

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z+ (Fiction/Narrative)

Level W

Reader's Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Excerpt from *Nightjohn*, pp. 32-37

Level W 701 words

Independent Level:
Yes No

Accuracy Rate _____%

Book Introduction: Say this to the reader before he or she begins the student copy of the text: "Sarny, a female slave at the Waller Plantation, meets a newly purchased slave named Nightjohn who is looking to make a trade. Please read aloud the first section. (*Point to the line on the student copy to show the child where the first section ends*). After this part, you may read the rest silently. If you need to, you can reread the first part. When you are finished reading, I will ask you to retell or what you have just read."

During and after the Running Record, you may make these observations and notes to inform instruction:

- Self-corrects;
- Pauses while reading to think;
- Uses more than one strategy to figure out unfamiliar words;
- Miscues make sense;
- Miscues fit the syntax or structure of the sentence;
- Miscues look similar to words in the text;
- Figures out the meaning of unfamiliar words—
if the child mispronounces a word during the running record, ask the child if they know the meaning of the word when they finish reading the excerpt.

Running Record: For the first 100 words of the passage, record each miscue above the relevant word as the student reads. You may decide to hear and record miscues for an additional 100 words to get a better portrait of the student's oral reading. See *Teacher Guidebook* for specific recording practices, and for guidance on analyzing the student's miscues towards future instruction. Use the Accuracy Rate calculator at the end of the text excerpt to determine if this student's accuracy demonstrates independence at this level. Use the Oral Reading Fluency Scale to determine if this student is reading fluently at this level.

"Who's got tobacco? I need some tobacco."

It was a whisper, but loud, cutting from the corner where the new man sat. I had me some tobacco. It was just shredded bottom leaf that I'd been chewing to spit on the roses but I'd kept some back in a wrapped piece of sacking inside my shirdress, tied round my waist on a piece of string. I didn't say a word. You come on things, things to keep, and you keep them to trade for other things. Things you need. Like pork fat. Or pennies.

He chuckled, low and rippling. Sounded **(100 Words)** like a low wind through willows, that small laugh, or maybe water moving over round rocks. Deep and soft.

***** (Reader may read silently from this point on.) *****

"I'll trade," he whispered. "I'll trade something for a lip of tobacco."

I thought, What you got to trade? You come in naked as the day you was born, come in bad with whip marks all up and down your back, not even a set of clothes or canvas pants and you're ready to go to trading? I didn't say it, but I thought it. And he like to read my thoughts.

“What I got to trade, what I got to **(200 Words)** trade for a lip of tobacco is letters. I knows letters. I’ll trade A, B, and C for a lip of chew.” He laughed again.

And there I was, with the tobacco in my dress and he said that and I didn’t know what letters was, nor what they meant, but I thought it might be something I wanted to know. To learn.

So mammy she was sleeping, her breath moving in and out, and I wiggled out of the pile of young ones and moved to the dark corner and set my ownself next to him. “What’s a letter?” **(300 Words)**

He smiled. “You sound like you’ve got tobacco.”

“Not until I know what a letter is...”

“Why, it’s reading. You learn the letters first and then when you know them you string them together into words. I’ll trade you three letters for a lipful.”

I knew about reading. It was something that the people in the white house did from paper. They could read words on paper. But we weren’t allowed to be reading. We weren’t allowed to understand or read nothing but once I saw some funny lines on the side of a feed sack. It said: 100 lbs.

I wrote them down in the dirt with a stick and mammy gave me a smack on the back of the head that like to drove me into the ground.

“Don’t you take to that, take to writing,” she said.

“I wasn’t doing it. I was just copying something I saw on a feed sack.”

“Don’t. They catch you doing that and they’ll think you’re learning to read. You learn to read and they’ll whip you till your skin hangs like torn rags. Or cut your thumb off. Stay away from writing and reading.”

So I did. But I remembered how it had looked, the drawings on the sack and in the dirt, and it still puzzled me. I dug in my dress and found the tobacco but held it.

“You saying you can read?”

He nodded.

“I give you something to read, you can read it? Just like that?”

“I can.”

There was some yellow light from the windows of the big house and it came through the doorway and made a light patch on the dirt floor.

“Come on.”

I led him to the light patch and squatted. I used my finger to scratch what I remembered in the dirt. The floor was hard packed and I had to rub hard to make it show right.

“There.”

He squatted and squinted.

“Why, those ain’t letters. Those are numbers.”

“Numbers?”

He nodded. “Sure is. Says one hundred. Then there’s those three letters on the end. They don’t work for me as a word. Just L B S—don’t say a word. It must mean something to somebody.”

“Can you teach me that?”

“To read?”

“To read what I just put there in the dirt—can you teach me?”

He rubbed his chin. “Well, mought be if I had some tobacco...”

Scoring the Running Record for Accuracy and Oral Reading Fluency

Total miscues including self-corrected: _____

Self-corrections: _____

Miscues reader did not self-correct: _____

Accuracy Rate: Circle the number of miscues per 100 words the reader did not self-correct.

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 100 Words | 100% | 99% | 98% | 97% | 96% |
| | 0 miscues | 1 miscue | 2 miscues | 3 miscues | 4 miscues |
| 95% | 94% | 93% | 92% | 91% | 90% |
| 5 miscues | 6 miscues | 7 miscues | 8 miscues | 9 miscues | 10 miscues |

- 96%-100% = independent reading level of accuracy
- 90%-95% = instructional reading level of accuracy

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – Circle the Level that Best Describes the Student’s Oral Reading *Note: Oral Reading Fluency is not taken into account until Level K for determining reading level, though it should of course be considered and taught into at earlier levels.

