

READY★TO★READ

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME READING STARS!

Do you have a classroom full of students at different reading levels? Are you looking for a quick and effective way to find books that will match their diverse needs? Simon & Schuster's new "Be a Reading Star!" leveling system makes it easy to determine which of the many wonderful Ready-to-Read books are best suited for each of your students.

This guide explains how to get the most out of the "Be a Reading Star!" levels. It also provides strategies for using Ready-to-Read books to teach reading and other subjects in your classroom, and project and activity ideas to use with your students. The Ready-to-Read books will help all of your students learn and grow as readers—whether they start out as Rising Stars, Stars, Superstars, or Megastars.

RISING STAR! ★ Pre-Level One ★ Recognizing Words

STAR! ★ Level One ★ Starting to Read

SUPERSTAR! ★ Level Two ★ Reading Independently

MEGASTAR! ★ Level Three ★ Reading Proficiently





How the “Be a Reading Star!” Leveling System Works

Each Ready-to-Read book has been assigned a level, from Pre-Level 1 (Rising Star) to Level 3 (Megastar). When you see the level on a book, you’ll know whether it’s likely to be appropriate for helping students develop basic decoding skills, more advanced comprehension strategies, or anything in between.

Tip: You can determine if a level is too high by having the child read the first page or paragraph. If they miss three to five words (depending on the length of the passage) the text is on a frustration level. Books need to be on a child’s “independent reading level” in order for them to move through the levels easily.

Pre-Level One: Rising Star Reader

- ★ Shared reading
- ★ Familiar characters
- ★ Simple words

Do your students enjoy listening to you read? Are they developing phonemic awareness and starting to connect letters with sounds? The books at this level—filled with characters that kids know and love, such as Puppy Mudge and Mouse—are just right for your students.

Level One: Star Reader

- ★ Easy sight words and words to sound out
- ★ Simple plot and dialogue
- ★ Familiar topics and themes

Are your students able to recognize lots of high-frequency words? Are they starting to decode words and read simple sentences? Olivia, Dora, Friday, and many more classic and new characters are waiting for your students at this level.

Level Two: Superstar Reader

- ★ Longer sentences
- ★ Simple chapters
- ★ High-interest vocabulary words

Are your students learning to read longer sentences fluently? Are their vocabulary and comprehension skills expanding? At this level, your students can learn and grow with Henry and Mudge, Annie and Snowball, and many more loveable characters.

Level Three: Megastar Reader

- ★ Longer, more-complex story plots and character development
- ★ Variety of challenging vocabulary words
- ★ More-difficult sentence structure

Can your students read and comprehend difficult books? Are they confident readers who are ready for a challenge? In the books at this level, many fun and exciting characters will take them on journeys they won’t soon forget.



General Tips for Making Your Classroom a Great Place for Reading

Try integrating the Ready-to-Read books into some of the approaches below:

- ★ Build a classroom library with a wide variety of books. Guide students to books at the appropriate reading level, and then let them choose topics, stories, and characters they find interesting.
- ★ If possible, turn a corner of your room into a cozy reading area. Pile up blankets, pillows, or even some comfortable old chairs. Make the area inviting so your students are eager to visit it when they have free time.
- ★ Every day, read aloud to your students, and give them time to read independently as well. Great reading takes practice!
- ★ Have an ongoing conversation about books. Tell your students about what you're reading. Explain why you like the book, how you chose it, or what it has taught you. Share your excitement about books, and let students do the same.
- ★ Create a classroom "book review" like you see in some Sunday newspapers. After students read a book, help them write the title in a log that you keep in your classroom library. Younger students can then give it a rating on a simple number scale; older students can write down more detailed reactions to the book.
- ★ Hang the "Reach for the Stars!" reading chart in your classroom. This chart allows you and your students to set a new reading goal each month and keep track of your progress toward meeting it. Use stars to note each book a student has completed. Aim for a wall of stars to represent all your reading stars. When your class reaches its goal, have a celebration!



