

READING SKILLS REINFORCEMENTS FOR YOUNG READERS

Summer is a time of leisure! A time of fun! And for avid readers, it's a time for reading whatever we want, wherever we want!

But what about our youngest readers who are still getting comfortable with books? Or those who haven't found a favorite series or author to explore on their own? What if they see words jumbled in their head, or they're still learning to connect the words they hear with the text they see?

What about the Summer Slide?

“

The good news is that the summer slide is often overstated. In fact, evidence is decidedly mixed on whether it really exists, and education researchers say that summer is an opportunity.”

—SCHOOL'S OUT. SHOULD YOU WORRY ABOUT THE 'SUMMER SLIDE'? [Scientific American, 2023](#)

Some research discusses the importance of books being “matched” to the student's interests ([Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003](#)) — in other words, letting them “Read what they want!” Other research has stated there must be a “match” between the reader's ability and the readability of texts chosen by students. ([Kim & Guryan, 2010](#))

If a book is too easy, the reader does not improve; too difficult, the reader becomes frustrated and stops reading.

Simply having access to books isn't enough; readers need books at the appropriate level that also interest them. “Children who are at risk for summer reading loss may need help to ensure that they read the books they're given and that they do so in ways that are likely to build decoding skills, fluency, and comprehension.” ([Kim & White, 2011](#))

Young readers need scaffolding, or training wheels, to help them focus as they read.

Building and Reinforcing Young Readers' Skills

With **Comics Plus**, your beginning, early, and middle grade readers have unlimited, simultaneous access to a deep collection of graphic novels, manga, and picture books they'll want to read all year long.

Whether focusing on word decoding, fluency practice, or comprehension, this Skills Reinforcement Resource can be used to build and reinforce reading skills.

It includes recommended titles and aligned classroom standards that can help librarians and educators enhance reading programs, while providing scaffolding tools to parents who need them to ensure reading success continues at home.

DECODABLES

Stories for young readers that reinforce phonics skills.

Emergent readers are building connections between the spoken word and printed text. They are learning to hear and play with the sounds of words when they practice counting syllables, decoding words by individual sounds or blends of letters.

“When students read decodable texts, they can more readily apply their knowledge of letters and sounds, making it more likely that they will process all of the letters within words and develop fully specified orthographic representations of words. Recognizing words in this way allows the reader to focus mental energy on comprehension rather than word recognition.”

[Cheatham & Allor, 2012](#)

Decodables are designed to align with systematic phonics instruction. They feature words students can decode using learned letter-sound relationships, minimizing reliance on guessing. Key features include focusing on specific phonics patterns, controlled vocabulary with high-frequency words, and a structured introduction of new skills.

The increased adoption of the [Science of Reading](#) framework in many states underscores the crucial role of Decodable readers.

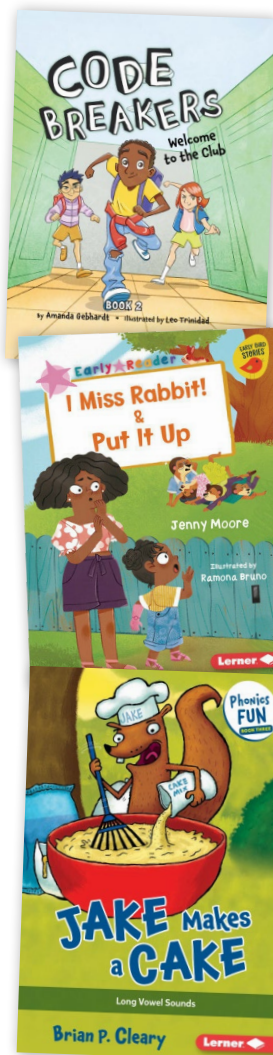
To assist in selecting appropriate Decodables, publishers offer Scope and Sequence/Sequencing Charts, detailing the phonics skills taught by each book. By referencing these charts, you can ensure that the Decodables you use with your emergent readers align with your phonics instruction.

