

Reading speed tests

Passage A1

Leatherhead is about twelve miles from Maybury Hill. The scent of hay was in the air through the lush meadows beyond Pyrford, and the hedges on either side were sweet and gay with multitudes of dog-roses. The heavy firing that had broken out while we were driving down Maybury Hill ceased as abruptly as it began, leaving the evening very peaceful and still. We got to Leatherhead without misadventure about nine o'clock, and the horse had an hour's rest while I took supper with my cousins and commended my wife to their care.

My wife was curiously silent throughout the drive, and seemed oppressed with forebodings of evil. I talked to her reassuringly, pointing out that the Martians were tied to the Pit by sheer heaviness, and at the utmost could but crawl a little out of it; but she answered only in monosyllables. Had it not been for my promise to the innkeeper, she would, I think, have urged me to stay in Leatherhead that night. Would that I had! Her face, I remember, was very white as we parted.

For my own part, I had been feverishly excited all day. Something very like the war fever that occasionally runs through a civilized community had got into my blood, and in my heart I was not so very sorry that I had to return to Maybury that night. I was even afraid that that last fusillade I had heard might mean the extermination of our invaders from Mars. I can best express my state of mind by saying that I wanted to be in at the death.

It was nearly eleven when I started to return. The night was unexpectedly dark; to me, walking out of the lighted passage of my cousins' house, it seemed indeed black, and it was as hot and close as the day. Overhead the clouds were driving fast, albeit not a breath stirred the shrubs about us. My cousins' man lit both lamps. Happily, I knew the road intimately. My wife stood in the light of the doorway, and watched me until I jumped up into the dog cart. Then abruptly she turned and went in, leaving my cousins side by side wishing me good hap.

I was a little depressed at first with the contagion of my wife's fears, but very soon my thoughts reverted to the Martians. At that time I was absolutely in the dark as to the course of the evening's fighting. I did not know even the circumstances that had precipitated the conflict. As I came through Ockham (for that was the way I returned, and not through Send and Old Woking) I saw along the western horizon a blood-red glow, which as I drew nearer, crept slowly up the sky. The driving clouds of the gathering thunderstorm mingled there with masses of black and red smoke.

Ripley Street was deserted, and except for a lighted window or so the village showed not a sign of life; but I narrowly escaped an accident at the corner of the road to Pyrford, where a knot of people stood with their backs to me. They said nothing to me as I passed. I do not know what they knew of the things happening beyond the hill, nor do I know if the silent houses I passed on my way were sleeping securely, or deserted and empty, or harassed and watching against the terror of the night.

575 words

Passage A2

As the dawn grew brighter we withdrew from the window from which we had watched the Martians, and went very quietly downstairs.

The artilleryman agreed with me that the house was no place to stay in. He proposed, he said, to make his way Londonward, and thence rejoin his battery--No. 12, of the Horse Artillery. My plan was to return at once to Leatherhead; and so greatly had the strength of the Martians impressed me that I had determined to take my wife to Newhaven, and go with her out of the country forthwith. For I already perceived clearly that the country about London must inevitably be the scene of a disastrous struggle before such creatures as these could be destroyed.

Between us and Leatherhead, however, lay the third cylinder, with its guarding giants. Had I been alone, I think I should have taken my chance and struck across country. But the artilleryman dissuaded me: "It's no kindness to the right sort of wife," he said, "to make her a widow"; and in the end I agreed to go with him, under cover of the woods, northward as far as Street Cobham before I parted with him. Thence I would make a big detour by Epsom to reach Leatherhead.

I should have started at once, but my companion had been in active service and he knew better than that. He made me ransack the house for a flask, which he filled with whiskey; and we lined every available pocket with packets of biscuits and slices of meat. Then we crept out of the house, and ran as quickly as we could down the ill-made road by which I had come overnight. The houses seemed deserted. In the road lay a group of three charred bodies close together, struck dead by the Heat-Ray; and here and there were things that people had dropped--a clock, a slipper, a silver spoon, and the like poor valuables. At the corner turning up towards the post office a little cart, filled with boxes and furniture, and horseless, heeled over on a broken wheel. A cash box had been hastily smashed open and thrown under the debris.

