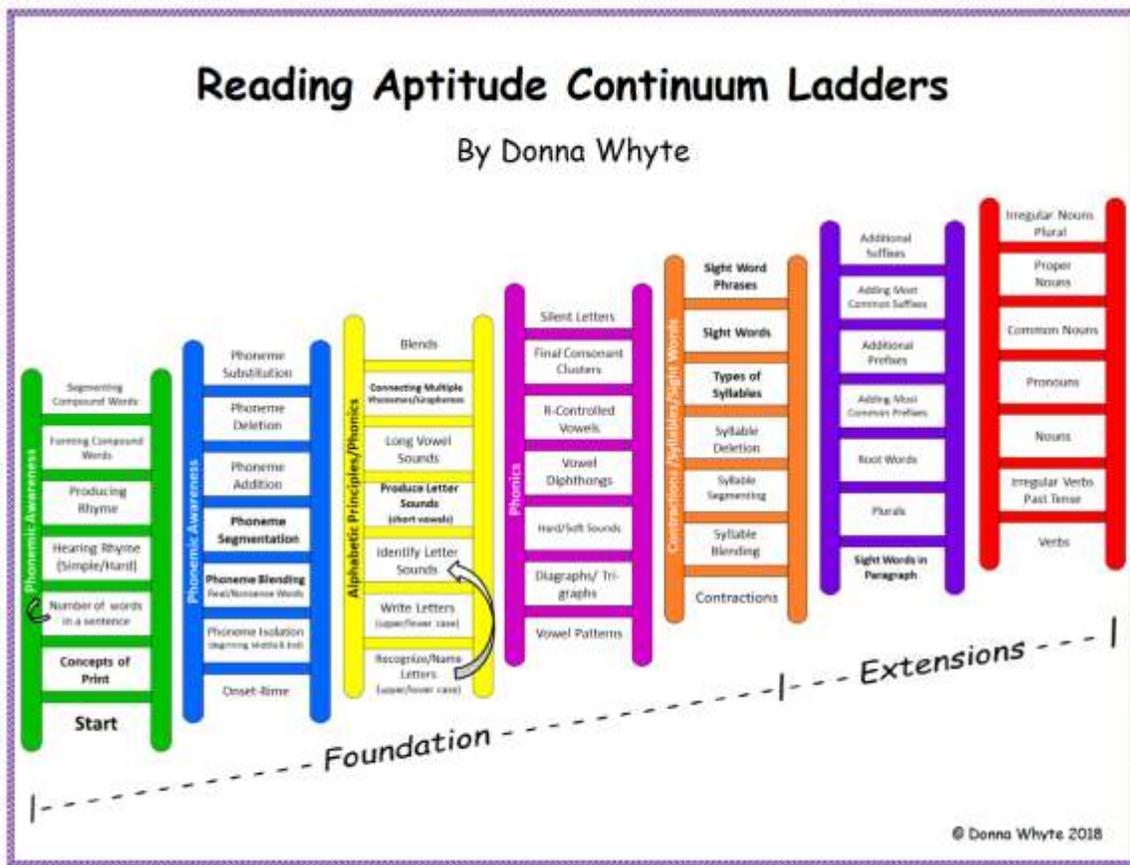


# Reading Aptitude Continuum

Created by ~ Donna Whyte

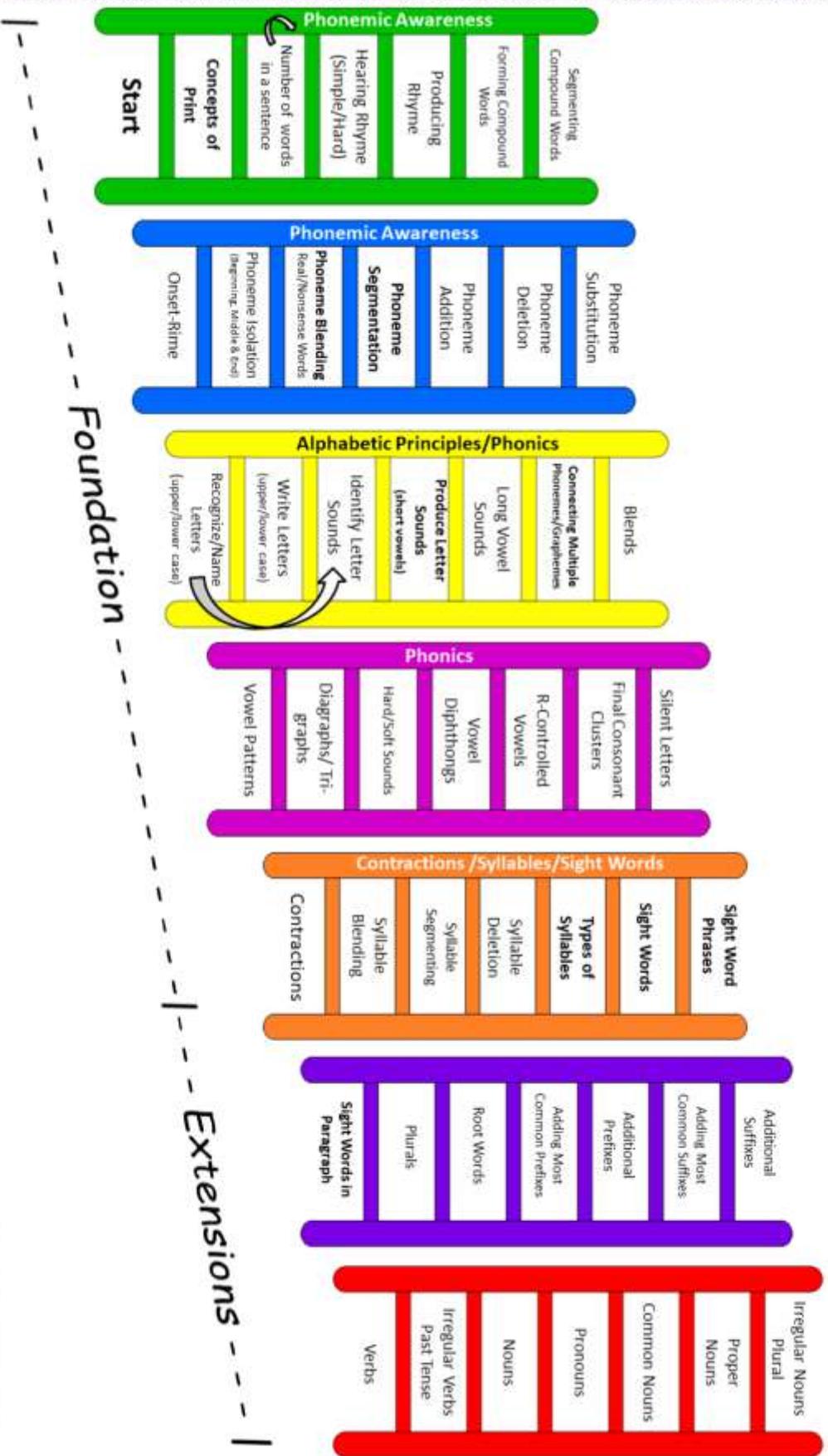
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All tests are available through your ESGI subscription. This is the information and added materials that will allow you to fully use the tests. It is NOT a stand-alone document.



# Reading Aptitude Continuum Ladders

By Donna Whyte



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## Purposeful Assessment or Torture?

In education we use the term assessment to refer to approaches educators use to evaluate and report on the readiness, learning development, and skill acquisition of students. In theory all educators believe that we must have a baseline of a student's knowledge to know how to move the student forward in their learning. Unfortunately, numerous and lengthy assessments are overwhelming to most of us and don't leave time to evaluate needed skills or to teach the skills that our students lack. Many assessments leave us with more questions about where to start than they answer. Therefore, many times assessments become torture for *both* the teacher and the students.