- Early Bird Readers - Pink ([Lerner](#))
- Early Bird Readers - Red ([Lerner](#))
- *Little Blossom, In Bloom*, and *Code Breakers* ([Cherry Lake](#))
- Phonics Fun Decodables ([Lerner](#))
- Phonics Fun ([Lerner](#))

Explore our [Decodables](#) collection for more recommended titles.

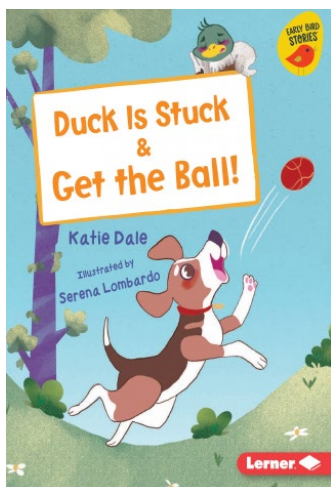
Classroom Connections:

- ✓ Individual Phonics Instruction
- ✓ Small-Group Reading and/or Phonics Instruction
- ✓ Word Hunt Activity
- ✓ Home Reading Connections



Recommended Titles: Decodables

► [Duck Is Stuck & Get the Ball!](#) by Katie Dale and Serena Lombardo (Lerner)



Standard: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

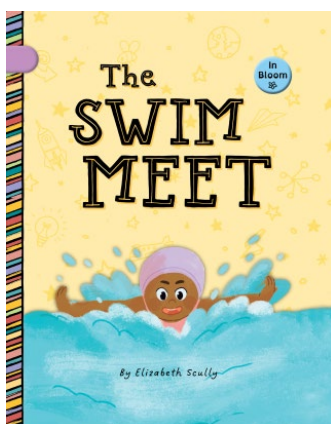
This Decodable book consists of two separate stories. *Duck Is Stuck* tells the story of a duck stuck in the mud, and various animal friends try to free him. *Get the Ball!* follows Ruff, a dog, as he chases various balls (baseball, soccer, golf).

Both stories, beautifully illustrated by Serena Lombardo — with text in open white space, unhindered by color and images — rely on characters to solve a problem. They will benefit students who are focused on learning the letters S and G.

Each one begins with an illustration of how to write the letter in upper and lower case, with reading tips, words to review, and expected high-frequency words. Readers will learn to recognize the relationship between the letter and the sound as well as the consonant digraph. The vowel focus is the *short vowel u*, and the phonics focus is *d/g/b/u* and *short u*.

Other decodables in [Lerner's Pink Early Bird Stories](#) series also provide simple sentence structures; patterned, predictable text; and strong picture support to aid in decoding.

► [In Bloom: The Swim Meet](#) by Elizabeth Scully and Laura Gomez (Cherry Lake)



Standard: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

In this Decodable book, Shamika prepares to swim with the Red Fin Swim Team. She and her mother head to the pool, where she puts on her gear and swims her best time.

Each image-filled page illustrates and supports Scully's text, and readers will enjoy Gomez's use of a soft blue palette highlighting the characters' key actions.

This Decodable title is part of the [In Bloom](#) series. The series uses decodable text, common sight words, and sequenced vowel sounds, with students learning the following vowel patterns CCVC, CVCC, and CCVCC. The vowels featured in this book are *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*. Blends and digraphs featured are *sh*, *sw*, *cl*, *ck*, *th*, *qu*, *nk*, *ll*, *gr*, *st*, *lp*, *str*, *sq*, *wr*, *bl*, *st*, *shr*, *ft*.

EARLY READERS

Stories with repetitive sentence structure, high-frequency words, clear and simple language, and pictures that reinforce the text.

The beginner reader continues to work on decoding texts, recognizing various sight words, and reading simple sentences relying less on images. They are working towards fluency and accuracy and are often voracious readers, rereading their favorite stories multiple times!

