



# Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 8<sup>th</sup> Edition

Benchmark

Grade 8

Student Materials

## Crows

Crows are scavengers. The birds will eat almost anything, from vegetables and fruit, to nuts and seeds. They'll devour insects, frogs, lizards, mice, smaller birds, basically any animal they can fit into their mouths. And they'll happily pick at the flesh of carrion, which probably accounts for why ancient people associated crows with death.

Crows are playful birds, very sociable with their own kind, and they live in large extended family groups. They frequently indulge in silly games, such as carrying a twig high into the air, dropping it, then quickly swooping down and catching it. They've also been observed executing acrobatic backflips in flight.

Though few species of crows migrate, very often, during the fall and winter months, the birds will congregate in large groups, known as roosts. These roosts may range from a few dozen crows to hundreds of thousands. One astonishingly large roost, recorded in Oklahoma, was estimated at over two million crows. Exactly why they gather in such large groups remains a mystery, though researchers suspect that the birds congregate for protection against predators, as well as to communicate with one another and exchange information about where to find food.

Nearly all ornithologists (from the ancient Greek words *ornis* "bird" and *logos* "explanation") agree that crows are vastly intelligent creatures, with large brains in relation to their body size. Their intelligence is near the top of the avian world, alongside that of parrots. Their brains, at least in scale, are larger than human brains. A human brain is about one-and-a-half percent of body mass, while the brain of an American crow is more than two percent of its body mass.

And like us, crows are toolmakers. For example, they'll use straight twigs to poke for grubs, and then use a hooked twig to pull the grub from its hiding place. Crows often drop nuts onto roads and rocky surfaces to crack them open. In Japan, the clever birds deposit walnuts at intersections, placing the nuts right in front of the wheel of a car. Then, after the car crushes the nut, the crows return to peck at the pieces.

## Government

Societies tend to function best when there are well-defined laws. Yet, even more important than the laws are the people who get to decide, enact, and enforce those laws. The people and structures that make those decisions are called government. Worldwide there are many types of government. These function at local, regional, and national levels. In all instances, government is the basis of power and control. But even when power is shared among people, problems arise. So, no form of rule is perfect.

An aristocratic government is power and control in the hands of a few people. Usually these people are thought to be different from the general population in some way. Ways in which aristocrats are thought to be different include: wealth, physical strength, intelligence, honor, technology, or achievement.

A despotic government is absolute power and control in the hands of a single person or very small group. Despotic rulers often rule out of self-interest and ignore the desires of the people. They often come to power in one of two ways. First, they can inherit power from a relative—such as a king or queen. These are known as absolute monarchs or dictators. Second, a despotic government can seize power from their predecessors. This process is called a military coup. Often despotic governments are authoritarian or totalitarian. This means that the person or people in power try to control all aspects of life.

A democratic government is one in which people are involved in decision making. There are two main ways democracies function. One is direct democracy where people get to create, vote on, and enact laws on their own. The other is indirect democracy where citizens elect politicians to vote on and enact laws. Often in democracies a simple majority wins, but this can put people with minority viewpoints at a disadvantage.

Anarchy is the opposite of government where a population is not ruled by any controlling body. In some senses, people view anarchy as disorder due to the lack of laws. However, for proponents of this form of "government", it removes all power structures. It makes individuals truly equal because it removes power from those with wealth, strength, merit, military arms, honor, and technology.

## Digital Music Recording

Just a little over a century ago, the only way to enjoy music was to play it or listen to it in person. Then, with the discovery of radio waves and the invention of recording technology, people could enjoy music anytime. Today, digital recordings make enjoying music even easier and more portable than ever. However, the process of producing music has become more complex.

Prior to the sale of the first compact disc, or CD, music was sold and listened to on wax cylinders, phonographs, vinyl records, or cassette tapes. Although most of these technologies are thought to be obsolete, you can still buy music in these formats.

Prior to recording the music, musicians would thoroughly practice their songs. Then they would head to a recording studio. The musicians would want to make sure their songs were ready for recording because studio time can be expensive. Some musicians who had the equipment could record from their home or garage, but the sound quality would not be as good. Either way, the technology didn't allow for much post-recording editing as the technology does now. So, they had to make sure to minimize mistakes prior to recording. Finally, the musicians would have to be in-sync because everyone would play together in real time.

Although decades in the making, digital music wasn't available for purchase in the United States until the late seventies when the first compact disc was sold. Digital music recording has changed how music is recorded, produced, and sold. With digital music, musicians no longer have to be physically together to play together. In fact, with pop music, musicians may never see each other—ever!

In digital music, each part, voice, or instrument can be recorded on its own track. Usually, the first track is just a metronome or drum beat to keep time. Then, everyone records their own track when listening to that track and any other already-recorded track. Usually, the rhythm section lays the first music track. Then, basic chords and harmonies are added as the next track. Finally, the main melody is added. But a song isn't finished yet. The last step is for a producer to edit, enhance, and combine all the tracks into a final recording.