# WHAT IS
# GUIDED READING?

**G**uided reading is an instructional approach that involves a teacher working with a small group of students who demonstrate similar reading behaviors and can all read similar levels of texts. The text is easy enough for students to read with your skillful support. The text offers challenges and opportunities for problem solving, but is easy enough for students to read with some fluency. You choose selections that help students expand their strategies.

## What is the purpose of guided reading?

You select books that students can read with about 90 percent accuracy. Students can understand and enjoy the story because it's accessible to them through their own strategies, supported by your introduction. They focus on meaning but use problem-solving strategies to figure out words they don't know, deal with difficult sentence structure, and understand concepts or ideas they have never before encountered in print.

## Why is guided reading important?

Guided reading gives students the chance to apply the strategies they already know to new text. You provide support, but the ultimate goal is independent reading.

## When are children ready for guided reading?

Developing readers have already gained important understandings about how print works. These students know how to monitor their own reading. They have the ability to check on themselves or search for possibilities and alternatives if they encounter a problem when reading. For these readers, the guided reading experience is a powerful way to support the development of reading strategies.

The ultimate goal of guided reading is reading a variety of texts with ease and deep understanding. Silent reading means rapid processing of texts with most attention on meaning, which is achieved as readers move past beginning levels (H, I, J). At all levels, students read orally with fluency and phrasing.

*Excerpts from the Guided Reading Text Types Teacher's Guide.

**scholastic.com/guidedreading**

## Matching Books to Readers

The teacher selects a text for a small group of students who are similar in their reading behaviors at a particular point in time. In general, the text is about right for students in the group. It is not too easy, yet not too hard, and offers a variety of challenges to help readers become flexible problem solvers. You should choose Guided Reading Program books for students that:

- **match their knowledge base.**
- **help them take the next step in learning to read.**
- **are interesting to them.**
- **offer just enough challenge to support problem solving while still supporting fluency and meaning.**

## Supporting Students' Reading

In working with students in guided reading, you constantly balance the difficulty of the text with support for students reading the text. You introduce the story to the group, support individuals through brief interactions while they read, and guide them to talk together afterwards about the words and ideas in the text. In this way, you refine text selection and help individual readers move forward in developing a reading process.

Good readers employ a wide range of word-solving strategies, including analysis of sound-letter relationships and word parts. They must figure out words that are embedded in different kinds of texts. Reading a variety of books enables them to go beyond reading individual words to interpreting language and its subtle meanings.

For more specific teaching suggestions, see individual cards for each book title.

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**Procedure for Guided Reading**

- **The teacher works with a small group of students with similar needs.**
- **The teacher provides introductions to the text that support students' later attempts at problem solving.**
- **Each student reads the whole text or a unified part of the text.**
- **Readers figure out new words while reading for meaning.**
- **The teacher prompts, encourages, and confirms students' attempts at problem solving.**
- **The teacher and student engage in meaningful conversations about what they are reading.**
- **The teacher and student revisit the text to demonstrate and use a range of comprehension strategies.**

# USING YOUR
# **GUIDED READING** PROGRAM

**T**he *Scholastic Guided Reading Program* is a varied collection of books that are categorized by the kind and level of challenge they offer children as they are learning to read. The Guided Reading Program consists of 260 books organized into 26 levels of difficulty—Levels A–Z. Many different characteristics of the texts are considered in determining the level of challenge and support a particular book or shorter story presents.

## Advantages of a Leveled Book Collection

A leveled book set has many advantages, including the following:

- **It provides experience with a wide variety of texts within a level.**
- **It makes it easier to select books for groups of children.**
- **It lends itself to flexible grouping.**
- **It provides a way to assess children's progress.**
- **It provides a basic book collection that can be expanded over time.**

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**Multiple Copies of Books**

Six copies of each book are provided so that children in small groups will have access to their own copies. Having a collection of books on various levels, with multiple copies of each book, allows you to consider individual strengths when grouping and selecting books. To help you identify a book's level quickly, you may place a Guided Reading Program sticker for the level on the front or back of each book cover.

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**Flexibility of Use**

With a gradient of text, grouping can be more flexible. Children might read only some of the books in a level, and not necessarily in the same sequence. In addition, children may change groups based on individual needs. The **Characteristics of Text** and **Behaviors to Notice and Support** on pages 96–121 will assist you in placing children in the appropriate levels.

If you note that some students need extra support for a particular text or that the selection is too difficult for most of the group, you can abandon guided reading and instead use shared reading to experience the book. Then you can select an easier book the next day. As students progress, have them reread books on a lower level for enjoyment. Students will become more confident readers as they reread a book for meaning with no need for problem solving.

