

# **Parent Guide to Accelerated Reader and STAR Testing at Boston St Mary's RC Primary Academy**

The Accelerated Reader program has been found to be a very effective system for motivating children and ensuring good reading progress. This guide is designed to answer your questions about AR. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your child's teacher, who will be happy to discuss the program with you, or you could visit the Accelerated Reader website at [www.renlearn.co.uk](http://www.renlearn.co.uk).

## **What is Accelerated Reader (AR)?**

AR is a computer program that helps teachers manage and monitor children's independent reading practice. *Your child picks a book at his/her own level and reads it at his/her own pace. When finished, your child takes a short quiz on the computer - passing the quiz is an indication that your child has understood what has been read.* AR gives both children and teachers feedback based on the quiz results which the teacher then uses to help the child set targets and ongoing reading practice.

Children using AR have a free choice of the books they read, rather than having one assigned to them. This makes reading a much more enjoyable experience as they feel in control and can choose books that are interesting to them. Your child will choose books that are at an appropriate reading level for them. These will be challenging without being frustrating and will also be at a level at which your child can pass the quiz and experience success.

If your child does not do well on the quiz, the teacher may assist him/her by:

- Helping choose another book that is more appropriate
- Next time asking probing questions as your child reads and before he/she takes a quiz
- Discussing with your child actions that they think might help to improve their score

## **How much will my child read during the school day?**

According to Renaissance Learning's research, children who read at least 20 minutes a day with a 90% comprehension rate on AR quizzes see the greatest gains. In the school day, the children have reading time of 20 mins.

## **How can I help my child become a better reader?**

As with anything, performance improves with practice. We recommend that your child read for a further 15 to 20 minutes at home. When reading with your child stop and ask questions to be sure your child comprehends what they have read and in general make a habit of discussing books that each of you have read. Create a culture of reading in your household by starting a home library, or visiting your local library.

## **How does the school determine my child's reading level?**

Teachers determine your child's reading level in two ways: a STAR Reading test, and by using his/her best professional judgment based on his/her knowledge of your child.

## **What is a STAR Reading test?**

At various points throughout the year teachers perform a star reading test. STAR Reading is a computer based reading assessment program that uses computer-adaptive technology. Your child is presented with questions which require a multiple choice answer. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses. If your child's response is correct, the difficulty level is increased. If your child

cannot answer a question or answers incorrectly, the difficulty level is reduced. The whole test takes approximately 10-15 minutes and is never an ordeal. A report gives an estimated reading age, ZPD (zone of proximal development) range and a scaled score.

### What is a Book Level?

Books are levelled using ATOS readability formula and represent the difficulty of the text. The levelling criteria covers such factors as vocabulary, average word length, average sentence length, grammatical complexity etc – not how long the book is or how many pictures it contains! Our reading books have been levelled and labelled to make it easier for the children to choose an appropriate book.

### What is a zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)?

ZPD is the range of books that will challenge a child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Your child will receive a ZPD after completing a STAR test. It is vital that children read with a high degree of comprehension and within his/her ZPD.

For example a ZPD could be 3.2 - 5.0, this shows the range of texts a child should aim to read with books nearer 5.0 being more difficult. Books outside the range may be too easy/too challenging and should not be read. Children are allowed to choose any book within their ZPD, however, children should be aiming for 90%-100% on their quizzes to progress quicker. If they are struggling to reach 90% they should be moving towards the lower end of their ZPD for their next book. Similarly, if they are getting 100% they should be challenging themselves by reading more difficult books within their ZPD range.



### What are the AR Quizzes?

When your child has finished reading a book they will be given time to take a quiz independently on the computer at school. All quizzes should be taken within **48 hours** of finishing a book.

The purpose of a quiz is to determine whether a child has read a book, it will measure a child's literal comprehension of the book and provide immediate feedback. Each quiz consists of 3, 5, 10 or 20 multiple-choice questions depending on the book level and length. Depending on the book level the quiz will take around 5-10 minutes to complete. The results are calculated and shown to the child instantly.

Children earn points, or a portion of the book's points, depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice quiz. For example, a child who takes a 5-question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point for 5 correct answers (100%), 0.8 point for 4 correct answers (80%) etc. A child who reads a book worth 5 points and takes a 10-question quiz will earn the full 5 points for 10 correct answers (100%), 4.5 points for 9 correct answers (90%) etc. For quizzes with 3, 5 or 10 questions, a

child needs to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points. For quizzes with 20 questions, a child needs to pass with a score of 70% or higher to earn points.

