching children to read high-frequency words is not as simple as it may seem. Most high-frequency words are function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and inactive verbs, the meanings and uses of which are not as easily defined as regular nouns (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 31). In the past, some children’s writers and publishers have addressed the need to teach high-function words to children by creating texts that consist almost entirely of high-function words. The type of stilted language used in these texts became known as *primerese*, and usually resulted in nonsensical stories that seemed contrived (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 31). According to Hiebert, stories written in primerese diverted children’s attentions from common patterns of the English language and blocked them from connecting the language to concepts that were known to them, often confusing children instead of helping them (553–557).

Beck and Juel argue that books for early readers should include a wide variety of high-function words, but that these words should be in the context of sentences that help young readers to comprehend them in a natural setting (9). Many high-frequency words

are not phonetically regular, and are therefore difficult to decode. Placing them within an environment of natural language helps children decode them and comprehend their meanings (Hiebert 556–557).

Hiebert and her colleagues encourage teachers to choose books that allow beginning readers to practise their skills with high-frequency words while remaining simple enough that children will be able to read them without much difficulty. They assert that books should contain only a small percentage of words that are difficult to decode; otherwise, they become too challenging for children and fail to support their skills and confidence. According to Hiebert et al., the optimal percentage of decodability ranges from ninety to ninety-five percent (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 32–33).

It is important for editors to pay close attention to the percentage and difficulty of high-frequency words included in the early reader books they work on. As noted earlier, too many high-frequency words can result in a primerese-like language that is likely to confuse young readers and be counterproductive to their learning. However, texts that include too few high-frequency words may not prepare them adequately for higher stages of reading. While there is no standard percentage of high-frequency words that is optimal within a text, editors must use their judgement to determine the correct balance of high-frequency words to normal- or low-frequency words for each particular text, while taking other language factors, such as the number of phonetically irregular words or high-content words in the text, into account.

*Phonetically regular words.* Emergent readers rely heavily on phonics, or letter-sound associations, to help them decode unfamiliar words and sound them out (Cunningham, Spadorcia, et al. 414). After sounding words out, children must verify their pronunciation against both their own prior knowledge and what's in the text to ensure that it is correct. Awareness of phonemic devices and letter-sound relationships is crucial to children who are learning how to read, so much so that it accounts for more of the variations between skill levels in early readers than intelligence, maturity, or listening comprehension (Ontario Ministry of Education 16).

According to Hiebert and her colleagues, children learn more about associating letters to sounds as they progress through the primary grades, moving from knowing only single-letter-sound relationships to understanding the sounds made when groups of letters are put together (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 24). Children in the first stages of learning how to read start by sounding out the first letter of a word and making predictions as to what that word might be based on the context and the illustrations. Then, usually around grade one, they progress to the sequential decoding stage, where they sound out each letter of a word, then attempt to put those letter sounds together to form a proper word. Following this stage, they start to recognize phonograms (groups of letters that form a sound when put together, such as the “*uck*” in *duck* or *luck* or the “*at*” in *bat* or *cat*). Then, usually by the end of grade two, children progress to reading multisyllabic words and understanding the meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and roots. By grade three, children

should be able to read most simple multisyllabic words by sight (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 24).

Because children's facility with phonograms develops over time, it is important to pay close attention to the phonetic difficulties of words when editing books for emergent readers. Lower-levelled texts should contain mostly words that children can sound out without much knowledge of phonograms, while higher-levelled readers can include a few more challenging phonograms. Books in the middle levels should start with only the simplest or most common phonograms, and incorporate increasingly difficult phonograms as the levels get higher. As Hiebert et al. note, there are 353 phonograms in total, but some are much more common than others; in fact, according to Hiebert and her colleagues, the thirty-eight most commonly used phonograms make up over six hundred different words, with each phonogram appearing in between fourteen and twenty-six different words (Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 26). A list of the thirty-eight most common phonograms is available in Appendix Two.

In addition to the type of phonograms being used, an editor should pay attention to the amount and variety of phonetically regular words that are included in a text. In the past, entire books were written using a few phonetically regular words based on one particular phonogram. Like with the cases of stories written almost entirely in high-frequency words, the language in the books based on only one phonogram seemed stilted and unnatural, and the storylines left much to be desired (Hiebert 553–556). While it is important for teachers to have storybooks that support their phonics lessons, recent

studies show that children benefit more from reading texts with a variety of phonetically regular words than they do from texts that only focus on one phoneme at a time (Hiebert 556). Thus, instead of stories focusing on only one or two phonograms, editors should attempt to acquire stories that give young readers the chance to encounter several different types of phonetically regular words at once. However, using too many different phonograms within one story can also be problematic, because there may not be enough instances of any particular phonogram for children to make the connections needed to understand the relationship of the sounds to the letters (Hiebert 561).

One solution to this problem might be to choose a few texts within every level to focus on phonetically regular words, with each text concentrating on a different set of phonograms. For example, level one could include five books dedicated to enhancing phonemic awareness, each using a variety of words containing three of the fifteen most common phonograms. Level two could contain seven books with twenty-one more phonograms between them. Level three could start introducing some simple prefixes, suffixes, and root words, and higher levels could progress from there (although the number and difficulty of phonograms per level would obviously vary depending on the number of levels in the series). This would allow children to practise reading a wide array of phonograms, while still providing the repetition and support they need to learn and remember them.

Regardless of the methods used to address phonetically regular words, it is undeniably important for publishers to pay attention to the way words are used within books for early

readers. Phonics provides children with a crucial base for learning to read, and early reader books that are unable to provide the proper amount of phonetic support, no matter what their literary value, will fail to supply children with the foundational knowledge and skills they need to become successful readers.

*High-content words.* Similar to high-frequency words and phonetically regular words, high-content words are an important consideration for editors working on books for early readers. According to Hiebert, high-content words appear fairly infrequently in texts when compared to other types of words, but they account for a significant percentage of unique words within most early reader books, and they are essential for children to use in order to make meaning out of the text. They also help to provide children with a basis for word acquisition (Hiebert 559–60).

High-content words are usually easier for children to learn because their meanings are more concrete and they can be further supported by illustrations. They have also been proven to be more interesting to children than other types of words because they tend to have richer meanings (Hiebert 559–60). As well, books using a large number of high-content words can be easier to read than books with many high-frequency words and varied sentence structures because they draw on the conceptual knowledge that children expect to use when reading stories about familiar subjects and provide them with words that have richer meaning within the context of the story (Hiebert 557).

When working on early reader books, editors need to ensure that high-content words are used properly so that they can have the greatest possible advantage in supporting

literacy skills. Illustrations that correspond to the high-content words should be used to give clues to readers who are trying to decode the text. However, Hiebert stresses that the illustrations supporting the text shouldn't be so literal that children are able to "read" the book by looking at the pictures (564). It is important to find a balance between illustrations that give high-content words away too easily and illustrations that don't support the text enough for young readers to make educated guesses as to what words might be.

High-content words also need to be repeated in stories numerous times before children are able to recognize and remember them (Hiebert 560). Editors should be careful that only a limited number of high-content words are included in each story, and should ensure that each word is repeated numerous times. For example, it is preferable to have a simple story about a dinosaur where the words *dinosaur*, *caveman*, and *T-Rex* are repeated frequently than a story about a boy who cleans his room and finds his *skateboard*, *pocket knife*, *football*, *Yo-Yo*, *hockey skates*, *toy sword*, and *action figure*, with each new high-content word only being mentioned once.

High-content words are a critical part of stories for early readers. They help to capture children's interests and make books exciting to read, while laying the foundation young readers need to progress through the various stages of reading. They also help early readers to find meaning in the texts they read and activate their prior knowledge and experiences. Editors must ensure that high-content words are not only used in the books they work on, but used properly. Attention must be paid to the way high-content words are introduced,



and the way they are supported throughout the text. If high-content words are not used effectively, they will not be easily learned or remembered, and the books they appear in will likely be too difficult for children to read and enjoy on their own.

### Predictability

While decodability and predictability are independent factors when determining a text's difficulty, they also go hand-in-hand. Whereas decodability focuses on the difficulty of words, predictability is "primarily conceptualized as a between-word factor," focusing on format, language, and content (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 2-7). Thus, while decodability and predictability both contribute to the overall difficulty level of a text, they do so in different ways. This means that a book could be difficult to decode while still remaining fairly predictable, or vice versa (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 3).

The recent popularity of literature-focused emergent reader books has resulted in a significantly higher level of predictability in newly published books than with phonics-based books of previous decades (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 4). This is possibly a reaction to the recommendations of literacy experts, who began emphasizing the "characteristics of the naturalness of the language, a close picture-text match, and the predictability of text structure" when choosing books for emergent readers (Hiebert 558). The two latter recommendations, illustrations that match the text and predictability of the text, both contribute directly to the overall predictability of the book as a whole. In fact, picture

support, rhyming text (an aspect of predictable text structure), and repetition of textual elements (another aspect of predictable text structure) are three of the main factors that contribute to a book's predictability rating (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 4). Each of these factors is addressed in detail in the following pages.

*Use of illustrations.* While most emergent reader books do not contain as many illustrations as a picture book or little book, the way illustrations are used within these texts is still important. Illustrations are often used as scaffolds in early reader series, helping young readers “recognize high-content words that appear infrequently but that are critical to making meaning of the text” (Hiebert 559). Along with being visually stimulating, illustrations can act as a means for beginning readers to cross-check their speculations about words based on the picture against the graphic qualities of the words in the text. In order to best support children in the process of predicting difficult words and concepts, Hiebert asserts that illustrations should correspond closely with the text (559). According to Marie Clay, the founder of the Reading Recovery program, “a close picture-text match allows beginning readers to recognize the high-content words that appear infrequently but that are critical to making meaning of the text” (qtd. in Hiebert 559). Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, developers of the Fountas and Pinnell levelling system, affirm this claim, contending, “Illustrations that are clearly related to the information in the text and that are themselves easy to understand assist the reader” (54–55).

However, not all literacy experts agree with Clay and Fountas and Pinnell. In his 1970 study of how pictures affect children learning how to read, S. Jay Samuels, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Minnesota, claims, “The bulk of the research findings on the effect of pictures on acquisition of a sight-vocabulary was that pictures interfere with learning to read,” and “that pictures, when used as adjuncts to the printed text, do not facilitate comprehension” (Samuels 405). Samuels argues that illustrations impede children’s abilities to recognize words by their textual features because children are able to identify words without paying attention to the way they look or recognizing the patterns of letters (Hiebert 559).

So how does an editor reconcile these two conflicting schools of thought and ensure that the illustrations included in early reader books help young readers predict difficult words and concepts without deterring them from paying attention to the graphic features of the text? While there is no simple answer, one solution might be to take care that the illustrations match the text closely, but are not so literal that they make it easy to “read” the book by looking at the pictures (Hiebert 564). For example, if the text of a page were to read, “Sarah rode her skateboard to the pet store to look at the kittens in the window,” it might be better to depict a girl peering into a pet store window with a skateboard beside her than to have a picture of a girl riding a skateboard, and then a picture of the same girl in front of a pet store window, looking at some kittens through the glass. However, no matter which methods are used to ensure that illustrations are appropriate, it is evident that editors need to work closely with illustrators and art directors to ensure that the

pictures used in early reader chapter books are there to illuminate the text, not to explain it. Illustrations should help young readers decipher the words on a page while remaining subtle enough that they do not eliminate the need to read the text in order to understand the story.

*Use of rhyming text.* As well as incorporating a sense of silliness and fun into children's books, the use of rhyming text helps early readers to decode unfamiliar words by providing sound prompts that act as clues to help them predict the word that is coming next (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 3). According to a 2003 study conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education called "Early Reading Strategy: The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario," rhyming text helps emergent readers blend sounds together to make words and divide the words they hear into separate letter-sounds, both of which contribute to a solid foundation for learning to read and write (17). Rhyme is also considered to be one of the strongest features contributing to a text's predictability (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 4).

While many children's book publishers are turning away from rhyming books toward texts with prose that more closely represents realistic language patterns, rhyme remains an important factor in ensuring a text's predictability (Broerman). Unfortunately, because each book and series is different, it isn't possible to decide upon any standard for when rhyme should be used, or what percentage of the text should be rhyming. Editors need to use their judgement to determine how and when rhyming text can be used appropriately, and how much rhyme to incorporate into any given text.

*Repetition of textual elements.* In order for children to learn and recognize words, even those as simple to remember as the names of their family members or pets, they usually need to come into contact with each word numerous times. Studies have shown that “the number of repetitions of a word predicted children’s facility with it in both high-frequency and phonetically regular texts” (Hiebert 560). Like rhyme, repetition of words and phrases is a strong factor contributing to a book’s predictability level (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 4); as Hiebert claims, “Books that fall into the predictable text genre are characterized by the repetition of a syntactic unit that can range from a phrase to a group of sentences” (558).

Also like rhyme, there is no consensus as to when and how often repetition should be used within texts. Many texts that rely heavily on repetition do so at the cost of literary value and engagement, and end up sounding dull and flat or stilted and contrived (Hiebert 557–560; Broerman). But Hiebert claims that repetition, when used properly, can make a story more engaging for young readers, and recommends a higher word-density ratio<sup>5</sup> than the average 1:2 or 1:4, but gives no ideal range (560–565).

Since there is no formula to determine the ideal amount of repetition that should be used in such a subjective endeavour as publishing books for emergent readers, editors must again use their judgement to determine when repetition is appropriate, as well as how much repetition should be used. As a general rule, editors should avoid introducing high-

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<sup>5</sup> The word-density ratio is the proportion of the number of distinct words in a text to the total number of words.

content or phonetically irregular words, which are inherently more difficult to decode, without supporting them with a significant amount of repetition. High-frequency words and phonetically regular words, however, are more difficult to judge in regard to their needs for repetition. While studies do show that repetition affects children's facilities with these types of words in a positive way, too much repetition of high-frequency and phonetically regular words is likely to result in stilted, unnatural language, which can be detrimental to students' learning. Calculating the right amount of repetition needed for these types of words is complicated, and must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for each book.

### Accessibility

Accessibility is a measure of how appropriate a book is for its target audience, and it is the main consideration when determining the difficulty level of a book or series. While readability, decodability, and predictability are all factors that contribute to a text's overall accessibility, the scope of accessibility is much broader than just these aspects. Fountas and Pinnell describe accessibility thus:

Accessibility means that a given reader: can process the text well, using knowledge of what makes sense, sounds right, and looks right—simultaneously—in a smoothly operating system; reads most of the time at a good rate with phrasing, appropriate stress, pausing, and intonation; knows or rapidly solves most of the words and reads with a high level of accuracy; [and] can interpret the full meaning of the text (39).

But while this definition gives a good indication of what a reader will be able to do with a text that is accessible, it does not provide a clear idea of the features a text must have in

order to be accessible. In their 2002 report on decodable texts for beginning readers, “Decodable Text for Beginning Reading Instruction: The Year 2000 Basals,” James V. Hoffman, Misty Sailors, and Elizabeth U. Patterson provide a more text-oriented definition of accessibility:

Accessibility [...] considers both the degree of decoding demands placed on the reader to recognize words in the text and the “extra” supports surrounding the words, which assist the reader with identification, fluency, and, ultimately, comprehension (5).

