

## Readability levels of text – how to find them...

1) Readability is an attempt to match the reading level of written material to the "reading with understanding" level of the reader. To locate the readability level of any document produced or scanned into MS Word, go to file, click on options, click on proofing, go to "When correcting spelling and grammar in Word," and put a tick the box that says show readability statistics. You only need to do this once. Now whenever you check spelling and grammar after this it will now display the readability statistics. **What do the statistics mean?**

**Schools only need to focus on the bottom two numbers:**

- *Flesch Kinkaid Grade Level.* Add 5 to the F-K grade and you have an approx UK readability level. e.g. 4.6 = readability level of 9.6
- *Reading Ease levels.* A score between 1-100, with 100 being the easiest to read. Schools should aim for a score of 60 or above.

Remember that this is a simplistic method but provides a starting place when evaluating text.

2) When examining the readability of text books, sometimes it may be easier to use a formula such as the Simplified Measure Of Gobbledygook (SMOG).

**Calculating the SMOG level of a text:**

1. Select a page of a book
2. Count 10 sentences
3. Count the number of words which have three or more syllables
4. Multiply this by 3
5. Find the square root of the number you circled
7. Add 8 = Approximate readability level
8. Information on a range of readability devices can be obtained from:

<http://www.timetabler.com/download-readability.html>

## Texts of known readability levels

Included below are five pieces of text that are at known readability levels. Asking pupils to read these can provide a guide to their readability level. All the pieces have 100 words. If the pupil makes more than 5 errors when they are reading a piece, their comprehension level is likely to be insufficient for text of this level.

The texts are:

- **The boy who cried wolf:** F.K level 2.2 approx readability level 7 years
- **Some snake facts:** F.K level 4.3 approx readability level 9 years
- **A Roman soldier:** F.K level 6.4 approx readability level 11 years
- **Seapup:** F.K level 8.1 approx readability level 13 years
- **The beginnings of the world:** F.K level 11.2 approx readability level 14+

## The boy who cried wolf

There was a boy who did not like to get out of his bed and go to school. His Mum and Dad made him go. The boy said that a mad wolf was going to kill the sheep. All the people ran up the hill to kill the wolf. When they got there they saw it was a trick and were very cross. The next day the boy did see a wolf but no one came to help when he told them. The sheep ran away over the hill and the boy had to run all day to find them.

## **Some snake facts**

Many people hate snakes. They can't stand the sight of their wriggling bodies or their flicking tongues. The thought of being crushed to death or poisoned with a bite fills them with dread. Then there are those who love them and find them interesting and beautiful. For them a cat or dog is out and they prefer to keep a snake instead. Perhaps we have become a little over wary of these crawling reptiles. They are certainly not the slimy creatures they're made out to be. Indeed having one at home could have a point or two in its favour.

## **A Roman soldier**

Lem was a soldier for the city of Rome. He wore armour made of polished leather with a bronze shield and a helmet. The Roman soldiers were known throughout the world as excellent fighters. The soldiers' training was difficult, but they all learned to fight bravely and were not afraid of any army anywhere. All the young men in Rome had to join the army for at least two years and Lem was now looking forward to going home. Home was a village on the east coast of Italy, twenty miles from the sea where his father was the mayor.

## **Seapup**

Seapup was born on a misty morning into a rock-encrusted pool beyond Faraway Point. His Mother laughed with delight at her screaming child and his Father sent up an enormous salty splash to the swooping seagulls. Painted clown fish took turns to rock the howling child until the dawn wind extinguished the stars one by one. The white horses thundered in from the depths of the ocean, from near and far, to see the angry arrival. "What a fine baby," they neighed before they reared and pranced away; with their manes flying and their hooves thundering in the crashing surf.

## **The beginnings of the world**

A hundred and fifty years ago, people studying how rocks were formed and how animals and plants looked long ago, came up with different ideas about how the world began. Some men began to think that all the questions of the world could be explained by using science. This idea was supported by those explorers who brought back strange creatures from foreign countries to exhibit in zoos. Links between different animals were discovered and the most famous scientist of his age, Charles Darwin, caused a huge scandal by writing a book that suggested that human beings and apes were related.