

# Firecracker Books and MacqLit



Older low-progress readers who qualify for MacqLit have gaps in their phonic knowledge which impedes their reading accuracy and fluency. The program addresses this weakness through explicit and systematic teaching of the basic and advanced phonic code. A placement test determines the best place to start instruction. The controlled vocabulary in the Sounds and Words Books provide consolidation at a single word, sentence, paragraph and story level. This offers students one type of reading practice.

However, older students also need opportunities to practise their reading more generally, applying their phonic skills to connected text in 'real' books. They need to be exposed to a range of connected text as soon as possible. In MacqLit, this is provided through Group Reading during the lesson and in one-on-one Reinforced Reading sessions which are scheduled at other times.

For this second type of practice, the vocabulary does not need to be carefully controlled for phonics as it is in the Sounds and Words Books. The aim is to get students to generalise their phonic skills.

Given that students are supported by the teacher to help them in these sessions, phonic patterns that have not been taught yet can be incidentally taught when they are encountered using Pause, Prompt, Praise strategies. This builds students' confidence and enjoyment of reading.

Firecracker Books are a perfect fit for this second type of practice. They have been written with an understanding that students need to experience reading success but also need to have some challenge. A rule of thumb when assessing suitability of the books for a MacqLit group is to do a 100-word sample. If students achieve between 80–85% accuracy, the books should be suitable. Of course, students in the very early stages of learning to decode (Part A) may need to focus on the Sounds and Words Books until their decoding skills improve and they have at least the basic code secure.

The Firecracker Books will provide struggling and reluctant readers in Years 4 to 6 with engaging, accessible and high interest reading. Teacher support will ensure that students get the most out of them. They can be read in any order.