The “‘extra’ supports” that Hoffman et al. are referring to are all of the qualitative factors that contribute to a book’s difficulty level, from its design features to the way punctuation is used in the text. Along with the principal factors that help determine the difficulty level of a text (i.e. readability, decodability, and predictability), accessibility accounts for all of the other features that affect the complexity of a book, including its text structure, content, sentence complexity, length, print and layout, and punctuation. Following is a brief discussion of each of these factors, and recommendations as to how they are best used in the context of books for emergent readers. Because accessibility is so closely tied to the levelling process, much of the information within the following sections has been drawn from Fountas and Pinnell’s levelling guide, *Leveled Books K–8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching*, the most comprehensive resource available on the topic of accessibility and levelling.

*Text structure.* Text structure is the way a book is organized: temporally, thematically, and structurally (Fountas and Pinnell 53). According to Fountas and Pinnell, fictional books for emergent readers should have simple plots that follow

naturally from one event to the next, with only a few different episodes. Stories should have a clear beginning, middle, and end, and follow chronologically without use of flashbacks or flashforwards. Literary devices such as similes, metaphors, or onomatopoeia should seldom be used. Nonfiction books should be structured coherently, with headings and subheadings that help children navigate through the text without difficulty. Both types of books should centre on one main idea or a series of related ideas (Fountas and Pinnell 53–128).

*Content.* Fountas and Pinnell argue that books are easier for children to read and understand when they are closely related to their own experiences (53). Readers bring their own knowledge and understanding of the world to each text they read; as Brenda Stein Dzaldov and Shelley Peterson assert in their 2005 article “Book Leveling and Readers,” emergent readers’ “social and cultural identities influence their reading and play a role in determining how difficult a particular text is” (223). Children choose books based on their own interests, and Dzaldov and Peterson recommend that teachers provide students with a large number of books on a wide variety of topics in order to support them in the literacy process (223). According to Dzaldov and Peterson, early reading programs should include as diverse a spectrum of topics, themes, genres, characters, and settings as possible, with particular attention being paid to aspects such as ethnicity, gender, urban vs. rural settings, and socioeconomic lifestyles, while still remaining age-appropriate (227).



*Sentence complexity.* Fountas and Pinnell note that shorter sentences tend to be easier for children to read and understand than longer sentences (54). Therefore, as a general rule, they argue that sentences in emergent reader books should remain fairly short (ten or more words for the highest levels, three to five words for the lowest levels). According to Fountas and Pinnell, sentences in books in the lower levels of a series should not include embedded clauses, while simple embedded clauses may be used in books in the higher levels. They stress that in most sentences, the subject should precede the verb, although in higher levels, some sentences may contain verbs that precede the subjects, prepositional phrases, and adjectives. In higher levels, Fountas and Pinnell state that some sentences may start with phrases, use commas to set words apart, be phrased as questions, or be compounds connected by *and*. In all cases, they advise that sentences should be predictable and close to spoken language (Fountas and Pinnell 105–125).

*Length.* Longer books tend to be more difficult, and can also be daunting for children because they are more demanding (Hiebert 560). While length does not always indicate how difficult a text may be, longer texts do tend to be more complex, with more detailed plots, longer time spans, and more developed characters (Fountas and Pinnell 44). According to Fountas and Pinnell, books in the lowest levels of an emergent reader series should be short, often only eight to sixteen pages. As the levels get higher, early reader books may become longer, and chapter books can extend as high as forty to sixty pages (105–125).

*Print and layout.* The way that text is laid out on a page can greatly affect the difficulty of a book. If the font is too small, or the words are too close together, children may not be able to process the print or find information (Fountas and Pinnell 55). Books for emergent readers should use large serif fonts<sup>6</sup> and have well-defined spaces between words (Dzaldov and Peterson 224). Fountas and Pinnell allow for print features (bolding, italics, larger font sizes) to be used to convey meaning and help readers comprehend the text better (55). They argue that in the lower levels of a series, sentences should always begin flush left; in higher levels, some short sentences may begin mid-line, and some long sentences may even carry over to the next page. They also warn that books in the low levels of the series should only have one or two lines per page, with line breaks that match the ends of sentences or phrases. According to Fountas and Pinnell, books in the high levels of the series should have three to eight lines per page, and a few lines may end mid-phrase. Longer texts should be broken into chapters or sections at logical breaks (Fountas and Pinnell 105–125).

*Punctuation.* According to Fountas and Pinnell, books in the low levels of an emergent reader series should use only simple punctuation, starting with the period, and moving on to the question mark, exclamation mark, and comma. The ellipsis and em dash may be introduced in the mid-range levels, and used with more frequency in higher levels. Less common punctuation such as colons and semicolons should be avoided at the emergent reader stage (Fountas and Pinnell 105–125).

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<sup>6</sup> Fourteen points or higher for lower levels, and a minimum of ten to twelve points for higher levels.

CHAPTER THREE: READABILITY AND LEVELLING

### Readability vs. Levelling

One of the most important factors to take into consideration when creating a series for emergent readers is the process that will be used to place each book in the correct level. In their 2006 book *Leveled Books K-8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching*, prominent levelling experts Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell explain that children progress through numerous stages of proficiency when they are learning to read, and levels help teachers and parents find books that meet their needs at each specific stage (1-7). Text gradients can guide children through the literacy process, and can also help educators track a child's progress over time (Fountas and Pinnell 11). According to Edna Greene Brabham and Susan Kidd Villaume, authors of the 1998 article "Leveled Text: The Good News and the Bad News," if a book is placed into the wrong difficulty level of a gradient, it will fail to offer the amount of support needed by teachers and students, and could be counterproductive to student comprehension and learning (438-439).

Thomas G. Gunning, author of the 2003 article "The Role of Readability in Today's Classroom," explains that a book's difficulty level can be determined using quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of both quantitative and qualitative factors (Gunning 175). Quantitative approaches are used to determine *readability*; they employ mathematical formulas to produce objective scores that indicate how difficult texts are on a given scale (Fry 286). Readability is basically a measure of the difficulty level of the words and sentences within a given text; it takes only objective factors into account, and does not usually account for more subjective factors such as the illustrations present, types of

punctuation used, or font size used (these factors are measured using a process known as *levelling*, which will be discussed shortly). Readability formulas take both semantic and syntactic factors into account. The semantic variable used in readability formulas is based on the difficulty of vocabulary, and is measured by number of syllables per word, number of letters per word, number of words not on a list of familiar words, number of words per passage, grade levels of words, or word frequency, depending on the formula being used (Gunning 176). The syntactic variable used in readability testing is almost always based on the average number of words per sentence in a passage of a prescribed length (DuBay 19; Gunning 176; Fry 287). As Edward Fry, author of the article “Readability Versus Leveling” reports, readability scores can be reported in U.S. grade levels or in other units that conform to a corresponding scale of difficulty (289). Most readability scales are wide in scope, covering ranges from grades one to twelve or one to seventeen; some scales only report whole grade levels, while others are able to report finer progressions of a tenth of a grade (Fry 289).

Using qualitative approaches to determine the difficulty of books is known as *levelling*. This is a more subjective process that is often performed by educators or other experts in children’s literacy. Levelling attempts to compensate for what the readability scores lack by taking factors that cannot be measured by a formula or computer into account. In levelling approaches, educators study the accessibility of a text, and take factors such as print, content, length, illustrations, curriculum, language structure, judgement, and format into account to make decisions about where a book should be

placed within a specific gradient (Fry 287–289; Gunning 180). Levelling is particularly important when judging the difficulty of texts for early readers because it is more precise at the lower levels than readability measures are, it is able to take comprehension aids such as illustrations and text size into account, and it is able to measure the fine gradations of difficulty needed at these levels (Fry 289–290). The scopes of levelling scales tend to be narrower than those of readability scores, generally ranging from kindergarten to grade six (Fry 289; Brabham and Villaume 439).

Many readability and levelling experts, including educators and developers of readability and levelling programs, suggest that a combination of quantitative and qualitative factors be used when determining the levels for books (Gunning 180; Fry 288–89; Dzaldov and Peterson 222; Gunning 180; DuBay 35; Brabham and Villaume 2–3). Because readability and levelling measure two different aspects of a book's difficulty, it is preferable to use both of these techniques when deciding upon a book's level. Many readability and levelling experts, including the creators of most readability formulas, warn against relying on readability scores alone to determine the appropriateness of texts, and many levelling programs recommend using a readability score to aid in the process of assigning appropriate levels (Dzaldov and Peterson 222; Gunning 180; DuBay 35; Brabham and Villaume 2–3; Fry 288–89). Numerous large publishers use several different methods of determining difficulty levels, and publish information about these methods on their websites so that parents and teachers can make more informed decisions when choosing an emergent reader series. For example, Scholastic USA and HarperCollins, two

of the largest and most prominent early reader publishers, both include information about their readability and levelling techniques on their websites.

When choosing which readability and levelling techniques to use to determine the difficulty levels of their books, publishers need to take several factors into consideration, including cost, availability, appropriateness for target markets, and appropriateness for the series in question. Some of the readability systems are administered by large companies that charge fees for their services, while other readability systems are based on formulas that can be used easily by anyone at no cost. However, even though it may not seem necessary to pay for something that is available for free, the fee-based readability scores may be preferable because they may be more well-known or widely used than the free systems, they may correspond with the reading scores that most schools in the publisher's target market use, or they may be more appropriate for scoring the specific books being published. Each publisher's needs are different, and it is important to choose the best system or combination of systems to suit these individual needs.

The following sections offer technical explanations of the various readability and levelling systems available, as well as recommendations regarding their appropriateness for use with emergent reader series. Also, see Appendix Three for quick-reference fact sheets for each of the readability and levelling systems mentioned below.

## Readability Formulas Administered by Large Companies

This section describes the *Lexile* and *Advantage-TASA Open Standard (ATOS)* systems, which are sophisticated computer-based readability formulas administered by large companies. These readability systems score both the books in question (using a computer analyzer) and the students who read them (using standardized test scores), and help educators match students to books that are of the appropriate difficulty level. These systems tend to be used by large multinational publishers that are targeting their books to a very broad market because they offer scores in widely recognized units that are easily matched with students' standardized test scores, and thus the scores these systems produce can be understood and used by a wide range of parents and educators.

*Lexile Framework for Reading.* The Lexile Framework for Reading is one of the most widely used text measurement tools currently available (Lennon and Burdick 3; Fry 291). Developed by MetaMetrics Inc., this system measures text difficulty and reader ability on the same scale, offering a method for matching readers to books that correspond with their individual levels of comprehension (Lennon and Burdick 3). As Pauline Lennon and Hal Burdick, authors of the 2004 study "The Lexile Framework as an Approach for Reading Measurement and Success,"<sup>7</sup> explain, reader ability is usually measured by standardized tests, while book difficulty is measured using a sophisticated computer analyzer. Once a reader's Lexile score has been calculated using a standardized test, he or she can then be matched up with books that the computer-based analyzing program has

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that this study was commissioned by the Lexile parent company, MetaMetrics Inc., and thus it is likely to be biased toward this readability measurement system over others.



deemed to match his or her ability level. Both reader ability and book difficulty are measured in the same unit, Lexiles (L), which makes the process of matching reader to text relatively simple (Lennon and Burdick 4).

In order to measure the Lexile levels of readers, several methods may be used. The most accurate methods are recognized standardized tests and computerized reading-assessment tools such as the Scholastic Reading Inventory (developed by Scholastic USA, which uses the Lexile system to calculate readability for their emergent reader series) (Lennon and Burdick 7–9). The Scholastic Reading Inventory measures students' ability to read and comprehend literature and expository texts of varying levels of difficulty by assessing their answers to fifty questions (Lennon and Burdick 7–8). If a standardized test or computer reading-assessment tool is not available, a subject can determine his or her own Lexile level fairly accurately by reading a passage from a book or article that has already been assigned a Lexile level and determining whether it is too simple, too difficult, or appropriate (Lennon and Burdick 8). Once a reader's Lexile level has been measured, it is then easy to match the reader with books that have been determined to be at the same Lexile level as the reader (a detailed description of the process for measuring the Lexile levels of texts can be found below).

A text's Lexile measure is determined by assessing the relationship between its semantic difficulty and syntactic complexity using a software program called the Lexile Analyzer (Lennon and Burdick 5). The Lexile Analyzer works by breaking the entire text up into 125-word "slices" and measuring the sentence lengths and word frequencies for

each slice separately. Lennon and Burdick claim that this method gives them a much more accurate result than if they were to analyze the text as a whole (6). Once each slice has been analyzed, the program assigns the text a Lexile level. If the text contains mostly low-frequency words and long sentences, it will receive a high Lexile number; if it contains mostly high-frequency words and short sentences, it will receive a low Lexile number (Lennon and Burdick 5). Texts such as poetry or lists are not included in the analysis process because they do not conform to regular rules of punctuation and would skew the results (Lennon and Burdick 5).

The process for analyzing emergent reader books is slightly different than it is for other novels or textbooks. Because emergent reader books contain pictures that assist students in the process of decoding language, a Lexile analysis based solely on a book's text wouldn't be accurate. To counteract this problem, the Lexile Analyzer is set to subtract 120 Lexiles from the final Lexile measurement to compensate for the difference (Lennon and Burdick 6). The same method is used for non-fiction books under five hundred words in length, because even if these books do not contain images, they usually include long sentences with definitions, a considerable amount of repetition of words and phrases, and cues for pronunciation, all of which are meant to help young readers with comprehension (Lennon and Burdick 7).

According to Edward Fry, the Lexile Framework for Reading is a useful method for determining text readability because it uses a computer to analyze the full text of a book to gauge the difficulty, not just a short sample of the book (289). This makes for a high

degree of accuracy and objectivity, and produces results that are fairly consistent (Fry 287). However, because the scoring is done by a computer, the system is only able to take numerical factors such as sentence length and word frequency into consideration, which limits the scope of the measurement and ignores the “text support” factors like content, length, language structure, and format (Fry 287–289). Thus, while it is a good way to measure readability and a valuable asset when determining the difficulty level of a text, the Lexile Framework should not be used on its own to assign levels to books because it is unable to assess all of the factors that contribute to a book’s overall difficulty.

Despite its faults, the Lexile system is a useful for determining the difficulty level of an emergent reader book or series, not only because it is fairly accurate, but because it is widely used (Fry 287). According to information published on the Lexile website, there are currently over a hundred thousand English and Spanish titles from more than 450 different publishers in the Lexile book database, including children’s and educational publishers such as Scholastic, Pearson Education, and Harcourt Education. As well, schools throughout the United States and Canada use Lexiles to score students’ reading abilities, and many standardized reading tests and instructional reading programs report student scores in Lexiles (Lennon and Burdick 3). Thus, by including a Lexile score along with a book’s readability and levelling information,<sup>8</sup> publishers can provide parents and educators with a measurement that is compatible with the information they already have

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<sup>8</sup> This information is most often made available in promotional materials or on publishers’ websites.

about their child's reading ability. This not only helps parents and educators find materials that are suitable for their children or students, but also makes the books more marketable.

While publishers can register for free to use the online Lexile Analyzer to obtain Lexile scores for their books, they have to contact MetaMetrics directly to have books scored officially and to be able to use the Lexile score on book covers, informational websites, or marketing materials. The Lexile certification fee is one hundred dollars per title, plus any necessary scanning or editorial costs, and the turnaround time is usually around four weeks (Weller). See the Lexile website ([www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)) for further details and contact information.

