



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 8th Edition

Australasian Version

Progress Monitoring

Oral Reading Fluency

Grade 5

AU-Year 5 | NZ-Year 6

Student Materials

Sam the Cat

Our cat Sam leads a double life. By day he is a soft, sweet, chubby, orange-striped couch potato whose favourite thing is to lie in a patch of sunlight. He regards the activity around him through sleepy, narrowed eyes. He swishes the end of his tail ever so slightly. He neatly tips an ear. He never runs to his food bowl but only strolls over with a lack of urgency and crunches his kibble tastefully one bit at a time.

Sam loves to lounge in a lap and delights in pats. He purrs loudly and blissfully at his humans. Sometimes he places a soft paw on a human face as if to say, “It’s so wonderful to be here with you.” His name is Sam, but if you ever saw him stretch his limbs and turn onto his back, exposing his wide, soft stomach, you would understand why we call him Sweet Jellybelly.

At night, though, Sam is an entirely different creature. He becomes a wicked hunter and a cold-blooded killer. He stalks his terrain at full attention, alert to the least sound and movement. He slinks low to the ground, working the perimeters, his muscles tight, ready to attack. His pupils are dilated; his ears pricked forward; his nostrils flared to catch every scent. His whiskers twitch as if scanning his surroundings.

His victims are much smaller than he is and lack his power, but he pursues them mercilessly. The fly and the moth have no chance against him. He corners them and swats them with his swift paw, then works them into his mouth with his tongue and pointy teeth. Once, he caught a grasshopper and toyed with it until it gave up in exhaustion. The velvety gray mice he slays, he leaves around the house as grim trophies. He intends them as gifts, testaments of his prowess, but to us they are reminders of his wild nature.

Koda's Big Day

Koda's father woke him in the dark by laying a hand on his shoulder. Koda rolled out of his bearskin at once and stood up, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. His big day had finally arrived.

His father had already ducked out through the deer hide curtain that hung over their low door. His mother hadn't started a cooking fire yet. She and everybody else in the lodge were still asleep. Koda heard their soft snores and saw their huddled shapes by the blueness that came in through the fire hole in the roof. Looking up he saw stars still gleaming faintly in the sky.

Koda yawned once more, then pushed through the deer hide curtain, and stepped outside. He could see the men who would row the whaling canoe standing under the big trees by the inlet. Other men sat on the ground nearby smoking pipes.

At the base of the biggest cedar was the Raven costume with its feathered wings and a carved and painted wooden head. He could barely see the Raven's eyes by the glow of the men's pipe embers.

Today he would be the one to wear the feathered wings on his own arms, and the head over his head, and he would stand in the bow of the whaling boat. He would flap the wings in time to the beating of a drum as the men rowed it out into the great ocean. With a deep breath, he walked over to join the other men under the cedar.

The North American Beaver

It is rare to see a beaver in the wild in North America. For one thing, there are far fewer than there were hundreds of years ago. For another, they live in lodges hidden from view. Finally, they are most active at night. Beavers have been linked with North America since the earliest days of its recorded history. The first Europeans to settle in Canada were fur traders. First the French, and then the English bought beaver skins from First Nations trappers. First Nations people trapped beavers for food and clothing, but Europeans sent beaver skins to Europe to sell. Demand in Europe for beaver skins drove much of the exploration of North America. The demand for beaver skins was so great that the North American beaver nearly became extinct. As a result, there are far fewer beavers today than when Europeans first came to North America.

Beavers live by streams, rivers, and ponds, and build their homes, called lodges, on the water. They build their lodges using mud and branches. The entrances to their lodges are under water so that the beavers can come and go without being seen. They can stay underwater for up to fifteen minutes. It is hard to tell if a beaver is inside a lodge. In the cold winter, steam from a beaver's breath might be seen escaping from the lodge. If you see steam coming from a beaver lodge, you know a beaver is inside.

Beavers are nocturnal, meaning they are mostly awake at night. They build and fix their lodges and dams at night. During the night, beavers will feed on young trees, bark, and leaves as they work. Beavers are most likely to be seen outside during the day in the autumn. They spend extra time in the autumn storing food for their winter meals because their ponds might freeze over and trap them in their lodges during the winter.