All of our book stock in school have quizzes. A child can take a quiz when:

- They have read a book independently;
- A teacher has read a book to them, e.g. class novel;
- They have read a book with someone, e.g. parent, teaching assistant.

### What are points?

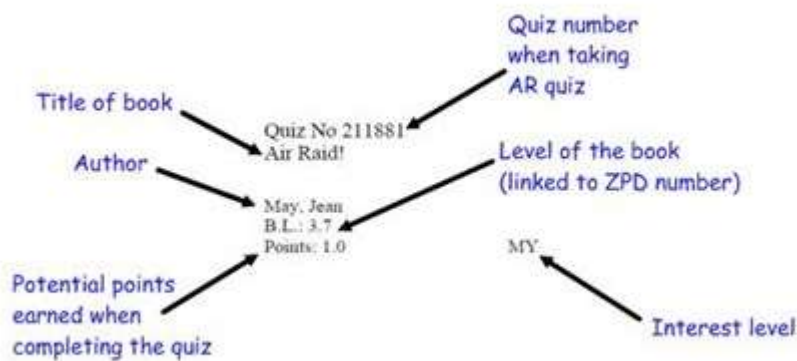
Every book that has an AR Reading Practice Quiz is given a points value. AR points are based on the difficulty of the book and the length of the book (number of words). The points value of our books is indicated on the label along with the book level. Children earn points on a pro rata basis depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice Quiz. For example, a pupil who takes a 5-question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point for 5 correct answers (100%), 0.8 point for 4 correct answers (80%) and so on. A pupil who reads a book worth 5 points and takes a 10-question quiz will earn 5 points for 10 correct answers (100%) 4.5 points for 9 correct answers (90%), etc. A child needs to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points.

### How are Accelerated Reader point targets set?

Teachers will set a target of a number of points to achieve in a half term. Achieving a half term's target will be rewarded with house points. The target is designed to be motivational and to ensure enough reading practice is happening to guarantee progress.

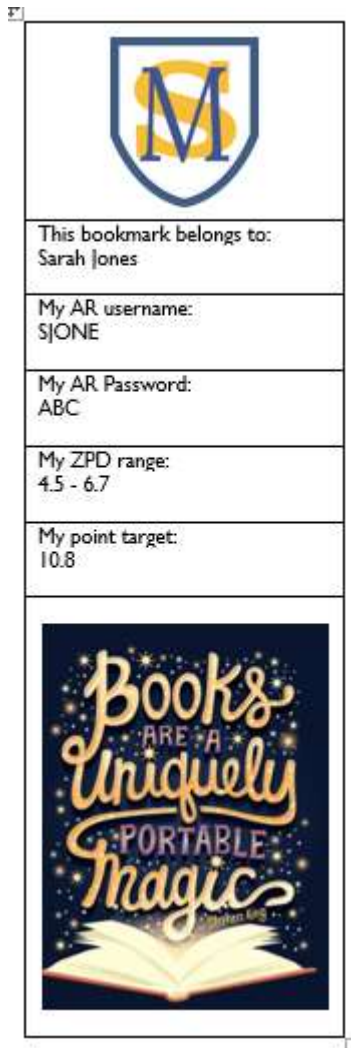
### How can I find out a books: level, interest level and point value?

Each book in school has a personalised label on the inside cover which shows important information. This is an example of a book label:



## How will I know what my child's ZPD, point target and usernames/passwords are?

Your child will be given book marks (see example below). This will contain a space for children's username, password (to access the quizzes *at school*) and their ZPD range.



## How will I know how my child is doing?

Home Connect is a website that links school and home to keep you informed of your child's progress in AR. Visit:

<https://ukhosted97.renlearn.co.uk/6698087/homeconnect/>

Use the username and password on your child's bookmark to log in. Once logged in, all you have to do is simply enter their child's username and password and you will be able to:

- review results on AR quizzes taken in school
- view the number of books read, words read and quizzes passed
- see a virtual bookshelf showing the books your child has read

You can also sign up (optional) to receive an email every time your child takes a quiz to share the results with you instantly