“It may be helpful to think of reading fluency as a bridge between the two major components of reading – word decoding and comprehension.” [Rasinski, 2003](#)

Early Readers are perfect to support the initial stages of learning to read. These books are a crucial tool in early literacy instruction because they provide a structured and engaging way for children to develop reading skills. Characterized by their simple vocabulary, short sentences, repetitive patterns, and clear, supportive illustrations, the goal is to create a reading experience that is manageable and encouraging for young readers, allowing them to build confidence and fluency as they progress.

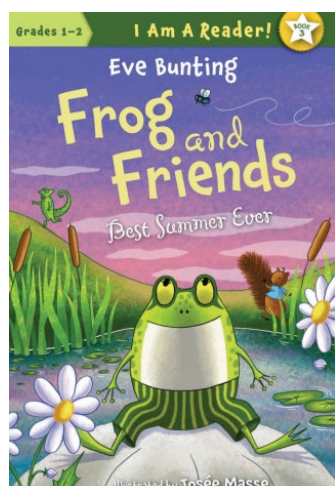
Early Readers bridge the gap to longer texts and comprehension skills, while fostering a lifelong love of reading. Explore our [Early Readers](#) collection for more recommended titles.

Classroom Connections:

- ✓ Individual Phonics Instruction
- ✓ Small-Group Reading Instruction
- ✓ Independent Reading
- ✓ Home Reading Connections

Recommended Titles: Early Readers

► [Frog and Friends Vol #3: The Best Summer Ever](#) by Eve Bunting and Josée Masse (*Cherry Lake*)



Standard: Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

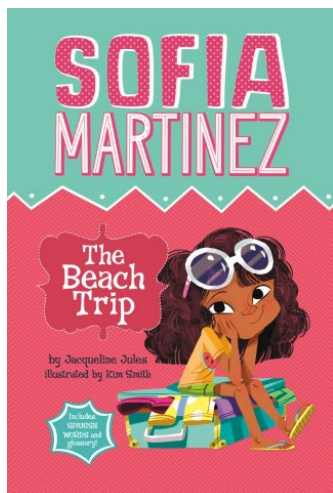
“The Best Summer Ever” is an Early Reader chapter book, with each chapter (or short story) featuring Frog trying to enjoy the simpler things in life with his friends.

Masse’s beautiful illustrations of summer days and nights are bursting with color and imagination, while the text is surrounded by white-framed images of Frog and his friends. The illustrations reinforce the text so that beginning readers can find meaning.

This Early Reader has high-frequency words and clear and simple language, and is ideal for repeated readings, which can help improve reading fluency, increase vocabulary recognition, and provide much-needed and appreciated self-confidence.

Check out more “I Am a Reader” stories with [Digger and Daisy](#) (Grades K-1); [Frog and Friends](#) (Grades 1-2); and [Tugg and Teeny](#) (Grades 2-3).

► **[Sofia Martinez: The Beach Trip](#)** by Jacqueline Jules and Kim Smith (Capstone)



Standard: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

“The Beach Trip” follows Sofia Martinez and her family on a family vacation to the beach. Sofia is excited to spend time with her family and decides that her board games are essential items to pack, which come in handy when it rains on the first day.

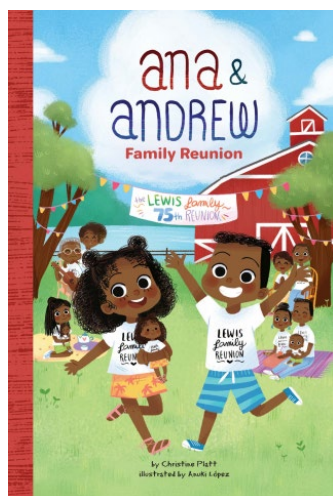
Smith’s vibrant illustrations capture the energy and emotions of the characters, making the story come alive with Sofia’s adventures and interactions with her family. In addition, this title includes bilingual elements, with Spanish words interspersed in pink/red throughout the text, making them stand out. This feature can help students learn new vocabulary and become familiar with a

second language while reading.