Madeleines

One winter day I went to visit my mother. Seeing that I was cold and sad, my mother offered me a cup of tea. Along with the tea, she served those small sponge cakes called madeleines, which look like a scallop shell and are flavoured with almonds.

I broke off a morsel of the cake and soaked it in my tea. I carefully raised it on the spoon to my lips. As soon as the warm tea with its crumbs of cake touched my tongue, a shiver went through me.

It came to me in a rush, all at once. When I was just a little boy on Sunday mornings in the village where I grew up, my aunt used to give me a piece of this same kind of cake after dipping it first in her own cup of tea. I remembered it all so clearly.

Along with this taste, I remembered the stone house I grew up in, and the flowers in the garden. I remembered the little square of the village, and the streets I used to run along. I remembered the river choked with water-lilies that flowed near our house. I remembered my mother's smile when she was a young woman, and my father's handsome laugh.

All of this had rushed back to me in an instant, as I tasted the madeleine soaked in a spoonful of tea. It was as though, all of a sudden, I was a child again, back in our village sitting with my aunt.

Mum, the Pastry Chef

I'll tell you something lucky about myself. My mum is a pastry chef. That means she works in a restaurant and makes desserts every day. It's pretty awesome! I always have the best birthday cakes, and she brings home a lot of leftover treats. Another benefit is that when we eat at a restaurant, we order every dessert on the menu so that my mum can see what other chefs are doing. My friends are all jealous. They love coming over to my house, because we always have yummy things to eat.

There are some parts of a pastry chef's life that are a little challenging, though. They have to get up super early in the morning, for one thing. And they don't have weekends like everybody else; Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are really busy days in restaurants, so my mum has Mondays and Tuesdays off. That's a bummer for me, because I'm at school those days. Restaurant people eat at restaurants a lot as part of their job, and it's kind of cool, but sometimes we have to go to stuffy places where they don't really like kids and the food is weird. Speaking of weird food, sometimes my mum will try really strange things. Like one time, she made a cucumber sherbet sprinkled with elderflower blossoms! The adults all thought it was incredible, but I didn't really like it.

Another hazard for pastry chefs is sometimes they just get sick of sugar. Last night, my mum said it was time to take a break from sugar. She brought a creamy sheep's milk yoghurt to the table, which she served with dates, orange zest, and a tiny pinch of flaky sea salt. That's when I said, "This is not dessert! Let's bake a cake!"

Underneath the Mistletoe

No one knows exactly how the Christmas tradition of kissing beneath a sprig of mistletoe began. It may come from ancient times, when people believed that the plant had the magical power to give them large families.

Mistletoe is a parasite that grows in the branches of trees. It is often found in apple, ash, and hawthorn trees. Its roots burrow into the branch and draw nutrients from the sap. Its leaves are green all year. Its waxy white berries appear in winter. Sometimes, if it takes too much water and nutrients from its host tree, the host tree can die. However, the berries provide food for birds in winter. Its seeds are spread through bird droppings.

Mistletoe was a sacred plant for the Druids. They believed it could protect them from evil, and cure all ills. They made a ritual of collecting it. They waited until they received a vision and the moon was right. They used a golden sickle to cut it from the branches of an oak tree. Since mistletoe grows only rarely in oak trees, this harvest was a rare and special event.

Mistletoe was used as food for sheep in the winter, when fodder was scarce. And, it was used as a treatment for infertility in animals. It was used as a medicine for many human ailments as well, especially epilepsy. Today, some practitioners of alternative medicine prescribe mistletoe. They use a tea for high blood pressure. Some people believe that mistletoe injections strengthen the body's immune system. However, this has not been proven.

Annie and the Lady

Annie was sitting on the little bridge and swinging her legs over the edge when she saw the lady coming. She'd been thinking about how small her town was, how she knew she'd never go anywhere else, and she was feeling kind of sorry for herself. It was a small town and she knew everyone, but she didn't recognise the lady who looked neither young nor old. So, when she came up Annie forgot all about her troubles.

The lady asked Annie politely if she happened to have a dollar fifty for the bus. She said that if Annie gave an address she'd return the money when she got where she was going.

Annie reached in her pocket and said, "I'm sorry. I only have seventy-five cents." She put the three coins in the lady's hand. The lady nodded, took down Annie's address anyway, and began to walk away.

