

Timed Reading for Fluency

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Introduction

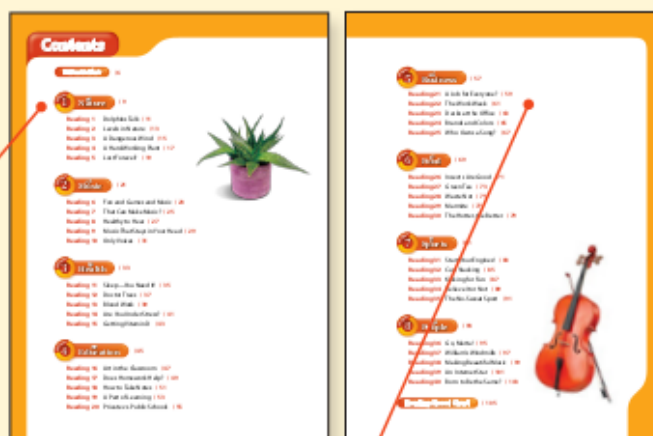
A well-organized language course provides opportunities for learning through communicative activities involving listening, speaking, reading and writing, deliberate study, and fluency development. The fluency development part of a course should take about one-quarter of the course time, and there should be fluency development activities for each of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

This series of books focuses on fluency in reading. Fluency involves making the best use of what you already know. That comes from working with familiar vocabulary and grammar, and from practicing using them in a comfortable way without having to struggle.

Four Requirements of Fluency Development:

1. Familiar Material

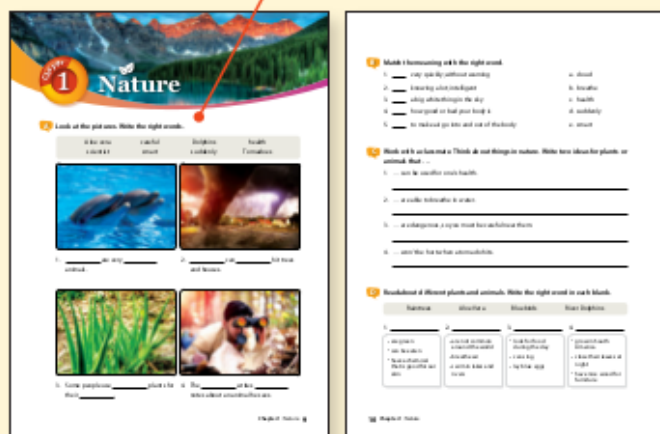
Material for fluency development must be known and familiar. It should not involve unfamiliar language items or content too far removed from what learners already know. This is because to become fluent, learners need to focus on using material they already know well, not on learning new vocabulary or grammar. This is why the texts in these books are grouped into topic areas so that learners can read several texts about very similar information. Their familiarity with the topic will help them increase their reading speed.



Learners do not get fluent in reading by struggling through difficult texts with lots of unknown words. The books in this series are carefully written within a controlled vocabulary so that there is a minimum of unknown words. Words that might be unfamiliar to some learners are dealt with before the reading texts.

2. Quantity of Practice

Another key requirement of a fluency development course is quantity of practice. Fluency develops by doing plenty of practice with easy material. That is why each book in this series contains a lot of reading texts. When learners have finished working through one book in the series, it is a good idea if they go back over the texts they have already read, trying to read them faster than they did the first time.





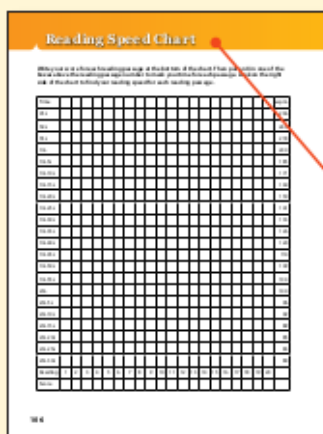
3. Pressure to Go Faster

A fluency development course will work well if there is some pressure to go faster when using the language. This series of books uses timed readings. When the learners read, they measure how long it takes them to do the reading, and they keep a record of their reading speed. Their aim is to increase their speed until it gets close to 250 words per minute. The upper limit of reading speed is 300 words per minute. Reading faster than that requires skipping words on the page and relying on background knowledge to fill the gaps. While this is a useful reading skill, it does not help develop reading fluency in a second language.

Book 1 is written within a vocabulary of 800 words, Book 2 within 1,100 words, Book 3 within 1,500 words, and Book 4 within 2,000 words.