## Reading Assessments

Two thirds of our nation's 4<sup>th</sup> graders read below grade level. It is imperative that we identify the skills students need to be successful in reading, that we can assess those skills and that we know which order they should be taught. Each assessment should be given with a goal towards supporting mastery of skills and helping each educator identify "where the student is". Reading is divided into 5 areas:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension

The first two allow students to decode print so that they can move to the goal of reading – comprehension. At the earliest stages students must have an awareness of print, be able to begin to connect spoken language to written language, and understand that print holds meaning. Many questions surround reading assessments:

- Is the assessment appropriate for the student?
- Will it give me quick information that can impact my teaching immediately?
- How do I utilize the assessment to determine where to start with a student?
- Is there a progression of skills so I know when to stop in an assessment?
- Can assessments be made easier and more valuable in classrooms?

The words, “my students are low” or “they are struggling readers” have become common place in schools across the United States. Knowing students are low or struggling doesn’t provide us with the information to help each one move forward in their learning. When I am told that a “student is low or struggling”, my first questions is, “What seems to be the problem?” Some teachers will tell me that they don’t know their letters. I then ask, “What don’t they know about their letters? Is it that the student doesn’t know any letters or that the student knows some? Which ones? Does the student recognize the letters and can name them? Can they write the letters? Do they hear the sound most commonly associated with a letter but can’t produce the sound? Or is it that the student has not mastered the utilization of letters that enables them to read

and write?” There are many levels within “knowing letters” and it is imperative that we know exactly which levels are known and which are unknown.

If it’s not the letters but words that keep a child “low”, then is it short or long vowels, is it an inability to recognize patterns or is the student having trouble with the six types of syllables? Does the student lack long vowel patterns or maybe have low sight word recognition? Too often, the answer is, “I am not really sure”.

Many times I am asked in presentations around the country “What do you use and is there a more purposeful assessment available?” To answer that question, it is important to understand that reading occurs on a continuum and that at times, our biggest enemy is our belief that assessments that are grade specific, as opposed to skill specific. The assessments that I have created are based upon skills, not grade level. They can be utilized with any student in the process of learning to decode for reading. This can be a child that happens to be at the Pre-K level, a struggling intermediate reader, an ESL student, a student with disabilities or any other student in the process of learning to read.

As the teacher, each of us needs to determine what is a student’s skill level, what needs to be taught and what skills comes next. My goal is to provide you with a framework that allows you to see skills in a progression that will aide your students in becoming successful readers.

Our goal should be to identify basic skills, diagnose what is needed to acquire the skill, and NOT continue to move forward

when the necessary skills that are often a prerequisite to further learning have not been mastered. You are the expert in your class; don't continue to assess a student on the next levels if the student is not successful on prior skills. **STOP** – teach foundation skills and then add the next assessment to the student's portfolio. For example, look at the progression of skills in the Phonemic Awareness assessments. In most cases a student who is not able to blend two words into a compound word will not be able to blend individual phonemes into a word. Therefore, if the student is not successful with compound words, focus your teaching on this skill first. A student who has not mastered individual letter sounds should not be expected to blend those sounds or students that can't fluently read high frequency sight word phrases that are expected to read a paragraph.

In each circumstance there are foundation skills lacking. We have to look to the prior skills, determine what to teach, and when the student has successfully mastered the skill, move to the next skill assessment. Targeted assessments should drive our instruction.

Each ladder in the continuum contains rungs that build decoding skills. While it is certainly possible for a student to miss a couple of rungs and continue to climb the ladder, you wouldn't want a student to have no footings in a ladder. Pick and choose the assessments most valuable to your class or individual students in identifying needs. Your first step will be to determine where to start in your assessments. Based upon your work with the student, look at the ladder and determine where you believe he/she should start. If the assessments are too hard, stop and go back several tests. If they are too easy, jump forward a few. Keep in mind, that for the

most part, the assessments were created to be easiest at the start of each assessment and to end with hardest level of the skill. This will allow you to determine if a high level of mastery is evident. It's important to remember that many skills have a quick assessment and that if there is any sense that the student hasn't truly mastered the skill, you may want to add to the number of questions.