*ATOS Readability Formula for Books.* The Advantage-TASA Open Standard (ATOS) Readability Formula for Books is a computer-based readability calculator developed by Renaissance Learning, Inc. and Touchstone Applied Science Associates, Inc. (TASA) (School Renaissance Institute 1). The ATOS Readability Formula for Books is similar to the Lexile Analyzer in that it uses a software program to scan the entire text of a book and generate a readability score based on its syntactic and semantic properties. Like the Lexile system, ATOS measures text difficulty and reader ability on the same scale (Renaissance Learning 3). However, the score that the ATOS system generates is measured in grade levels (in increments of a tenth of a grade, from grade one to grade twelve), not Lexiles or any other arbitrary unit, and therefore no scale or map is required to understand the results (Fry 4; School Renaissance Institute 6). The ATOS system does, however, provide a variety of charts to help users convert a book's ATOS grade level to scales comparable to

those used by other readability formulas, such as the Lexile Framework for Reading (School Renaissance Institute 4).

ATOS is an open system, which means that publishers and educators can use it free of charge to determine the readability of books. It also means that, unlike with Lexiles, educators can use any nationally normed reading test to measure a child's reading level, not just those created or recognized by one specific company (School Renaissance Institute 4; Renaissance Learning 2). However, Renaissance Learning does sell its own reading test software, STAR Reading, for those who either do not have access to a child's standardized test scores or choose not to use them. Once a student's reading level is determined, either by using a standardized test or the STAR Reading software, educators can use the ATOS system to match him or her with texts measured to be at his or her readability level.

The ATOS system uses a slightly different formula to calculate the readability of a text than the Lexile Analyzer does. While both measure readability by the syntactic and semantic difficulty of the text, the ATOS system uses different variables in its testing. Whereas the Lexile Analyzer uses two variables, sentence length and word frequency, the ATOS system uses three: sentence length, characters per word, and average grade level per word (School Renaissance Institute 5). In a 2000 study commissioned by Renaissance Learning, researchers from the School Renaissance Institute claim that this formula is more accurate than the sentence length and word frequency formula used by the Lexile Analyzer because the word frequency factor that Lexile uses does not take words that are

common at different age levels into account (4). They give the example of the word *kitten*, which is common in books for young children, but becomes more uncommon as the reading levels of books increase. Thus, even though *kitten* may be categorized as a low-frequency word, it is not necessarily a difficult one, and therefore it should not contribute to a higher readability level (School Renaissance Institute 4–5).

Because the ATOS system studies the average grade level per word instead of the average frequency per word, the researchers at ATOS claim that their system is especially accurate when it comes to determining the readability of books for emergent readers (Renaissance Learning 5). While ATOS does not have a separate formula to measure the readability level of books for emergent readers like the Lexile Framework for Reading does, its software is programmed to make adjustments to readability levels based on books that have very long sentences but simple vocabulary or books that are extremely short (Renaissance Learning 5). In the 2007 article “Matching Books to Students: How to Use Readability Formulas and Continuous Monitoring to Ensure Reading Success,” the researchers from Renaissance Learning assert that because their system is based on average grade level per word instead of word frequency, and because their formula accounts for books composed of only a few long sentences and books that are short, the ATOS readability score is more accurate than levels produced by any other formula (5). However, unlike the Lexile Analyzer, the ATOS system does not account for images or illustrations used as comprehension aids, so the level of accuracy the ATOS researchers are reporting may be slightly inflated.

The ATOS Readability Formula for Books is a good alternative to the Lexile system because it is accurate, widely used, professionally recognized, and free of cost. According to William H. DuBay, author of the 2004 article “The Principles of Readability,” while the ATOS system may not offer all of the same services that the Lexile system does, it is highly regarded within the educational field, and based on one of the most extensive readability studies ever conducted (52).

To have a book’s readability measured using the ATOS Readability Formula for Books, publishers need visit the ATOS for Books website, fill in the web form, and email the text of the book to Renaissance Learning. For more information on the ATOS Readability Formula for Books, visit the ATOS for Books website at <http://renlearn.com/>.

#### In-House Readability Scoring Systems

The next three readability scoring systems that are discussed, the *Fry Index*, the *New Dale-Chall Readability Formula*, and the *Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level* system, are less sophisticated readability scoring systems than the readability formulas administered by large companies, but they can be performed by anyone, anywhere. These systems are free and easy-to-use, and can be calculated instantly in-house. While the scores these formulas provide may not be as accurate or as widely recognized as those calculated by the large corporations, the benefits of these systems are that they are free of cost, the scoring can be performed on a manuscript (some of the large corporations require a finished copy of the book), and they do not require any wait time.

*Fry Index.* The Fry Index is a text readability measurement system developed by Edward Fry in 1968 (School Renaissance Institute 2). It is one of the easiest readability systems to use without the aid of a computer or other electronic calculation system, which is why it is still widely used by educators (Gunning 177; Fountas and Pinnell 40).

The Fry readability test is performed by selecting three random one-hundred-word passages from the text, and then determining the average number of sentences and syllables per passage. Proper nouns, numbers, abbreviations, acronyms, and initializations are counted as words, and each symbol is counted as a syllable (for example, *2008* would count as one word and four syllables, while *CBC* would be counted as one word and three syllables). Once the average number of sentences and syllables per hundred words is found, these numbers are plotted onto the Fry Graph. The point where the numbers meet indicates the grade level of the passage, from grade one to grade seventeen (Fry 288). See Appendix Four for a sample Fry Graph.

While the Fry test is relatively simple, there is opportunity for error. If separate passages of the text show considerable variation in difficulty, more passages may be used to find the result, but the tester must conclude that the book has uneven readability (Fry 288). As well, if a book falls into one of the grey areas in the corners of the graph, the grade level scores are not valid (Fry 288).

The Fry Index is a beneficial tool for determining the approximate grade level of a book, but it is not particularly helpful when determining the difficulty level of books for emergent readers. This is because the scale that the Fry Index uses to score texts is not



precise. The Fry Index is only able to indicate the grade level of a book, and it does not accommodate for the fine progressions within grades that are needed when determining levels for emergent reader books. As well, the Fry Index is only able to score books from grade one to grade seventeen—it does not include kindergarten or anything before grade one, which is usually when children begin the process of learning how to read. In addition to these problems, the Fry Index could be difficult to use on some early reader books because they may not reach the three-hundred-word minimum needed to perform the test accurately or they may not be written using proper punctuation, which would greatly skew the sentence-length score and result in a much higher difficulty rating than would be appropriate. Thus, while the Fry Index may be useful as a quick method of determining the approximate readability level of a book, when used alone, it is not an effective means of determining readability levels for emergent reader books.

*New Dale-Chall Readability Formula.* The Dale-Chall Readability Formula was developed by Edgar Dale and Jeanne S. Chall and published in *A Formula for Predicting Readability* in 1948, and later revised in 1983 (School Renaissance Institute 2). Dale-Chall is an open system that scores readability by grade level (Renaissance Learning 3). Like all of the other readability systems discussed in this report, the Dale-Chall system uses average sentence length as the syntactic component in its formula. The semantic component of the formula is measured by calculating the percentage of words not included in the Dale-Chall Modified List, a catalogue of over three thousand words familiar to more than eighty

percent of grade four students (Gunning 176–177). See Appendix Five for a copy of the Dale-Chall Modified List.

The Dale-Chall Reading Grade Score (RGS) is calculated using one 100-word passage for each fifty pages in the book (Renaissance Learning 3). The formula for calculating a reading grade score is  $RGS = 0.1579PDW + 0.0496ASL + 3.6365$ , where PDW (Percentage of Difficult Words) is equal to the percentage of words not on the Dale-Chall Modified List and ASL is equal to the average sentence length (number of words divided by number of sentences) (DuBay 23). Once it is calculated, the Reading Grade Score can be mapped onto a table used to convert the score to its corresponding grade level, from grade one to grade sixteen-plus (DuBay 23).

While the New Dale-Chall Readability Formula is known for its accuracy, it is not a particularly widely used system (DuBay 23; Gunning 177). The New Dale-Chall Formula is considerably more complex than the formula used in the Fry Index, and unlike the Flesch- Kincaid Grade Level system, the calculations must be done by hand. It is not recommended for use on books for emergent readers, mainly because the grade four reading level of the words on the Dale-Chall Modified List is too high for measuring texts for early readers, but also for many of the same reasons that the Fry Index is not recommended (Weitzel). Like the Fry Index, the New Dale-Chall Readability Formula does not accommodate for the fine progressions between grade levels that are needed when determining the difficulty levels of books for emergent readers. And like the Fry Index, the lowest grade level the Dale-Chall formula can calculate is grade one (Fry 289),

which is higher than the reading levels of many emergent readers. Thus, while the New Dale-Chall Readability Formula may be slightly more accurate than other readability formulas, its difficulty of use and inability to accurately measure the complexity of texts for young readers make it a poor choice for testing the readability levels of books for emergent readers.

*Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level.* The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level readability formula is a revised version of Rudolph Flesch's Reading Ease Index, which was originally developed in the 1940s (School Renaissance Institute 2). J. Peter Kincaid revised Flesch's original formula in the 1970s, and it was renamed the Flesch-Kincaid Formula (School Renaissance Institute 2).

The Flesch-Kincaid readability formula uses sentence length as its syntactic factor and average syllables per word as its semantic factor (School Renaissance Institute 2). Flesch-Kincaid readability measurement tools are widely available for use on the home or office computer, making the process of calculating readability as simple as a click of the mouse. Most word processing programs come with the Flesch-Kincaid readability tool built-in, including the ubiquitous Microsoft Word application (Gunning 178). To use the Flesch-Kincaid tool in MS Word, all one has to do is highlight the text to be checked, open the *Tools* pull-down menu from the top menu bar, and then select *Spelling and Grammar*.

When the spelling and grammar check is complete, a box with various readability statistics, including the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score, will pop up.<sup>9</sup> For example, according to the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Grade calculator in MS Word, the reading grade level of this report (not including the front or back matter or the footnotes) is 12.0.

The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level calculator is a convenient, easy-to-use method for publishers to estimate the readability levels of their books. It is widely recognized, easily accessible, and based on an open system, so it is free to use and report scores (Renaissance Learning 3). Unlike the Fry Index and the Dale-Chall Readability Formula, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level calculator is able to measure tenths of a grade level, giving publishers a more precise difficulty reading, which is particularly important when measuring the reading levels of young children, who often progress through many stages of ability very quickly. But like the Fry Index and Dale-Chall Readability Formula, the Flesch-Kincaid system isn't optimized for testing books for emergent readers. The formula does not make accommodations for illustrations that aid in comprehension or books that are composed of only a few long sentences. Thus, while the Flesch-Kincaid system is a relatively easy means for publishers to test the readability for books as low as grade zero, it should not be used as the only means of determining readability for emergent reader books.

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<sup>9</sup> Note: In some cases, this function does not work automatically. See the *Display Readability Statistics* topic in the MS Word Help Menu for more information about how to turn this function on.

## Levelling Systems

The two systems that are described in this section, the *Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient* and the *Reading Recovery* system, are levelling techniques. These are guides to help determine a book's overall accessibility and appropriateness, and to place it in a gradient based on these factors. Levelling systems are crucial to publishers when determining appropriate levels for books, and most publishers either use one of the standard levelling systems or create their own levelling system based on the accessibility guidelines put forth in other levelling systems.

The Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient provides publishers and educators with detailed information on the various factors that can affect the levelling of a book. It also breaks each level down by characteristics such as text structure, sentence complexity, and illustrations, offering detailed indications of what should be expected in any given book assigned to a specific level. It effectively provides anyone who has a knowledge of children's books with a guide for determining book levels on their own. The Reading Recovery system, in contrast, does not cater to anyone outside of the Reading Recovery educational community. The procedures described in the Reading Recovery system are meant as a guide for educators who are working one-on-one with students in the Reading Recovery literacy outreach program for struggling first-grade readers, and they are put in place to help these educators choose books that meet their students' individual needs. However, while the Reading Recovery levelling system was not created for the use of publishers, it would be fairly simple for them to adapt some of the Reading Recovery

guidelines for use in their own levelling processes. Therefore, even though the Reading Recovery techniques were not designed to be used by publishers, it may still be worthwhile for publishers to consider them when deciding upon a means of levelling their books.

*Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient.* The Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient is a levelling system developed by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell as part of their Guided Reading program. In *Leveled Books K–8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching*, Fountas and Pinnell describe their gradient as “a defined continuum of characteristics related to the level of support and challenge that a reader meets in a text” (9). They stress that their system for is not meant as a means for labelling readers, but as a tool to assist educators in matching texts to readers (Fountas and Pinnell 11). Fountas and Pinnell have used their gradient to assign levels to over eighteen thousand books, with more titles being added to their catalogue every month (Fountas and Pinnell xi).

The Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient has twenty-six levels (ranging from A–Z), and roughly corresponds to a grade range of kindergarten to grade eight, with finer progressions in the early levels than in the later levels (Fountas and Pinnell 9, 38). Each of the levels was determined by examining numerous characteristics that affect reading difficulty, including genres and forms, text structure, content, themes and ideas, language and literary features, sentence complexity, vocabulary, words, illustrations, and book and print features (which include length, print and layout, punctuation, and tools) (Fountas and Pinnell 105–193). For example, according to Fountas and Pinnell, books in level A have “predictable language patterns and very easy high frequency words that are used over

and over within a text”; “one line of print”; and print that is “presented in a very plain, clear font that is as large as possible without distorting the reader’s view of the line of text” (Fountas and Pinnell 104), while books in level Z have “long stretches of descriptive language, important to understanding setting and characters”; “many lines of print on a page”; and “large variation among print styles and font size” (Fountas and Pinnell 189). For a complete list of the characteristics specific to each of the levels in the Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient, see chapters eleven to fourteen of *Leveled Books K–8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching*. Fountas and Pinnell suggest that educators level books by choosing a set of benchmarks (such as another set of levelled readers), and then judging the difficulty of other books against these benchmarks (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 5).

The Fountas and Pinnell system is a helpful resource for levelling books because it takes a variety of qualitative factors into account. However, as Thomas G. Gunning, a literacy specialist at Southern Connecticut State University, notes in “The Role of Readability in Today’s Classrooms,” this asset can also be seen as a drawback. Gunning claims that because these qualitative factors are based on subjective judgements, they are more prone to error (181). He cites a study conducted by L. Dreyfus that compared reading levels produced by the Fountas and Pinnell system and the Degrees of Reading Power system, and found that some books levelled using the Fountas and Pinnell system were erroneously measured by as much as two years (Gunning 181). Gunning also notes that in a study conducted by Elfrieda H. Hiebert, teachers found the Fountas and Pinnell system complicated to use when attempting to determine levels for books because many

of the characteristics described by Fountas and Pinnell are difficult to interpret. Hiebert gives factors such as “difficult content” and “higher level of conceptual understanding” as examples of characteristics that are ambiguous, and ultimately concludes that, “Without refinement of the leveling criteria, the text levels of Fountas and Pinnell [...] cannot be applied with any fidelity” (qtd. in Gunning 181).

