

Figure I–8 Ten Text Characteristics for Guided Reading

Genre/Form	<i>Genre</i> is the type of text and refers to a system by which fiction and nonfiction texts are classified. <i>Form</i> is the format in which a genre may be presented. Forms and genres have characteristic features.
Text Structure	<i>Structure</i> is the way the text is organized and presented. The structure of most fiction and biographical texts is <i>narrative</i> , arranged primarily in chronological sequence. Factual texts are organized categorically or topically and may have sections with headings. Writers of factual texts use several underlying structural patterns to provide information to readers. The most important are <i>description</i> ; <i>chronological sequence</i> ; <i>comparison and contrast</i> ; <i>cause and effect</i> ; and <i>problem and solution</i> . The presence of these structures, especially in combination, can increase the challenge for readers.
Content	<i>Content</i> refers to the subject matter of the text—the concepts that are important to understand. In fiction, content may be related to the setting or to the kinds of problems characters have. In factual texts, content refers to the topic of focus. Content is considered in relation to the prior experience of readers.
Themes and Ideas	These are the big ideas that are communicated by the writer. Ideas may be concrete and accessible or complex and abstract. A text may have multiple themes or a main theme and several supporting themes.
Language and Literary Features	Written language is qualitatively different from spoken language. Fiction writers use dialogue, figurative language, and other kinds of literary structures such as character, setting, and plot. Factual writers use description and technical language. In hybrid texts you may find a wide range of literary language.
Sentence Complexity	Meaning is mapped onto the syntax of language. Texts with simpler, more natural sentences are easier to process. Sentences with embedded and conjoined clauses make a text more difficult.
Vocabulary	<i>Vocabulary</i> refers to words and their meanings. The more known vocabulary words in a text, the easier it will be. The individual's <i>reading and writing vocabularies</i> refer to words that she understands and can also read or write.
Words	This category refers to recognizing and solving the printed words in the text. The challenge in a text partly depends on the number and the difficulty of the words that the reader must solve by recognizing them or decoding them. Having a great many of the same high-frequency words makes a text more accessible to readers.