Annie felt bad about not having more to give and wondered how the lady would get the rest in such a small town. So, without thinking much about it, she said, "If you walk across the bridge instead, you can go through the woods to get to the bus station. My grandma says these woods are where all the good stories come from."

The lady stopped, smiled at Annie, then walked across the bridge and into the woods.

Years went by, and Annie grew up in the small town forgetting all about the lady at the bridge that day long ago. But one day her grandma told her she'd received a letter. Annie opened it, thinking it must be just something from her cousin. But inside was seventy-five cents, a letter, and an airplane ticket. The letter said to use the open ticket whenever she liked to go anywhere she wanted. It said, "Those stories helped me write a book and it did well. Thank you."

Glow Worms

In the dark, damp caves of New Zealand you'll find an amazing sight that observers have called a magical experience. Glowing in the darkness above your head is what appears to be a night sky with a constellation of blue-green stars. The magnificent beauty of this display has been compared to that of viewing the Milky Way.

Except things aren't at all as they seem. These glowing specks on the roof of the cave aren't stars at all. They are New Zealand glow worms. And their blue-green light is produced by a chemical that is also present in fireflies. These tiny cave creatures, which are not worms at all, are the larval stage in the lifecycle of a two-winged insect.

In the larval form, these glow-worms build nests out of silk on the cave's ceiling. The nest is about thirty centimetres long and shaped like a tube. Inside the tube, the worm slithers back and forth, dropping dozens of long silk threads. These silk threads, which dangle up to fifty centimetres, are called snares and they are beaded with sticky mucus. Other insects, such as mosquitoes and moths, are attracted to the glowing blue-green light, and they end up getting stuck to the sticky threads. Then the glow worm uses its mouth to pull up the fishing line and the insect.

Glow worms live only in the wet caves of New Zealand. They spend about nine months as a larva, before forming a cocoon. Then they grow wings and turn into a gnat that lives for just a few days. Many tourists visit the caves each year to see the spectacle as thousands of these tiny creatures radiate their luminous light. And the hungrier a glow worm is, the more it glows.

Eating Contest

At the beginning of every summer my big family has a corn-eating contest. My mum and aunts go to the supermarket and buy tonnes of corn to roast and slather with butter and salt. My brother, sisters, cousins, grandparents and everyone gather, with their eyes gleaming, and their stomachs rumbling. At a couple of big picnic tables, we see who can stuff their faces fastest. I hate this tradition and I usually watch my brother gobble up every, last kernel of the huge mound on his plate. He always wins and I always come in dead last, barely tasting the food.

One summer I got an idea. I asked my mum to set aside a couple cobs for me. I carefully plucked them and collected the kernels on a cookie tray to dry. My brothers and cousins laughed and said I was weird.

One morning I went out to the backyard, chose a sunny spot, poked holes in the ground with a screwdriver and put one kernel in each hole. Every day I watered. Soon, small green shoots came up, and by the end of the summer I had a forest of corn, waving golden green in the sun and wind.

There were so many big cobs it took me almost a whole day to pick them and shuck them. I got my mum to light the barbecue and I roasted them myself, tending to them with the utmost care. I set a picnic table, got myself some butter and a shaker of salt, and began my feast.

Then a funny thing happened. My brother came over and asked if he could have a piece. I thought for a minute, looked at my mound of buttery corn, and said sure. Then everyone else came and I invited them to sit down. We all sat savouring every last bite, and my brother said, “You win.”

The Barge

It was a clear autumn day, maybe just a little too hot. Charles was taking a walk out to an island that sat in the middle of the river that ran through Paris. Charles stopped in the middle of the bridge to wipe his sweating forehead with the sleeve of his green suede jacket. Glancing down, he saw a small barge moving on the sluggish river. It had just popped out from the shadow under the bridge.

On the barge, a man in a dirty white shirt with his sleeves rolled up was sitting on an old crate, playing an accordion and singing in a rough voice. Next to the man sat a dog, its ears alert. The dog had a black muzzle and was panting, its tongue hanging out.

Charles stood with his elbows on the bridge's warm iron railing, watching the barge disappear slowly down the river. The barge man's accordion playing and singing became fainter and fainter. Then the barge went around a curve in the river. It was gone.