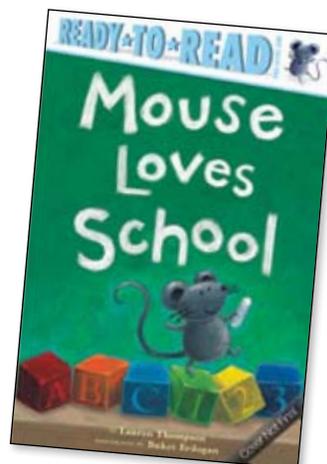


Teaching Ideas: Reading

- ★ Pre-Level One books contain lots of simple words that are great for increasing students' comfort with written text. As you read, run your fingers under the text so students can see that it moves from left to right. Point out various letters and encourage students to identify other words that start with that letter. You may want to declare a "letter of the day" and focus on that letter during reading and other activities that day.
- ★ Rising Star readers are learning to match letters to sounds. Help them develop their phonics skills by pointing out words in a book that are similar, such as sit and sat. Talk about the different sounds in the two words and point out the letters that create the different sounds.
- ★ Before you begin reading a new book, help your Rising Star readers relate to it by connecting it to their own lives and knowledge. The Pre-Level One books have lots of familiar characters, so ask students to share what they already know about the book's main character. Or tell students about part of the plot and let them describe similar experiences they've had.
- ★ As you read, pause periodically to talk about the book. If your students are unclear about something, direct them to the pictures for information. In Pre-Level One books, there is almost always a direct correspondence between the pictures and the words. Help students see this relationship.

Teaching Ideas: Cross-Curricular

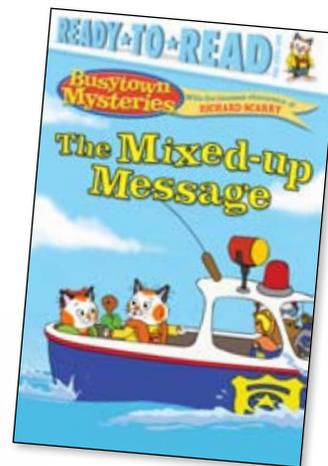
- ★ In *Mouse Loves School*, Mouse finds four blocks in his new classroom. Help students practice their counting skills by asking them to count groups of objects in their own classroom. For example, you might ask them to count how many windows, doors, pencils, shoes, or people are in the room.
- ★ Mouse also finds a drum in his classroom. Encourage your students' musical ability and creativity by having them create simple instruments with everyday materials. For example, they might make a shaker by putting some pennies in an empty water or juice bottle, or a tambourine by attaching bells around the outside of a paper plate. Then have your "class band" choose songs to sing and play.





Class Activities and Projects

- ★ Have your students work in groups to create models of Mouse’s classroom. They can create the room by turning an empty shoebox on its side. Help students make a list of everything they know is in the room, such as the four blocks, the red car, the drum, the plant, and more. Then have them create or find each object. For example, they can bring in a red toy car from home, make small blocks by folding colored paper into cubes, or draw and cut out a picture of a drum. Then have them place the objects around the room and add other details, such as decorations on the walls or little desks and chairs. Finally, have students use craft objects such as pompoms, felt, and pipe cleaners to make Mouse. When groups are done, have them take turns looking at each others’ models. Encourage them to reenact the story in the book—and make up other stories—using their creations.
- ★ Mouse loves school for so many reasons—the toys, the art supplies, the books, and especially his friends. Ask your students to think of one thing they love about school. (For example, they might love learning to read, playing on the playground, or doing science projects.) Help each student write his or her reason at the top of a sheet of paper. Then have students use crayons or markers to draw a picture of their reason. Hang students’ completed pictures on a bulletin board called “Mouse Loves School, and So Do We!” Decorate the board with little cut-out pictures of Mouse!
- ★ After reading *Mixed-up Message* with your class, play a “mixed-up message” game. Create a worksheet that has five different mixed-up messages on it. Each one should be three words long, and two of the words should be “mixed-up.” For example, one message could be “dime for hunch,” which is a mixed-up version of “time for lunch.” Below each mixed-up message, give your students a hint by drawing a simple picture of what the actual message should be. For the example above, you might draw a clock to suggest “time” and a sandwich to suggest “lunch.” Have your students solve the mysteries. Then, challenge your students to create a mixed-up message of their own and give it to a partner to solve.



