



# TOEFL Primary<sup>®</sup> / TOEFL Junior<sup>®</sup>

## Authentic Readers/Leveled Readers Compatibility

Use the Lexile Index to select the best English reader to improve your English reading comprehension

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**GEET**

一般社団法人  
国際教育英語試験協会  
Global Educational English Testing

# 1. The Authentic English Proficiency Test (TOEFL Primary® / TOEFL Junior®) and Two Readers (Authentic Readers / Leveled Readers)

## 1-1: About Question Setup for the TOEFL Primary® / TOEFL Junior®

In TOEFL Primary® and TOEFL Junior®, to assess proficiency in both everyday conversational English and academic English, the questions are often based on situations from students' daily lives at school and home. For example, there are scenarios where students talk about homework, extracurricular clubs, weekend or summer vacation plans. You may also see settings such as teachers giving instructions or engaging in Q&A sessions in class, morning assemblies, or guest lectures.

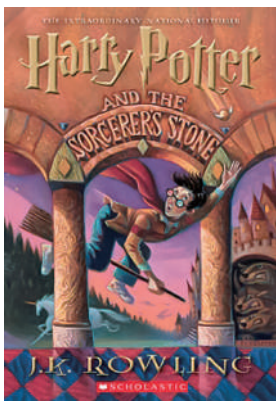
Additionally, reading and listening questions may involve academic topics such as science, social studies, history, and art that are actually covered in classes. As for home life, there are examples of events or conversations with family, such as discussing shopping, chores, planning a family birthday, or how to spend a special event. These are everyday situations commonly seen in English-speaking countries, particularly in the United States.

## 1-2: Two Types of Authentic Readers/ Authentic Readers

Authentic Readers refer to stories or expository texts written in the authors' original, natural language. In this report, they specifically refer to books and literature written for native English-speaking children and students. These works reflect cultural backgrounds and personal perspectives, and they hold literary or informational value across various genres, including stories, historical fictions, nonfictions, and explanatory texts.

Authentic readers can be broadly classified into two main groups. One group is what we call "Authentic Readers," which are English books

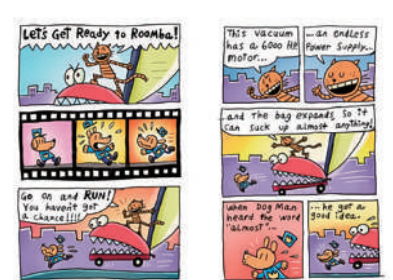
published for general readers, often found in bookstores and public libraries, intended for entertainment or knowledge acquisition. Popular children's books that have become bestsellers worldwide, such as "Harry Potter" , "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" , and "National Geographic Kids" , are written by authors with the aim of helping children enjoy reading and gain knowledge. Recently, a new genre called "graphic novels," which is similar to Japanese manga, has also emerged, serving as a bridge that connects children with books.



"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone"  
Lexile Index: 880L  
Text copyright©1997  
by J.K.Rowling.  
All rights reserved.  
Published by Scholastic Inc.



"DOGMAN" (Graphic Novel) Lexile Index: 390L  
Copyright©2016 by Dav Pilkey. All rights reserved.  
Published by Graphix, an imprint of Scholastic Inc.



### 1-3: Two Types of Authentic Readers/ Leveled Readers

Another type of Authentic readers is “Leveled Readers” , which are educational books used in learning environments. These books are designed to help students acquire knowledge according to their developmental stages, reading skills, and learning progress. They are used alongside textbooks or in school libraries and other educational settings.

“Leveled Readers” are used to help students develop reading skills. These books are tailored to the age, vocabulary, and intellectual curiosity of the students, and they include important elements for early reading, such as high-frequency words, phonics rules, words that follow those rules, and sight words that don't. The texts are short and repetitive at lower levels, gradually becoming longer and more complex as the levels advance. At the early stages, there are often illustrations closely related to the text, which provide clues to the meaning of the words and help with comprehension.

As students acquire various reading skills through

“Leveled Readers” and become independent readers, they "graduate" from “Leveled Readers” and move on to the previously mentioned “Authentic Readers” . Some “Leveled Readers” feature popular characters, like “Pete the Cat” , “The Magic School Bus” , “Disney characters” , or “Biscuit” , to support a smooth transition to “Authentic Readers” .

#### Representative “Leveled Readers”

- Oxford Reading Tree/ Oxford University Press
- Scholastic Readers/ Scholastic Inc.
- I Can Read!/Harper Collins.
- Step Into Reading/ Random House



“GIRAFFE IS GRUMPY”  
Lexile Index: 160L  
(Scholastic Reader Level 1)  
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Hilary Leung. All rights reserved.  
Published by Scholastic Inc.