Each concept has directions on the sheet, along with the questions, words, letters or phrases listed. Each list then has a corresponding sheet or sheets of the cards that can be used for the assessments. The exception is the Phonemic Awareness section as all of the concepts are done orally and require no cards. Assessment Recording Sheets are included. There is an individual student recording sheet and a class recording sheet. Each sheet has skills broken up by ladder or concept. Every sheet is customizable and can be modified for the skills you are assessing.

The first series of assessments address:

Print Concepts (basic understanding of rules for print)

This long version fully assesses concepts of print.

Print Concepts Condensed (basic understanding of rules for print)

I have also provided a shorter version as a pre-check of the skills.

Progression of Skills in Phonemic Awareness Acquisition (most common order of learning)

Each of these skills is based upon auditory and speech abilities:

- Hearing Rhyme Level 1
- Hearing Rhyme Level 2
- Producing Rhyme
- Words in a Sentence
- Compound Words – Creating and Taking Apart
- Onset/Rime
- Phoneme Isolation (initial, ending and medial)
- Phoneme Blending
- Nonsense Words
- Phoneme Segmentation
- Phoneme Addition
- Phoneme Deletion (beginning and ending)
- Phoneme Substitution

### Progression of Skills in Phonics Acquisition

- Letter Identification Uppercase
- Letter Identification Lowercase
- Identify Letter Sounds
- Produce Letter Sounds
- Writes Letters Random Order
- Soft/Hard Sounds
- Short /a/
- Short /e/
- Short /i/
- Short /o/
- Short /u/
- Long /a/
- Long /e/
- Long /i/

- Long /o/
- Long /u/
- Y as long /i/ or /e/
- Blends Level 1
- Blends Level 2
- Consonant Digraphs (ch)
- Consonant Digraphs (sh)
- Consonant Digraphs (th)
- Consonant Digraphs (zh)
- Consonant Digraphs (wh)
- Consonant Digraphs (ph)
- Consonant Digraphs (ng)
- Consonant Digraphs (mixed)
- Consonant Trigraphs (scr)
- Consonant Trigraphs (sch)
- Consonant Trigraphs (shr)
- Consonant Trigraphs (spl)
- Consonant Trigraphs (spr)
- Consonant Trigraphs (squ)
- Consonant Trigraphs (str)
- Consonant Trigraphs (thr)
- Consonant Trigraph (mixed)
- Final Consonant Clusters Level 1
- Final Consonant Clusters Level 2
- Silent Letters
- Vowel Diphthongs
- R Controlled Vowels
- Contractions (create)
- Contractions (break apart)

## Syllable Skills

- Syllable Blending
- Syllable Segmentation
- Syllable Deletion

Fry's Words (embedded skill as we teach Phonics) It is important to note that there are 25 words that make up almost a 1/3 of what we read and that the first 100 most frequent sight words make up almost 50% of printed materials. If a student cannot identify the majority of the first 10, **STOP** the assessment and focus instruction on those words before proceeding on the list. You may want to customize each list into groups of 5-10 Words.

- Fry's Word List 1-25
- Fry's Word List 26-50
- Fry's Word List 51-75
- Fry's Word List 76-100

The First 100 words are the most frequent; therefore, I do not have a sampling of each set of 25. I believe that it is imperative that a student master these 100 before proceeding forward. If a student moves to second or third list, remember to return to entire list if the student does not do well on the sampling assessment.