Despite Dreyfus and Hiebert’s criticisms, the Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient scale is, at very least, a good starting point in determining a book’s approximate level. While some of the characteristics Fountas and Pinnell describe may be ambiguous, their list of factors to take into consideration when levelling books is extensive. The system is also worthwhile for publishers to consider because it is widely recognized and can be used by anyone to determine approximate book levels, free of charge (Hoffman, Roser, et al. 5; Fountas and Pinnell 18). However, if publishers want their books levelled officially and added to the Fountas and Pinnell list, which is available both in print and via paid subscription online, they must submit two copies of the finished book to Fountas and Pinnell. For more information about the Fountas and Pinnell levelling system, see [www.fountasandpinnellleveledbooks.com](http://www.fountasandpinnellleveledbooks.com).

*Reading Recovery.* The Reading Recovery levelling system was created by Marie Clay, who published her ideas on levelling in the book *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control* in 1991 (Fry 287, 291). Clay’s system, which is part of her Reading Recovery first grade literacy intervention program, is based on levelling techniques developed by the New Zealand Department of Education (Fry 287).



In the Reading Recovery system, books are chosen specifically for each student by the Reading Recovery teacher, and levelled appropriately to meet that student's particular needs (ACT Department of Education and Community Services 23). Peter J. Hatcher, author of the 2000 article "Predictors of Reading Recovery Book Levels," explains that Reading Recovery teachers use personal judgement and trial readings to place books into finely graded difficulty levels based on a variety of factors, such as "'reader interest,' 'prior knowledge,' 'text layout,' 'quality of illustrations,' and 'predictiveness of language'" (Hatcher 69). During trial readings, children are asked to read both books that are being tested and benchmark books that have already been levelled. If the child can read a test book at the same level of accuracy (ninety to ninety-four percent) as the benchmark books, then the test book is placed in the same level as the benchmarks (Hatcher 69). For books to be levelled officially using the Reading Recovery scale, they must go through several levels of trials within the Reading Recovery community of educators before a final level can be agreed upon (ACT Department of Education and Community Services 24). The Reading Recovery scale has 26 levels in total, all of which are aimed at children in their first two years of reading (Hatcher 69; ACT Department of Education and Community Services 24).

While the Reading Recovery levelling system may be an effective and accurate means of determining the difficulty of books for early readers (Hatcher 69), it is not an option for publishers to use when levelling books. The Reading Recovery levelling process can only be administered by a trained Reading Recovery teacher, and even then, the levels

assigned to books are based on the individual needs of a specific child. Official Reading Recovery book levels must be agreed upon by a panel of Reading Recovery educators, and these levels remain tentative even after they have been assigned (ACT Department of Education and Community Services 23). The Reading Recovery program will not endorse any particular series, nor will they recommend specific texts; as well, their official book levels remain their own private property and are only available to teachers who are members of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (ACT Department of Education and Community Services 23–24). Thus, while publishers can choose to employ some of the same techniques that Reading Recovery teachers would use to determine levels for books, they are not able to have their books levelled officially by the Reading Recovery program.

CHAPTER FOUR: DESIGN AND PRODUCTION CONCERNS

### **Print Specifications**

In order to determine the appropriate print specifications for early reader books, it crucial to know what the industry standards are for this type of book and what competing publishers are doing. If a publisher does not follow the standards already set out in the industry, there is a greater risk that the books being published will not sell as well as they may have otherwise. For example, books that are too large or too small in trim size may not fit onto the specialized shelves or racks that many booksellers use to display early reader books, and thus booksellers may be hesitant to stock them, or may be forced to stock them away from the early reader section, making them hard to find. Books that are too long in page count may intimidate readers of certain ages, while books that are too short may appear overly childish and simple. Books that are not priced accordingly may not be able to compete in the early reader market, where there is very little variation in pricing.

Size, format, extent, and price are all important factors to take into account when publishing any book, but these factors are especially significant in the early reader genre, where print specifications tend to be strictly regimented and standardized. The following sections provide a brief summary of the various trends in print specifications for emergent reader chapter books.

### Size and Format

The books in nearly all of the emergent reader book series sold in Canada are usually the standard size of six inches by nine inches or a size very close to this measurement. These include HarperCollins's "I Can Read" series, Random House's "Step into Reading" series, Kids Can Press's "Kids Can Read" series, Grosset and Dunlap's "All Aboard Reading" series, Harcourt's "Green Light Readers" series, Dorling Kindersley's "DK Readers" series, and Scholastic USA's "Scholastic Readers" series. A few early reader lines use slightly smaller formats closer to five inches by seven inches, including Orca's "Orca Echoes" series and Simon & Schuster's "Ready for Chapters" series. Most of the emergent reader books sold in Canada are available in paperback form only.<sup>10</sup>

### Extent

The extents of early reader books vary from publisher to publisher and level to level. In general, books in the first and second levels of most series tend to be thirty-two to forty-eight pages in length. Books in the third level of most early reader series average forty-eight to sixty-four pages, with only a small percentage having fewer than forty-eight pages. Many series do not have a fourth level, but out of those that do, the extents range from forty-eight to sixty-four pages. Some series also have a level that precedes level one; in these cases, the extents are almost always thirty-two pages.

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<sup>10</sup> The information presented in the "Print Specifications" section is a result of personal research compiled by studying the print specifications of numerous series of emergent reader books.

## Price

The current<sup>11</sup> standard list price for emergent reader books is \$3.99 US or \$4.99 CDN. A few individual books and some whole series are sold at higher prices in Canada, reaching prices as high as \$6.95 CDN. However, given the current strength of the Canadian dollar and the recent trend in reducing prices to reflect this phenomenon (Williams), it is possible that emergent reader books published in the future may be priced closer to the standard American price of \$3.99 US.

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<sup>11</sup> As of the time this report was written (October 2007).

### Cover Design

Emergent reader books must walk a fine line between individuality and conformity; they must be original and engaging enough to stand out in a crowd of similar books and series, but must also look enough like the other series already available (which all share extremely similar design features and overall appearances) to fit in on the emergent reader shelf.

Emergent reader series look similar to one another not only because they need to be easily recognizable, but also because they must meet both children's expectations of what the books are and their parents' and educators' expectations. Joy Bean, author of the 2004 article "In Search of New Readers: A Look at Some Developments in Easy-Reader and Chapter Book Lines," stresses that early reader books must look enough like "real" chapter books that children feel like they are progressing from picture books to something older children might read, while looking enough like practice texts that adults can easily distinguish them from "real" chapter books. The design standards that have evolved for emergent reader books offer designers a proven means of walking this fine line.

Because every book is different, it would be impossible to provide generalized recommendations as to how any given book cover should be designed. However, since early reader books need to conform to some of the conventions already established for the genre in order to "fit in with the crowd" and cater to both children's and adults' expectations of the genre, it is possible to provide a set of guidelines for designing these books based on the conventions already established. Following is a brief description of

the various design elements common to most emergent reader books, and details about how they are most often handled.

### Branding

Branding is a powerful force in children's book publishing, especially in the form of series branding. It seems that every generation of children has its own immensely popular series, from the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys series of the mid-twentieth century to the Sweet Valley High and Fear Street series of the 1980s and 90s to the Gossip Girls and Harry Potter series of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each of these series has accomplished massive sales numbers by enticing young readers (and by proxy, their parents) to buy books based on a brand name (whether it be the name of a character, an author, or the series itself).

While it is easy to see the benefits of branding a children's series in theory, it is more difficult to do it in practice, especially for a series of emergent reader books. The examples of successful series in the previous paragraph have a significant advantage over emergent reader chapter books in that all of the books in the individual series are connected by a common character, genre, or author. The difficulty of branding an emergent reader series is that there is no common thread—each of the books in the series is distinct. It is true that many emergent reader book publishers introduce several specialized series within their early reader lines, for example the Dumpy the Dump Truck series within HarperCollins's "I Can Read" line or the Strawberry Shortcake series within Penguin's "All Aboard Reading" line, but these series still need to be branded as part of the larger line (Bean).



While marketing and publicity play an important role in the successful branding of an emergent reader series, the design of the series is also significant. When branding elements are incorporated into book designs effectively, they create a “signature look” for the series that ties each of the separate books together and makes the series look like a cohesive whole while also identifying the series as an emergent reader line. There are several design elements that emergent reader book publishers use to create this sense of cohesion, including logos, banners, and the level information itself. Each of these factors is discussed in detail below.

*Logos.* Logos are perhaps the most important of the branding elements used on emergent reader books. They differentiate the series from all of the other lines on the market, and give readers and buyers a distinctive symbol to look for when attempting to find the series on the cramped early reader shelves. Most of the logos for early reader books incorporate the name of the series, not the name of the publisher (for example, HarperCollins’s classic “I Can Read” banner logo or Random House’s modern “Step into Reading” arrow logo). Logos are usually displayed horizontally across the top of the book’s front cover in a large enough size that they can be recognized from a distance, often taking up the top one-sixth or one-eighth of the cover.<sup>12</sup>

*Banners.* In most early reader series, a solid-coloured bar appears behind the logo at the top of the cover. This bar is often used to signal the book’s level, as most series use a different coloured bar for each level. However, there is no consistency between publishers

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<sup>12</sup> The information presented in the “Cover Design” section is a result of personal research compiled by studying the cover designs of numerous series of emergent reader books.

in the colour-coding of levels. For example, Dorling Kindersley's "DK Readers" series uses red to denote level one and green for level two, while Harcourt's "Green Light Readers" series uses red for level one and blue for level two. In some cases, a solid-coloured border appears around the outer edge of the cover in place of the banner.

*Level information.* Early reader publishers often also use a coloured circle or starburst to denote the level of the book in question. The coloured circle is usually about an inch in diameter, and the level number is indicated in the centre of the circle. The circular level logo is almost always placed at the top right-hand corner of the book's cover.

## Layout

The layout of the cover, spine, and back cover of early reader books is generally very similar throughout all early reader series. Along with the branding features discussed above, each cover usually includes an illustration or photo, the book's title, and the author and illustrator's names. The title of the book is usually centred and placed underneath the banner or level information at the top of the page. It is generally set in a large, easy-to-read display font in a bright primary or secondary colour. The illustration or photo is generally placed in the centre of the cover, directly below the title. In lower levels, the illustration is usually a simple one, placed amid a blank, solid-coloured background. In the higher levels, the illustrations become slightly more detailed, and often take up the majority of the cover space. The names of the author and illustrator are usually placed side-by-side at the bottom of the front cover.

The back covers of books in early reader series generally include a very short blurb, a small illustration, and a chart that explains the different levels of the series, along with the usual publisher, price, bar code, and ISBN information. The banner from the front cover usually extends over the spine and continues onto the back cover, with the circular series logo and level logo repeated on the back cover in the same treatment as on the front cover. The blurb (usually only about three short sentences) appears below the banner on the left side of the back cover, with a small illustration beside it on the right side. Below this, taking up the bottom half of the back cover, is where the levelling chart is placed. The publisher, price, bar code, and ISBN information is generally placed at the very bottom of the page. See Appendix Six for a diagram of the conventional cover design layout of an emergent reader chapter book.

Spine treatments tend to be very similar throughout most of the series. The coloured banner on the front and back covers is usually continued onto the spine so that levels can be easily recognized when the books are placed spine-out on the shelf. The level number is also usually displayed prominently, and set so that it can be read vertically. The rest of the text on the spine is set horizontally, with the series name, publisher name, and author's last name all being included. Small versions of publishers' logos are occasionally added to the bottom of the spine, but are usually not included at all, presumably due to space constraints; spines for early reader books tend to be very thin, often only two or three millimetres, making it difficult to include anything but the necessary information.

## Photographs and Illustrations

The photographs and illustrations used on the covers of early reader books vary widely from series to series and book to book. Illustrations are used more often than photographs, with most photos appearing on non-fiction books or books based on popular movie characters (for the latter, movie stills are often used as cover art). The vast majority of emergent reader books, especially those of a fictional nature, use illustrations on their covers, and the styles and complexities of the illustrations are as diverse as the books themselves. In general, books in the lowest level of a series use very simple, childish artwork, and the illustrations get more detailed and mature-looking as the levels get higher, but there is no hard-and-fast rule.

In addition to the artwork style, designers and art directors need to ensure that the photographs or illustrations that are depicted on a book's cover give children a good idea of what they can expect inside the book. This means that they should be closely related to the plot or subject of the book in question. According to Elfrieda H. Hiebert, covers with an abstract approach to artwork may confuse readers when they begin reading the book and find that it is not what was expected (559).

## Interior Design

Early reader chapter books are a unique format. Joy Bean notes that they act as a stepping stone between picture books and full-length chapter books, and their layout and design reflect this intermediary position. While emergent reader books are a similar size and length to many middle-grade chapter books, the way text and illustrations are used in emergent reader books more closely resembles the layout of picture books. This means that books that are forty-eight to sixty-four pages in length may only have eight hundred to twelve hundred words in total (Broerman). As Joan Broerman notes, some publishers even have guidelines as to how many lines are allowed per page or per book. For instance, HarperCollins regulates their “I Can Read” series so that there are approximately thirteen lines per page, with level two readers having a total of about two hundred lines, and level three readers having a total of about three hundred lines (Broerman).

Designers need to find a way to preserve the balance between the picture book and chapter book elements when working on texts for early readers. The illustrations and fonts used must be appropriate for children to read on their own without supervision, while not seeming too immature or “babyish.” When used well, the design features of an emergent reader book can support the literacy process and improve the accessibility of the text. But when used poorly, design features can make a text harder to read and understand (Fountas and Pinnell 55). Following is a brief discussion of the various elements of interior design for early reader books and a summary of the conventions used when deciding upon text and illustration layouts.

## Fonts

The fonts used in early reader books must be large and easy-to-read so that children do not have trouble deciphering the text (Fountas and Pinnell 55; Dzaldov and Peterson 224). Most emergent reader books use serif fonts in a size fourteen points or higher (Dzaldov and Peterson 225), often with the font size starting out very large in the low levels of the series and reducing slightly as the levels get higher. While there is no standard font size for early reader texts, most books use a font between twenty and twenty-two points, with some series using fonts as large as thirty points in their lower levels.<sup>13</sup>

## Text Layout

The layout of text on the page is extremely important in early reader books; as Fountas and Pinnell explain, “the way a text is laid out—font size, margins, spacing between words and lines, placement of phrases and sentences, headings and subheadings—can support the reader or make the text harder” (55). Fountas and Pinnell suggest that most early reader books only have a small number of lines per page: one to two lines for the lower levels and three to eight lines for the higher levels<sup>14</sup> (105–125). They argue that there should be clearly defined spaces between each word in a line<sup>15</sup> and between each line on a page so that the text is easy to read, search, and extract information from (55). They also

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<sup>13</sup> Much of the information presented in the “Interior Design” section is a result of personal research compiled by studying the interior designs of numerous series of emergent reader books.

<sup>14</sup> Though many early reader series on the market today have as many as twelve or thirteen lines per page for books in the higher levels.

<sup>15</sup> Fountas and Pinnell suggest that designers use two or three spaces between words instead of one (104).

recommend that sentences start flush left in most books, as this helps young readers process the print. Sentences that begin mid-line or that carry over to the next page increase the difficulty for young readers, and should only be introduced in the higher levels of the series. Longer sentences should begin flush left no matter what level of book they are being included in (Fountas and Pinnell 55–56, 105–125). Sentences that begin with punctuation such as an opening quotation mark should be set so that the first letter of the sentence lines up with the left margin; the punctuation mark should be placed in the margin beside the first letter of the sentence. As mentioned in the “Editorial Concerns” section of this report, lines should never be broken mid-phrase in the early levels of a series (Fountas and Pinnell 107–114).