### 1-4: Characteristics of Authentic Readers

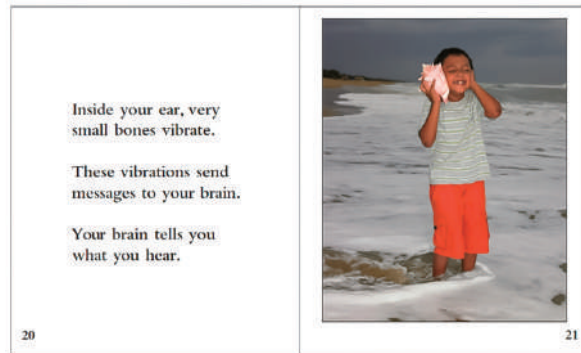
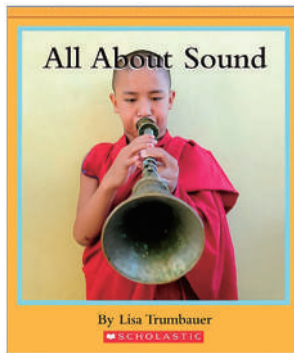
Authentic Readers are aimed at children and students in English-speaking countries. Therefore, the content, vocabulary, and expressions are selected with consideration for their grade level and age. Even in books for lower grades, past tense and present progressive forms may appear, as well as specialized terms or words with difficult spellings and pronunciations. Vocabulary and expressions that may be slightly challenging are sometimes included as needed to enrich the children's intellect and knowledge. On the other hand, complex concepts are sometimes expressed using very simple words and phrases. Since

Authentic Readers are not restricted in terms of vocabulary or sentence structure from the perspective of learning English as a second language, beginners may find them a bit difficult. However, they provide a valuable opportunity to learn practical, real-life English expressions.

The "Rookie" series, an educational book series published in the U.S. for elementary school students, covers academic topics such as natural phenomena like sound and light, animals, plants, insects, environmental issues, and biographies. It is a nonfiction reader series that handles these topic

in relatively easy English at a basic level. In Japan, it is also used in “Extensive Reading Programs” in

middle and high schools.



“All About Sound”  
Lexile Index: 400L

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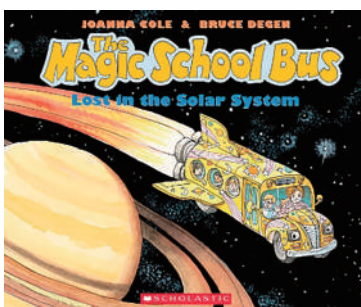
## 2. The Lexile Index (a bridge between TOEFL Primary® / TOEFL Junior® and the two types of Authentic Readers)

### 2-1: The situational questions in TOEFL Primary® / TOEFL Junior® for better understanding through Authentic Readers

In terms of compatibility with TOEFL Primary®/TOEFL Junior®, Authentic Readers offer many books and series set in everyday life at schools and homes in English-speaking countries. By reading these, students can familiarize themselves with various situational settings likely to appear on the test and gain exposure to natural conversational dialogue. The Magic School Bus series, a global bestseller focused on scientific themes, is one example. It features casual conversations and inner thoughts of classmates in speech bubbles, while also including formal writing summarizing lessons or reflections learned

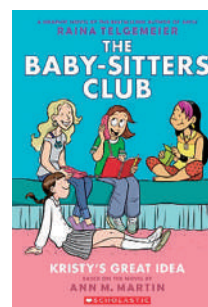
during field trips, all illustrated within the text. Additionally, students are introduced to academic topics such as space, the human body, animals, plants, the ocean, and climate through both illustrations and English. Another example is The Baby-Sitters Club, which tells the story of four middle school girls working part-time as babysitters (yes, middle school students can work part-time in the U.S!). This series provides insight into the daily lives of American teenagers at school, their choice of words and expressions, and part-time job culture.

[The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System]  
Lexile Index: 570



The Magic School Bus book series  
© Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen.  
All rights reserved.  
Published by Scholastic Inc.