Except the lodge at the Orphanage, which was still on fire, none of the houses had suffered very greatly here. The Heat-Ray had shaved the chimney tops and passed. Yet, save ourselves, there did not seem to be a living soul on Maybury Hill. The majority of the inhabitants had escaped, I suppose, by way of the Old Woking road--the road I had taken when I drove to Leatherhead--or they had hidden.

We went down the lane, by the body of the man in black, sodden now from the overnight hail, and broke into the woods at the foot of the hill. We pushed through these towards the railway without meeting a soul. The woods across the line were but the scarred and blackened ruins of woods; for the most part the trees had fallen, but a certain proportion still stood, dismal grey stems, with dark brown foliage instead of green.

516 words

Passage A3

My younger brother was in London when the Martians fell at Woking. He was a medical student working for an imminent examination, and he heard nothing of the arrival until Saturday morning. The morning papers on Saturday contained, in addition to lengthy special articles on the planet Mars, on life in the planets, and so forth, a brief and vaguely worded telegram, all the more striking for its brevity.

The Martians, alarmed by the approach of a crowd, had killed a number of people with a quick-firing gun, so the story ran. The telegram concluded with the words: "Formidable as they seem to be, the Martians have not moved from the pit into which they have fallen, and, indeed, seem incapable of doing so. Probably this is due to the relative strength of the earth's gravitational energy." On that last text their leader-writer expanded very comfortingly.

Of course all the students in the crammer's biology class, to which my brother went that day, were intensely interested, but there were no signs of any unusual excitement in the streets. The afternoon papers puffed scraps of news under big headlines. They had nothing to tell beyond the movements of troops about the common, and the burning of the pine woods between Woking and Weybridge, until eight. Then the St. James's Gazette, in an extra-special edition, announced the bare fact of the interruption of telegraphic communication. This was thought to be due to the falling of burning pine trees across the line. Nothing more of the fighting was known that night, the night of my drive to Leatherhead and back.

My brother felt no anxiety about us, as he knew from the description in the papers that the cylinder was a good two miles from my house. He made up his mind to run down that night to me, in order, as he says, to see the Things before they were killed. He dispatched a telegram, which never reached me, about four o'clock, and spent the evening at a music hall.

In London, also, on Saturday night there was a thunderstorm, and my brother reached Waterloo in a cab. On the platform from which the midnight train usually starts he learned, after some waiting, that an accident prevented trains from reaching Woking that night. The nature of the accident he could not ascertain; indeed, the railway authorities did not clearly know at that time. There was very little excitement in the station, as the officials, failing to realize that anything further than a breakdown between Byfleet and Woking junction had occurred, were running the theatre trains which usually passed through Woking round by Virginia Water or Guildford. They were busy making the necessary arrangements to alter the route of the Southampton and Portsmouth Sunday League excursions. A nocturnal newspaper reporter, mistaking my brother for the traffic manager, to whom he bears a slight resemblance, waylaid and tried to interview him. Few people, excepting the railway officials, connected the breakdown with the Martians.

499 words

Passage C1

Whitefoot the Wood Mouse is one of the smallest of the little people who live in the Green Forest. Being so small he is one of the most timid. You see, by day and by night sharp eyes are watching for Whitefoot and he knows it. Never one single instant, while he is outside where sharp eyes of hungry enemies may see him, does he forget that they are watching for him. To forget even for one little minute might mean--well, it might mean the end of little Whitefoot, but a dinner for some one with a liking for tender Mouse.

So Whitefoot the Wood Mouse rarely ventures more than a few feet from a hiding place and safety. At the tiniest sound he starts nervously and often darts back into hiding without waiting to find out if there really is any danger. If he waited to make sure he might wait too long, and it is better to be safe than sorry. If you and I had as many real frights in a year, not to mention false frights, as Whitefoot has in a day, we would, I suspect, lose our minds. Certainly we would be the most unhappy people in all the Great World.

