As educators, we believe there is power inherent in the written word. It is the power of knowledge and interaction—the ability to convey what we mean and to be heard, the gift that brings others’ thoughts into our realm of understanding. It is our hope that the children in our care will learn to look to the written word for the same reasons we do—to answer questions, clarify learning, and exchange ideas.

A relationship between readers and the text can come only from training and experience. To help unlock the meaning of language, we teach readers to apply sense to symbols. They learn to associate sounds with letters and then to combine letters to make words. Ultimately, they connect these words to make sense of what they are reading. They can answer questions such as “What is this story about?” and “What is the author telling me?”

For some, this progression happens naturally. One day children are decoding single words and the next they are reading sentences, paragraphs, and chapters with ease. For others, each step comes with great effort, and success is not always at hand. They seek what the proficient readers have—and what all readers deserve: fluency.

Fluency, the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression, is essential to comprehension, which is the primary goal of reading. Fluency comes with practice, and all readers must strive to achieve it. Readers who are already fluent, readers who are well on their way to being so, and those who are struggling to get there all must employ practice and patience to become confident, capable readers. Their skills may be different, but their goal is the same: They want to understand.

This teaching resource, *Fluency Practice Mini-Books: Grade 2*, offers countless opportunities to build and strengthen your students’ ability to read with ease and confidence. It contains 15 mini-books on topics from core curricular areas, tied in with national standards at the second-grade level and presented as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and prose. It also offers tools for assessment, including a teacher checklist and rubric and a checklist students can use to monitor their own reading progress. (See Assessing Fluency, page 9.)

The mini-books and accompanying activities target specific skills in fluency and phonics and aim to increase speed of word recognition as well as to improve decoding accuracy, use of expression, and, ultimately, comprehension. The text adheres to vocabulary standards based on the studies of Harris and Jacobson. These standards ensure that your students
will encounter words within the first-grade reading vocabulary rather than those that might hinder their progress.

The stories have been leveled using readability scores from the Lexile Framework for Reading (See chart, page 14.) These scores offer guidelines to help you select the stories that best match the needs and reading levels of each student. The stories are ready for use to practice, strengthen, and assess skills in reading fluency. And they all share the same objective: to give students practice reading comfortably, confidently, and with enthusiasm, so that you can build an ever-growing flock of fluent readers within the walls of your classroom.

**Fluency: An Overview**

**What Is Fluency?**

Fluency is the mark of a proficient reader. When a student reads text quickly, gets most of the words right, and uses appropriate expression and phrasing, we say that he or she has achieved fluency. Fluency frees readers from the struggle that slows them down. Hence, they are able to read for meaning and to understand. They can attend to the details of text, pausing as indicated and varying tone and pace to enhance comprehension for both themselves and potential listeners.

**How Does Fluency Develop?**

As with every skill worth developing, fluency sharpens with experience. Exposure to print, immersion in a rich linguistic environment, and practice, practice, practice all lead to fluent reading.

From the emergent on up, readers must learn and apply tools to help them advance. The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) speaks of fluency as a skill in flux.

"Fluency is not a stage of development at which readers can read all words quickly and easily. Fluency changes, depending on what readers are reading, their familiarity with the words, and the amount of their practice with reading text. Even very skilled readers may read in a slow, labored manner when reading texts with many unfamiliar words or topics.” (NIFL, 2001)

Readers are most comfortable (and most fluent) when reading what they have seen before or what they know most about. When venturing beyond that, they must rely on word attack skills, prior knowledge, and the host of tools that helped them advance previously.
The child reads primarily in meaningful phrases. The child attends to most punctuation and usually reads at a smooth pace, but sometimes struggles with words or sentence structure. The child often self-corrects but does not always recognize errors. The child reads with expression and attempts to pronounce unfamiliar words, but sometimes needs assistance.