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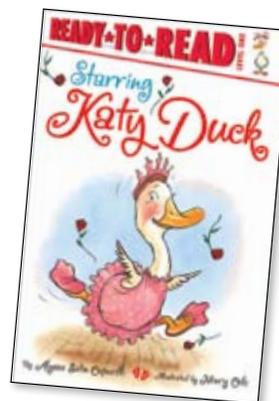


Teaching Ideas: Reading

- ★ Level One books contain lots of simple words for students to sound out. Teach them strategies to use when they have trouble decoding a certain word. For example, help them recognize common prefixes, suffixes, and word roots. Encourage them to think about what word would make the most sense in the sentence. Draw their attention to the pictures, which often reflect what's happening in the text.
- ★ Level One books also have lots of high-frequency “sight” words. Build a “sight word wall” in your classroom. As students read more books and learn to recognize more words, write them on oak tag strips and add them to the word wall. You may want to devote sections of the wall to various books you read in class. For example, you can hang up a picture of Olivia, and around her, hang the words that the students learned while reading the Olivia books.
- ★ Although Star readers are learning to read words and simple sentences on their own, make sure you still read aloud to them as often as possible. Listening to a fluent reader helps developing readers to build fluency. Level One books often have dialogue, so consider asking guest readers to read different parts. The more models of fluent reading, the better.
- ★ Before your Star readers begin a new book, encourage them to make predictions about it based on the title and cover. Or, have them take a “picture walk” through the book. They should look at the pictures on each page and try to guess at the story line based on the pictures. Having these ideas in mind will give students clues to draw from as they work to decode new words.

Teaching Ideas: Cross-Curricular

- ★ *Starring Katy Duck* is about Katy's love of dancing. Read this book with your students during a unit on jobs and careers. Talk about careers in the performing arts, such as dancing, playing an instrument, and acting. Have students generate a list of questions about these careers, such as “How many hours a day do you need to practice?” or “What is the hardest part about being a dancer/musician/actor?” Try to arrange to have an actual artist come to your class to share the answers.
- ★ In *Robin Hill School: Class Picture Day*, Emma visits the eye doctor. During a unit on the human body, help your children learn more about how we see. Show them a diagram of the eye, and teach them the names and functions of various parts of the eye, such as the lens, cornea, iris, pupil, and retina. Give students their own copies of the diagram to label and color.





Class Activities and Projects

- ★ Olivia loves camping and being in the outdoors with her family, exploring nature and having new experiences like sleeping in a tent! In *Olivia Goes Camping*, she helps Francine enjoy camping, too. How did she do that? Ask students to describe something new that they did for the first time, such as trying a new food, a new sport, playing a new game, traveling to a new place, etc. How did it make them feel once they did it? Did someone encourage them to try it? Who and how?
- ★ Friday the Scaredy Cat is scared of many things: doorbells, telephones, thunder, lightning, car horns, and more. Have students meet in pairs and tell each other about something they were once scared of and how they got over their fear. Then, have volunteers share their stories with the whole class. Talk about patterns in the students' stories, such as common fears (the dark, going to the doctor, etc.) and common ways of conquering them (focusing on the positive, watching someone else do it first, etc.).
- ★ In *Follow Those Feet!*, Dora and Boots wonder which animal made the strange footprints they see on the ground. With your class, play a silly game with feet. Have all of your students take off their shoes and put them in a pile at the front of the room. Mix up all the shoes. Then, challenge your class to run over to the pile, find their own shoes, put them on, and return to their seats as quickly as possible. Time them with a stopwatch. Next, challenge them to try it again and beat their own record. Before they try it, have them discuss different ways of approaching the task that might make it go faster.
- ★ In *Kat's Maps*, Kat loves to make maps. Draw a simple map of your classroom that includes your own desk, the students' desks, the door, the windows, the chalkboard, and any other important objects. Do not label the objects on the map. Give each student a copy, but don't tell them what it is. Provide hints that help them figure out that it's a map of the classroom. Help students read the map by discussing what each symbol on it might represent. Then, show them how to label the various objects (door, window, etc.). Have students label and color their classroom maps. They can add as much or as little detail as they'd like.
- ★ In *Robin Hill School: Class Picture Day*, Emma's dad makes all of Emma's classmates eye patches so that Emma doesn't have to be the only student wearing one. Tell your students about a time when you did something kind for someone else. Then have them write or draw about a time when they did something kind. They should try to include the following details: What was the situation? What kind act did they do? How did they feel after doing the act of kindness? Ask volunteers to share their stories with the class.





Teaching Ideas: Reading

- ★ Use the high-interest words in Level Two books to help SuperStar readers develop their vocabularies. Stop and talk about the interesting words that come up while students read. Discuss what each word means and have students name other words with similar meanings. Point out key parts of the word's spelling, such as common prefixes, suffixes, or roots. Challenge students to use the word in other contexts.
- ★ The longer sentences in Level Two books are great for teaching fluency. Choose a long sentence, write it on the board, and draw slash marks between the groups of words that should be read together as phrases. Then model reading with clear phrasing, speed, and tone. Let students participate by echo reading and then choral reading the sentence.
- ★ The books in Level Two are longer and sometimes contain simple chapters. At the end of a chapter, help monitor students' comprehension. Ask them which parts they found confusing or didn't understand. Model strategies for improving comprehension, such as re-reading, reading ahead, paraphrasing, or asking questions.