But Whitefoot isn't unhappy. Not a bit of it. He is a very happy little fellow. There is a great deal of wisdom in that pretty little head of his. There is more real sense in it than in some very big heads. When some of his neighbors make fun of him for being so very, very timid he doesn't try to pretend that he isn't afraid. He doesn't get angry. He simply says:

"Of course I'm timid, very timid indeed. I'm afraid of almost everything. I would be foolish not to be. It is because I am afraid that I am alive and happy right now. I hope I shall never be less timid than I am now, for it would mean that sooner or later I would fail to run in time and would be gobbled up. It isn't cowardly to be timid when there is danger all around. Nor is it bravery to take a foolish and needless risk. So I seldom go far from home. It isn't safe for me, and I know it."

385 words

Passage C2

Whitefoot the Wood Mouse and Danny Meadow Mouse had become so interested that they decided they couldn't afford to miss the next lesson. Neither did either of them feel like making the long journey to his home and back again. So Whitefoot found a hole in a stump near by and decided to camp out there for a few days. Danny decided to do the same thing in a comfortable place under a pile of brush not far away. So the next morning both were on hand when school opened.

"I told you yesterday that I would tell you about some of Danny's cousins," began Old Mother Nature just as Chatterer the Red Squirrel, who was late, came hurrying up quite out of breath. "Way up in the Far North are two of Danny's cousins more closely related to him than to any other members of the Mouse family. Yet, strange to say, they are not called Mice at all, but Lemmings. However, they belong to the Mouse family.

"Bandy the Banded Lemming is the most interesting, because he is the one member of the entire family who changes the color of his coat. In summer he wears beautiful shades of reddish brown and gray, but in winter his coat is wholly white. He is also called the Hudson Bay Lemming.

"Danny Meadow Mouse thinks his tail is short, but he wouldn't if he should see Bandy's tail. That is so short it hardly shows beyond his long fur. He is about Danny's size, but a little stouter and stockier, and his long fur makes him appear even thicker-bodied than he really is. He has very short legs, and his ears are so small that they are quite hidden in the fur around them, so that he appears to have no ears at all.

"In that same far northern country is a close relative called the Brown Lemming. He is very much like Bandy save that he is all brown and does not change his coat in winter. Both have the same general habits, and these are much like the habits of Danny Meadow Mouse. They make short burrows in the ground leading to snug, warm nests of grass and moss. In winter they make little tunnels in every direction under the snow, with now and then an opening to the surface.

392 words

Passage C3

The bank of the Smiling Pool was a lovely place to hold school at that hour of the day, which you know was just after sun-up. Everybody who could get there was on hand, and there were several who had not been to school before. One of these was Grandfather Frog, who was sitting on his big, green, lily pad. Another was Jerry Muskrat, whose house was out in the Smiling Pool. Spotty the Turtle was also there, not to mention Longlegs the Heron. You see, they hadn't come to school but the school had come to them, for that is where they live or spend most of their time.

"Good morning, Jerry Muskrat," said Old Mother Nature pleasantly, as Jerry's brown head appeared in the Smiling Pool. "Have you seen anything of Billy Mink or Little Joe Otter?"

"Little Joe went down to the Big River last night," replied Jerry Muskrat. "I don't know when he is coming back, but I wouldn't be surprised to see him any minute. Billy Mink was here last evening and said he was going up the Laughing Brook fishing. He is likely to be back any time. One never can tell when that fellow will appear. He comes and goes continually. I don't believe he can keep still five minutes."

"Who is that can't keep still five minutes?" demanded a new voice, and there was Billy Mink himself just climbing out on the Big Rock.

"Jerry was speaking of you," replied Old Mother Nature. "This will be a good chance for you to show him that he is mistaken. I want you to stay here for a while and to stay right on the Big Rock. I may want to ask you a few questions."

Just then Billy Mink dived into the Smiling Pool, and a second later his brown head popped out of the water and in his mouth was a fat fish. He scrambled back on the Big Rock and looked at Old Mother Nature a bit fearfully as he laid the fish down.

"I--I didn't mean to disobey," he mumbled. "I saw that fish and dived for him before I thought. I hope you will forgive me, Mother Nature. I won't do it again."