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**Adding to the Guided Reading Program**

The Guided Reading Program has been designed with adaptability in mind, so you may add copies of children's and your own favorite books to the library. You may place a Guided Reading Program sticker for the suggested level on each book you add.

## Variety Within Levels in the Collection

When working with groups in classroom reading, a broad base of text is needed. The Guided Reading Program provides this broad base. Readers who experience only one kind of book may develop a narrow range of strategies for processing text. With a leveled set, difficulty is controlled because all text characteristics have been factored in. Yet the level of text is not artificially controlled because the variety of text characteristics occurs within natural story language.

The early levels of the Guided Reading Program introduce students to reading print. While reading at these beginning levels, students apply phonics skills, develop a core of high-frequency words, work with print in a variety of layouts, and engage with a variety of high-interest texts.

Books at later levels (Levels J and beyond) include a wider range of text. Within each level, literary texts are included. Essentially, there are three kinds of books at these levels, although there is variety within each category.

- **First, there are picture books at a more sophisticated level than before. These picture books provide an opportunity to expand vocabulary, to interpret stories, and to recognize how illustrations contribute to the story. Like the short story, picture books provide the advanced reader with complex reading material that does not take several days to complete.**

- **Second, there are informational books that are generally shorter. These present complex ideas and some technical language. They challenge students to acquire and discuss ideas and information and to go beyond the text to research topics of interest to them.**

- **Third, there are longer stories and chapter books. These longer selections provide an opportunity for readers to sustain reading over time, remembering details and getting to know characters as they develop.**

# FACTORS CONSIDERED IN
# **LEVELING BOOKS**

In placing a book, short story, or article along a gradient of text, multiple characteristics of text are considered. Here is a sample list.

## Book and Print Features
Refers to the physical aspects of the text—what readers cope with in terms of length, size, print layout, and font size. It also refers to the interpretation of illustrations and the relationships between information in graphics and the body of the text.

- **How many words are in the book?**
- **How many lines of text are on each page?**
- **How many pages are in the book?**
- **What size is the print?**
- **How much space is there between words and lines?**
- **How easy is it to find information?**
- **What is the relationship between print and illustrations?**
- **Are there graphics (photos, diagrams, maps) that provide essential information and how easy are the graphics to interpret?**
- **What are the features of print layout? (For example, do sentences begin on the left or do they "wrap around" so that end punctuation must be relied upon?)**
- **Is print placed in standard, predictable places on the pages or is it used in creative ways that require the reader's flexibility?**
- **Do the size and shape of book, binding, and layout play a role in text interpretation?**

## Genre
Means the "type" or "kind" and refers to a classification system formed to provide a way of talking about what texts are like (fiction—including realistic fiction, fantasy, traditional literature; and nonfiction—including biography, autobiography, and informational texts).

- **What is the "genre" or "kind" of book?**
- **What special demands does this genre make on readers?**
- **Is this an easy or more difficult example of the genre?**

## Content
Refers to the subject matter that readers are required to understand as they read both fiction and nonfiction texts.

- **What background information is essential for understanding this text?**
- **What new information will readers need to grasp to read the text?**
- **How accessible is the content to the readers?**

## Themes and Ideas
Refers to the "big picture," the universality of the problem in the text and its relevance to people's lives.

- **What is the theme of the text?**
- **Are there multiple themes that the reader must understand and be able to talk about?**
- **How accessible are the "big ideas" to the reader?**

## Language and Literary Features

Refers to the writer's style and use of literary devices. Literary features are those elements typically used in literature to capture imagination, stir emotions, create empathy or suspense, give readers a sense that the characters and story are real, and make readers care about the outcome of the plot. Nonfiction books may incorporate some literary features.

- **From what perspective is the story or informational text written?**
- **Does the book include devices such as headings, labels, and captions?**
- **Are graphical elements such as diagrams, tables, charts, and maps included?**
- **To what degree does the writer use literary language, such as metaphor?**
- **How easy is it to understand the characters and their motivations and development?**
- **Is character development essential to the story?**
- **Is dialogue assigned (using** he said**) or unassigned with longer stretches of interchange that the reader must follow and attribute to one character or another?**
- **How are characters revealed through what they say or think and what others say or think about them?**
- **How essential to the story are understandings about setting and plot?**

## Vocabulary and Words

Refers to the words and their accessibility to readers. Vocabulary generally refers to the meaning of words that readers may decode but not understand. Word solving refers to both decoding and to understanding meaning.

