

# Independent (“Just Right”) Reading Descriptions

## Level Z

### Characteristics of Level Z Books

- Wide range of complex genre & forms; some sentences of 30 or more words; many texts with the complex structure of adult-level reading; *texts that explicitly present mature issues such as sexuality, murder, abuse, nuclear war*
- In information texts, texts with multiple topics/categories; prior knowledge often required
- Fiction texts have elaborate plots and subplots; complex themes revealing insight into the human condition & human problems; present mature/adolescent social issues
- Interpretation of *multiple* characters essential to understanding theme
- Many texts requiring knowledge of history, other heavy content load, or current events; critical thinking required to judge authenticity of texts
- Some switching through dialogue from setting to setting, often un signaled
- Some with larger-than-life characters who represent struggle between good/evil; fantasy texts may incorporate classical motifs, such as “the quest;” multiple themes that may be understood in many layers; wide range of challenging themes building social awareness and revealing insights into the human condition
- Many stories have moral lessons & many have parallel or circular plots
- Texts with multiple points of view revealed through characters' behaviors
- Long strings of unassigned dialogue from which story action must be inferred; long stretches of descriptive language important to understanding setting, characters
- Extensive use of figurative language important to understand plot
- Words that are seldom used in oral language and are difficult to decode; long multisyllable words requiring attention to roots to read and understand
- Vocabulary words used figuratively or with unusual or hard-to-understand connotations; archaic words or non-English words not following conventional pronunciation patterns

### Characteristics of Readers at Level Z

- Can remember information in summary form over chapters, to understand larger themes
- Search for/use information from texts with many new/unfamiliar concepts; can organize important ideas in summary form & later use them as background knowledge
- Can adjust stance to better understand genre, like fantasy, or stance, like satire
- Notice & reflect on purpose of author's use of irony, satire, parody and allegory and the resulting changes to surface meaning; can determine point of view or bias
- Make connections among characters in different texts (setting, problem, person)
- Can explain how author supports points in a text; collects evidence for arguments
- Monitors understanding closely, searching within and outside the text, as needed
- Can process texts with dense print, complex layouts, & almost no illustrations
- Can solve complex multisyllable words (vowels, phonograms, affixes, word origins...)
- Can understand words with multiple meanings, difficult proper nouns, words from dialects/languages other than English; can understand meaning when satire is used
- Can infer about characters' traits, motivations, and changes; can manage multidimensional characters; use situations focusing on the problems of adolescents to develop new perspectives on own lives
- Integrates content knowledge while reading to consciously create new understandings
- Crafts and revises many predictions using knowledge of genre and evidence from the text

## Sample Texts - Level Z

**All-Star Examples:** *Johnny Tremain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Breadwinner, The Outsiders, Witness, Animal Farm, Farewell to Manzanar, The Golden Compass, Monster, Night, The Pearl, Scorpions, 145th Street Short Stories, Fahrenheit 451*

**Books titles at my level include:**

TITLE	AUTHOR
Stormbreaker: The Graphic Novel	Horowitz, Anthony
A Wizard of Earthsea	Le Guin, Ursula K.
Fever 1793	Anderson, Laurie Halse
Treasure Island (Graphic Adaptation)	Stevenson, Robert Louis
Forged By Fire	Draper, Sharon M.
The Golden Compass	Pullman, Philip
Miracle's Boys/From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun/I Hadn't Meant to Tell...	Woodson, Jacqueline
Monster/Scorpions	Myers, Walter Dean
<b>Shadow Children Series</b> (Among The Betrayed, Among the Brave...)	Haddix, Margaret Peterson
Tears Of A Tiger	Draper, Sharon M.
A Matter Of Trust/Lost and Found	Schraff, Anne
<b>Bluford High Series</b> (Brothers In Arms, Summer of Secrets...)	Langan, Paul & Alirez, Ben (some)
Until We Meet Again	Schraff, Anne
The Moves Make The Man	Brooks, Bruce
Uglies	Westerfeld, Scott
American Eyes	Carlson, Lori M., Ed.
Catalyst/Speak	Anderson, Laurie Halse
Guys Write For Guys Read	Scieszka, John
If A Tree Falls At Lunch Period	Choldenko, Gennifer
Life as We Knew It	Pfeffer, Susan Beth
Rain Is Not My Indian Name	Smith, Cynthia Leitich
Samir And Yonatan	Carmi, Daniella
Small Steps	Sachar, Louis
Stuck In Neutral	Trueman, Terry
The Princess Diaries	Cabott, Meg
Woman Hollering Creek And Other Stories	Cisneros, Sandra
<b>Cirque du Freak Series</b> (The Vampire Prince, The Vampire's Assistant...)	Shan, Darren
<b>His Dark Materials Series</b> (The Amber Spyglass, The Golden Compass...)	Pullman, Philip
<b>The Kiesha'ra Series</b> (Hawksong, Falcondance...)	Atwater-Rhodes, Amelia
The Hobbit	Tolkien, J.R.R.
<b>Redwall Series</b>	Jacques, Brian
Abarat	Barker, Clive
King of Shadows	Cooper, Susan
Across Five Aprils	Hunt, Irene
Little Women	Alcott, Louisa May
The Land	Taylor, Mildred D.
A Dream Of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement From 1954 To 1968	McWhorter, Diane
Guinea Pig Scientists: Bold Self-Experimenters In Science And Medicine	Dendy, Leslie and Boring, Mel
Left For Dead: A Young Man's Search For Justice For The USS Indianapolis	Nelson, Peter
Revenge Of The Whale: The True Story Of The Whaleship Of Essex	Philbrick, Nathaniel
The Race To Save The Lord God Bird	Hoose, Phillip M.
Witch-Hunt: Mysteries Of The Salem Witch Trials	Aronson, Marc

\*Bold titles are Series books.

**REMEMBER:** You can sometimes find titles at your level or check the level of a book you already have on Scholastic's Book Wizard site. Look for the initials GRL (meaning Guided Reading Level) - this is the level we use at school. [www.scholastic.com/bookwizard](http://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard)

Nancy Giansante is a librarian who keeps a leveled book list at her website: <http://home.comcast.net/~ngiansante>  
This site is searchable by grade level suggestions, titles, and author names.