The book is divided into three short chapters, allowing students to build confidence in reading longer texts while providing natural stopping points. It also includes three discussion questions and three writing prompts at the end of the book, encouraging them to engage with the text and practice critical thinking skills.

Follow [Sofia Martinez’s](#) other adventures!

► **[Ana & Andrew: Family Reunion](#)** by Christine Platt and Anuki López (ABDO)



Standard: Describe the overall structure of a story, including how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

“Family Reunion” is an engaging story of siblings Ana and Andrew traveling with their family from Washington, D.C. to Savannah, Georgia, for the 75th anniversary of the Lewis family reunion.

López’s illustrations are colorful and vibrant, providing a variety of perspectives while leaving extra space between sentences and paragraphs. The images complement the story and perfectly depict the siblings’ adventures and interactions, providing additional context clues for readers.

This Early Reader chapter book is part of the [Ana & Andrew](#) series. Each book presents a unique adventure, with the siblings often exploring places related to African American history and culture. Divided into short chapters, they allow students to build confidence in reading longer texts while providing natural stopping points.

PICTURE BOOKS

Stories that combine full-page illustrations and minimal text.

Readers of every age can enjoy reading or listening to a great read-aloud of a Picture Book, sometimes called “Everybody Reads” or “Everybody Books.” The importance of Picture Books is more than the scaffolding of beautiful illustrations that provide context clues for decoding words; they also offer predicting, inferring, and making connections, which deepen comprehension. ([Pavio & Clark, 1991](#))

The range of Picture Books is broad and deep. Very young children enjoy hearing them read aloud, with their rich language and extensive vocabulary. Those learning to read themselves can utilize their decoding skills to deepen their understanding of the pictures and text, while confident readers build critical thinking and speaking skills when discussing a Picture Book.

The mighty Picture Book can provide multiple avenues for teachers and their students to explore.

- Check out [ABDO BookLinks](#), [Cherry Lake Teaching Guides](#), and [Lerner eSource](#) for additional resources.

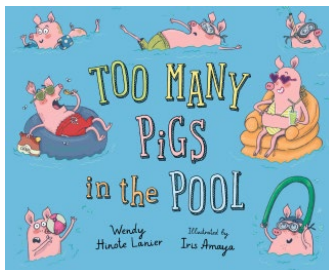
Explore our [Picture Books](#) collection for more recommended titles.

Classroom Connections:

- ✓ Individual Reading Instruction
- ✓ Small-Group Reading Instruction
- ✓ Independent Reading
- ✓ Read Aloud
- ✓ Book Club
- ✓ Home Reading Connections

Recommended Titles: Picture Books

- [Too Many Pigs in the Pool](#) by Wendy Hinote Lanier and Iris Amaya (Cherry Lake)



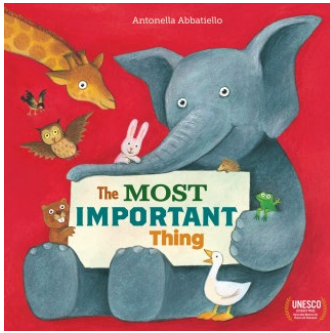
Standard: Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story; e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting.

This colorful Picture Book shares the story of Mr. Jenkins, who loves sitting by his pool reading, floating, and playing “Marco Polo” with his friend, Ms. Peal, and her pig, Percy. The trouble soon doubles when Percy invites his friends to the pool. Follow the math through this book to learn about addition and multiplication while Mr. Jenkins finds a solution to enjoying his pool again.

The expressions on Percy’s friends’ faces are adorable; Amaya fills each 2-page spread with action, movement, hilarity, and a little math.

Whether practicing the days of the week, reading for details, or calculating doubles, this fun read reinforces math concepts while depicting poolside antics. Readers can discuss how the illustrations create the summer mood, emphasizing the pure enjoyment of each of the 64 playful pigs!