### Layout of Illustrations

Along with the layout of the text on the page, it is also imperative that designers pay close attention to the relationship between the text and illustrations. As discussed in Chapter Two of this report, illustrations that adhere closely to the content of the book can be an effective way of supporting the text and assisting children with decoding. However, in order for the illustrations to play this role effectively, they must not interfere with the text on the page. Fountas and Pinnell recommend that books in the early levels of a series have illustrations that are simple and clear, with very little detail to distract children from the narrative. Every page of the text should be supported by illustrations that match closely with the events or characters described. They should also be clearly separated from

the text on the page (105–109). As the levels get higher, illustrations may become slightly more detailed and complex, and may be used less often (i.e. on every other page) in a variety of layouts. While they should still support the text, they do not necessarily need to match it exactly. There may be some interaction with the print, but they should largely remain separate (Fountas and Pinnell 112–117). Books in the highest levels are more flexible when it comes to illustrations. Fountas and Pinnell argue that illustrations in upper-level texts should not relate as closely to the literal meaning of the text, and should instead extend the meaning and tone implied in the narrative. Illustrations may be detailed, complex, and diverse, and should be placed in a variety of engaging layouts. However, it is still important for illustrations to be separated from the text so that they do not impede children in the process of decoding (Fountas and Pinnell 119–125).



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Conclusion

Emergent reader series are a relatively new phenomenon in the publishing industry. Marie Clay introduced the first levelled reading system in the 1980s, and levelling quickly grew to be a popular craze in both the publishing and educational fields. As John Lorinc notes in his 2006 *Quill and Quire Omni* article “The Latest Literacy Cure-All,” over the last two decades, the market for levelled emergent reader books in Canada has exploded, and publishers have been quick to step up and fill the holes created by these new demands. But as more publishers throw their proverbial hats into the levelled-reader ring, the market share remains virtually the same; the number of parents, teachers, and librarians who purchase and use early reader series as teaching tools is finite, and as more publishers launch lines for emergent readers, the competition for these consumers is getting fiercer (Bean).

As increasing numbers of publishers vie for the coveted early reader market, each new player must find fresh, innovative ways to capture its share of the profits. Whether it be through more engaging stories, texts more supportive of educational needs, better-branded series, or more comprehensive levelling techniques, publishers need to find a way to stand out in this competitive market if they want to be successful.

The best way for a publisher to go about creating a niche in the emergent reader market is entirely dependent upon its individual situation: size, editorial direction, location, budget, strengths, and weaknesses all play a role in making this decision. For example, large multinational publishers with hefty budgets often decide to use licensed

characters such as Spider-Man and the Transformers to draw readers in, a tactic that has been proven to greatly boost sales (Bean). Meanwhile, smaller publishers with more limited budgets often choose to focus on high-interest books written by established authors, providing skeptics of the genre (those who complain that many early reader books are “bland [...] lacking creativity [...] and] mediocre literature”) with books that are written with levels in mind, but that do not sacrifice literary quality (Lorinc).

In the case of Raincoast Books, a medium-sized publisher based in Vancouver, British Columbia, with a strong editorial vision but a fairly modest budget, it would seem that the latter tactic would have been more appropriate. However, publishing high-interest books by established authors may not have been enough to distinguish Raincoast’s series from what is already available in the emergent reader market. Even publishing high-interest *Canadian* books by established authors may not have been enough, as two prominent Canadian children’s publishers, Kids Can Press and Orca Books, are already doing just that (Lorinc). In order to build a successful series, Raincoast would have needed to develop a program that offered readers and educators something more than what is already available, whether this would be through more supportive editorial content, more precise readability and levelling procedures, or more engaging formats and designs. Since Raincoast’s Puddle Jumpers series was terminated before a detailed publishing plan could be developed for it, it is difficult to know whether the series would have been able to succeed in this venture. For the same reasons, it is difficult to provide any sort of critique of the project. It is, however, possible to offer suggestions of ways that the publishers at Raincoast could

have endeavoured to create an emergent reader series that provided its target demographic with something that was not already readily available in the emergent reader market. The following sections provide a summary of various editorial, readability and levelling, and design and production recommendations that could have benefited Raincoast's emergent reader series.

### Editorial Concerns

While high-quality, well-written literature is important, quality is not the only factor editors must take into account when acquiring and editing books for emergent readers. Literacy experts stress the need for high-quality literature that also supports the literacy process: books that are decodable, predictable, and accessible (Hiebert 563–565). The ideal literacy supports would give children the opportunity to practise with high-frequency, high-content, and phonetically regular words while providing them with the illustration, repetition, and rhyme features they need to make meaning out of the text. In addition to these factors, the content and structure of the books would ideally be accessible to readers of many different ages and abilities.

While most early reader publishers attempt to meet at least some of these needs, this is usually done in a general way, with each book providing a combination of reading supports, but without any specific support features being emphasized. High-content, high-frequency, and phonetically regular words are included in the books, but usually no particular type of word is emphasized over others. This makes it difficult for parents and

educators to find books that support the specific reading lessons being taught (such as phonics lessons or lessons on recognizing and understanding the meanings of high-frequency or high-content words), and leaves them picking and choosing books from many different genres and series to create a comprehensive reading support system (Hiebert 563).

One way that Raincoast could have created a niche for themselves within the early reader market is to provide what it is missing right now: books that are of high literary value, but that also focus on the specific needs of educators. This would have involved working with authors to create high-quality, well-written books that each concentrated on a specific facet of decodability (i.e. high-frequency, high-content, or phonetically regular words), while still remaining predictable, accessible, and engaging. As more books were published in the series, a wider variety of titles would be available in each level and category, providing the selection needed to ensure that readers would be able to find something to suit their individual skill levels and interests. Taken individually, these books would have ideally looked and sounded no different than the early readers already on the market, except that they would have borne a mark identifying the particular skill focused on in the book. But when used as a set, the series would have provided parents and educators with a comprehensive collection of literacy supports.

## Readability and Levelling Concerns

In-house editors are usually the people in charge of determining which level a book should be placed in, and they often use a variety of techniques to determine a book's difficulty. Some of the larger publishers, such as Scholastic USA, provide potential buyers with detailed information about their readability and levelling processes, and cater to a broad market by providing various readability and levelling scores for their books based on numerous different professionally administered systems. Scholastic, for example, supplies parents and educators with scores for each of their books based on Guided Reading, Developmental Reading Assessment, and Lexiles. Many of the smaller publishers use a simple readability formula paired with an editor's expertise to determine difficulty. For example, Orca Books uses the Fry Readability Graph to determine readability, but couples this with a strict editing process that ensures that their books have linear storylines, clear contexts, and understandable situations.

In Raincoast's case, the ideal way to level books would probably have been a combination of a simple readability formula, such as Flesch-Kincaid, and a levelling procedure that could be performed in-house by an editor familiar with children's books, such as Fountas and Pinnell's Guided Reading system. If used consistently, these tactics should have provided a fairly accurate and reliable system of determining the appropriate difficulty levels of books at very little cost. Later, when the series was more established and a wider variety of books was available, Raincoast could have submitted the books to a professional readability scoring company, such as ATOS or Lexile, in order to extend the

information available for the books and provide parents and educators with a recognized readability score that corresponded to the standardized test scores that they already have for their children and students.

### Design and Production Concerns

Many of the more established publishers of emergent reader books have begun revisiting their old designs and modernizing them for the current market (Bean). Publishers that have introduced fresher looks have been rewarded by higher sales and increased visibility in the marketplace (Bean). Even HarperCollins, the oldest and one of the most prolific publishers of early readers, has reworked its iconic “I Can Read” logo, giving it a “younger and friendlier” look (Bean).

When designing emergent reader books, it is important to create a signature look that is cutting-edge and eye-catching while still seeming like it fits in on an early reader shelf. It is also crucial that the designs and artwork used are appropriate for the age range they are catering to, and are appealing to both children and adults. Fonts, illustrations, and layouts should be more mature-looking than those used in picture books while still remaining suitable for children of a young age. They should also appear modern and engaging enough to appeal to the parents and educators who will be purchasing the books.

Many of the emergent reader books on the shelves right now, even some of those that have been revamped, use classic illustrations and design styles, with childish images, muted colours, and busy design elements such as ornate borders. While these designs may

provide children with a more familiar and comforting look, they tend to appear stale and outdated when shelved next to books with more modern design styles, which can be a turn-off for both children and adults. One way the publishing team at Raincoast could have made their books stand out on the often-cluttered early reader shelves is to use a contemporary approach to design, incorporating bold images or modern illustrations, a palette of vibrant colours, and clean lines.

Another way for an emergent reader series to stand out while still remaining within the confines of the design conventions of the genre is in the spine treatment. Many emergent reader series are displayed on specially designed racks with only their spines apparently visible. Currently, most early reader lines have spine treatments that are almost identical to one another, making it extremely difficult to find a series based on the spine alone. By introducing a distinctive design feature onto the spines of their books, even something as simple as using a special metallic ink (such as gold or silver) for the base colour of the spines, Raincoast's early reader series would not only have stood out, but would also have been easier to find. However, it should be noted that most bookstores shelve early reader books by level, not by series, and thus a designer cannot count on books being placed side-by-side. This means that the spine treatment chosen should be able to stand out on each book individually, not just when books are shelved together.



## From the Press to the Shelves

While there are countless emergent reader series currently available today, there is still room in the market for more, as long as the new lines being launched are able to provide parents, educators, and children with something that is not already readily available. But providing something new, whether it is a new levelling process, editorial vision, or design treatment, is not where a publisher's job ends. Like any other trade publishing venture, in order to achieve high sales numbers, the series being launched must be supported by effective sales, marketing, and publicity initiatives.

This report focuses primarily upon the *creation* of emergent reader books, but creating a product is only half of the publishing process. In order for a series to succeed, it is crucial that it has a strong marketing and publicity plan to promote it and a skilled sales team to get it into stores, schools, and libraries. While it was not possible to touch upon the second half of the publishing process within the confines of this report, it is strongly recommended that publishers who are planning to start a series like this do extensive research into the markets available for emergent reader books, and the most effective ways of reaching these markets.

Publishing an emergent reader series is a complicated venture with many moving parts, and the more information a publishing team has about it, the more likely they are to succeed.

APPENDICES

## Appendix One: Dolch Sight Word List

(arranged by grade and frequency)

| Preprimer | Primer | First | Second  | Third    |
|-----------|--------|-------|---------|----------|
| the       | he     | of    | would   | if       |
| to        | was    | his   | very    | long     |
| and       | that   | had   | your    | about    |
| a         | she    | him   | its     | got      |
| I         | on     | her   | around  | six      |
| you       | they   | some  | don't   | never    |
| it        | but    | as    | right   | seven    |
| in        | at     | then  | green   | eight    |
| said      | with   | could | their   | today    |
| for       | all    | when  | call    | myself   |
| up        | there  | were  | sleep   | much     |
| look      | out    | them  | five    | keep     |
| is        | be     | ask   | wash    | try      |
| go        | have   | an    | or      | start    |
| we        | am     | over  | before  | ten      |
| little    | do     | just  | been    | bring    |
| down      | did    | from  | off     | drink    |
| can       | what   | any   | cold    | only     |
| see       | so     | how   | tell    | better   |
| not       | get    | know  | work    | hold     |
| one       | like   | put   | first   | warm     |
| my        | this   | take  | does    | full     |
| me        | will   | every | goes    | done     |
| big       | yes    | old   | write   | light    |
| come      | went   | by    | always  | pick     |
| blue      | are    | after | made    | hurt     |
| red       | now    | think | gave    | cut      |
| where     | no     | let   | us      | kind     |
| jump      | came   | going | buy     | fall     |
| away      | ride   | walk  | those   | carry    |
| here      | into   | again | use     | small    |
| help      | good   | may   | fast    | own      |
| make      | want   | stop  | pull    | show     |
| yellow    | too    | fly   | both    | hot      |
| two       | pretty | round | sit     | far      |
| play      | four   | give  | which   | draw     |
| run       | saw    | once  | read    | clean    |
| find      | well   | open  | why     | grow     |
| three     | ran    | has   | found   | together |
| funny     | brown  | live  | because | shall    |
|           | eat    | thank | best    | laugh    |
|           | who    |       | upon    |          |
|           | new    |       | these   |          |
|           | must   |       | sing    |          |
|           | black  |       | wish    |          |
|           | white  |       | many    |          |
|           | soon   |       |         |          |
|           | our    |       |         |          |
|           | ate    |       |         |          |
|           | say    |       |         |          |
|           | under  |       |         |          |
|           | please |       |         |          |

(Ramsay)

## Appendix Two: The Thirty-Eight Most Common Phonograms

### A

at, am, ag, ack, ank, ap, an, ab, ay, ail, ain, ake

### E

ell, est, ed, eed, ew

### I

ill, ip, ick, ing, in, ink, im, ine, ight

### O

ot, op, og, ock, out, ow, ore

### U

unk, ug, uck, um

### Y

y

(Hiebert, Pearson, et al. 27)

### Appendix Three: Readability and Levelling Fact Sheets

#### Lexiles

- Type: computer-based readability measurement system
- Developer: MetaMetrics, Inc.
- Administrator: MetaMetrics, Inc. (measurement can be done officially or in-house using an online tool)
- Measures: reader ability and text difficulty
- Unit of measurement: Lexiles (for both reader ability and text difficulty)
- Method(s) of measurement: specialized standardized tests (reader ability) and syntactic/semantic variables (text difficulty)
- Semantic variable: word difficulty
- Syntactic variable: sentence length
- Provisions for emergent reader books: accounts for illustrations or books that are very short (< 500 words)
- Length of passage(s) tested: full text
- Precision: fine gradations
- Recognition: widely used and recognized
- Cost for official score: \$100/book, plus scanning and editorial costs as needed
- Further information: [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)

#### Advantage-TASA Open Standard Readability Formula for Books

- Type: computer-based readability measurement system
- Developers: Renaissance Learning, Inc. and Touchstone Applied Science Associates, Inc.
- Administrators: Renaissance Learning, Inc. and Touchstone Applied Science Associates, Inc. (measurement can only be done officially)
- Measures: reader ability and text difficulty
- Unit of measurement: U.S. grade levels (for both reader ability and text difficulty)
- Method(s) of measurement: any nationally normed standardized test (reader ability) and syntactic/semantic variables (text difficulty)
- Semantic variables: characters per word and grade level per word
- Syntactic variable: sentence length
- Provisions for emergent reader books: no separate formula for emergent reader books, but the system can make adjustments for long sentences with simple vocabulary or very short books
- Length of passage(s) tested: full text
- Precision: fine gradations (tenths of a grade level)
- Recognition: widely used and recognized
- Cost for official score: no cost
- Further information: [renlearn.com/ar/overview/atos.htm](http://renlearn.com/ar/overview/atos.htm)