4. A Focus on Comprehension

Fluency in reading not only involves speed of word recognition, but also involves comprehension. This is why the texts in these books are followed by questions. There is no value in reading faster if there is a big drop in comprehension.



At the back of each book there is a graph where learners should enter their reading speed for each text and their comprehension score. The learners' goal should be to make their reading speed graph keep going up.

A Look at the pictures. Write the right words.

Aloe vera
scientist

careful
smart

Dolphins
suddenly

health
Tornadoes



1. _____ are very _____ animals.



2. _____ can _____ hit trees and houses.



3. Some people use _____ plants for their _____.



4. The _____ writes _____ notes about an animal he sees.

B Match the meaning with the right word.

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. ____ very quickly; without warning | a. cloud |
| 2. ____ knowing a lot; intelligent | b. breathe |
| 3. ____ a big white thing in the sky | c. health |
| 4. ____ how good or bad your body is | d. suddenly |
| 5. ____ to make air go into and out of the body | e. smart |

C Work with a classmate. Think about things in nature. Write two ideas for plants or animals that ...

1. ... can be used for one's health.

2. ... are able to breathe in water.

3. ... are dangerous, so you must be careful near them.

4. ... won't be hurt when a tornado hits.

D Read about different plants and animals. Write the right word in each blank.

Raintrees

Aloe Vera

Bluebirds

River Dolphins

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

- are green
- can be eaten
- have a chemical that is good for our skin

- are not common around the world
- breathe air
- swim in lakes and rivers

- look for food during the day
- can sing
- lay blue eggs

- grow in South America
- close their leaves at night
- have nice wood for furniture



Dolphins Talk

Scientists put a mother in one place. They put her two-year-old child in another place. There was a telephone line between them. Soon, the mother and child were talking to each other.

5 The mother and child were dolphins.

In this test, one of the two dolphins would make a sound. Then the other dolphin would make the same sound.

Also, the scientists believed that the two animals knew who they were talking to.

Scientists have known for a long time that animals can "talk" with each other. But
10 dolphins have a special way of talking. And they are very smart. When they are in a group, they "talk" to each other. They do this using different sounds. Scientists have listened to the dolphins' sounds, and they have watched the dolphins. They now believe that the dolphins really are talking. They just don't know what the dolphins are saying.

Dolphins not only use sounds. They use body language, too. They "tell" something
15 to another dolphin by moving their body in a special way. They also do it by opening and closing their mouths quickly.

Scientists hope to understand dolphin language. They want to learn more about these very interesting animals.

Word Count 200 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. dolphins that talk to people.
 - b. dolphins that talk to each other.
 - c. dolphins that talk to fish.
2. Scientists believe that the mother dolphin and her baby
 - a. were just making noise.
 - b. were talking about other dolphins.
 - c. knew who they were talking to.
3. Which of these is NOT a way dolphins talk?
 - a. By using their bodies
 - b. By using other fish
 - c. By using sounds
4. Dolphins are special animals because
 - a. they can "talk" to other animals.
 - b. they have a special language.
 - c. they understand human speech.
5. Besides using sounds to "talk," dolphins tell things to each other by
 - a. pushing water quickly or slowly.
 - b. playing with rocks and sand in the sea.
 - c. opening and closing their mouths.



Extra Practice

Circle True or False for each sentence.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1. A dolphin can swim. | True | False |
| 2. Only people use language. | True | False |
| 3. Scientists have studied dolphins. | True | False |
| 4. Body language uses words. | True | False |
| 5. Some animals are smart. | True | False |

