

In this presentation, we will learn more about Concepts of Print, an observation task of early literacy achievement. This assessment was developed by Marie Clay.

## *Concepts about print*

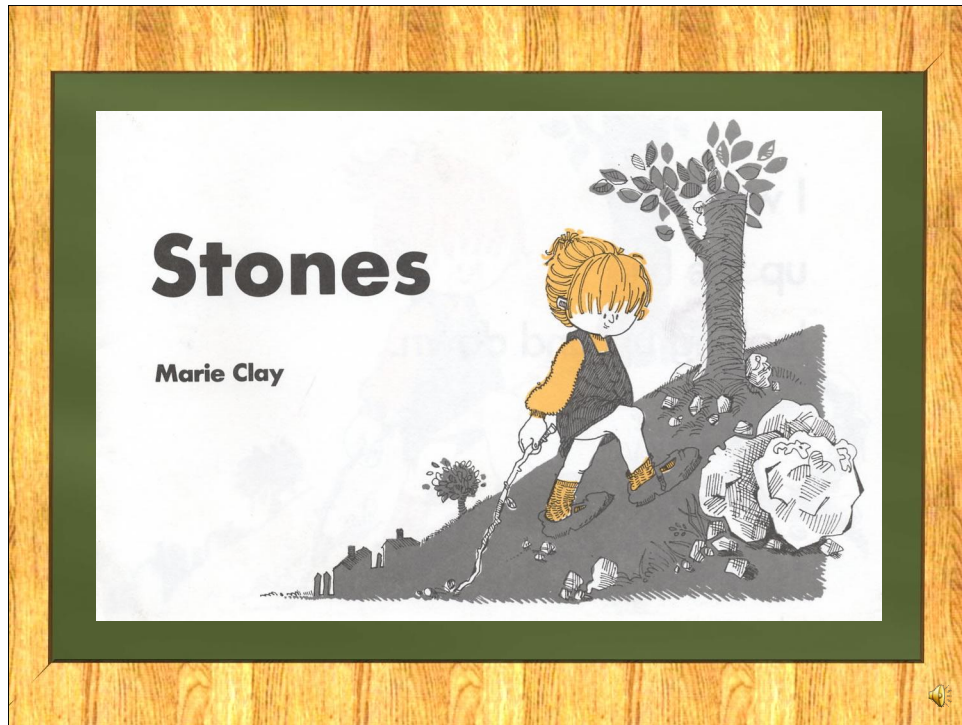
- Allows teachers to learn what children already know about print
- Helps teachers identify children who need more teacher attention

So what is concepts of print? Basically, Concepts about print is what we know about print or more specifically written language: It is important for children to understand that the print (not the picture) tells the story. The Concepts of Print task is a way for teachers to discover what children already know about the way we print language and what has yet to be learned. This task is an observation task that really taps into what the learners have noticed about the written language around them in their environment. It is important to note that this assessment was not designed to reveal how much a child knows about print; it is more a matter of discovering what experiences they have had with print, what they have noticed and what they have ignored. It is easy to determine what a child knows about print when using the Concepts about Print observation task, and teachers will be better prepared to advance any child's understanding when they know what the child is already attending to, rightly or wrongly.

## *Why is it important?*

- Conventions must be accepted:
  - Directional movement across print (left-to-right; top-to-bottom)
  - Orientation of letters
  - Sequence of letters is a word.
  - Sequence of words is a sentence.

As preschool children engage with printed materials they learn things, such as looking through a book in an orderly of fashion. However, there is so much more to learn about written language. When does one start to notice print? In what direction does one move? How does one move through a word? It is easy for adults to underestimate the complexity of the rules surrounding written print and it is equally easy for children to pick up strange ways of exploring print. For print to work, children must accept our writing conventions such as, writing top-to-bottom and left-to-right, the correct formation of letters, that clusters are called words, that there are first letters and last letters in a word, that you can choose uppercase and lowercase letters, that spaces are there for a reason, and that different punctuation marks signal different meanings. It is important to remember that learning the conventions of writing will occur over an extended period of time. It is also not important that children be able to talk about these concepts as long as they can learn to work within the constraints of print.