#### Fry Index

- Type: hand-calculated readability measurement system
- Developer: Edward Fry
- Administrator: publisher (measurement can be done in-house)
- Measures: text difficulty only
- Unit of measurement: U.S. grade levels
- Method(s) of measurement: syntactic/semantic variables
- Semantic variable: syllables per passage
- Syntactic variable: sentence length
- Provisions for emergent reader books: none
- Length of passage(s) tested: three 100-word passages
- Precision: wide gradations (only measures whole grade levels)
- Recognition: widely used by educators
- Cost for official score: no official score available, no cost for individual scoring
- Further information: Appendix Four

#### New Dale-Chall Readability Formula

- Type: hand-calculated readability measurement system
- Developers: Edgar Dale and Jeanne S. Chall
- Administrator: publisher (measurement can be done in-house)
- Measures: text difficulty only
- Unit of measurement: U.S. grade levels
- Method(s) of measurement: syntactic/semantic variables
- Semantic variable: percentage of words not included on the Dale-Chall Modified List
- Syntactic variable: sentence length
- Formula:  $RGS = 0.1579PDW + 0.0496ASL + 3.6365$ , where RGS is the reading grade score, PDW is the percentage of difficult words, and ASL is the average sentence length
- Provisions for emergent reader books: none (words on the list are of a grade four reading level)
- Length of passage(s) tested: one 100-word passage per fifty pages in the book
- Precision: wide gradations (only measures whole grade levels)
- Recognition: not widely used
- Cost for official score: no official score available, no cost for individual scoring

#### Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

- Type: computer-based readability measurement system
- Developers: Rudolph Flesch and J. Peter Kincaid
- Administrator: publisher (measurement can be done in-house)
- Measures: text difficulty only
- Unit of measurement: U.S. grade levels
- Method(s) of measurement: syntactic/semantic variables
- Semantic variable: syllables per word
- Syntactic variable: sentence length
- Formula:  $FKRS = 0.39ASL + 11.8ASW - 15.59$ , where FKRS is the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Score, ASL is the average sentence length, and ASW is the average number of syllables per word
- Provisions for emergent reader books: none
- Length of passage(s) tested: full text
- Precision: fine gradations (tenths of a grade level)
- Recognition: widely used
- Cost for official score: no cost

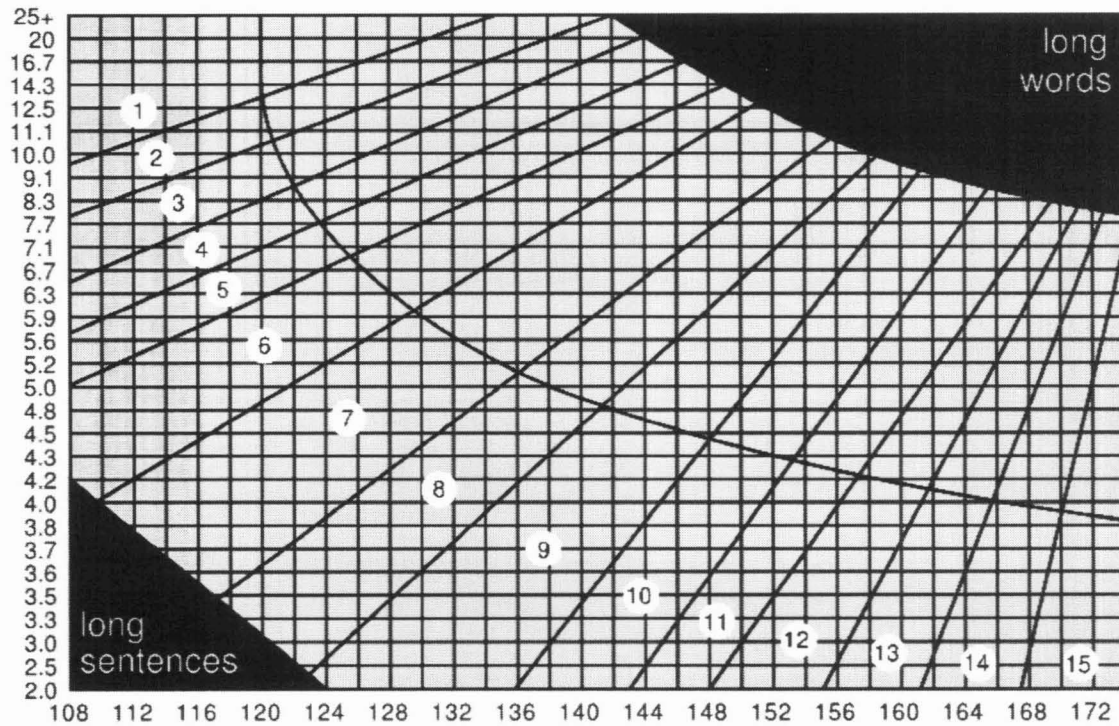
#### Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient

- Type: levelling system
- Developers: Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
- Administrator: measurement can be done officially or in-house
- Measures: overall text accessibility
- Unit of measurement: gradient of 26 levels (levels A-Z)
- Method(s) of measurement: comparing texts to benchmarks, evaluating texts by specific characteristics
- Characteristics studied: genres and forms, text structure, content, themes and ideas, language and literary features, sentence complexity, vocabulary, words, illustrations, book and print features (including length, print and layout, punctuation, and tools)
- Provisions for emergent reader books: designed specifically for emergent reader books
- Length of passage(s) tested: full text
- Precision: fine gradations
- Recognition: widely used
- Cost for official score: no cost

Reading Recovery

- Type: levelling system
- Developer: Marie Clay
- Administrator: measurement can only be done officially (service not available to publishers)
- Measures: overall text accessibility
- Unit of measurement: gradient of 26 levels
- Method(s) of measurement: comparing texts to benchmarks, evaluating texts by specific characteristics, evaluating appropriateness for individual students
- Characteristics studied: reader interest, prior knowledge, text layout, quality of illustrations, predictiveness of language
- Provisions for emergent reader books: designed specifically for emergent reader books
- Length of passage(s) tested: full text
- Precision: fine gradations
- Recognition: used only within the Reading Recovery program
- Cost for official score: no official score available to anyone outside of the Reading Recovery community

Appendix Four: Fry Readability Graph



Example

The following is an example of the Fry Index being used to determine the readability level for *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell.

Passage One:

*“Except on rare occasions she always wore her riding habit, for whether she rode or not she always expected to ride and in that expectation put on her habit upon arising. Each morning, rain or shine, Nellie was saddled and walked up and down in front of the house, waiting for the time when Mrs. Tarleton could spare an hour away from her duties. But Fairhill was a difficult plantation to manage and spare time hard to get, and more often than not Nellie walked up and down riderless hour after hour, while Beatrice Tarleton went through the day with [...]”* (Mitchell 85).



## Passage Two:

*“Only her feeling for Tara had not changed. She never came wearily home across the fields and saw the sprawling white house that her heart did not swell with love and the joy of homecoming. She never looked out of her window at green pastures and red fields and tall tangled swamp forest that a sense of beauty did not fill her. Her love for this land with its softly rolling hills of bright-red soil, this beautiful red earth that was blood colored, garnet, brick dust, vermilion, which so miraculously grew green bushes with white puffs, was one part of [...]”* (Mitchell 434).

## Passage Three:

*But even as they laughed, they expressed regret for Scarlett and her tragedy. After all, Scarlett was a lady and one of the few ladies in Atlanta who were nice to Yankees. She had already won their sympathy by the fact that she had to work because her husband couldn't or wouldn't support her properly. Even though her husband was a sorry one, it was dreadful that the poor thing should discover he had been untrue to her. And it was doubly dreadful that his death should occur simultaneously with the discovery of his infidelity. After all, a poor husband [...]”* (Mitchell 815).

## Passage One

Number of sentences: 2.75

Number of syllables: 141

## Passage Two

Number of sentences: 2.8

Number of syllables: 130

## Passage Three

Number of sentences: 5.2

Number of syllables: 148

Average number of sentences:  $(2.75 + 2.8 + 5.2) / 3 = 3.6$

Average number of syllables:  $(141 + 130 + 148) / 3 = 140$

Fry grade level: 9

## Appendix Five: Dale-Chall Modified List

|            |            |            |            |            |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| a          | animal     | backwards  | beefsteak  | blind      |
| able       | another    | bacon      | beehive    | blindfold  |
| aboard     | answer     | bad        | been       | blinds     |
| about      | ant        | badge      | beer       | block      |
| above      | any        | badly      | beet       | blood      |
| absent     | anybody    | bag        | before     | bloom      |
| accept     | anyhow     | bake       | beg        | blossom    |
| accident   | anyone     | baker      | began      | blot       |
| account    | anything   | bakery     | beggar     | blow       |
| ache       | anyway     | baking     | begged     | blue       |
| aching     | anywhere   | ball       | begin      | blueberry  |
| acorn      | apart      | balloon    | beginning  | bluebird   |
| acre       | apartment  | banana     | begun      | blush      |
| across     | ape        | band       | behave     | board      |
| act        | apiece     | bandage    | behind     | boast      |
| acts       | appear     | bang       | being      | boat       |
| add        | apple      | banjo      | believe    | bob        |
| address    | April      | bank       | bell       | bobwhite   |
| admire     | apron      | banker     | belong     | bodies     |
| adventure  | are        | bar        | below      | body       |
| afar       | aren't     | barber     | belt       | boil       |
| afraid     | arise      | bare       | bench      | boiler     |
| after      | arithmetic | barefoot   | bend       | bold       |
| afternoon  | arm        | barely     | beneath    | bone       |
| afterward  | armful     | bark       | bent       | bonnet     |
| afterwards | army       | barn       | berries    | boo        |
| again      | arose      | barrel     | berry      | book       |
| against    | around     | base       | beside     | bookcase   |
| age        | arrange    | baseball   | besides    | bookkeeper |
| aged       | arrive     | basement   | best       | boom       |
| ago        | arrived    | basket     | bet        | boot       |
| agree      | arrow      | bat        | better     | born       |
| ah         | art        | batch      | between    | borrow     |
| ahead      | artist     | bath       | bib        | boss       |
| aid        | as         | bathe      | bible      | both       |
| aim        | ash        | bathing    | bicycle    | bother     |
| air        | ashes      | bathroom   | bid        | bottle     |
| airfield   | aside      | bathub     | big        | bottom     |
| airplane   | ask        | battle     | bigger     | bought     |
| airport    | asleep     | battleship | bill       | bounce     |
| airship    | at         | bay        | billboard  | bow        |
| airy       | ate        | be         | bin        | bowl       |
| alarm      | attack     | beach      | bind       | bow-wow    |
| alike      | attend     | bead       | bird       | box        |
| alive      | attention  | beam       | birth      | boxcar     |
| all        | August     | bean       | birthday   | boxer      |
| alley      | aunt       | bear       | biscuit    | boxes      |
| alligator  | author     | beard      | bit        | boy        |
| allow      | auto       | beast      | bite       | boyhood    |
| almost     | automobile | beat       | biting     | bracelet   |
| alone      | autumn     | beating    | bitter     | brain      |
| along      | avenue     | beautiful  | black      | brake      |
| aloud      | awake      | beautify   | blackberry | bran       |
| already    | awaken     | beauty     | blackbird  | branch     |
| also       | away       | became     | blackboard | brass      |
| always     | awful      | because    | blackness  | brave      |
| am         | awfully    | become     | blacksmith | bread      |
| America    | awhile     | becoming   | blame      | break      |
| American   | ax         | bed        | blank      | breakfast  |
| among      | axe        | bedbug     | blanket    | breast     |
| amount     | baa        | bedroom    | blast      | breath     |
| an         | babe       | bedspread  | blaze      | breathe    |
| and        | babies     | bedtime    | bleed      | breeze     |
| angel      | back       | bee        | bless      | brick      |
| anger      | background | beech      | blessing   | bride      |
| angry      | backward   | beef       | blew       | bridge     |

|              |              |           |           |            |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| bright       | campfire     | checkers  | cob       | crank      |
| brightness   | can          | cheek     | cobbler   | cranky     |
| bring        | canal        | cheer     | cocoa     | crash      |
| broad        | canary       | cheese    | coconut   | crawl      |
| broadcast    | candle       | cherry    | cocoon    | crazy      |
| broke        | candlestick  | chest     | cod       | cream      |
| broken       | candy        | chew      | codfish   | creamy     |
| brook        | cane         | chick     | coffee    | creek      |
| broom        | cannon       | chicken   | coffeepot | creep      |
| brother      | cannot       | chief     | coin      | crept      |
| brought      | canoe        | child     | cold      | cried      |
| brown        | can't        | childhood | collar    | croak      |
| brush        | canyon       | children  | college   | crook      |
| bubble       | cap          | chill     | color     | crooked    |
| bucket       | cape         | chilly    | colored   | crop       |
| buckle       | capital      | chimney   | colt      | cross      |
| bud          | captain      | chin      | column    | crossing   |
| buffalo      | car          | china     | comb      | cross-eyed |
| bug          | card         | chip      | come      | crow       |
| buggy        | cardboard    | chipmunk  | comfort   | crowd      |
| build        | care         | chocolate | comic     | crowded    |
| building     | careful      | choice    | coming    | crown      |
| built        | careless     | choose    | company   | cruel      |
| bulb         | carelessness | chop      | compare   | crumb      |
| bull         | carload      | chorus    | conductor | crumble    |
| bullet       | carpenter    | chose     | cone      | crush      |
| bum          | carpet       | chosen    | connect   | crust      |
| bumblebee    | carriage     | christen  | coo       | cry        |
| bump         | carrot       | Christmas | cook      | cries      |
| bun          | carry        | church    | cooked    | cube       |
| bunch        | cart         | chum      | cooking   | cuff       |
| bundle       | carve        | cigarette | cookie    | cup        |
| bunny        | case         | circle    | cookies   | cuff       |
| burn         | cash         | circus    | cool      | cup        |
| burst        | cashier      | citizen   | cooler    | cupboard   |
| bury         | castle       | city      | coop      | cupful     |
| bus          | cat          | clang     | copper    | cure       |
| bush         | catbird      | clap      | copy      | curl       |
| bushel       | catch        | class     | cord      | curly      |
| business     | catcher      | classmate | cork      | curtain    |
| busy         | caterpillar  | classroom | corn      | curve      |
| but          | catfish      | claw      | corner    | cushion    |
| butcher      | catsup       | clay      | correct   | custard    |
| butt         | cattle       | clean     | cost      | customer   |
| butter       | caught       | cleaner   | cot       | cut        |
| buttercup    | cause        | clear     | cottage   | cute       |
| butterfly    | cave         | clerk     | cotton    | cutting    |
| buttermilk   | ceiling      | clever    | couch     | dab        |
| butterscotch | cell         | click     | cough     | dad        |
| button       | cellar       | cliff     | could     | daddy      |
| buttonhole   | cent         | climb     | couldn't  | daily      |
| buy          | center       | clip      | count     | dairy      |
| buzz         | cereal       | cloak     | counter   | daisy      |
| by           | certain      | clock     | country   | dam        |
| bye          | certainly    | close     | county    | damage     |
| cab          | chain        | closet    | course    | dame       |
| cabbage      | chair        | cloth     | court     | damp       |
| cabin        | chalk        | clothes   | cousin    | dance      |
| cabinet      | champion     | clothing  | cover     | dancer     |
| cackle       | chance       | cloud     | cow       | dancing    |
| cage         | change       | cloudy    | coward    | dandy      |
| cake         | chap         | clover    | cowardly  | danger     |
| calendar     | charge       | clown     | cowboy    | dangerous  |
| calf         | charm        | club      | cozy      | dare       |
| call         | chart        | cluck     | crab      | dark       |
| caller       | chase        | clump     | crack     | darkness   |
| calling      | chatter      | coach     | cracker   | darling    |
| came         | cheap        | coal      | cradle    | darn       |
| camel        | cheat        | coast     | cramps    | dart       |
| camp         | check        | coat      | cranberry | dash       |