"Acting before thinking gets people into trouble sometimes," replied Old Mother Nature. "However, I will forgive you this time. The fact is you have just shown your friends here something. Go ahead and eat that fish and be ready to answer questions."

417 words

Passage C4

Buster Bear had been right about the coming of Farmer Brown. It was only a few minutes after Buster's disappearance that Farmer Brown's footsteps were heard coming down the Lone Little Path, and of course that ended school for that morning. But the next morning all were on hand again at sun-up, for every one wanted to hear about Buster Bear's big cousins.

"Way out in the mountains of the Far West, where Whistler the Marmot and Little Chief the Pika live, is a big cousin of Buster Bear," began Old Mother Nature. "He is Silvertip the Grizzly Bear, and in the past no animal in all this great country was so feared by man, as he. But times have changed, and Silvertip has been so hunted with terrible guns that he has learned to fear man quite as much as Buster does.

"He is larger than Buster and possessed of tremendous strength. Instead of a black coat, he has a coat which varies from yellowish-brown to almost black. The tips of the hairs usually are lighter, giving him a frosted appearance, and this is what has given him his name. His claws are longer and more curved than those of Buster; in fact those claws are so big that they look very terrible. Because they are so long, Silvertip cannot climb trees. But if they prevent him climbing trees they are the finest kind of tools for digging out Marmots and ground Squirrels. Even when Whistler the Marmot makes his home down in among the rocks, he is not safe. Silvertip's strength is so great that he can pull over and roll aside great rocks.

"He is a great traveler and covers a wide range of country in his search for food. Sometimes he visits the Cattle ranges and kills Cattle. So great is his strength that he can kill a Cow with ease. Clumsy looking as he is, he is a very fast runner, and only a fast Horse can outrun him. Like Buster, he lives on anything he can find that is eatable. He has been so hunted by man that he has become very cunning, and in all the great mountains where he lives there is no one with quicker wits.

375 words

Passage C5

Lightfoot the Deer was the first one on hand the next morning. In fact, he arrived before sun-up and, lying down in a little thicket close at hand, made himself very comfortable to wait for the opening of school. You see, not for anything would he have missed that lesson about his big cousins. There the others found him when they arrived.

"The Deer family," began Old Mother Nature, "is divided into two branches--the round-horned and the flat-horned. I have told you about the round-horned Deer with the exception of the largest and noblest, Bugler the Elk. He is commonly called Elk, but his right name is Wapiti.

"Bugler is found only in the great mountains of the Far West, but once, before hunters with terrible guns came, Elk were found in nearly all parts of this country excepting the Far South and the Far North--even on the great plains. Now Bugler lives only in the forests of the great mountains."

"How big is he?" asked Lightfoot.

"So big that beside him you would look very small," replied Old Mother Nature. "Have you ever seen Farmer Brown's Horse?"

Lightfoot nodded. "Well, Bugler stands as high as that Horse," replied Old Mother Nature. "He isn't as heavy, for his body is of different shape, not so big around, but at that he weighs three times as much as you do. In summer his coat is a light yellowish-brown, becoming very dark on his neck and underneath. His legs are dark brown. The hair on his neck is long and coarse. His tail is very small, and around it is a large patch so light in color as to be almost whitish. In winter his coat becomes dark gray.

"Bugler's crowning glory are his antlers. They are very large and wide-spreading, sweeping backward and upward, the long prongs, or tines, curving upward from the front instead of from the back, as in the case of Lightfoot's antlers. Above each eye is a long sharp prong. So big are these antlers that Bugler looks almost as if he were carrying a small, bare tree on his head.

356 words

Using the Reading Speed Tests

40L Volunteers have found a slight initial slowdown in reading speeds in their students as they learned a new way to read words, focusing on slowing down and reading all the letters from left to right. As this process becomes more automated, the students become both more accurate and faster. Most have ended up reading both faster and more accurately in oral reading speed tests. Also, some older students who were in the class just for spelling and word root study also improved their oral reading speed.