He watched until even the wake from the barge had disappeared. Then Charles finished crossing the bridge. The air smelled of rock dust. Some construction workers were drilling holes in the street. As he walked around in the sunlight amidst the buildings on the island, Charles kept remembering the dog, and the barge man's seeming great happiness in just being alive today to play the accordion and sing next to the happy, panting dog. Would he ever be as happy as that man?

Not A Duck

The platypus is a very odd creature. It has a flat bill and webbed feet like a duck does. It also has a tail like a beaver's. Its brown fur and body are like an otter's. It even has sharp claws, and the males have venomous spurs on their heels. Even though it is a mammal, it lays eggs, also like a duck. It's almost like someone made a Frankenstein's monster out of small animals to make the platypus!

Platypuses can only be found naturally in Australia. They walk awkwardly on the land, but swim very gracefully. As a result, they build nests near streams and rivers and spend a lot of time in the water, looking for food. They hunt about twelve hours each day. They like to eat shrimp and crayfish, but they also eat insects and worms. Strangely, platypuses have no teeth and no stomach! Instead they store their food in their gullets, which lead straight to their intestines.

When the first platypus was found, no one knew what it was. The platypus is so odd that even scientists thought the first one found was a hoax. They thought someone was playing a trick on them. One scientist wondered if someone had sewn together parts of different animals. They studied the creature for a long time and didn't discover it could lay eggs for nearly one hundred years. Eventually scientists decided the platypus was a real animal, just a very, very unique one.

Milking the Cows

Harold grew up on a farm in Gippsland, in a big white house set in the middle of a giant green paddock. Near it there was an old red barn and a tall grain silo. A tractor stood in the grass outside the barn.

Horses ran back and forth or grazed in a fenced-in field behind the house. There were four cows that grazed there, also.

Harold milked the cows, starting every morning before the sun had risen. That was his chore. He came back to the house carrying the milking bucket full of sloshing milk. The milk was warm and frothy. He poured it through a strainer into a big steel container that was kept in a refrigerator and shut the lid. At least once every week his mother churned butter out of the cream that rose to the top as it sat in the steel container.

When Harold grew up he always remembered the darkness and cold hours before a winter dawn, sitting on a milking stool in the barn and milking the cows into a freezing steel bucket. But he also remembered the delicious taste of the melted butter on a warm slice of bread fresh from the oven.

Harold always told his own children that having to get up to milk the cows every morning before dawn was what taught him his work ethic. You had to work hard to get what you wanted in this world. It was the work that went into things that gave them their value.

It's All a Mystery

I love to solve problems so I read a lot of mystery books. I can read a book anytime, but I enjoy reading most on rainy days. I snuggle up on my bed with my dog and read for hours at a time. On rainy days, I like to read a good book and drink hot cocoa. Sometimes my dog wants to play and then I must get up to entertain him for a while or he won't allow me to read in peace. I play with him so I can get back to reading my novel. I don't like to be interrupted when I am deep in thought.

I love to read about mysteries because the plot is so intriguing and it is full of suspense. When I think I know what is going on, it takes another twist that is unexpected. It is hard to put the book down. I thrust myself into the book and imagine that I am one of the characters. I replay the scenes in my head and try to figure out a character's next move. Most of the time, my conclusions are incorrect. Mystery books keep me mentally sharp by allowing me to draw conclusions and make inferences.

I often wonder how authors create such fascinating and engaging stories. They must be full of creative ideas that just take flight in their mind and transcribe onto paper. I admire their thought process and ability to think of these awesome stories to captivate their reading audience.

Teaching Beatrix

Anabella decided to teach her sister Beatrix how to read. Beatrix was only four, but it was good to start early. Many kids had trouble learning when they got to kindergarten. Anabella didn't have trouble. Her older cousins had read to her all the time: picture books, comic books, even the writing on the backs of cereal boxes. Now, it was her turn to give her kid sister a head start in life.

Anabella pulled Beatrix onto her lap. She started with a stack of picture books she found in Beatrix's room. Beatrix shifted restlessly as Anabella pointed to the words and flipped the pages. Occasionally, she would grab her older sister's hair or squirm out of her arms. Anabella was patient. Reading was important, and she was not going to lose her cool just because her little sister wanted to play.