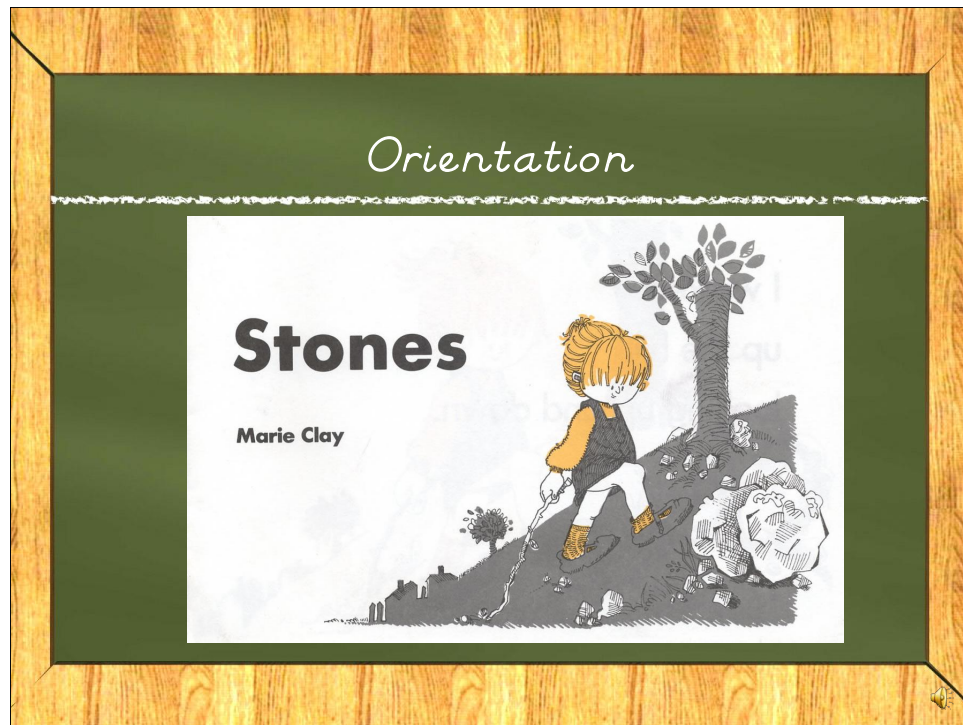
It is easy to determine what a child knows about print when using the Concepts about Print observation task. Teachers who observe carefully will discover what children already know about print. Four special books have been prepared for this observation task. For our purposes, we will be using the book “Stones” by Marie Clay. In the Concepts about Print observation task the teacher appears to be merely reading the story to the child but she is also asking the child to help. On each page, the teacher will ask a question or two.

## *Administering the Task*

- Concepts About Print test book
- Record Sheet
- Administration instructions
- Two index cards
- Writing instrument

Before administering the observation task, it is important for the teacher to be familiar with the tools intended for use. The story must be read with sufficient continuity and vitality for the child to be able to gain its meaning and its sense of flow. The teacher will need the Concepts About Print Test book, record sheet, administration instructions, 2 index cards, and a writing instrument. Again for our purposes, we will use the book “Stones” to demonstrate the observation task. The teacher should read the directions to the child, as they are written for each item. The teacher should not deviate from the script in order to keep the assessment standardized.