|            |            |             |             |            |
|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| date       | donkey     | egg         | family      | flashlight |
| daughter   | don't      | eh          | fan         | flat       |
| dawn       | door       | eight       | fancy       | flea       |
| day        | doorbell   | eighteen    | far         | flesh      |
| daybreak   | doorknob   | eighty      | faraway     | flew       |
| daytime    | doorstep   | either      | fare        | flies      |
| dead       | dope       | elbow       | farmer      | flight     |
| deaf       | dot        | elder       | farm        | flip       |
| deal       | double     | eldest      | farming     | flip-flop  |
| dear       | dough      | electric    | far-off     | float      |
| death      | dove       | electricity | farther     | flock      |
| December   | down       | elephant    | fashion     | flood      |
| decide     | downstairs | eleven      | fast        | floor      |
| deck       | downtown   | elf         | fasten      | flop       |
| deed       | dozen      | elm         | fat         | flour      |
| deep       | drag       | else        | father      | flow       |
| deer       | drain      | elsewhere   | fault       | flower     |
| defeat     | drank      | empty       | favor       | flowery    |
| defend     | draw       | end         | favorite    | flutter    |
| defense    | drawer     | ending      | fear        | fly        |
| delight    | draw       | enemy       | feast       | foam       |
| den        | drawing    | engine      | feather     | fog        |
| dentist    | dream      | engineer    | February    | foggy      |
| depend     | dress      | English     | fed         | fold       |
| deposit    | dresser    | enjoy       | feed        | folks      |
| describe   | dressmaker | enough      | feel        | follow     |
| desert     | drew       | enter       | feet        | following  |
| deserve    | dried      | envelope    | fell        | fond       |
| desire     | drift      | equal       | fellow      | food       |
| desk       | drill      | erase       | felt        | fool       |
| destroy    | drink      | eraser      | fence       | foolish    |
| devil      | drip       | errand      | fever       | foot       |
| dew        | drive      | escape      | few         | football   |
| diamond    | driven     | eve         | fib         | footprint  |
| did        | driver     | even        | fiddle      | for        |
| didn't     | drop       | evening     | field       | forehead   |
| die        | drove      | ever        | fife        | forest     |
| died       | drown      | every       | fifteen     | forget     |
| dies       | drowsy     | everybody   | fifth       | forgive    |
| difference | drub       | everyday    | fifty       | forgot     |
| different  | drum       | everyone    | fig         | forgotten  |
| dig        | drunk      | everything  | fight       | fork       |
| dim        | dry        | everywhere  | figure      | form       |
| dime       | duck       | evil        | file        | fort       |
| dine       | due        | exact       | fill        | forth      |
| ding-dong  | dug        | except      | film        | fortune    |
| dinner     | dull       | exchange    | finally     | forty      |
| dip        | dumb       | excited     | find        | forward    |
| direct     | dump       | exciting    | fine        | fought     |
| direction  | during     | excuse      | finger      | found      |
| dirt       | dust       | exit        | finish      | fountain   |
| dirty      | dusty      | expect      | fire        | four       |
| discover   | duty       | explain     | firearm     | fourteen   |
| dish       | dwarf      | extra       | firecracker | fourth     |
| dislike    | dwelt      | eye         | fireplace   | fox        |
| dismiss    | dying      | eyebrow     | fireworks   | frame      |
| ditch      | each       | fable       | firing      | free       |
| dive       | eager      | face        | first       | freesdom   |
| diver      | eagle      | facing      | fish        | freeze     |
| divide     | ear        | fact        | fisherman   | freight    |
| do         | early      | factory     | fit         | French     |
| dock       | earn       | fail        | fits        | fresh      |
| doctor     | earth      | faint       | five        | fret       |
| does       | east       | fair        | fix         | friday     |
| doesn't    | eastern    | fairly      | flag        | fried      |
| dog        | easy       | faith       | flake       | friend     |
| doll       | eat        | fake        | flame       | friendly   |
| dollar     | eaten      | fall        | flap        | friendship |
| dolly      | edge       | false       | flash       | frighten   |
| done       |            |             |             | frog       |

|             |               |              |           |             |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| from        | golf          | haircut      | helpful   | hound       |
| front       | gone          | hairpin      | hem       | hour        |
| frost       | good          | half         | hen       | house       |
| frown       | goods         | hall         | henhouse  | housetop    |
| froze       | goodbye       | halt         | her       | housewife   |
| fruit       | good-by       | ham          | hers      | housework   |
| fry         | goodbye       | hammer       | herd      | how         |
| fudge       | good-bye      | hand         | here      | however     |
| fuel        | good-looking  | handful      | here's    | howl        |
| full        | goodness      | handkerchief | hero      | hug         |
| fully       | goody         | handle       | herself   | huge        |
| fun         | goose         | handwriting  | he's      | hum         |
| funny       | gooseberry    | hang         | hey       | humble      |
| fur         | got           | happen       | hickory   | hump        |
| furniture   | govern        | happily      | hid       | hundred     |
| further     | government    | happiness    | hidden    | hung        |
| fuzzy       | gown          | happy        | hide      | hunger      |
| gain        | grab          | harbor       | high      | hungry      |
| gallon      | gracious      | hard         | highway   | hunk        |
| gallop      | grade         | hardly       | hill      | hunt        |
| game        | grain         | hardship     | hillside  | hunter      |
| gang        | grand         | hardware     | hilltop   | hurrah      |
| garage      | grandchild    | hare         | hilly     | hurried     |
| garbage     | grandchildren | hark         | him       | hurry       |
| garden      | granddaughter | harm         | himself   | hurt        |
| gas         | grandfather   | harness      | hind      | husband     |
| gasoline    | grandma       | harp         | hint      | hush        |
| gate        | grandmother   | harvest      | hip       | hut         |
| gather      | grandpa       | has          | hire      | hymn        |
| gave        | grandson      | hasn't       | his       | I           |
| gay         | grandstand    | haste        | hiss      | ice         |
| gear        | grape         | hasten       | history   | icy         |
| geese       | grapes        | hasty        | hit       | I'd         |
| general     | grapefruit    | hat          | hitch     | idea        |
| gentle      | grass         | hatch        | hive      | ideal       |
| gentleman   | grasshopper   | hatchet      | ho        | if          |
| gentlemen   | grateful      | hate         | hoe       | ill         |
| geography   | grave         | haul         | hog       | I'll        |
| get         | gravel        | have         | hold      | I'm         |
| getting     | graveyard     | haven't      | holder    | important   |
| giant       | gravy         | having       | hole      | impossible  |
| gift        | gray          | hawk         | holiday   | improve     |
| gingerbread | graze         | hay          | hollow    | in          |
| girl        | grease        | hayfield     | holy      | inch        |
| give        | great         | haystack     | home      | inches      |
| given       | green         | he           | homely    | income      |
| giving      | greet         | head         | homesick  | indeed      |
| glad        | grew          | headache     | honest    | Indian      |
| gladly      | grind         | heal         | honey     | indoors     |
| glance      | groan         | health       | honeybee  | ink         |
| glass       | grocery       | healthy      | honeymoon | inn         |
| glasses     | ground        | heap         | honk      | insect      |
| gleam       | group         | hear         | honor     | inside      |
| glide       | grove         | hearing      | hood      | instant     |
| glory       | grow          | heard        | hoof      | instead     |
| glove       | guard         | heart        | hook      | insult      |
| glow        | guess         | heat         | hoop      | intend      |
| glue        | guest         | heater       | hop       | interested  |
| go          | guide         | heaven       | hope      | interesting |
| going       | gulf          | heavy        | hopeful   | into        |
| goes        | gum           | he'd         | hopeless  | invite      |
| goal        | gun           | heel         | horn      | iron        |
| goat        | gunpowder     | height       | horse     | is          |
| gobble      | guy           | held         | horseback | island      |
| God         | ha            | hell         | horseshoe | isn't       |
| god         | habit         | he'll        | hose      | it          |
| godmother   | had           | hello        | hospital  | its         |
| gold        | hadn't        | helmet       | host      | it's        |
| golden      | hail          | help         | hot       | itself      |
| goldfish    | hair          | helper       | hotel     | I've        |

|           |           |            |          |              |
|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|--------------|
| ivory     | lake      | lip        | mare     | month        |
| ivy       | lamb      | list       | mark     | moo          |
| jacket    | lame      | listen     | market   | moon         |
| jacks     | lamp      | lit        | marriage | moonlight    |
| jail      | land      | little     | married  | moose        |
| jam       | lane      | live       | marry    | mop          |
| January   | language  | lives      | mask     | more         |
| jar       | lantern   | lively     | mast     | morning      |
| jaw       | lap       | liver      | master   | morrow       |
| jay       | lard      | living     | mat      | moss         |
| jelly     | large     | lizard     | match    | most         |
| jellyfish | lash      | load       | matter   | mostly       |
| jerk      | lass      | loaf       | mattress | mother       |
| jig       | last      | loan       | may      | motor        |
| job       | late      | loaves     | May      | mount        |
| jockey    | laugh     | lock       | maybe    | mountain     |
| join      | laundry   | locomotive | mayor    | mouse        |
| joke      | law       | log        | maypole  | mouth        |
| joking    | lawn      | lone       | me       | move         |
| jolly     | lawyer    | lonely     | meadow   | movie        |
| journey   | lay       | lonesome   | meal     | movies       |
| joy       | lazy      | long       | mean     | moving       |
| joyful    | lead      | look       | means    | mow          |
| joyous    | leader    | lookout    | meant    | Mr.          |
| judge     | leaf      | loop       | measure  | Mrs.         |
| jug       | leak      | loose      | meat     | much         |
| juice     | lean      | lord       | medicine | mud          |
| juicy     | leap      | lose       | meet     | muddy        |
| July      | learn     | loser      | meeting  | mug          |
| jump      | learned   | loss       | melt     | mule         |
| June      | least     | lost       | member   | multiply     |
| Junior    | leather   | lot        | men      | murder       |
| junk      | leave     | loud       | mend     | music        |
| just      | leaving   | love       | meow     | must         |
| keen      | led       | lovely     | merry    | my           |
| keep      | left      | lover      | mess     | myself       |
| kept      | leg       | low        | message  | nail         |
| kettle    | lemon     | luck       | met      | name         |
| key       | lemonade  | lucky      | metal    | nap          |
| kick      | lend      | lumber     | mew      | napkin       |
| kid       | length    | lump       | mice     | narrow       |
| kill      | less      | lunch      | middle   | nasty        |
| killed    | lesson    | lying      | midnight | naughty      |
| kind      | let       | ma         | might    | navy         |
| kindly    | let's     | machine    | mighty   | near         |
| kindness  | letter    | machinery  | mile     | nearby       |
| king      | letting   | mad        | milk     | nearly       |
| kingdom   | lettuce   | made       | milkman  | neat         |
| kiss      | level     | magazine   | mill     | neck         |
| kitchen   | liberty   | magic      | miler    | necktie      |
| kite      | library   | maid       | million  | need         |
| kitten    | lice      | mail       | mind     | needle       |
| kitty     | lick      | mailbox    | mine     | needn't      |
| knee      | lid       | mailman    | miner    | Negro        |
| kneel     | lie       | major      | mint     | neighbor     |
| knew      | life      | make       | minute   | neighborhood |
| knife     | lift      | making     | mirror   | neither      |
| knit      | light     | male       | mischief | nerve        |
| knives    | lightness | mama       | miss     | nest         |
| knob      | lightning | mamma      | Miss     | net          |
| knock     | like      | man        | misspell | never        |
| knot      | likely    | manager    | mistake  | nevermore    |
| know      | liking    | mane       | misty    | new          |
| known     | lily      | manger     | mitt     | news         |
| lace      | limb      | many       | mitten   | newspaper    |
| lad       | lime      | map        | mix      | next         |
| ladder    | limp      | maple      | moment   | nibble       |
| ladies    | line      | marble     | Monday   | nice         |
| lady      | linen     | march      | money    | nickel       |
| laid      | lion      | March      | monkey   | night        |

|               |           |            |           |           |
|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| nightgown     | outward   | pear       | police    | queer     |
| nine          | oven      | pearl      | policeman | question  |
| nineteen      | over      | peck       | polish    | quick     |
| ninety        | overalls  | peek       | polite    | quickly   |
| no            | overcoat  | peel       | pond      | quiet     |
| nobody        | overeat   | peep       | ponies    | quilt     |
| nod           | overhead  | peg        | pony      | quit      |
| noise         | overhear  | pen        | pool      | quite     |
| noisy         | overnight | pencil     | poor      | rabbit    |
| none          | overturn  | penny      | pop       | race      |
| noon          | owe       | people     | popcorn   | rack      |
| nor           | owing     | pepper     | popped    | radio     |
| north         | owl       | peppermint | porch     | radish    |
| northern      | own       | perfume    | pork      | rag       |
| nose          | owner     | perhaps    | possible  | rail      |
| not           | ox        | person     | post      | railroad  |
| note          | pa        | pet        | postage   | railway   |
| nothing       | pace      | phone      | postman   | rain      |
| notice        | pack      | piano      | pot       | rainy     |
| November      | package   | pick       | potato    | rainbow   |
| now           | pad       | pickle     | potatoes  | raise     |
| nowhere       | page      | picnic     | pound     | raisin    |
| number        | paid      | picture    | pour      | rake      |
| nurse         | pail      | pie        | powder    | ram       |
| nut           | pain      | piece      | power     | ran       |
| oak           | painful   | pig        | powerful  | ranch     |
| oar           | paint     | pigeon     | praise    | rang      |
| oatmeal       | painter   | piggy      | pray      | rap       |
| oats          | painting  | pile       | prayer    | rapidly   |
| obey          | pair      | pill       | prepare   | rat       |
| ocean         | pal       | pillow     | present   | rate      |
| o'clock       | palace    | pin        | pretty    | rather    |
| October       | pale      | pine       | price     | rattle    |
| odd           | pan       | pineapple  | prick     | raw       |
| of            | pancake   | pink       | prince    | ray       |
| off           | pane      | pint       | princess  | reach     |
| offer         | pansy     | pipe       | print     | read      |
| office        | pants     | pistol     | prison    | reader    |
| officer       | papa      | pit        | prize     | reading   |
| often         | paper     | pitch      | promise   | ready     |
| oh            | parade    | pitcher    | proper    | real      |
| oil           | pardon    | pity       | protect   | really    |
| old           | parent    | place      | proud     | reap      |
| old-fashioned | park      | plain      | prove     | rear      |
| on            | part      | plan       | prune     | reason    |
| once          | partly    | plane      | public    | rebuild   |
| one           | partner   | plant      | puddle    | receive   |
| onion         | party     | plate      | puff      | recess    |
| only          | pass      | platform   | pull      | record    |
| onward        | passenger | platter    | pump      | red       |
| open          | past      | play       | pumpkin   | redbird   |
| or            | paste     | player     | punch     | redbreast |
| orange        | pasture   | playground | punish    | refuse    |
| orchard       | pat       | playhouse  | pup       | reindeer  |
| order         | patch     | playmate   | pupil     | rejoice   |
| ore           | path      | plaything  | puppy     | remain    |
| organ         | patter    | pleasant   | pure      | remember  |
| other         | pave      | please     | purple    | remind    |
| otherwise     | pavement  | pleasure   | purse     | remove    |
| ouch          | paw       | plenty     | push      | rent      |
| ought         | pay       | plow       | puss      | repair    |
| our           | payment   | plug       | pussy     | repay     |
| ours          | pea       | plum       | pussycat  | repeat    |
| ourselves     | peas      | pocket     | put       | report    |
| out           | peace     | pocketbook | putting   | rest      |
| outdoors      | peaceful  | poem       | puzzle    | return    |
| outfit        | peach     | point      | quack     | review    |
| outlaw        | peaches   | poison     | quart     | reward    |
| outline       | peak      | poke       | quarter   | rib       |
| outside       | peanut    | pole       | queen     | ribbon    |