40L's director has a theory that anyone with a MWIA slowdown of 10% or more who is reading below 500 Words Per Minute (WPM) will improve their reading speed in the long run after retraining their brain with nonsense words. These silent reading speed tests were developed to test that theory.

Use the Adult (A) first 3 passages for those reading at a 9th grade level or above. For the rest of your students, use the Child (C) passages. The adult passages come from H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds." The concept for the adult test was developed by Staples, they have a fun online test¹ that you can use that is based on a passage from "War of the Worlds." The Staples test has just one passage. For consistency, you need a before and after test from the same book, given in the same manner. Have your students use the printed version before and after the phonics class and nonsense word study to have a consistent before and after score. Tell your student that they will need to read the passage, not just skim it, and that you will ask them to tell you a bit about the passage after they finish.

The child passages are from Thornton Burgess's "The Burgess Animal Book for Children." Both of these books are in the public domain as they were published before 1923.

The formula for computing reading speed is: (Number of words read X 60) / Speed in Seconds. For each of the passages, the top portion of the equation is done for you. To get the bottom portion of the equation, you can use the charts for determining speed in seconds, or easily calculate it yourself by converting your minutes and seconds into total seconds. Here are the formulas for determining reading grade level of each passage:

Passage A1: 575 words, WPM = 34,500/ Speed in Seconds

Passage A2: 516 words, WPM = 31,500/ Speed in Seconds

Passage A3: 499 words, WPM = 29,940/ Speed in Seconds

Passage C1: 385 words, WPM = 23,100/ Speed in Seconds

Passage C2: 392 words, WPM = 23,520/ Speed in Seconds

Passage C3: 417 words, WPM= 25,020/ Speed in Seconds

Passage C4: 375 words, WPM = 22,500/ Speed in Seconds

Passage C5: 356 words, WPM = 21,360/ Speed in Seconds

(For example, if you read passage A1 in 2 minutes and 43 seconds, that is 120+43 seconds for 143 seconds, your WPM score would be calculated as 34,500/143 which is 241 WPM.

¹ Staples' online reading speed test is available online at <http://www.staples.com/sbd/cre/marketing/technology-research-centers/ereaders/speed-reader/>

Minutes	Seconds	Time in Seconds	Min.	Sec.	Time in Seconds	Min.	Sec.	Time in Seconds
1	0	60	2	0	120	3	0	180
	1	61		1	121		1	181
	2	62		2	122		2	182
	3	63		3	123		3	183
	4	64		4	124		4	184
	5	65		5	125		5	185
	6	66		6	126		6	186
	7	67		7	127		7	187
	8	68		8	128		8	188
	9	69		9	129		9	189
	10	70		10	130		10	190
	11	71		11	131		11	191
	12	72		12	132		12	192
	13	73		13	133		13	193
	14	74		14	134		14	194
	15	75		15	135		15	195
	16	76		16	136		16	196
	17	77		17	137		17	197
	18	78		18	138		18	198
	19	79		19	139		19	199
	20	80		20	140		20	200
	21	81		21	141		21	201
	22	82		22	142		22	202
	23	83		23	143		23	203
	24	84		24	144		24	204
	25	85		25	145		25	205
	26	86		26	146		26	206
	27	87		27	147		27	207
	28	88		28	148		28	208
	29	89		29	149		29	209
	30	90		30	150		30	210
	31	91		31	151		31	211
	32	92		32	152		32	212
	33	93		33	153		33	213
	34	94		34	154		34	214
	35	95		35	155		35	215
	36	96		36	156		36	216
	37	97		37	157		37	217
	38	98		38	158		38	218
	39	99		39	159		39	219
	40	100		40	160		40	220
	41	101		41	161		41	221
	42	102		42	162		42	222
	43	103		43	163		43	223
	44	104		44	164		44	224
	45	105		45	165		45	225
	46	106		46	166		46	226
	47	107		47	167		47	227
	48	108		48	168		48	228
	49	109		49	169		49	229
	50	110		50	170		50	230
	51	111		51	171		51	231
	52	112		52	172		52	232
	53	113		53	173		53	233
	54	114		54	174		54	234
	55	115		55	175		55	235
	56	116		56	176		56	236
	57	117		57	177		57	237
	58	118		58	178		58	238
	59	119		59	179		59	239

