

Lucy Calkins Classroom Libraries Video Interview Transcript

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Question: *How were the Libraries leveled?*

Lucy: I want to talk about leveling in these libraries. In order to design the libraries, we started by looking at our data on readers. We have data on thousands and thousands of readers, so we know, for example, what the arc of text levels that a class of sixth graders who are reading mostly at benchmark should be. We also know the text levels that the significantly below benchmark classes can read. And based on that, for any individual shelf, such as fourth grade fantasy, we knew the levels that we needed for those fantasy books. In order to choose the fantasy books, we needed to level them. We were insecure about that, because my colleagues and I don't have PhDs in leveling and haven't done doctoral work in leveling texts. So, what we did was to rely on our very best knowledge and on research, asking ourselves how has this book been leveled by other people? And we came to trust a few people's levels, like Fountas and Pinnell's, of course. We also came to not necessarily trust some other leveling systems.

After researching how the book has been leveled in the past, we took these levels that the book had been given and we'd bring our own wisdom and knowledge and do the best we could to level the books. We talked among ourselves about how we were leveling them in pencil, because we're not quite sure that were 100% right. When it came time to put the books out to all of you, we asked ourselves, should we put out these levels, or not, because they're not perfect. But we decided to put the levels out in pencil, as we say, because even though they're not perfect, a lot of people who know a lot, spent a long time coming up with these levels, so we think they're probably going to be help to you, even if they're not perfect.

Now, having said that, for the K-2 books, we made sure that we leveled them perfectly—we say that these libraries are leveled in pen. For the primary grades' libraries we spent a tremendous amount of time and brought in people with tremendous expertise on leveling books to double-check every decision that we made, so we think you can absolutely count on our K through Two levels. And our Three-Eight levels, they're the best that we could do, and we hope they help. But we also hope that you continue working with your kids, and sometimes you'll come to think a book is harder than we realized it was, and change the level, if that's the case.

To learn more about the TCRWP Classroom Libraries, browse representative titles, and order shelves, visit calkinslibraries.com