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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALITATIVE READING INVENTORY-5

The *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5* (QRI-5) is an individually administered informal reading inventory (IRI) designed to provide information about (1) conditions under which students can identify words and comprehend text successfully and (2) conditions that appear to result in unsuccessful word identification or comprehension. The QRI-5 continues a long history of informal reading inventories, which for forty years have been used to identify subjects' reading levels—independent, instructional, and frustration—and to provide valuable diagnostic information. Like other informal reading inventories, the QRI-5 provides graded word lists and numerous passages designed to assess the oral and silent reading and listening ability of students from the pre-primer 1 through the high school levels.

The QRI-5 provides a number of assessment options. Results can be used to estimate students' reading levels, to group students for guided reading sessions, or to choose appropriate books for literacy circles, reading workshops, and independent reading. The QRI-5 can provide information for designing and evaluating intervention instruction. Finally, the QRI-5 can be used to document student growth.

The QRI-5 is not a norm-referenced or standardized instrument. Norm-referenced tests provide comparative data; that is, an individual's score is evaluated in terms of the scores of the norm group. Standardized instruments are administered identically for all students. Users of an informal reading inventory, on the other hand, make their own decisions as to the number and type of passages to administer and which assessment options to use. While the QRI-5, like other IRIs, uses traditional percentages to determine independent, instructional, and frustration levels, student scores are interpreted only in regard to the individual and not to any norm group.

THE WORD LISTS

The pre-primer 1 word list has 17 words; all of the other word lists contain 20 words that we have selected from QRI passages at the same level of readability. For example, the primer word list contains words from the primer passages. The word lists are designed

1. To assess accuracy of word identification
2. To assess speed and automaticity of word identification
3. To determine a starting point for reading the initial passage

The QRI-5 includes a new feature. Some words on the pre-primer 1 through first grade lists contain phonetically regular vowel patterns. However, because these words are high-frequency words (as is appropriate at these levels), students may still pronounce them as memorized sight words and be relatively unaware of the sound patterns they contain. Therefore the QRI-5 provides an additional list of low-frequency words that contain the same phonetically regular phonograms. This additional feature allows the examiner to determine two things. First, does the student actually recognize phonograms as phonetic units? Second, does she or he know the more common or frequent ones? This can suggest a beginning point for phonics instruction.

THE PASSAGES

The passages to be read orally or silently assess the student's ability to read and comprehend different types of text. Passages can also be used to assess a student's listening level.

Pre-Primer, Primer, First Grade, and Second Grade Passages

At the pre-primer levels, there are six passages of increasing difficulty. Five are narratives and one is expository. Narratives usually involve stories while expository text is written primarily to inform, as in textbooks, newspapers, and much magazine writing (Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Three of the narratives and the expository passage are presented with pictures. The primer, first, second, and third grade readability levels have six passages—four narrative and two expository. At the primer and first grade levels, three narrative passages and one expository passage are presented with pictures. At second grade there are two narratives with pictures. Research suggests that emergent readers depend on picture context for both word identification and passage comprehension. In addition, text with pictures more closely approximates the type of selections presented to beginning readers. However, good readers are not dependent on pictures for word identification (Stanovich, 1991b), and it may be important to ascertain whether word identification differs when pictures are present as opposed to when they are absent. The examiner can assess the effect of pictures on a student's word identification or comprehension by contrasting performance on passages with and without pictures.

Because children often have difficulty making the transition from narration to exposition, we felt that it was important to include expository material at all levels. The inclusion of expository material also makes the QRI-5 more usable by teachers working with adult beginning readers who might be put off by children's narratives. Examiners who

give passages from pre-primer through second grade will be able to ascertain the reader's relative strengths in recalling and comprehending narrative versus expository material. In addition, we have included enough passages to assess differences between oral and silent reading, which, if they occur, should be more predominant at these early reading levels.

All passages contain concept questions that are designed to measure prior knowledge of three or four major concepts within each passage. While the topics of pre-primer 1 through third grade passages are generally familiar, scores on the concept task will help the examiner determine whether the student possesses knowledge of basic concepts necessary to comprehend the selection. All passages are also accompanied by a short prediction task where, given the title of the passage and the concepts included in the prior knowledge measure, the reader is asked to predict passage content.

Third Grade through Fifth Grade Passages

The passages for third grade through fifth grade include three narrative and three expository passages at each level. The narratives for fourth through fifth grades are biographies of famous people who vary in their familiarity to students in these grades (e.g., Johnny Appleseed versus Amelia Earhart in fourth grade and Martin Luther King, Jr., versus Patricia McKissack in fifth grade). We chose biographies in order to provide a more controlled assessment of prior knowledge. For example, it is easier to assess prior knowledge of a real person than the content of a fictional narrative. Because both familiar and unfamiliar people are included, *QRI-5* results can be useful in suggesting why students are having trouble in comprehension.

The expository passages are descriptive science and social studies materials on various topics, modeled after or taken from representative textbooks. We include passages that, according to our pilot data, offer a range in familiarity because of research suggesting that familiarity, which is measured by students' prior knowledge, is an important determinant of reading comprehension.