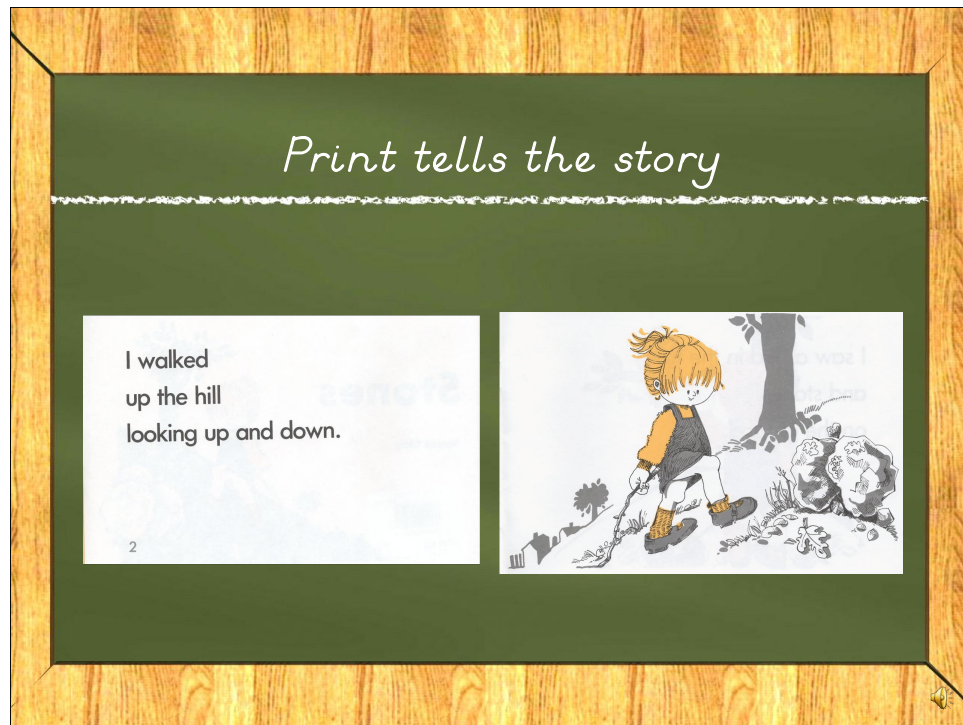




To begin the observation task, the teacher will say, "I'm going to read this story to you but I want you to help me." The teacher will then pass the book to the child, holding it vertically by the outside edge with the spine of the book towards the child. The teacher will ask the child, "Show me the front of this book."

The student will receive 1 point for the correct answer.

The teacher is testing for the child's knowledge of book orientation.

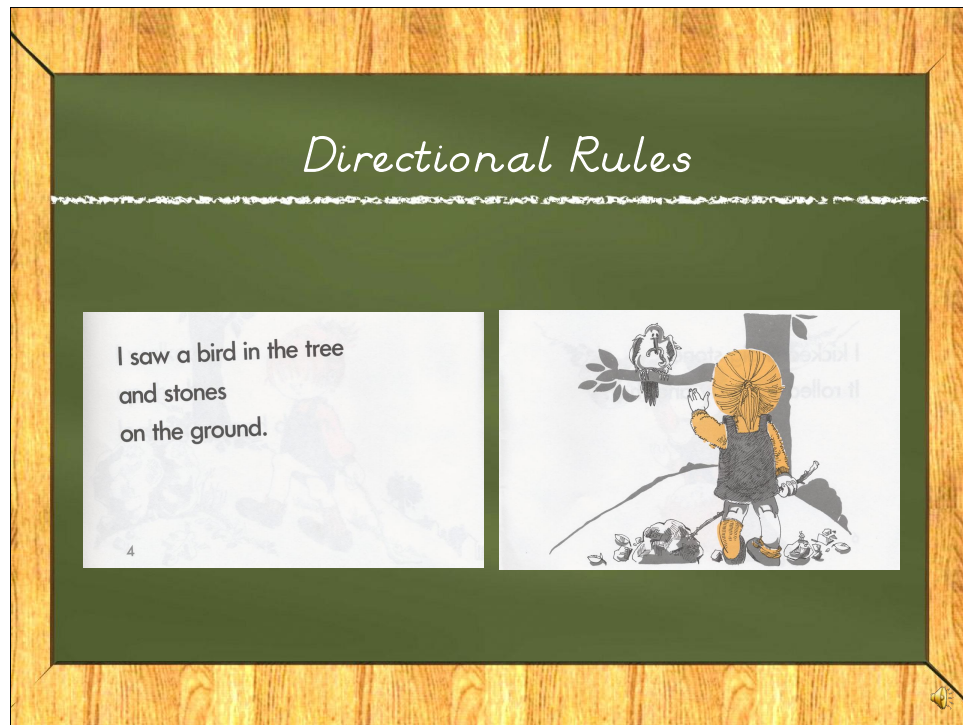


On pages 2 and 3, the teacher is testing for the child's understanding that print, not the picture, carries the message.

The teacher will say, "I'll read this story. You help me. Show me where to start reading. Where do I begin to read?"

The teacher will then read the text from page 2.

The student will receive 1 point for pointing to the print; 0 for pointing to the picture.



On pages 4 and 5, the teacher is testing for the child's understanding of directional rules.

The teacher will say, "Tell me where to start."

The student will receive 1 point for pointing to the top left.

The teacher will ask, "Which way do I go?"

The student will receive 1 point for moving left to right.

The teacher will ask, "Where do I go after that?"

The student will receive 1 point for return a return sweep to the left, or for moving down the page.

The teacher will say, "Point to it while I read it." (The teacher should read the text slowly but fluently)

The student will receive 1 point for exact matching.