|          |              |            |           |            |
|----------|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| rice     | saint        | settle     | silly     | soap       |
| rich     | salad        | settlement | silver    | sob        |
| rid      | sale         | seven      | simple    | socks      |
| riddle   | salt         | seventeen  | sin       | sod        |
| ride     | same         | seventh    | since     | soda       |
| rider    | sand         | seventy    | sing      | sofa       |
| riding   | sandy        | several    | singer    | soft       |
| right    | sandwich     | sew        | single    | soil       |
| rim      | sang         | shade      | sink      | sold       |
| ring     | sank         | shadow     | sip       | soldier    |
| rip      | sap          | shady      | sir       | sole       |
| ripe     | sash         | shake      | sis       | some       |
| rise     | sat          | shaker     | sissy     | somebody   |
| rising   | satin        | shaking    | sister    | somehow    |
| river    | satisfactory | shall      | sit       | someone    |
| road     | Saturday     | shame      | sitting   | something  |
| roadside | sausage      | shan't     | six       | sometime   |
| roar     | savage       | shape      | sixteen   | sometimes  |
| roast    | save         | share      | sixth     | somewhere  |
| rob      | savings      | sharp      | sixty     | son        |
| robber   | saw          | shave      | size      | song       |
| robe     | say          | she        | skate     | soon       |
| robin    | scab         | she'd      | skater    | sore       |
| rock     | scales       | she'll     | ski       | sorrow     |
| rocky    | scare        | she's      | skin      | sorry      |
| rocket   | scarf        | shear      | skip      | sort       |
| rode     | school       | shears     | skirt     | soul       |
| roll     | schoolboy    | shed       | sky       | sound      |
| roller   | schoolhouse  | sheep      | slam      | soup       |
| roof     | schoolmaster | sheet      | slap      | sour       |
| room     | schoolroom   | shelf      | slate     | south      |
| rooster  | scorch       | shell      | slave     | southern   |
| root     | score        | shepherd   | sled      | space      |
| rope     | scrap        | shine      | sleep     | spade      |
| rose     | scrape       | shining    | sleepy    | spank      |
| rosebud  | scratch      | shiny      | sleeve    | sparrow    |
| rot      | scream       | ship       | sleigh    | speak      |
| rotten   | screen       | shirt      | slept     | speaker    |
| rough    | screw        | shock      | slice     | spear      |
| round    | scrub        | shoe       | slid      | speech     |
| route    | sea          | shoemaker  | slide     | speed      |
| row      | seal         | shone      | sling     | spell      |
| rowboat  | seam         | shook      | slip      | spelling   |
| royal    | search       | shoot      | slipped   | spend      |
| rub      | season       | shop       | slipper   | spent      |
| rubbed   | seat         | shopping   | slippery  | spider     |
| rubber   | second       | shore      | slit      | spike      |
| rubbish  | secret       | short      | slow      | spill      |
| rug      | see          | shot       | slowly    | spin       |
| rule     | seeing       | should     | sly       | spinach    |
| ruler    | seed         | shoulder   | smack     | spirit     |
| rumble   | seek         | shouldn't  | small     | spit       |
| run      | seem         | shout      | smart     | splash     |
| rung     | seen         | shovel     | smell     | spoil      |
| runner   | seesaw       | show       | smile     | spoke      |
| running  | select       | shower     | smoke     | spook      |
| rush     | self         | shut       | smooth    | spoon      |
| rust     | selfish      | shy        | snail     | sport      |
| rusty    | sell         | sick       | snake     | spot       |
| rye      | send         | sickness   | snap      | spread     |
| sack     | sense        | side       | snapping  | spring     |
| sad      | sent         | sidewalk   | sneeze    | springtime |
| saddle   | sentence     | sideways   | snow      | sprinkle   |
| sadness  | separate     | sigh       | snowy     | square     |
| safe     | September    | sight      | snowball  | squash     |
| safety   | servant      | sign       | snowflake | squeak     |
| said     | serve        | silence    | snuff     | squeeze    |
| sail     | service      | silent     | snug      | squirrel   |
| sailboat | set          | silk       | so        | stable     |
| sailor   | setting      | sill       | soak      | stack      |

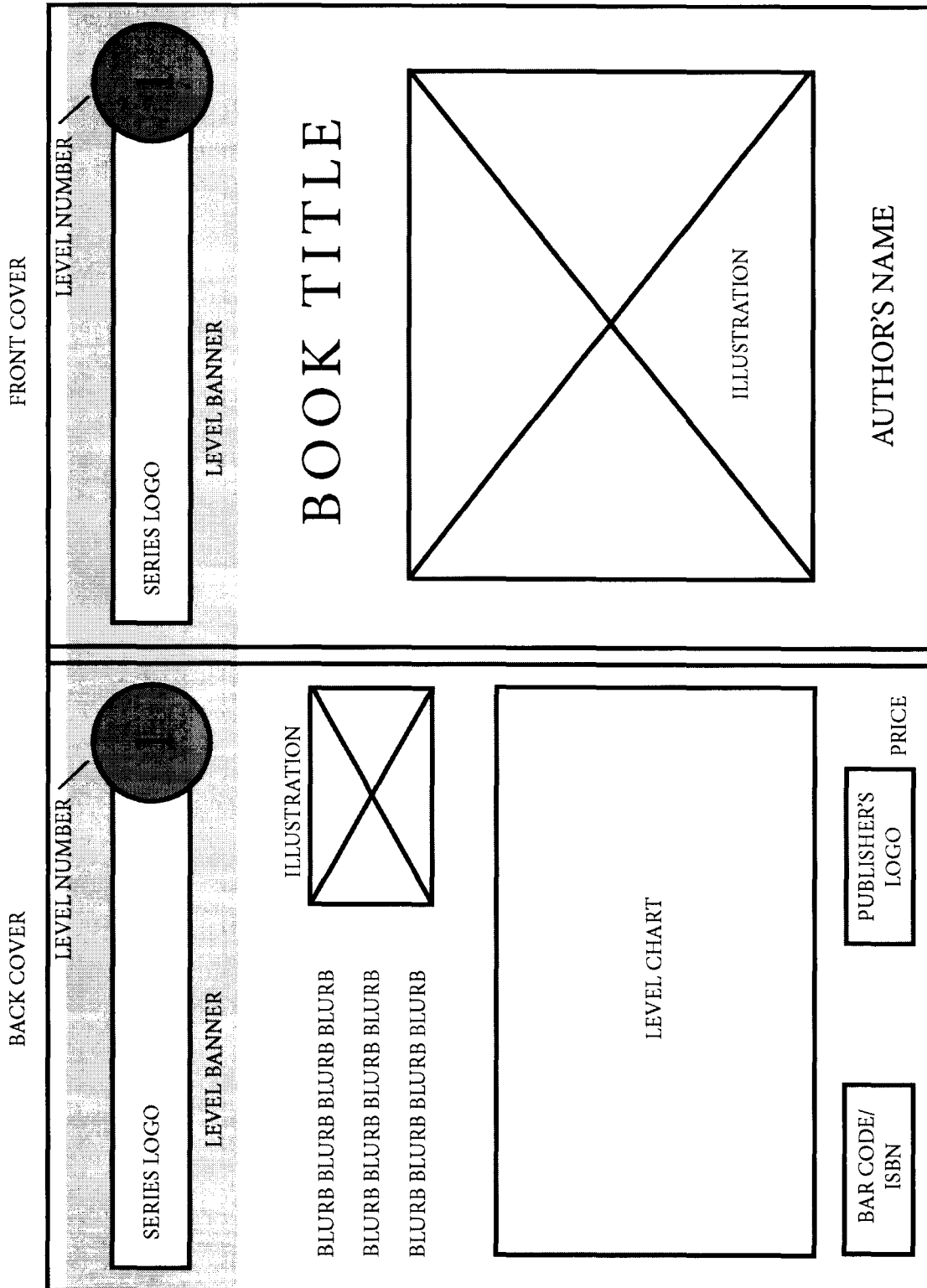


|            |            |              |            |            |
|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| stage      | sudden     | teach        | till       | Tuesday    |
| stair      | suffer     | teacher      | time       | tug        |
| stall      | sugar      | team         | tin        | tulip      |
| stamp      | suit       | tear         | tinkle     | tumble     |
| stand      | sum        | tease        | tiny       | tune       |
| star       | summer     | teaspoon     | tip        | tunnel     |
| stare      | sun        | teeth        | tiptoe     | turkey     |
| start      | Sunday     | telephone    | tire       | turn       |
| starve     | sunflower  | tell         | tired      | turtle     |
| state      | sung       | temper       | title      | twelve     |
| station    | sunk       | ten          | to         | twenty     |
| stay       | sunlight   | tennis       | toad       | twice      |
| steak      | sunny      | tent         | toadstool  | twig       |
| steal      | sunrise    | term         | toast      | twin       |
| steam      | sunset     | terrible     | tobacco    | two        |
| steamboat  | sunshine   | test         | today      | ugly       |
| steamer    | supper     | than         | toe        | umbrella   |
| steel      | suppose    | thank        | together   | uncle      |
| steep      | sure       | thanks       | toilet     | under      |
| steeply    | surely     | thankful     | told       | understand |
| steer      | surface    | Thanksgiving | told       | underwear  |
| stem       | surprise   | that         | tomato     | undress    |
| step       | swallow    | that's       | tomorrow   | unfair     |
| stepping   | swam       | the          | ton        | unfinished |
| stick      | swamp      | theater      | tone       | unfold     |
| sticky     | swan       | thee         | tongue     | unfriendly |
| stiff      | swat       | their        | tonight    | unhappy    |
| still      | swear      | them         | took       | unhurt     |
| stillness  | sweat      | then         | tool       | uniform    |
| sting      | sweater    | there        | toot       | United     |
| stir       | sweep      | these        | tooth      | States     |
| stitch     | sweet      | they         | toothbrush | unkind     |
| stock      | sweetness  | they'd       | toothpick  | unknown    |
| stocking   | sweetheart | they'll      | top        | unless     |
| stole      | swell      | they're      | tore       | unpleasant |
| stone      | swept      | they've      | torn       | until      |
| stood      | swift      | thick        | toss       | unwilling  |
| stool      | swim       | thief        | touch      | up         |
| stoop      | swimming   | thimble      | tow        | upon       |
| stop       | swing      | thin         | toward     | upper      |
| stopped    | switch     | thing        | towards    | upset      |
| stopping   | sword      | think        | towel      | upside     |
| store      | swore      | third        | tower      | upstairs   |
| stork      | table      | thirsty      | town       | uptown     |
| stories    | tablecloth | thirteen     | toy        | upward     |
| storm      | tablespoon | thirty       | trace      | us         |
| stormy     | tablet     | this         | track      | use        |
| stove      | tack       | story        | trade      | used       |
| straight   | tag        | those        | train      | useful     |
| strange    | tail       | though       | tramp      | valentine  |
| stranger   | tailor     | thought      | trap       | valley     |
| strap      | take       | thought      | tray       | valuable   |
| straw      | taken      | thousand     | treasure   | value      |
| strawberry | taking     | thread       | treat      | vase       |
| stream     | tale       | three        | tree       | vegetable  |
| street     | talk       | threw        | trick      | velvet     |
| stretch    | talker     | throat       | tricycle   | very       |
| string     | tall       | throne       | tried      | vessel     |
| strip      | tame       | through      | trim       | victory    |
| stripes    | tan        | throw        | trip       | view       |
| strong     | tank       | thrown       | trolley    | village    |
| stuck      | tap        | thumb        | trouble    | vine       |
| study      | tape       | thunder      | truck      | violet     |
| stuff      | tar        | Thursday     | true       | visit      |
| stump      | tardy      | thy          | truly      | visitor    |
| stung      | task       | tick         | trunk      | voice      |
| subject    | task       | ticket       | trust      | vote       |
| such       | taste      | tickle       | truth      | wag        |
| suck       | taught     | tie          | try        | wagon      |
|            | tax        | tiger        | tub        | waist      |
|            | tea        | tight        |            |            |

|            |           |          |            |            |
|------------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|
| wait       | web       | whistle  | with       | wren       |
| wake       | we'd      | white    | without    | wring      |
| waken      | wedding   | who      | woke       | write      |
| walk       | Wednesday | who'd    | wolf       | writing    |
| wall       | wee       | whole    | woman      | written    |
| walnut     | weed      | who'll   | women      | wrong      |
| want       | week      | whom     | won        | wrote      |
| war        | we'll     | who's    | wonder     | wrung      |
| warm       | weep      | whose    | wonderful  | yard       |
| warn       | weigh     | why      | won't      | yarn       |
| was        | welcome   | wicked   | wood       | year       |
| wash       | well      | wide     | wooden     | yell       |
| washer     | went      | wife     | woodpecker | yellow     |
| washtub    | were      | wiggle   | woods      | yes        |
| wasn't     | we're     | wild     | wool       | yesterday  |
| waste      | west      | wildcat  | woolen     | yet        |
| watch      | western   | will     | word       | yolk       |
| watchman   | wet       | willing  | wore       | yonder     |
| water      | we've     | willow   | work       | you        |
| watermelon | whale     | win      | worker     | you'd      |
| waterproof | what      | wind     | workman    | you'll     |
| wave       | what's    | windy    | world      | young      |
| wax        | wheat     | windmill | worm       | youngster  |
| way        | wheel     | window   | worn       | your       |
| wayside    | when      | wine     | worry      | yours      |
| we         | whenever  | wing     | worse      | you're     |
| weak       | where     | wink     | worst      | yourself   |
| weakness   | which     | winner   | worth      | yourselves |
| weaken     | while     | winter   | would      | youth      |
| wealth     | whip      | wipe     | wouldn't   | you've     |
| weapon     | whipped   | wire     | wound      |            |
| wear       | whirl     | wise     | wove       |            |
| wearry     | whisky    | wish     | wrap       |            |
| weather    | whiskey   | wit      | wrapped    |            |
| weave      | whisper   | witch    | wreck      |            |

("The Dale-Chall list of 3000 words")

Appendix Six: Conventional Cover Layout for Emergent Reader Chapter Books



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