Sixth Grade Passages



At the sixth grade level, we have included three narrative passages, two social studies passages, and two science passages. The two expository passages are on the same topic—ancient Egypt, including *The Nile River* and *Building Pyramids*. The second of the two passages has been formatted to allow the examiner to engage in the think-aloud process with students, and the examiner copy provides a scoring grid to help the examiner keep track of the type of comments made by the reader. If the examiner does not wish to use think-alouds, a student sheet without think-aloud formatting is provided on the accompanying DVD. Because the second passage focuses on the same general topic as the first, it can be used as a pre–post assessment as long as the student's prior knowledge is considered. It can also be used for other purposes such as contrasting oral and silent reading and assessing note-taking ability.

Upper Middle School Passages

At the upper middle school level, there are six passages. Two passages representative of middle school literature selections are biographical or autobiographical in nature, two passages represent science content, and two represent social studies content. Like the sixth grade level, the two social studies (*Immigration 1* and *2*) and science passages (*Life Cycle of Stars 1* and *2*) are on the same topic, with the second passage in each category formatted for the use of the think-aloud process. As in the sixth grade level, the second passage can also be used for pre–post assessment of progress or other purposes. All the

passages were taken from published literature, science, and social studies texts, so they are representative of classroom materials. Prior knowledge tasks allow the examiner to determine whether comprehension scores were due, in part, to the subject's level of prior knowledge.

High School Passages

At the high school level, there are three passages taken from representative literature, social studies, and science texts used at that level. The passages within each content area are sections of a biography in the case of literature or a chapter for social studies and science. Readability formulas for determining text level are not particularly useful at the high school level and different formulas provided us with a wide range of readability levels for a single selection. We reasoned that readability levels mattered less than the content typically chosen for high school textbooks. We have therefore included selections that were especially representative of high school content across several publishers.

All high school passages represent relatively unfamiliar topics: the Vietnam War, World War I, and viruses, and each passage is divided into three sections. The second section can be used for post-testing, for assessing note-taking ability, or for other similar purposes. The third section of each selection is formatted so it can be used for engaging in the think-aloud process.

We do not provide guidelines for scoring word identification on the high school passages. Our rationale is that students should read passages at this level silently. However, if a student demonstrates lack of comprehension after silently reading a high school passage and the examiner wishes to evaluate word identification, we suggest two options. The examiner can administer the high school word list, or the examiner can drop back to an upper middle school passage and ask the student to read it orally.

Use of the Passages

The passages are designed

1. To determine a student's independent, instructional, or frustration levels for word identification in context (pre-primer 1 through upper middle school)
2. To determine a student's independent, instructional, or frustration levels for comprehension
3. To assess a student's ability to read different types of text: narrative and expository text, text with and without pictures (pre-primer 1 through grade two), and text of varying familiarity
4. To assess a student's ability to comprehend in different modes: oral and silent (pre-primer 1 through upper middle school)
5. To assess a student's ability to use look-backs to locate missing or incorrect information (grade three through high school)
6. To assess the variety and quality of a student's think-alouds (grade six through high school)

Measures of Comprehension

The *QRI-5* assesses comprehension of all passages in two ways: retelling and questions. In addition, for passages at the third grade through high school levels, the examiner may utilize look-backs to evaluate the quality of comprehension further. In sixth grade through high school levels, the examiner may employ think-alouds as a further assessment of comprehension quality.

The comprehension measures are designed

1. To assess the quality of the reader's unaided recall
2. To assess the reader's understanding of the text when prompted with questions
3. To examine the quality of a student's comprehension during reading

Retelling. After reading the selection, the student is asked to retell the passage as though telling it to someone who never heard it before. The student's retelling is scored from a map of important idea units contained in the passage. Retelling for narrative passages is coded according to setting or background, goal, events, and resolution. Coding for expository passages focuses on main ideas and details. What the student is able to retell and the organization of that retelling can provide information about the reader's ability to recall important ideas that are structured in some logical way.

Questions. Next, the examiner asks the student two types of questions. Questions with answers stated explicitly in the text are called text-explicit questions. Questions with answers that the subject must infer from information in the text are called text-implicit questions. Answers to text-implicit questions must be tied to information in the story and not simply derived from prior knowledge. Independent, instructional, and frustration levels for comprehension are derived from scores on the question measure.

Look-Backs. At the third grade through high school levels, the examiner may use look-backs to assess comprehension further. After scoring the questions, the examiner can ask the student to look back in the text to locate missing information or to correct erroneous answers. Look-backs allow the examiner to differentiate between comprehension during reading and memory after reading. Students may understand a concept while reading but then forget it. As a result, they are unable to answer an explicit or implicit question. Look-backs are particularly informative when the student has read unfamiliar or difficult, concept-dense text. While skilled readers can generally employ skimming or rereading to locate information, less skilled readers are unable to do this successfully.

Think-Alouds. At the sixth grade through high school levels, the examiner can ask the student to think aloud while reading. The examiner asks the student to pause at designated segments of text signaled by the word **STOP** and describe what he or she is thinking at that point. A think-aloud scoring grid is provided to help examiners keep track of the type of comments made by the reader. A passage that examiners can use to model the think-aloud procedure is also included.

In summary, the *QRI-5* consists of graded word lists and narrative and expository passages. The word lists and passages, which range from pre-primer to high school levels, vary in familiarity, and prior knowledge is assessed before the student reads each passage. Comprehension is assessed through retelling, questions, look-backs, and think-alouds.