Teaching Ideas: Cross-Curricular

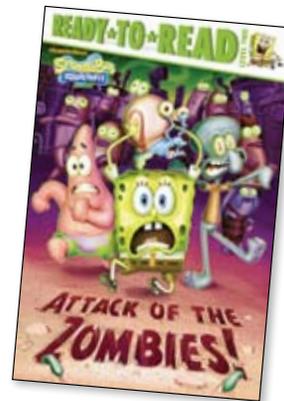
- ★ In *Henry and Mudge and the Funny Lunch*, Henry and his dad make "funny lunches" for Henry's mom on Mother's Day. Teach this book during a unit on nutrition. Help your students identify the food groups of all the foods mentioned in the book. Then show them how to use the kids' section of the FDA's web site (<http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html>) to determine how many servings from each food group they should eat every day.
- ★ *Henry and Mudge in the Sparkle Days* and *Henry and Mudge in the Green Time* are both about seasons. Share these books with students during a unit about weather or climate. Explain to students what it means to "forecast" the weather. Then teach them simple forecasting tricks, such as cloud forecasting (predicting the weather based on the types of clouds in the sky) and wind forecasting (predicting the weather based on which direction the wind is coming from). Over the course of a week, let students make and record predictions. Then see how accurate they were!





Class Activities and Projects

- ★ In *Ruby's New Home*, Jade, Jordan, and Justin learn to share Ruby their dog with each other. Tell your students about a time when you had to share something even though you didn't want to. Then, have them write or draw about a time when they had to share. They should try to include the following details: What did they have to share? Why was sharing difficult in this situation? How did they resolve the problem? Ask volunteers to share their stories with the class.
- ★ Have students read *SpongeBob SquarePants: Attack of the Zombies* through page 26, where everyone in the Krusty Krab wants to capture Gary, but SpongeBob protests. Then have students determine what they think will happen next. Let them work on their own or with partners, and allow them to write down or talk about the ending. Have volunteers share their ideas with the class. Then read the actual ending and discuss how it was similar to or different from the students' ideas.
- ★ In *Henry and Mudge and the Long Weekend*, Henry works with his parents to build a giant castle out of old boxes. Ask your students to bring in old boxes from home. Then have them vote on something the class will build together using the boxes. It could be a castle, like in the book. Or it could be something else, like a city skyline or a model of their school or their town. Help the students sketch out the basic design for the project, and leave the sketch near the boxes so everyone can refer to it. Bring in craft supplies such as paint, markers, colored paper, craft sticks, and glue. Allow students to add to the class project whenever they have some free time.
- ★ In *Henry and Mudge: The First Book*, Henry and Mudge meet and become fast friends. Have your students write acrostic poems about friendship. Have them write "friendship" vertically down the left-hand side of a piece of paper. Then, for each letter in "friendship," they should write a word, phrase, or sentence about friendship that begins with that letter. When they finish, they can illustrate their poem. Hang students' poems on a bulletin board display about friendship, or allow students to give their poems to friends as gifts.



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Teaching Ideas: Reading

- ★ Level Three books challenge MegaStar readers with complicated plots and characters. Students reading at this level should begin monitoring their own comprehension. As they read, have them take simple notes about parts they don't understand. Then have them determine which comprehension strategy would best answer each of their questions: re-reading, reading ahead, paraphrasing, or asking questions.
- ★ Improve students' comprehension of Level Three books by having them respond to the books orally and in writing. Have students write down what they liked and didn't like about each book, and why. Then have them share their responses in small groups or as a whole class.
- ★ Books at Level Three expose students to a variety of challenging vocabulary words. Have students keep "vocabulary notebooks." In these notebooks, they should keep a list of new words they learn while reading new books. For each word, students can include a brief definition, the sentence in which it's used in the book, and an original sentence that uses it. Have students divide their lists into sections based on which book the words came from.
- ★ The sentences in Level Three books often have complex structures. If students are having trouble following a sentence, encourage them to divide it into phrases, or groups of related words, before reading it. Dividing a long sentence into short phrases will make it easier to manage.