The child reads primarily in groups of two or three words. The child reads smoothly at times and then slowly, word by word, especially when encountering unfamiliar words. The child pays little attention to punctuation, pacing, and expression and spends most of the effort on decoding. The child hesitates before trying new words and usually requires assistance with them.

The child reads slowly and word by word. The child does not heed punctuation and reads words in a string without pause or expression. The child does not attempt to pronounce unfamiliar words. The child’s reading sounds stilted and unnatural and lacks meaning.

Adapted from 35 Rubrics & Checklists to Assess Reading and Writing by Adele Fiderer. Scholastic, 1998. Permission to reuse granted by the author.

Fluency Practice Mini-Books: Grade 2 Scholastic Teaching Resources
My Read-Aloud Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I say a word again if it does not sound right.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I pay attention to punctuation at the end of a sentence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I try to read without stopping after every word.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I read with expression.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I look at the pictures to see what is happening.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from 35 Rubrics & Checklists to Assess Reading and Writing by Adele Fiderer. Scholastic, 1998.
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Fluency Practice Mini-Books: Grade 2  Scholastic Teaching Resources
Activities for Building Fluency

Play With Punctuation

Emphasize the impact of ending punctuation. Model and then invite students to say the same sentence three different ways, using a period, a question mark, and an exclamation point. For example, from “Reptiles!,” page 37, you might read the sentence “Wes tripped over it” as follows:

- “Wes tripped over it.”
- “Wes tripped over it?”
- “Wes tripped over it!”

Dabble in Dialogue

Use a mini-book filled with conversation, such as “Numbers in the News!,” page 69, or “The Prince and the Sandwich,” page 77, to draw attention to using dialogue to represent each character’s unique personality. For example, when reading aloud “Numbers in the News,” purposely model distinct voices for Mrs. Patel, Kofi, Cindy, Omar, Jia, and Kevin. Discuss the ways you change inflection, accent, pace, and tone to represent each character. When Mrs. Patel speaks, for example, you may want to talk with enthusiasm and patience. For Jia, meanwhile, you may choose to speak more quickly and in a higher-pitched voice. Each character’s speech will hold its own distinct sound; repeat it each time he or she speaks. Point out your intentions to your students, and encourage them to create their own unique voices for characters—in this mini-book and in trade books they read aloud.

In addition, use oral reading to demonstrate the ways speech can reflect emotion. The dialogue in “The Prince and the Sandwich,” page 77, provides a particularly good opportunity for this; the queen’s doubting “We shall see,” and the prince’s horrified “I can’t eat this!” reflect the expression of two completely different emotions.
Connect With Phonics

Each mini-book offers opportunities to extend phonics awareness. While reading, look for connections to the following:

Letter-Sound Relationships
- blends and digraphs
- high-frequency words
- vowel sounds
- word families
- rhyme

Word Structure
- compound words
- contractions
- homonyms
- plurals
- prefixes and suffixes
- syllabication

Tap Into Highlighting Tape

Use colorful highlighting tape to flag words previously introduced as well as to mark the beginning and end of text children will be expected to read. Students can also use highlighting tape to emphasize repetitive phrases, rhyming words, sight words, and word chunks, as well as to mark dialogue for Readers’ Theater.

Pull Out a Pocket Chart

Use a pocket chart to reinforce pacing, intonation, word chunking, and other aspects of fluent reading. Focus on one mini-book and one skill at a time. For example, to guide children in reading a sentence smoothly instead of word by word, determine where natural phrasing groups words together, such as “The wind” in the sentence, “The wind blew and blew.” (from the mini-book “The Wind and the Sun,” page 25). Write each word on its own strip, and place these words in order on the chart. Read the words aloud, separately at first, and then blending, or “smooshing,” them together. (Blevins, 2001a) Next, substitute the individual words for a larger strip featuring the words in a group rather than individually. (Example: “The wind” would be a natural word group.)

Invite children to manipulate sentences on the pocket chart, writing whole sentences on strips and then cutting apart to show natural groupings.