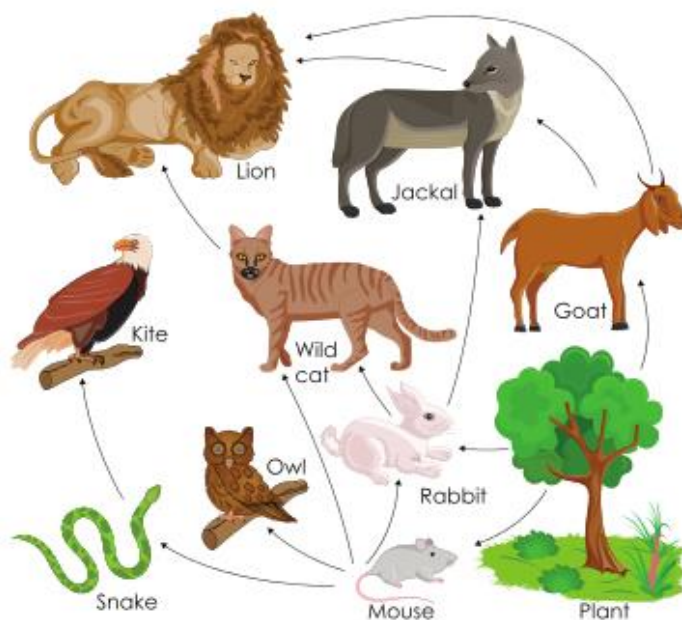
Levels in Nature

Animals get energy from the things that they eat. Some animals eat plants. Some eat other animals. Some eat plants and other animals. By looking at what eats what, we can learn how energy moves from one living thing to another.

One way to look at how energy moves from animal to animal is to imagine three levels in nature. At the first level, plants and trees make their own food. Animals and insects are usually in the second level. These are living things that eat things from the first level. Sometimes, they eat things from the second level, too. Some animals eat plants, and then another big animal eats them. Very small animals that you can't even see are part of the third level. After a living thing dies, these very small animals break down its body.

We can imagine something like these three levels in the ocean, too. Some kinds of small sea life use the sunlight to make food. Then another kind of small sea life eats them. A fish then eats the small sea life, and something larger eats the small fish. So energy moves between animals in the ocean just like it moves on land.

Word Count 200 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. things to eat in the ocean.
 - b. how energy moves in nature.
 - c. which animals eat plants.
2. Which of the following is true of the first level?
 - a. The animals there have very little energy.
 - b. All animals there are very small.
 - c. Things there make their own food.
3. The writer says that animals and insects
 - a. are found in the first level.
 - b. are found in the second level.
 - c. are found in the third level.
4. In the third level, very small animals
 - a. eat only one kind of small sea animal.
 - b. need sunlight to make the food they eat.
 - c. break down the bodies of animals that die.
5. The writer says that in the ocean, energy moves
 - a. more slowly than it does on land.
 - b. in the same way as it does on land.
 - c. from large animals to small animals.



Extra Practice

Circle the right word.

We can study how 1. (energy / life) moves in nature by looking at what eats what. An easy way to look at this is to 2. (imagine / learn) three levels in nature. The first level has things that make their own food in it. The second level has 3. (insects / scientists) and animals that eat things in the first and second levels. The third 4. (food / level) has very small animals that break down the bodies of things after they die. These three levels are the same in the 5. (ocean / plants) as they are on land.



A Dangerous Wind

In some parts of the world, when dark clouds fill the sky, a great danger sometimes appears. This danger is a quickly turning tower of air called a tornado, and it is one of the most dangerous things in nature.

Tornadoes happen mostly in the US, and they usually
5 form in the summer when warm, wet air and cold, dry air meet. They appear at the bottom of large, dark clouds. The wind under the cloud begins to go around and around. It gets faster and faster and can become very strong and dangerous. When the wind touches the ground,
10 it is called a tornado. The turning tornado moves along the ground and can break down trees and buildings in its way.

Most tornadoes are small and only stay on the ground a few minutes. However, even a small tornado can do a lot of damage. Sometimes, tornadoes are very, very big and can last much longer. The
15 worst tornado ever traveled 352 km and was on the ground for three and a half hours. Over 600 people died.

Tornadoes are so dangerous because they appear suddenly. There is often no time to run and no place to hide from them.

Word Count 200 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. dark clouds.
 - b. rain storms.
 - c. tornadoes.
2. Which of these is NOT needed to form a tornado?
 - a. Rain
 - b. Warm, wet air
 - c. Cold, dry air
3. What does the wind in a tornado do?
 - a. It goes in a straight line.
 - b. It goes around and around.
 - c. It goes up and down.
4. Tornadoes are so dangerous because
 - a. they are always very big.
 - b. they stay on the ground a long time.
 - c. they appear suddenly.
5. How far did the worst tornado travel?
 - a. About one kilometer
 - b. Less than ten kilometers
 - c. Over three hundred kilometers



Extra Practice

Circle True or False for each sentence.