After the picture books, Anabella switched to simple story books. These books still had lots of pictures, but also had words that Anabella sounded out with her sister. Beatrix stopped squirming and grew more interested.

The last book of the afternoon was a simple chapter book. It had lots of words and only a few pictures. Beatrix leaned back against Anabella's shoulder and sucked her thumb. Her head was warm with sleep. This made Anabella sleepy too, and she found herself beginning to nap. Suddenly, her little sister's voice awoke her. Beatrix was reading the last word of the chapter aloud.

"Fun," she read in a tiny voice.

Anabella stopped worrying. Beatrix's reading skills were just fine.

The Story of Tea

Tea is the most popular drink in the world. After water, it is the most frequently consumed drink. It is the number one manufactured drink. There are many kinds of tea. People drink tea to be social in many cultures. People also drink it in the morning and afternoon as a stimulant. The story of tea begins in East Asia.

Tea is made from the leaves of camellia plants, which grow well in very warm climates with heavy rainfall. They are native to a small area of Southern China and Northern Myanmar. Tea has been drunk in those areas since the second century B.C.E. It may have been drunk even earlier in India.

There are several different types of tea. Three of the most popular are black teas, green teas, and Oolong.

Early on, people drank black tea for healing purposes. Green leaves that have been picked turn black when they meet oxygen. This is called oxidation. Then people would boil or steam the leaves. These would be formed into cakes that would later be soaked in hot water for drinking.

In the seventh century in China, people began to pan fry and dry the leaves. This stopped the oxidation process, keeping the leaves green. Green tea became a popular drink. In the fifteenth century, partially oxidized leaves resulted in a tea called Oolong.

In the middle of the eighth century tea began to spread out of China. It travelled to Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. It became an important part of religious ceremonies.

The drink made its way to Europe in the early seventeenth century, though Portuguese priests and merchants drank it as early as the sixteenth century. It was served in coffee houses in Britain. It became fashionable in The Netherlands, Germany, and France. It even made its way to the new colonies in the Americas.

Tea was still quite expensive until the nineteenth century. But by then tea had become an important daily drink in many parts of the world.

Trains

A train is a form of rail transportation that has many connecting carriages. Some trains are used to transport cargo and these trains are called freight trains. They are made up of many connecting carriages or wagons. Passenger trains are used to transport people. They use many connecting carriages that are sometimes called coaches.

A freight train carries all sorts of freight such as supplies, containers, equipment and even mail. Transporting by freight saves money and energy so it is better than transporting by road. The freight train carries the freight in bulk to long-distance destinations. The one thing to remember about freight trains is that they do not have a flexible schedule.

A passenger train ride can be short or long, and they each have different routes with flexible schedules. These types of trains travel at a high rate of speed in order to get people where they need to go quickly. Some train rides can last for several hours or even days. Train rides that last days have sleeping carriages and dining carriages for the passengers' convenience. Some train rides last only thirty minutes or maybe an hour. Some may be shorter than that, but you must pay for any train ride you decide to take. They can cost as little as a few dollars or as much as a few hundred dollars depending on the length of the ride.

Many years ago, trains were pulled by horses using rope. Later, they used steam engines to move trains. Today's trains use electricity or fuel. Electric trains are powered by a cable and run on the tracks in the street. Trains that use fuel can use gas or even nuclear power.

A Ball of Clay

Matthew had a ball of sticky, reddish brown clay that was just the right size to fit inside his hands. He didn't know what to make out of it, so at first he just squeezed it until it warmed up and was nice and soft.

He decided to make a cup to drink mint tea out of. He pushed his thumb into his ball of clay, and flattened the bottom, and pinched all around to enlarge the opening. He kept pinching all around to make the walls of the cup thinner, and the inside bigger. At last, he had a cup.

But, then he thought it would be nicer to have a little bowl to fill with jelly beans than a cup for mint tea. So, he flattened the base of his cup some more, and widened the walls until his cup had become a bowl.

Then he thought that he didn't have jelly beans very often, but what he could really use was a plate to put his morning toast and jam on. Then he could use it every day. He flattened the base of his bowl, and pushed the walls down, and when one side of the plate split, he took a little extra clay from the other side and patched it up. He pinched it all around and smoothed it with his fingers.