- **What is the frequency of multisyllabic words in the text?**
- **How complex are word meanings? (For example, are readers required to understand multiple meanings or subtle shades of meaning of words?)**
- **What prior knowledge is needed to understand the vocabulary of the text?**
- **How many content or technical words are included in the text? How complex are these words?**
- **Does informational text utilize timeless verb constructions? (Ants** carry **sand as opposed to** carried.**)**
- **Are generic noun constructions used in informational and/or nonfiction text?**

## Sentence Complexity

Refers to the syntactic patterns readers will encounter in the text; sentences may be simple (short, with one subject and predicate) or complex (longer, with embedded clauses).

- **What is the average length of sentences in the text?**
- **To what degree do sentences contain embedded clauses?**
- **What is the sentence style of the writer?**
- **Are there complex sentences joined by** and, but, **or other conjunctions?**
- **Are paragraphs organized so that readers can recognize lead sentences and main ideas?**

## Punctuation

Refers to the graphic symbols that signal the way text should be read to reflect the author's meaning.

- **What punctuation symbols are used in the text?**
- **What do readers need to notice about punctuation in order to fully understand the text?**
- **What punctuation is essential for readers to notice to read with fluency and phrasing?**

## Using Leveled Books With Readers

The success of guided reading depends on many factors other than text characteristics. These, of course, have to do with the young readers using the texts as well as teacher-student interactions and include:

- **The reader's prior knowledge of the topic, including vocabulary and concepts.**
- **The reader's prior experience with texts that have similar features.**
- **The way the teacher introduces the text.**
- **The supportive interactions between the teacher and students before, during, and after reading.**
- **The level of interest teachers help students build.**

## Level-by-Level Descriptions

Characteristics of text for each level in the Guided Reading Program are listed on pages 96–121. These descriptions are general: not every book included in a level will have every characteristic noted. Also listed are some important behaviors to notice and support at each level. As you use these books with students, you will notice how they support and challenge readers.

## Other Resources

You may want to refer to the following resources for descriptions of guided reading as well as additional books for each level:

- **Duke, Nell K., and Bennett-Armistead, V. Susan, 2003.** *Reading & Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades.* **New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.**
- **Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S., 2008.** *Benchmark Assessment System 1 and 2.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S., 1996.** *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S., 2001.** *Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3–6: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S., 2005.** *Leveled Books, K–8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S., 1999.** *Voices on Word Matters.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Pinnell, G. S., and Fountas, I. C., 2007.** *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades K–8: Behaviors and Understandings to Notice, Teach, and Support.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Pinnell, G. S., and Fountas, I. C., 1998.** *Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**
- **Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S., 2006.** *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Reading, K–8.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

# THINKING **WITHIN, BEYOND,** AND **ABOUT** THE TEXT

Adapted from *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Reading, K-8* (Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, 2006)

When proficient readers process a text, they simultaneously draw on a wide range of strategic actions that are physical, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic. As students learn the skills and strategies they need to make sense of a text, this process becomes more effective and automatic. Eventually, the reading process becomes unconscious. In order to reach this point, students need to learn how proficient readers think about reading. Teachers may often interpret this as making sure students comprehend what they are reading. However, checking for comprehension by asking endless questions during reading can turn into an interrogation that interferes with the reading process. Having students learn and focus on one reading strategy at a time also can make the reading process less effective. Instead, students need guidance in how to integrate strategic actions and use them effectively with many kinds of texts. For the teacher, this means knowing what readers must be able to do and the information they need to access to process a text.

Readers access a wide range of information that is both visible and invisible. Visible information is what students see as words and art in the text. As they read, readers recognize letters, words, punctuation, format, and text structures, and they attach meaning to what they see. Proficient readers are barely aware of this processing of visual information as they focus on meaning. Invisible information—including the knowledge and experience of language, facts, and the world both past and present—is what readers know and think about as they respond to visual information. Such personal knowledge is different for each student and is shaped by family, culture, and community. As students learn about different cultures and communities, they expand their perspectives and make new connections. Many of the texts they encounter can become the basis for this expansion.

Another form of invisible information is readers' experiences with many kinds of text, including knowledge of genres, text structures, and formats. This knowledge helps readers form expectations and predictions about a new text, access meaning as they read, and respond to the text after reading.

Different kinds of texts make different demands on readers. Texts that students can read independently help them build their knowledge. Texts that students can read with teacher support challenge them to develop new strategic actions for reading. You can help students meet these demands by giving them opportunities to think about their reading within, beyond, and about text.