► **The Most Important Thing** by Angus Yuen-Killick and Antonella Abbatiello (Red Comet Press)



Standard: Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

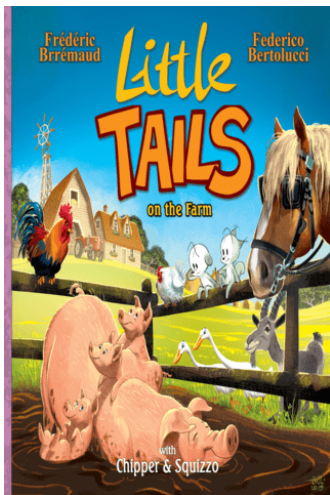
A fable about the importance of being yourself and understanding that everyone is different, this Picture Book explores the essence of unity; that everyone's strengths fill our world with diversity, creating harmony. Each animal in the forest shares its unique strength, suggesting that everyone else should have it, too.

When the animals make their suggestions, the two-page spreads and white space allow the reader to explore the text without distractions. Strengths are highlighted and emboldened, while color distinguishes each's animal's voice.

Abbatiello adorably and cleverly illustrates the suggestions — “large ears,” “long neck,” or “wings” — with humor and sensitivity.

Students will be encouraged to ask about unknown words. Yuen-Killick structures each animal's response with synonyms that furnish a slightly different understanding. Using a repetitive phrase after the animal's suggestion allows teachers to ask about the nuances of a conversation as the animals debate, discuss, ask, and wonder about each suggestion. Students will experience the connection between words and text, build vocabulary, and explore sentence structure while learning about the importance of differences.

► **Little Tails on the Farm** by Frederic Brremaud and Federico Bertolucci (Oni Press)



Standard: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

In this playful Picture Book, Squizzo (squirrel) and Chipper (puppy), two young adventurous friends, are in search of milk for their breakfast. Along the way, they meet wild and domestic animals living on and near the farm.

With the dialogue and main storyline told in sequential panels set against beautiful, realistic illustrations of animals and life on the farm, readers will want to discuss the relationship between the two visual styles. The detailed scenes of the countryside have an atmospheric perspective, adding an element of emotion and feeling to the story. This contrast between the two styles allows readers to delve deeper into the characters' adventure.

Readers will want to laugh and join in on the journey, meeting the charming farm animals while quickly learning which ones to avoid and why. Squizzo and Chipper's response to the challenge of finding milk and the farm animals' friendship lead to an endearing story. Realistic drawings of several of the animals alongside interesting and unusual facts about them offer additional opportunities for discussion at the end of the story.

► **Awesome Air** by Rena Korb and Brandon Reibeling (ABDO)



Standard: Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to efficiently locate key facts or information in a text.

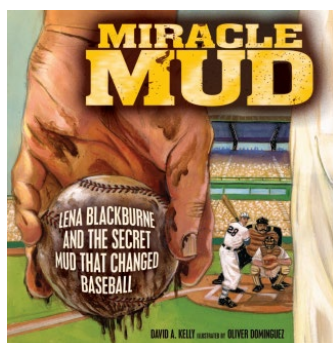
This nonfiction Picture Book demonstrates the importance of air, using scientific facts. Each page explains the power of our relationship with air and its effects on our environment. Readers will also learn about conservation and how to protect our atmosphere.

Reibeling's two-page spreads are filled with color and action. Although you may not be able to see air, each explanatory image helps identify its properties. The use of lines and symbols allows the reader to understand its invisible attributes.

Readers can delve deeper by utilizing the table of contents, glossary, index, and a simple science activity. Fun facts at the back of the book will give students ideas for further research and explanation.

► **Miracle Mud: Lena Blackburne and the Secret Mud that Changed Baseball**

by David A. Kelly and Oliver Dominguez (Lerner)



Standard: Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

This Picture Book biography is about professional baseball player Lena Blackburne and his contribution to modern baseball. Lena was a decent player but would never be in the *Hall of Fame* for the most home runs or stolen bases. However, he did find a solution to the problem of soggy, soft baseballs.