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Fluent | Level 4 | Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the text. Preservation of the author’s syntax is consistent. Most of the text is read with expressive interpretation. Pace is consistently conversational. |
| | Level 3 | Reads primarily in three or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Some expressive interpretation is present; this may be inconsistent across the reading of the text. The pace is mixed: there is some faster and some slower reading. |
| Non fluent | Level 2 | Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage. Beginning a little expressive interpretation, frequently first seen when reading dialogue. The pace is somewhat slow. |
| | Level 1 | Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur—but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax. No expressive interpretation. The pace is noticeably very slow. |

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study and Zutell and Rasinski’s Multidimensional Fluency Scales (Zutell, J., & Rasinski, T. V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students’ oral reading fluency. *Theory Into Practice*, 30, 211–217. Please refer to the *Benchmarks for Student Progress* for details regarding Oral Reading Rate.

Retell:

Say, “Please retell this story.” Be sure to retell the important parts, and to tell them in order.” Write notes regarding the student’s retelling on the back of this page.

If the student has trouble getting started or says very little, you may use non-leading prompting. Examples of non-leading prompting include: What happened next? Can you say more? Did anything else happen? Make a note that you needed to prompt the student, as you will want to teach this student how to self-initiate more elaborated retells.

Use the Sample Student Responses to determine if the child’s retelling and responses to the comprehension questions are acceptable. See scoring guidance for specifics regarding how to account for the retell and the responses to questions in determining a student’s independent reading level.

Comprehension: Questions: If the student’s retell did not include answers to the following questions, please ask any/all of the questions that were not addressed. There are many acceptable responses to each question, some of which are listed below. The reader’s response is acceptable as long as it demonstrates an accurate understanding of the text. As the reader answers each question, be sure to record the response carefully.

| Question | Sample Acceptable Responses |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Literal:</i> What does Nightjohn want to trade with the narrator, Sarny? | “... letters for tobacco; some of the narrator’s (Sarny’s) tobacco, but he doesn’t have anything to give her back so he offers to teach her to read” |
| 3. <i>Inferential:</i> The characters in this story talk and act in ways that match the time and place the story is set in. How do you think the historical setting fits with what the characters are saying and doing? | “... at that time slaves did not have many rights. For instance, Nightjohn has whip marks because he’s been beaten, Nightjohn has to whisper to trade for things he wants, and the slaves are not allowed to become educated and can only do so in secret; they are talking about trading tobacco, pig fat, and pennies—things that would not be desirable today; Sarny uses a stick to write and a patch of light from the big house to see. You can tell that Sarny and the other slaves do not live with modern technology like electricity” |
| 4. <i>Inferential:</i> How do you think the narrator’s impression of Nightjohn changes from the beginning to the end of this passage? | “... In the beginning Sarny thought Nightjohn was a fool for offering to trade because he didn’t have anything she would want. In the end, she realizes he does have something she wants: the ability to read; At first the narrator (Sarny) thought Nightjohn was ragged and worn down and had nothing. By the end, she sees that he can read and that that is worth a lot” |
| 4. <i>Inferential:</i> Why do you think Sarny would like to learn to read even though it is not allowed? | “...because she realizes reading will give her power; possessing the ability to read could be a good thing for Sarny (she’ll know more about the world, and so on)” |

Notes on retelling (this may be a transcription or comments on students' ability to retell in order and prioritize the key story elements):

Student's replies to comprehension questions (if necessary because not addressed in retell):

- 1) What does Nightjohn want to trade with the narrator, Sarny?

- 2) The characters in this story talk and act in ways that match the time and place the story is set in. How do you think the historical setting fits with what the characters are saying and doing?

- 3) How do you think the narrator's impression of Nightjohn changes from the beginning to the end of this passage?

- 4) Why do you think Sarny would like to learn to read even though it is not allowed?

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Level W

Final Score

Yes No Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?

Yes No Did the student read with fluency? (a score of 3 or 4 on the Oral Reading Fluency Scale)*

Yes No Did the reader demonstrate literal and inferential comprehension through one of the following combinations of retell and responses:

- A clear, accurate retell that incorporates answers to three out of four comprehension questions. (This may be with or without non-leading prompting. See directions for retell for more about non-leading prompting).
- A mostly accurate retell PLUS acceptable responses to three out of four of the comprehension questions (answered or included in the retell). The retell need not be well-crafted or completely comprehensive, but if it indicates mostly inaccurate comprehension, try the next level down.

Is this the student's independent reading level?

- If you did NOT answer "yes" to all questions in this **Final Score** box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all questions in the **Final Score** box.
- If you answered "yes" to all questions in this **Final Score** box, the student is reading independently at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read independently at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all questions. The highest level for which you can answer "yes" for all questions is the student's independent reading level.

*Note: Oral Reading Fluency is not taken into account until Level K for determining reading level, though it should of course be considered and taught at earlier levels.

Name:

Date:

In writing, retell the important parts of what you just read.

Name:

Date:

Please answer these questions in your own words. You may use extra paper if you need it.

Question #1: What does Nightjohn want to trade with the narrator, Sarny?

Question #2: The characters in this story talk and act a certain way that matches the time and place the story is set in. How do you think the setting fits with what the characters are saying and doing?

Question #3: How do you think the narrator's impression of Nightjohn changes from the beginning to the end of this passage?

Question #4: Why do you think Sarny would like to learn to read even though it is not allowed?