- Fry's Word List 101-125
- Fry's Word List 126-150
- Fry's Word List 151-175
- Fry's Word List 176-200
- Fry's 101-125 Sampling

- Fry's 126-150 Sampling
- Fry's 151-175 Sampling
- Fry's 176-200 Sampling
- Fry's Word List 201-225
- Fry's Word List 226-250
- Fry's Word List 251-275
- Fry's Word List 276-300
- Fry's 201-225 Sampling
- Fry's 226-250 Sampling
- Fry's 251-275 Sampling
- Fry's 276-300 Sampling

## Fry's Words - Sentences and Phrases

Many of us have witnessed students who can read sight words presented on flashcards and then are not be able to transfer the words to reading it in text. While there is value in tracing, writing the words, and identifying the words in isolation (visual discrimination, motor ability, patterning letters), the true goal is to fluently read the words within text. There won't be many occasions for the student to see the word "the" on a billboard or package without other words connected to it.

The sentences and phrases in this section are based upon Dr. Timothy Rasinski's work. The assessments in this section will determine transfer ability and can aid in increasing fluency. Each Level contains 10 sentences or phrases.

- Fry's 1<sup>st</sup> 100 Phrases Level 1
- Fry's 1<sup>st</sup> 100 Phrases Level 2
- Fry's 1<sup>st</sup> 100 Phrases Level 3
- Fry's 2<sup>nd</sup> 100 Phrases Level 1
- Fry's 2<sup>nd</sup> 100 Phrases Level 2
- Fry's 2<sup>nd</sup> 100 Phrases Level 3
- Fry's 3<sup>rd</sup> 100 Phrases Level 1
- Fry's 3<sup>rd</sup> 100 Phrases Level 2
- Fry's 3<sup>rd</sup> 100 Phrases Level 3

School Rules contains Fry's First 100 Words. This assessment will require you to assess the number of sight words missed. Do not focus on the other words in the selection. Ensure that the student is able to read the highlighted words. If the student begins to

struggle, stop the test and go back to the Words or Sentences/Phrases assessments.

Types of Syllables (Application)

- Closed Syllables
- Open Syllables
- Magic e Syllables
- R-Controlled Syllables
- Vowel Combination Syllables
- Consonant –le Syllables

Plurals

Root Words

Prefixes – (4 Most Common)

Prefixes – Additional

Suffixes – (7 Most Common)

Suffixes – Additional

Verbs

Irregular Verbs – Past Tense

Nouns

Pronouns

Common Nouns

Proper Nouns

Irregular Nouns – Plural

Passages

- K Passage
- K Comprehension Questions
- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Passage

- 1<sup>st</sup> Comprehension Questions
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Passage
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Comprehension Questions
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Passage
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Questions
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Passage
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Questions

Each assessment in this series is based upon learning basic concepts that allow readers to decode text and build fluency.

The Reading Aptitude Continuum will:

- Provide all materials and charts that allow you to identify individual, as well as class needs
- Provide you with a progression of skills that allow assessments to be focused to student need
- Give you access to information that aides in creating reading groups and activities for independent learning
- Allow you to establish a system for your assessments for quick reporting to support staff and parents.

# Concepts of Print

Hand the student a book with pictures and print on each page.

Does the student...

Hold the book correctly?

Turn pages correctly?

Ask the student to identify:

Front cover

Back cover

Title

Beginning of book

End of book

Can the student tell what the...

Author does?

Illustrator does?

Can the student track print...

Top to bottom?

Left to right?

Return sweep?

Concepts of Print Sheet 1

Using the following Concepts of Print – Sheet 1 (Letter, Word, Sentence) and ask the student to point to a letter, word and put his/her finger at the beginning and end of a sentence:

Concepts of Print – Sheet 1 (Letter, Word, Sentence)

I have a dog. His  
name is Gus. I love  
him very much.

# Punctuation

## Concepts of Print – Sheet 2

Using the following sheet ask the student to find each punctuation mark . , ? ! "..." :

I like to play.

I went to the store to  
buy apples, bananas  
and pears.

Is it raining?

Wow, look at that big  
ice cream cone!

# Concepts of Print Condensed

Hand the student a book with pictures and print on each page.

