The Expanding Reader

This is a practicing and stretching stage. These readers are able to use a variety of word study strategies independently (phonics, meaning, and word and sentence structure clues) to identify and understand new words. They now read silently for a longer period, 20 minutes or more. During independent reading time, they may choose to read a range of beginning chapter and picture books such as The Boxcar Children books, Polk Street books, Minstrel in the Tower, Ralph S. Mouse, Amazing Grace, and Sylvester and the Magic Pebble.

Expanding readers demonstrate comprehension through participation in guided literary discussions about a variety of reading material including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. They are able to retell setting, characters, problems, major events, and solutions of the stories they read or hear. They can contribute ideas about a topic and organize information from a variety of these materials. These materials may include New True books, Ranger Rick, and Sports Illustrated for Kids. Most students meet the standards for the Expanding Reading Stage by the end of third grade.
Parents: The following is only an excerpt from one of the many titles that children completing the *Expanding Reading Stage* might choose to read independently. Many factors need to be considered such as:

- Vocabulary level with regard to meaning and structure
- Sentence length and complexity
- Concept level
- Quality of literature (plot, characterization, language usage, vocabulary)
- Age appropriate main character and story line
- Interests developed
- Concept level
- Size of print
- Spacing on page
- Number of pages
- Use of color and graphics
- Author’s style

"Thank goodness the war is over and you can put on decent clothes again."

She sat back on her heels and looked Mieko up and down.

"Much better," she said with a satisfied smile.

"Yes, Mieko, you look like a girl again."

There was always much to do around the farm. Grandma never seemed to stop working—cooking, cleaning, sweeping, or mending. Mieko tried to help. She fed the chickens, collected eggs, polished the wooden porch, lit the fire underneath the deep bathtub in the afternoon, and sprinkled water on the cracked dry earth of the road to keep the dust down.

Kitchen work was the most difficult because Mieko's hand was clumsy and it hurt whenever she tried to hold a knife or spoon. She took a long time slicing eggplants and cucumbers with her left hand.

Once Mieko dropped a whole dish of chopped fish onto the floor. She stood there looking down at the mess, biting her lip.

"I'm not good for anything!" she cried.

Grandma scooped up the fish, talking all the while.