Minutes	Seconds	Time in Seconds	Min.	Sec.	Time in Seconds	Min.	Sec.	Time in Seconds
4	0	240	5	0	300	6	0	360
	1	241		1	301		1	361
	2	242		2	302		2	362
	3	243		3	303		3	363
	4	244		4	304		4	364
	5	245		5	305		5	365
	6	246		6	306		6	366
	7	247		7	307		7	367
	8	248		8	308		8	368
	9	249		9	309		9	369
	10	250		10	310		10	370
	11	251		11	311		11	371
	12	252		12	312		12	372
	13	253		13	313		13	373
	14	254		14	314		14	374
	15	255		15	315		15	375
	16	256		16	316		16	376
	17	257		17	317		17	377
	18	258		18	318		18	378
	19	259		19	319		19	379
	20	260		20	320		20	380
	21	261		21	321		21	381
	22	262		22	322		22	382
	23	263		23	323		23	383
	24	264		24	324		24	384
	25	265		25	325		25	385
	26	266		26	326		26	386
	27	267		27	327		27	387
	28	268		28	328		28	388
	29	269		29	329		29	389
	30	270		30	330		30	390
	31	271		31	331		31	391
	32	272		32	332		32	392
	33	273		33	333		33	393
	34	274		34	334		34	394
	35	275		35	335		35	395
	36	276		36	336		36	396
	37	277		37	337		37	397
	38	278		38	338		38	398
	39	279		39	339		39	399
	40	280		40	340		40	400
	41	281		41	341		41	401
	32	272		32	332		32	392
	43	283		43	343		43	403
	44	284		44	344		44	404
	45	285		45	345		45	405
	46	286		46	346		46	406
	47	287		47	347		47	407
	48	288		48	348		48	408
	49	289		49	349		49	409
	50	290		50	350		50	410
	51	291		51	351		51	411
	52	292		52	352		52	412
	53	293		53	353		53	413
	54	294		54	354		54	414
	55	295		55	355		55	415
	56	296		56	356		56	416
	57	297		57	357		57	417
	58	298		58	358		58	418
	59	299		59	359		59	419

Recording Progress

You can re-use the NRRF reading grade level tests and the reading speed tests. Record students' progress on the student progress sheet on the next page or in your own files so you don't lose track of the scores. The NRRF Reading Grade Level test is optional, but is nice to include so you can compare a student's ability to read stories with their ability to read words in isolation. Remember that for the NRRF test, even an error such as saying "the" in place of "a" counts as a missed word.

Make sure you use the same book but a different passage for before and after silent reading speed. For example, a student reading at the 10th grade level would use version A1 of the reading speed test for before testing and version A2 or A3 after. A student reading at the 4th grade level could use version C1 before and C2 after.

Student Progress

Student Name: _____ Student Age: _____ Student Grade: _____

(For student grade for older students, use Adult, 12+ or N/A. Adults can have adult as an age.)

Scores Before Class:

40L Quick Screen Reading Grade Level Test Grade Level: _____

NRRF Reading Grade Level Test Grade Level: _____

MWIA Used (circle) A B C

MWIA Holistic WPM: _____ Holistic Errors: _____

MWIA Phonetic WPM: _____ Phonetic Errors: _____

MWIA Slowdown Percentage: _____

Reading Speed Test Used (circle) A1 A2 A3 C1 C2 C3 C4 C5

Silent Reading Speed in WPM: _____

Scores After Class Completion:

40L Quick Screen Reading Grade Level Test Grade Level: _____

NRRF Reading Grade Level Test Grade Level: _____

MWIA Used (circle) A B C (Use a different version for before and after testing)

MWIA Holistic WPM: _____ Holistic Errors: _____

MWIA Phonetic WPM: _____ Phonetic Errors: _____

MWIA Slowdown Percentage: _____

Reading Speed Test Used (circle) A1 A2 A3 C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 (Use the same letter but a different number version for after testing.)

Silent Reading Speed in WPM: _____