## Concepts of Print Sheet 1

Using the Concepts of Print – Sheet 1 (Letter, Word, Sentence) on page 14 and ask the student to point to a letter, word and put his/her finger at the beginning and end of a sentence.

## Words in a Sentence

Use the following Phonemic Awareness (Sentences) sheet and ask the student to tell you the number of words they hear in each sentence:

The man is tall.

I like rabbits.

How are you today?

My favorite color is  
red.

## Reading Sight Words in Paragraph

Ask the student to read the following passage, *School Rules*. Assess four sentences at a time. Record the number of sight words read in each sentence. Remember to focus only on the sight words that are read, not mistakes with other words in the paragraphs. Please note – when a student misses the majority of the sight words in three sentences – **STOP**. This student has not mastered enough of the most common 100 words to continue.

One day two students were on their way to school. Liz was happy; she could see Ted was sad. They walked down a long path. Liz said, "I like to go to school." Ted made a face at her. She had no idea why he did not like school. School is fun. She asked, "Do you come to have fun?" He said, "There are too many rules which we have to follow." Liz thought that some rules are good to have. Your teacher needs a rule if you get up to get water. Then each person can be safe. People are part of a class and must take turns.

Liz asked, "What number of rules do you think would be good?" Ted said, "I am happy with one rule, it could be to do the right thing." Less is better than more rules. Ted wondered when and who could call the teacher about the rules. First, he thought he should write a note. Each word would be his. I will make her see how rules use too much of my time. All the rules have been silly but would she agree or get mad. Now he was thinking how he could put the note into her hands. He wanted her to find it but not know it was from him, so he has to be sneaky. He was glad he thought of a note and hadn't called.

Liz said, "By the way, you look like you have an idea." Ted said, "May I have these papers in your bag? I will take them out for my note." My note will be great; its words will be as no other she has read. This plan made Ted happy to go to school.

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# Types of Syllables

Closed Syllables – (CVC/VC) A syllable which ends with one or more consonants, *usually* containing a short vowel sound  
– Almost 50% of syllables in running text are this type

Open Syllables (CV) – a syllable that ends with a vowel, the vowel sound is *usually* long

Magic e Syllables (VCe) – a syllable that ends with a silent e. The silent e makes the vowel before it long

R-Controlled Syllables – A syllable with at least one vowel followed by r. The r controls the vowel and gives it a different sound

Vowel Combination Syllables (CVVC) – A syllable containing two vowels that have a special sound according to the pattern. This syllable *usually* contains two vowels together:

Consonant –le Syllables (Cle) – A final syllable that has a silent e after the l

## Keep in mind

## Prefixes

## Most Common

The four most frequent prefixes account for 97% of prefixed words in printed school English. Understanding the meaning that the prefix adds to the word is imperative to successful comprehension.

*un (not) re (again) in,im,il,ir (not) dis (not, opposite)*

## Suffixes

### Most Common

The first seven suffixes account for over 80% of suffixed words. Provide the student a word, then a suffix; ask the student the meaning of the new word.

*s, es (plural) ed (past-tense) ing (verb form, indicate on-going action) ly (characteristic of) er, or (one who, person connected with) ion,tion,ation,ition (act, process) able, ible (can be done)*

# Passages

Passages for grades K-5 are included. These passages can be a starting point to determine a student's reading level and where to start on the ladders for decoding skills. For example, a fourth grade student may struggle with the first grade passage, and therefore information can be gathered about what is impeding his ability to decode. Is it that he doesn't know basic sight words? Is he struggling with blending or segmenting? Your observation can give you starting points for rungs on the ladder.

## The Bug

Bugs are fun to look at. Bugs can dig and fly. I like to play with bugs. My mom does not want me to look for bugs. She said, "They can bite".

What is this text about?

What does the text tell you about bugs?