## Thinking Within the Text

When readers think within the text, they gather basic information from the text and determine its basic meaning. To do so, readers must process the text by:

- **decoding words and using word meaning and what they know about language**
- **searching for information, and noting and sorting important details**
- **determining how the text is organized**
- **monitoring themselves for accuracy and understanding**
- **adjusting reading speed and technique according to the type of text**
- **sustaining fluency**

Understanding the basic meaning of a text forms the foundation for higher thinking skills. By thinking within the text, readers can gather important information and summarize what they have read.

## Thinking Beyond the Text

When readers think beyond the text, they go more deeply into its meaning beyond their literal understanding of it. They are able to:

- **make predictions**
- **connect their reading to their own experiences**
- **relate the text to similar texts**
- **integrate what they know with new information**
- **infer ideas that are not directly stated**
- **think about the greater meaning of the text**

Thinking beyond the text allows readers to understand character motivations, explore how setting influences the story, and follow more complex plots. They also identify and learn new information that they can incorporate into what they already know and understand.

## Thinking About the Text

To think about the text, readers analyze and critique what they read. They examine a text to:

- **note how it is constructed**
- **note how the writer uses language**
- **identify literary devices**
- **determine how the writer has provided information, such as using compare and contrast, description, or cause and effect**
- **identify characteristics of the genre**
- **use their own knowledge to think critically about ideas**
- **evaluate quality and authenticity**

Thinking about the text helps readers move beyond identifying likes and dislikes and helps them learn more about how texts work. It also helps them better appreciate different genres, good-quality writing, and their own writing.

# ORGANIZING YOUR CLASSROOM FOR GUIDED READING

adapted from *Guided Reading: Making It Work* (Schulman and Payne, 2000)

**G**ood management begins with a thoughtful room arrangement and careful selection of materials; the way you organize furniture and supplies will support the learning that takes place within your classroom. For guided reading to be effective, the rest of the class must be engaged in other literacy activities that do not require direct teacher involvement. For most classes, this means literacy centers that accommodate small groups of students. So, a strategically arranged classroom for guided reading would have a class library, inviting spots for individual work, spaces for whole-class gatherings and small-group meetings, and several literacy centers.
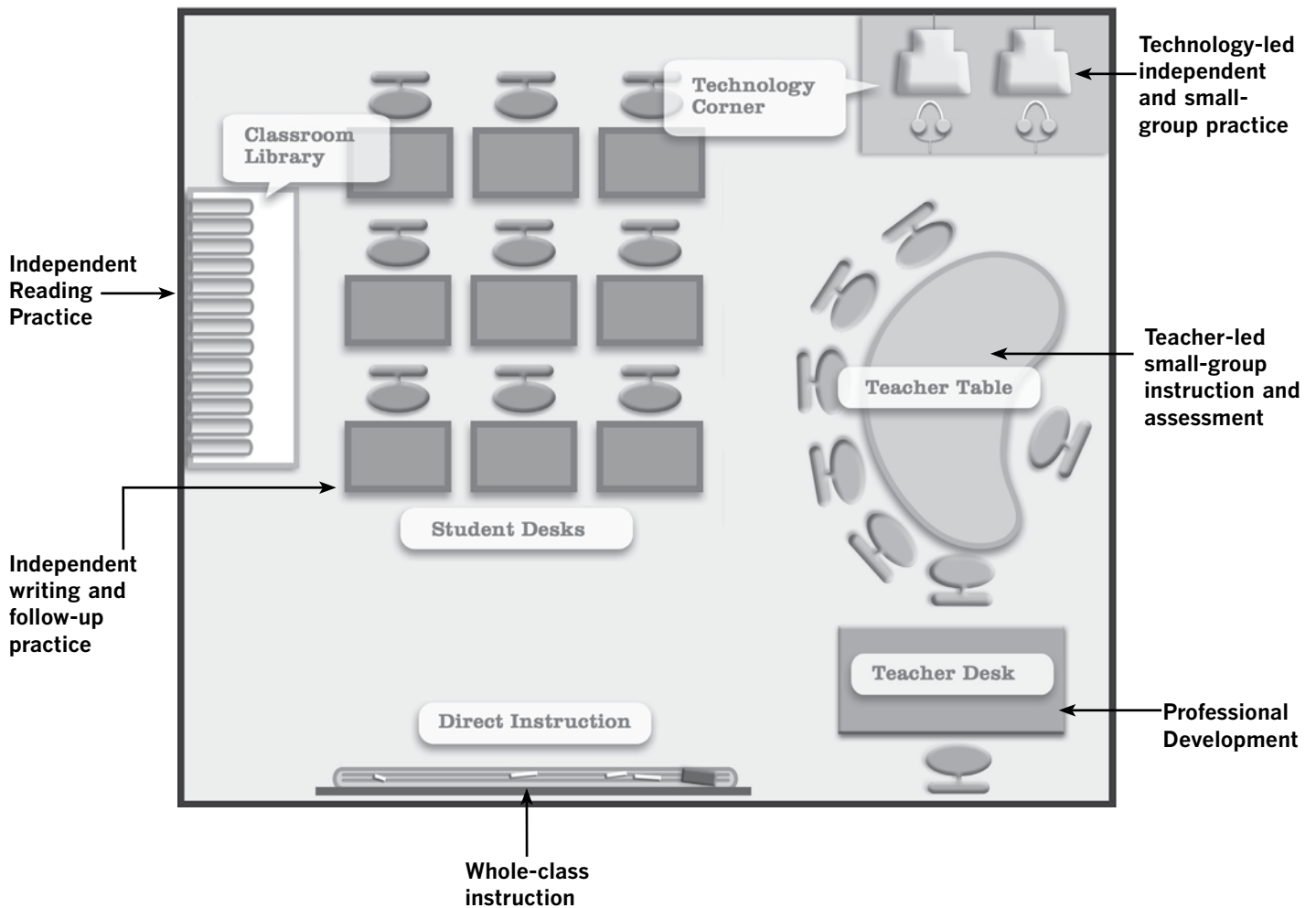
Arranging the room and organizing materials for effective reading and writing workshops takes thought and planning. So before the school year even begins, consider the activities you're planning for your class and the physical layout of your room. With a little ingenuity, you can provide an environment that will support learning all year long.