On pages 6 and 7, the teacher is testing for the child's concept of first and last, and inversion of picture.

The teacher will read the text on page 6. The child should not continue word-by-word pointing.

The teacher will say, "Show me the first part of the story. Show me the last part."

The student will receive 1 point if BOTH are correct.

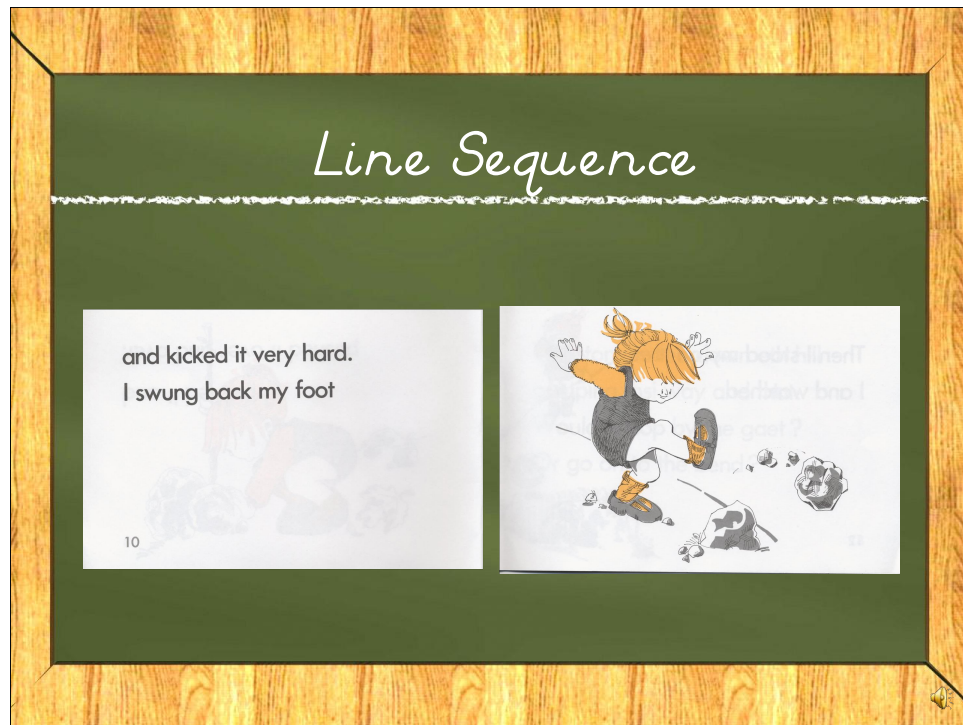
Next the teacher will say, "Show me the bottom of the picture."

The teacher should not mention that the page is upside-down.

The student will receive 1 point verbal explanation, OR for pointing to the top of the page, or for turning the book around and pointing appropriately.



On pages 8 and 9, the teacher is testing for the child's response to inverted print. The teacher will say, "Where do I begin?" "Which way do I go?" "Where do I go now?" The teacher will then read the text on page 8. The student will receive 1 point for beginning with the word "I", and moving right to left. OR 1 point for turning the book around and moving left to right in the conventional manner.