[The Baby-Sitters Club: Kristy's Great Idea]  
Lexile Index: GN350

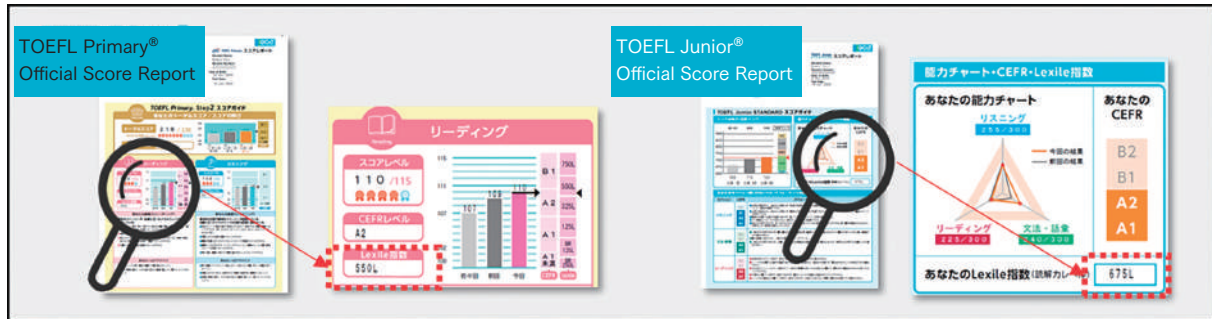


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## 2-2: The Lexile Index for connecting the reading comprehension level of TOEFL Primary® / TOEFL Junior® test takers with the difficulty level of books

When you take the TOEFL Primary® or TOEFL Junior®, the official score report you receive

afterward includes an item called the "Lexile Index, where a specific number is listed.

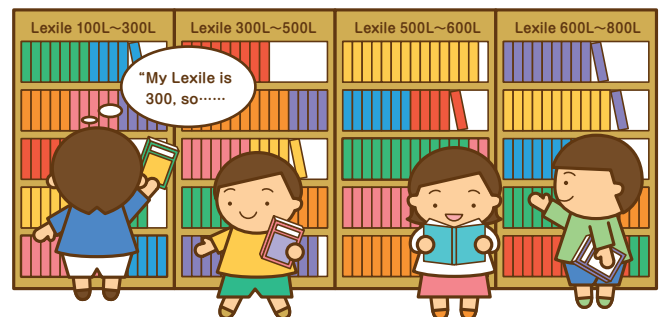


This figure represents your reading comprehension ability, expressed numerically, and was developed by MetaMetrics, Inc. in the United States, based on data from over 35 million students and their unique corpus of English words. A key feature of the Lexile Index is that it also serves as an indicator of the difficulty level of English books. In other words, it helps in selecting books that match the reader's comprehension level. For example, a student with a Lexile score of 200L is recommended to read books within the range of 200L (from -100L to +50L) as these are deemed to be at an appropriate level for comfortable reading.

However, since the Lexile Index is designed for native English-speaking students, this range (-100L to +50L) may feel a bit challenging for Japanese learners of English as a second language. Therefore, it is recommended to choose books in a range of

-200L to +50L based on your own Lexile score. The important thing is to start at a level where you can understand the content in English without translating through Japanese. If you find even the -200L range too difficult, it is advisable to begin with an even simpler level. The goal is to make reading English books an easy and enjoyable experience, and by increasing such input, you will gradually improve your reading comprehension skills.

See: Meta Metrics: <https://metametricsinc.com/>  
Lexile Index: <https://lexile.com/>



### Case Study: Kyoto Elementary and Junior High Schools Attached to Kyoto University of Education



Authentic Readers (approx. 2,000 books) arranged by Lexile Index



Each student chooses a reader from the bookshelf that matches their Lexile level and interest.



Read freely during English class time, free periods, or at home.

## 3. ABOUT SCHOLASTIC

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### 3-1: World's largest publisher of children's books Publisher

The world's Largest Children's Book Publisher, Scholastic, specializes in children's books (ages 0-18), including popular series such as “Harry Potter” , “The Magic School Bus” , “Clifford the Big Red Dog” , and the photo picture book “I Spy” .

Since its founding in 1920, Scholastic has been contributing to the education sector by promoting the importance of literacy, the joy of reading, and

the excitement of learning to children in English-speaking countries. Today, Scholastic is also dedicated to the development of English education outside of English-speaking regions, providing English books to children in 164 countries through schools and homes around the world.

### 3-2: World's largest publisher of children's books Distributor

One of the key features of Scholastic is that, in addition to its original publications, the company exclusively supplies a wide range of children's books to the school market by obtaining licenses from other publishers and printing them as Scholastic paperback editions.

Partner publishers: HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Simon & Schuster, Puffin Books, Penguin Random House, Candlewick Press, and many more.

### 3-3: The Lexile Index and Scholastic

In supporting the provision of a wide variety of general English books from other publishers to educational settings, Scholastic makes use of the Lexile Index. The Lexile Index allows for a standardized measure of book difficulty,

transcending publisher and genre boundaries. Scholastic was one of the first companies to adopt the Lexile Index approximately 20 years ago, helping to facilitate the use of authentic readers (general books) in educational environments.