## Scheduling for Guided Reading

To determine the time you'll need for guided reading, consider the number of students in your class and the range of reading abilities they possess. Then create your initial groupings; the ideal group size is four to six, though guided reading groups might range from three to eight. Place below-grade or struggling readers in smaller groups. Keep in mind that sessions are short—often 10–15 minutes for emergent readers, and 15–30 minutes for more advanced readers. You will want to meet with at-risk groups every day; five meetings over a two-week period for more advanced groups are typical. You'll also want to allow yourself some time for assessment—taking a running record, jotting anecdotal notes, or conducting oral interviews, for example. Finally, allow a few minutes between groups to check in with the rest of the class.

# THE SCHOLASTIC
# **GUIDED READING** CLASSROOM

Scholastic Guided Reading Programs support a comprehensive reading program by integrating guided instruction, assessment, and independent practice into your classroom. Here's what the Guided Reading classroom looks like:

**Technology-led independent and small-group practice**

**Classroom Library**

Technology Corner

**Independent Reading Practice**

**Teacher-led small-group instruction and assessment**

Teacher Table

Student Desks

**Independent writing and follow-up practice**

Direct Instruction

Teacher Desk

**Professional Development**

**Whole-class instruction**

# GROUPING
# STUDENTS

**Y**our job is to take each student from his or her present level to a more advanced one. Therefore, there must be assessment of individual students. With class sizes ranging from 20 to 35, grouping for instruction makes sense. As teachers, we want to make learning manageable, while avoiding any negative aspects of grouping.

## Fundamentals of Grouping

**Assessment of Students' Knowledge Base**

Students' knowledge base is the key element in selecting texts and planning instruction for groups so that they can read with 90 percent accuracy and use the skills that assure understanding. Other aspects to consider when selecting the best level for a group include:

- **how well developing readers can control a strategy, such as analyzing a new word.**
- **the kinds of language students find understandable and which they find challenging.**
- **what concepts they know or what concepts they don't understand.**
- **the kinds of texts and genres they have experienced. For example, if they have handled only narrative texts, then informational texts may be difficult.**

See pages 96–121 for help in assessing which level is best for a group.

**Dynamic Grouping**

Because students' individual needs change so often, ongoing observation of behavior and assessment of their knowledge and experience are essential to the guided reading process. Students progress at different rates, so regrouping is also ongoing. By grouping in different ways for different purposes, you can avoid labeling students with group names that are symbols of a static achievement level.

As you informally assess students' reading on a daily basis, you may wish to use the descriptions of **Behaviors to Notice and Support** on pages 96–121 for the level of book you are using. A quick, informal observation of students' reading will help you determine if the book was at the appropriate level.

- **Was this book too hard for this student? If the student can't read it independently with 85–95 percent accuracy and isn't using strategies as he or she reads, then the book is too hard.**
- **If the student reads with such fluency that there is no need for problem-solving behaviors, then the student should be reading a higher-level text for guided reading. Of course, the lower-level text will be useful for fluency practice.**