## Zig and Ted

Zig is a small cat. Ted is a big dog. They have fun. Zig sits on a bag. Ted wants the bag. Zig runs away. She jumps in the box. Ted gets in the box too. Zig runs out of the box. Ted looks for Zig but does not find her. Ted sits down and is very sad. Then he sees Zig and runs over to her. He licks her and Zig licks him back. Zig and Ted are friends.

What is Ted?

Does Zig like Ted? How do you know?

## Going to the Movies

My class is going to the movies on a field trip next week. We have to get permission slips signed before we go. We also need to ask our parents if they will drive us to the movie. We are going to see a movie that tells the story from a book we read. We love it when movies are made from books. It is fun to compare the movie to the book.

We get to the movie early so we can buy popcorn. Some of us buy candy and slushes too. We all watch the movie. When we return to school, we talk about how the movie and the book are alike and different.

What do the students need to do before going to the movie?

What do you think the students like best about going to the movie? Why?

## My Name is Albert

My name is Albert and I am a box turtle. I am an *exceptional* reptile because, as you probably know, turtles do not write stories. I have decided to let people know a little bit more about box turtles.

I move slowly at my age. I have not always been that way though. Why, when I was a hatchling, I could speed across my yard in no time. I will admit that I got stuck on a twig or garden hose once in a while, but I was certainly not a quitter. My little legs would just keep going until I overcame any obstacles. As I grew, I learned to slow down and enjoy all of the interesting sight and sounds in my environment.

When my owner approaches, I stretch out my long neck and reveal my beautiful coloring. My owner is much taller than I and usually sits down to play with me. If I walk around him, he will usually pick me up. Then he will proceed to feed me a treat of melons or dog food.

Resting is one of my favorite times. During the warm summer months I like to dig a hole in my yard and crawl into it. It is quiet and cool in my special place. During cold winter months, box turtles, like myself, hibernate by digging an even deeper hole and staying there until the summer sun returns.

In the first paragraph, what does *exceptional* mean?

What is something you learned about box turtles from Albert?

## City Government

The city of Chicago has many parts. There are neighborhoods. Each one is different. In each neighborhood, citizens want to have a good place to live. Good neighbors help each other. They keep their block clean. They call the police if there is a problem.

Each neighborhood is a part of a ward. The city is divided into wards. Each of the wards has an Alderman. That is someone voters choose. The Alderman meets with people from the ward. The Alderman's job is to help them with issues in their community.

A person may tell the Alderman about a problem. For example, the person may talk about litter. If the streets are dirty, people can ask the Alderman for help in planning a cleanup of the streets. Or they may ask the Alderman to contact the city garbage system.

Sometimes there is a problem with gangs. People complain to the Alderman about it. Gangs can disrupt communities. Where there are gangs, there is usually trouble. The Alderman can work with the police to help. Sometimes the gang members just need help. They are afraid, or frustrated too.

Aldermen try to improve things in their community. They may help to build a new library or a new park. They must ask the city government to support their causes and provide money. They call the transportation department if there is a problem with buses. They call the street department if there is a problem with streets signs or lights.

All the Aldermen meet twice each month with the Mayor who oversees the meeting. They talk about problems. They make plans. They vote on changes. Some of those changes will be laws. Then everyone in every ward will have to follow them.

Citizens choose the Alderman. They elect this person. They choose the Mayor, too. Some people do not vote. They think it is not important. But it is important. It is how to get things done.

What is the main idea of this passage?

Do you think it is important to vote? Why?

The following section is an *additional* resource for teachers for assessing basic skills of a student.

## Basic Skills

Use the following sheet to assess these basic skills:

Ask the child to write his/her name.

Does child display hand dominance?

Does child follow directions easily?

Use the questions at the bottom or assess by observation of following the directions that you are giving to them throughout the assessment.

Does child write name?

Is there a left to right progression in writing name?

Is there a top to bottom formation of letters? (Exception lower case f)

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## Directions

1. Touch your nose
2. Tell me who you live with.
3. What is your favorite thing to do at school?

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