It was a nice plate, but it occurred to him that if he turned the plate over on its face and added a little nub of clay in the middle, it would look like a beret. So, he turned his plate into a beret, and thought if he ever went to France, he could wear it to see if anyone thought it was a real, wool beret.

Thinking of France made him think of croissants. He rolled up his beret to turn it into a croissant. But, that didn't work, so he rolled it back into a ball again.

Up and Down

In the morning, Danny walked out of the village into the low desert hills. His steps raised little puffs of red dust.

He climbed a hill and sat on a rock, sweating. He took off his soft brimmed hat and wiped his forehead with a red bandana he carried in his pocket.

All around him was reddish desert earth and pebbles and blinding light. Nothing grew out in the desert above the height of Danny's knees.

There were many cactus plants with green bulbs and wicked spines. There was also sagebrush that smelled intense in the dry hot air. Lizards scuffled away under red veined rocks if you got too close.

This was where he lived with his father, who was a writer. It was summer and extremely hot during the days, but cool at night.

Whenever Danny lifted his eyes from where he sat on the hill he could see the whiteness of a snowy mountain range off in the shimmering heat and distance. He wondered how long it would take him to walk to that mountain range.

He thought he'd like to go up into the snow and quench his thirst in an icy stream and then throw snowballs at pine trees, where they'd burst into puffs of icy powder and leave a white mark.

But instead of doing this, he got up from the stone and trudged slowly down the hill in the dust and headed back to the village. Once back in the village, he got a jug of cool water from the well and took it home to his father where they both enjoyed a refreshing drink.

Scootering

Sammie scootered down her street. She liked the sound her scooter made while crossing the footpath's cracks. Up near the corner, there was a new stretch of footpath that had been put in just a month ago. Seven squares of smooth, smooth concrete! It felt so good to ride over that sometimes Sammie rounded the corner, turned, and rode over it again the other way, just for the sheer pleasure of it.

Sammie lifted her pushing foot up high, dug down deep, and launched herself again and again. She could really go fast! Her dad called her a speed demon. She hit the good, smooth concrete, went around the corner, and raced to the end of the block. She turned, and came back the other way.

This time, just as she was turning the corner, there was Sebastien, her neighbour's short, fat dog, at the end of his leash, and her neighbour! Sebastien yipped and turned his head away from Sammie, as Sammie steered her scooter around him on the street side, and her neighbour shouted, "Hey!" Sammie was afraid she would tumble from the kerb into the street, but she skirted Sebastien and her neighbour by a hair, and cut back toward the centre of the footpath where she almost hit the front wheel of a jogging pram coming toward her. "Oh!" gasped the woman pushing the pram, and she stopped short. Sammie narrowly missed colliding with it. She veered toward the house side of the footpath, and ran over the tiny grass sprouting in front of the apartment where Mrs. Plante lived on the ground floor. Unfortunately, Mrs. Plante happened to be sitting on her porch. "Sammie!" she yelled, and Sammie knew she would have to apologise later.

But Sammie didn't care. The footpath was clear to the end of the block ahead of her. She raised her pushing foot high, and dug it down.

Swimming

When Emily went to the pool, she went in the water with her parents and wore inflatable water floaties on her arms. Sometimes she also used a swim ring or a pool noodle, just for fun. She loved going to the pool, and her mum told everyone she swam like a fish.

When it was time for her to get out of the water, put on her hooded towel, and warm up in the sun and have a snack, Emily liked watching the bigger kids. Some of them didn't swim very well. Their doggy paddling barely kept their heads above the water. Others swam like dolphins, moving swiftly through the water. Emily was sure she would swim like that when she was older. She especially admired the kids who braved the high diving board and hit the water with a tremendous splash or even no splash at all.

One day, Emily was standing by the edge of the pool waiting for her dad to adjust his water goggles, and her mum to finish spreading out their towels. A girl in a purple bathing suit looked her up and down and asked if Emily could swim.

Emily knew she swam very well with her water floaties. She had watched the kids swimming without them and understood how it worked. Emily said yes, stepped to the edge of the pool, and jumped in.

She was surprised to find herself plunging toward the bottom of the pool! She wasn't scared, but it wasn't what she had expected to happen. Her dad jumped in next to her and pulled her to the surface. That very day, her mum signed her up for swimming lessons.