## 4. ELT (English Language Teaching) Readers / Graded Readers Written and Edited for English (Second Language) Learners

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While Authentic Readers are written for native English speakers, ELT Readers and Graded Readers are specifically designed for learners studying English as a foreign language. Originally targeted at teenagers and adults, these readers focus on helping learners acquire important vocabulary and grammar. They are categorized by levels based on key structures, vocabulary, and

page length. Each level has a set number of headwords, with easier levels starting at around 200 words, and higher levels reaching around 1,000 words, allowing learners to read without difficulty. Classic works such as Shakespeare and famous British and American literature are often simplified or rewritten in easy English so that even adult learners can enjoy them.

Since these readers are designed with specific learning goals for reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary, the text is grammatically correct but may sometimes feel unnatural or present unrealistic scenarios. Furthermore, due to the emphasis on vocabulary and grammar for language learning, some learners may find the

### Representative ELT Readers

- Oxford Bookworms/ Oxford University Press
- Cambridge English Readers/ Cambridge University Press
- Penguin Readers/ Pearson.
- Macmillan Readers/ Macmillan Education

ELT Readers and Graded Readers use each publisher's unique leveling system, so a book categorized as beginner level by one publisher might be considered intermediate level by another.

※CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) was introduced by the Council of Europe in 2001 after over 20 years of research. It provides a clear and transparent, comprehensive framework for creating language syllabuses and curriculums, editing learning materials, and evaluating foreign language proficiency.

## 5. Conclusion

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In the past, ELT Readers and Graded Readers were predominantly used in English learning environments. Authentic Readers were considered difficult to assess in terms of level, and they were also harder to obtain in Japan. However, nowadays, it has become relatively easy to acquire a wide variety of English books through online shops or by ordering them from abroad. English levels can now be assessed by referring to tools like the Lexile Index or CEFR. Moreover, with advancements in technology, there has been a significant increase in digital readers and apps that offer audio support.

content less stimulating as they become more proficient. However, keeping these points in mind, the variety of ELT readers for children and those focused on topics like science or social studies is growing. As a result, we are seeing an increase in high-quality ELT Readers.

However, this issue has been somewhat addressed with the introduction of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), developed in Europe, which allows for a more consistent comparison across different systems. Additionally, some ELT Readers and Graded Readers from publishers like Oxford and Pearson include the Lexile Index. For TOEFL Primary<sup>®</sup> and TOEFL Junior<sup>®</sup>, both CEFR levels and Lexile scores corresponding to test scores are provided.

Just like learning Japanese (one's native language), acquiring English (a foreign language) requires a substantial amount of time. Ideally, younger learners, who can complement their understanding through pictures, photos, and imagination even without fully grasping the English, should receive ample input through both visual and auditory means. Even for older students, it is recommended to start with children's picture books or readers with fewer words, aiming to understand English directly without translating into their native language.

While students in elementary and middle school still have some free time (before being overwhelmed by club activities and exams), I suggest that, in addition to efficient learning methods, they should dedicate time to inputting a large volume of quality, authentic English. Though this may seem like a longer route, it will lay the foundation for acquiring real and practical English, different from what has been taught before.

It would be ideal if children and students could take the TOEFL Primary® / TOEFL Junior® tests, check their own Lexile Index (reading comprehension Index), and then begin reading

books that match their level to continually improve their reading skills in English.

It is also important for teachers to be aware of their students' Lexile scores and recommend books suited to their level. By considering students' age, interests, and necessary skills, teachers can effectively incorporate various types of readers into their learning.

Finally, I have met many students (and adults!) who have the dream of reading the original Harry Potter in English. That dream and goal are absolutely achievable!

## About Author

**Kozue Sekiguchi:** Educational Consultant, Manager, Scholastic Japan

Academic background: Eastern Washington University, USA. BA Education (Reading Instruction / Minor in Early Childhood Education. MA Education (Technology Supported Education)

### **Other Experience:**

Worked as a reading teacher at a public elementary school in Washington State, U.S.A.

Teaching children from two to six years old at an international preschool in Japan.

Currently working as an educational consultant for Scholastic, a U.S. publishing company known for its Harry Potter books, proposing teaching materials and providing training and workshops for English teachers and parents.

### **Message:**

“Books are not only information, but also beautiful illustrations and stories that touch the senses, wisdom and teachings from ancient people, a source of creation for the future, and nourishment for the mind and heart.”