

FIGURE I-4 *Ten Characteristics of Texts for Guided Reading*

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF TEXTS FOR GUIDED READING	
Genre	Genre is the type of text and refers to a system by which fiction and nonfiction texts are classified. Form is the particular format in which a genre may be presented. Forms and genres have characteristic features.
Text Structure	Structure is the way the text is organized and presented. The structure of most fiction and biographical texts is narrative, 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 description; chronological sequence; comparison and contrast; cause and effect; and problem and solution. The presence of these structures, especially in combination, can increase the challenge for readers.
Content	Content refers to the subject matter of the text—the facts and 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	Themes and ideas are the larger messages 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. A text may have a main idea and several messages.
Language and Literary Features	Language and literary features make a text enjoyable and satisfying to readers. 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. Contemporary nonfiction writers use literary writing to make texts engaging, and they often present argument. In hybrid texts you may find a wide range of literary language.
Sentence Complexity	Sentence complexity refers to the way words are arranged in order in sentences with punctuation. 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	Vocabulary refers to words and their meanings. The more known vocabulary words in a text, the easier it will be. The individual's reading and writing vocabularies refer to words that she understands and can also read or write. Simple words that exist in the oral vocabulary (Tier 1) are the easiest. Tier 2 words are those that appear more often in writing and in the talk of mature language users. Tier 3 words are those used in academic disciplines.
Words	Words are the groups of letters arranged in print that readers must recognize and solve. 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 texts more accessible for beginning readers. Multisyllable words make a text more difficult.
Illustrations	Illustrations include the drawings, paintings, or photographs that accompany the text and add meaning and enjoyment. In factual texts, illustrations also include graphics that provide a great deal of information that readers must integrate with the text. Illustrations are an integral part of a high-quality text. Increasingly, fiction texts are including a range of graphics, including labels, sidebars, photos and legends, charts, and graphs. After grade one, texts may include graphic texts that communicate information or a story in a sequence of pictures and words.
Book and Print Features	Book and print features are the physical aspects of the text—what readers cope with in terms of length, size, and layout. Book and print features also include organizational tools like a table of contents, headings and subheadings, and sidebars; text resources like a glossary, pronunciation guide, and index; and a variety of graphic features in graphic texts that communicate how the text is read. Some features outside the body of the text (for example, endpapers, title page, dedication, front and back covers, and dust jacket or book flap) are called the peritext. All of these features hold meaning and aesthetic appeal for proficient readers.