Dominguez's full-page illustrations depict the early 1900s in a nostalgic color scheme, including fashion from the era, slogans in baseball parks, and baseball's evolution into the 1960s. The drawings bring the text to life, expanding its meaning and emphasizing characters' emotions and feelings.

This chronological biography explains the events and ideas from a historical perspective, sharing Blackburne's life and his influence on a significant problem in baseball. The text describes the problem, what happened, and what was tested, while back matter gives more detail as to why his solution was so important. Students can use specific information in the text to create a timeline to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the event.

WORDLESS

Stories told with only illustrations; no dialogue or narration.

Wordless Books are Picture Books that provide a more open-ended approach to reading and using our imagination. These stories are told entirely through illustrations with very few words. The reader must be a keen observer of the images and sequence of events, while identifying details that share the emotion and tone of the story.

Even though there are no words to apply a readability score, the subject and concepts shared must be evaluated for appropriateness to the age group reading the book.

The versatility of a Wordless Book — reaching readers where they are, no matter their reading level or language background — is paramount to the concept's flexibility. These books build personal connections, allowing the students to hear their own voices and use their imaginations. It is important to note that readers' understanding and comprehension can be assessed without decoding. ([Paris & Paris, 2003](#))

This powerful reading experience provides an innovative way to develop storytelling skills, practice inferring, predicting, and sequencing, while using imagination and creativity to construct meaning and build academic confidence.

Explore our curated [Wordless Wonders](#) list for recommended titles.

Classroom Connections:

- ✓ Individual Reading/ Writing Instruction
- ✓ Small-Group Reading/ Writing Instruction
- ✓ Independent Reading
- ✓ Creative Writing Exercise
- ✓ Home Reading Connections

Recommended Titles: Wordless

► [Picnic Pigs](#) by Derek Fridolfs and Scott Gross (Capstone)



Standard: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

In this Wordless graphic novel, characters from the classic Looney Tunes cast, Porky and Petunia, set off for a summer picnic, but nature is conspiring against Porky. Will he be able to enjoy his time with Petunia and have his cake, too?

Each panel's bright primary colors highlight Porky's calamity: his fight with the ants, his rescue of his sandwich from a bird, and its demise in a thunderstorm. Varying perspectives showcase the hilarious predicament Porky finds himself in.

Students will delight in describing how Porky and Petunia respond to escalating events, following the visual clues and sound prompts. This classic *Porky* story about the "happy-go-lucky pig" who is regularly challenged by the world will have readers laughing out loud!

► **Three-Story Books: SheHeWe** by Lee Nordling and Meritxell Bosch (Lerner)



Standard: With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

This Wordless graphic novel shares the power of imagination as two children playing at the park encounter one another. The story is told through three panels: the top panel represents the girl, the middle panel depicts the boy, and the bottom panel shares the story of both children.

Bosch's artwork is bright and full of details; each character is presented in their own color palette, while the third panel showcases the green setting of the park. The whimsical drawings of the children's imaginations create a spirit of adventure, experience, and reality.

Readers can choose which story to follow, comparing and contrasting the images to see how each child's imagination differs, but is also the same. Discussing the relationship between the illustrations and the missing words will require a keen eye for detail and a vivid imagination.

Check out more [Three-Story Books](#) from Lerner!

► **Light** by Rob Cham (Oni Press)



Standard: Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

This Wordless graphic novel takes our unnamed adventurer on a quest deep below the surface, searching for beautiful jewels to color their world. Our seeker finds a companion, and together, they battle the guardians of the jewels, forging new friendships with unusual creatures along their journey.

The story starts with black-and-white scenes of the adventurer's home. As they acquire jewels, the world around them lights up in beautiful reds, yellows, and greens, which Cham highlights in blues and purples to contrast with the dark, cavernous landscape.

An analysis of his choices in depicting the scenes and characters will lead to a deeper understanding of the story's themes and messages. Students will be delighted by the details lingering in the background, the interesting beasts, and the characters' courage, and ultimately be surprised by the beautiful ending.