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. A tornado is made of quickly turning air. | True | False |
| 2. Tornadoes appear at the bottom of large dark clouds. | True | False |
| 3. In the worst tornado ever, 60 people died. | True | False |
| 4. Many tornadoes only stay on the ground for a few hours. | True | False |
| 5. Tornadoes are dangerous because they appear suddenly. | True | False |

A Hard-Working Plant

Many people have Aloe vera plants in their homes. People have been growing Aloe vera for thousands of years. People used Aloe vera to help with health problems as long ago as 2100 BC.

Aloe vera is a plant that is usually found in hot, dry places. It has long, green leaves, and it is a very hard-working plant. It can be used to help with cuts or burns. Aloe vera also cleans the air around it. Bad air can come from the paint on the walls of some houses. Aloe vera can make the air clean again. Aloe vera is also a good plant to have in your room at night when you sleep. It takes in the air you breathe out. The plant then gives off clean air that you breathe in.

10 Growing an Aloe vera plant at home is very easy! You can buy a plant at the store. Put it in a place where there is plenty of sunlight. Water your plant during the spring, summer, and fall. If you want more
15 Aloe vera plants, you can just break off part of the Aloe vera plant. You can put this in the ground to grow again.

Word Count 200 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. how Aloe vera works hard.
 - b. how Aloe vera gives off bad air.
 - c. how Aloe vera was used long ago.
2. Which of the following is NOT something that Aloe vera does?
 - a. Gives off something bad like paint
 - b. Gives off the air you breathe in
 - c. Helps with health problems
3. People have been growing Aloe vera
 - a. to use as a kind of paint.
 - b. for thousands of years.
 - c. as something to kill insects in their rooms.
4. You can grow more Aloe vera plants by
 - a. giving special plant food to the Aloe vera plant.
 - b. breaking off a part of the plant and planting it.
 - c. giving the plant a lot of water.
5. The writer says that Aloe vera is good to have in your room because
 - a. it will change colors to let you know you have a health problem.
 - b. when you break off a part of the plant, it does not hurt the Aloe vera.
 - c. it takes in the air you breathe out and gives off the air you breathe in.



Extra Practice

Circle the right word.

People like to grow Aloe vera plants in their homes. One thing that these plants are good for is your 1. (health / touch). You can use these plants to help with cuts or 2. (burns / walls). Aloe vera are also good because they clean the air you 3. (breathe / dry). These plants are easy to grow. Just put a piece of the plant in the ground in a place where it can get 4. (clouds / plenty) of sunlight. Give it water in the 5. (spring / wind), summer, and fall, and it will grow well!

Lost Forever?

People live all over the world. But they are not always very careful about how they live. People can cut down too many trees or put bad things into the water. This can hurt the plants, trees, and animals that live there. Sometimes, one kind of animal or tree dies out and is gone forever. But not all of these animals or trees are gone forever. Some seem to be
 5 gone and then suddenly they come back!

This can happen to animals, plants, or trees. For a long time we think that they are gone. Since they are not seen for a long time, scientists say they have died out. Then someone finds one—or many! Scientists once said that one type of bird that could not fly was no longer living anywhere in the world. Then, in 2013, someone saw one! The bird that
 10 could not fly was still there. This was good news. It shows us that there are many things we do not know about our world. It also shows us that we need to be careful about how we live. We need to take care of our world so that living things are not gone forever.

Word Count 200 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. animals and plants that seem to be gone and then come back.
 - b. plants and animals that are gone forever, and people like that.
 - c. scientists who seem to have discovered new animals in nature.
2. What does the writer say about animals that are gone forever?
 - a. Not all of the animals are really gone forever.
 - b. There is more room for people because they are gone.
 - c. Other animals must change once an animal is gone.
3. The writer says that
 - a. people should put good things in the water.
 - b. people should find more animals near cities.
 - c. people should take care of the world around them.
4. At one time, scientists thought that
 - a. birds made one kind of tree die out.
 - b. a bird that could not fly was no more.
 - c. when animals suddenly come back, it is bad news.
5. The writer says that people sometimes hurt
 - a. the animals living in people's homes.
 - b. only large animals, but not small animals.
 - c. both plants and animals.



Extra Practice

Circle True or False for each sentence.

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. People are always careful how they live. | True | False |
| 2. Scientists say something has died out if no one sees it for a week. | True | False |
| 3. Sometimes one kind plant or animal dies out and is gone forever. | True | False |
| 4. Sometimes one kind of plant or animal seems to be gone, but it isn't. | True | False |
| 5. A type of bird that was thought all gone was seen in 2013. | True | False |