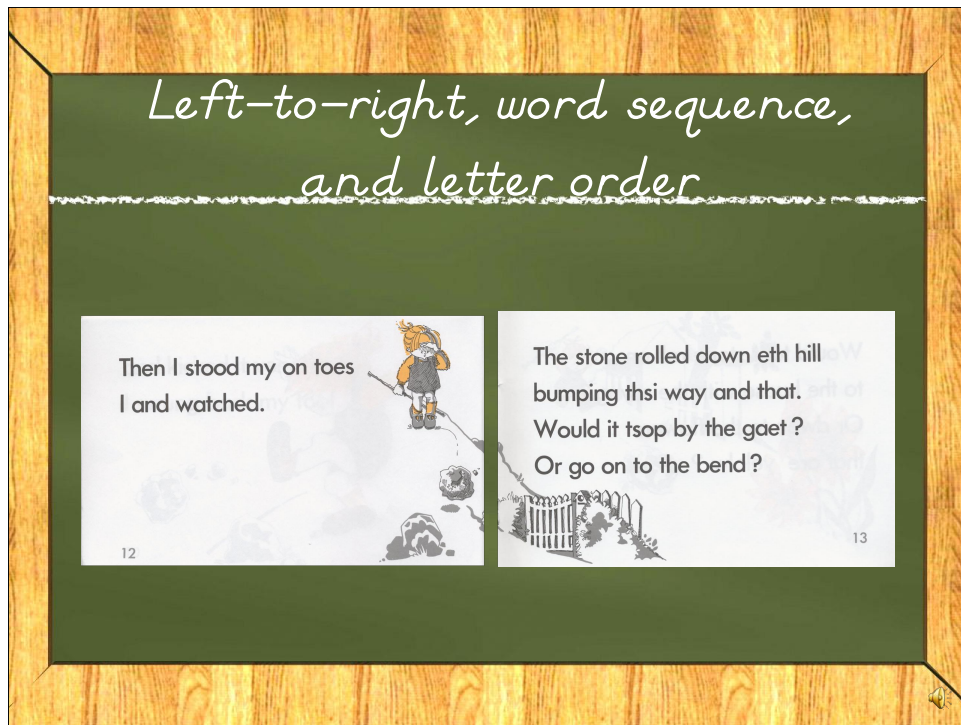


On pages 10 and 11, the teacher is testing for the child's understanding of line sequencing.

The teacher will ask the child, "What's wrong with this?"

The teacher will then immediately read the bottom line first, then the top line.

The student will receive 1 point for comment on line order.



On pages 12 and 13, the teacher is testing for the child's concept of left-to-right convention, word sequence, and letter order.

The teacher will ask, "Where do I start reading?"

The student will receive 1 point for indicating the left page.

The teacher will ask, "What is wrong with this page?" pointing to the page number 12, not the text.

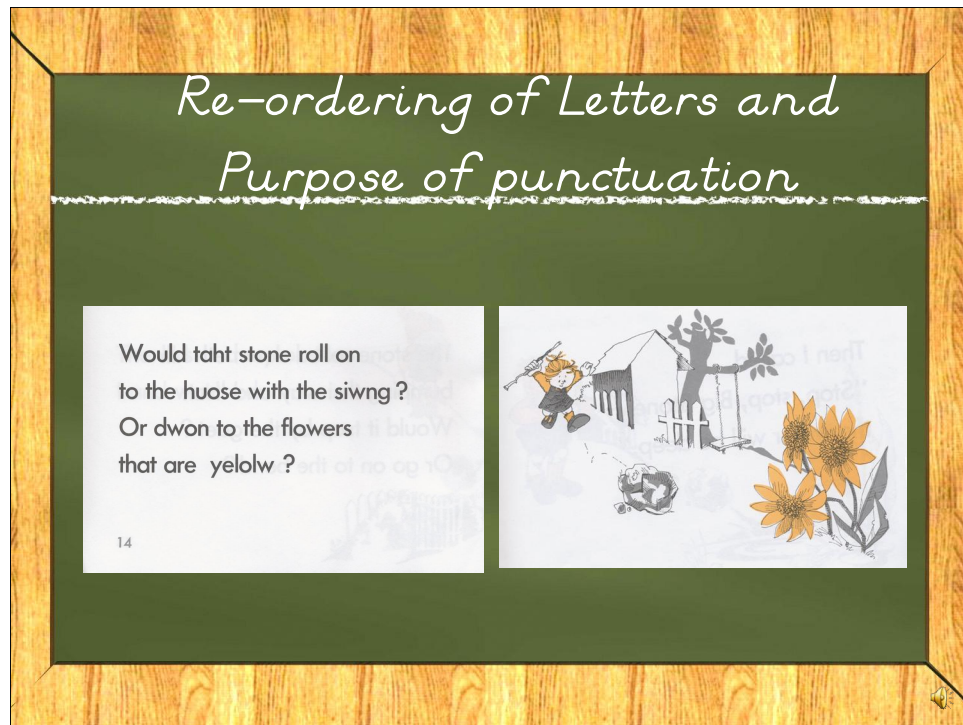
The teacher will then read the text on page 12 slowly, as if it were printed correctly.

The student will receive 1 point for commenting on either error.

The teacher will ask, "What is wrong with this page?" pointing to the page number 13, not the text.

The teacher will then read the text on page 13 slowly, as if it were printed correctly.

The student will receive 1 point for any one re-ordering of letters that is noticed and explained



On pages 14 and 15, the teacher is testing for the child's understanding of spelling and punctuation.

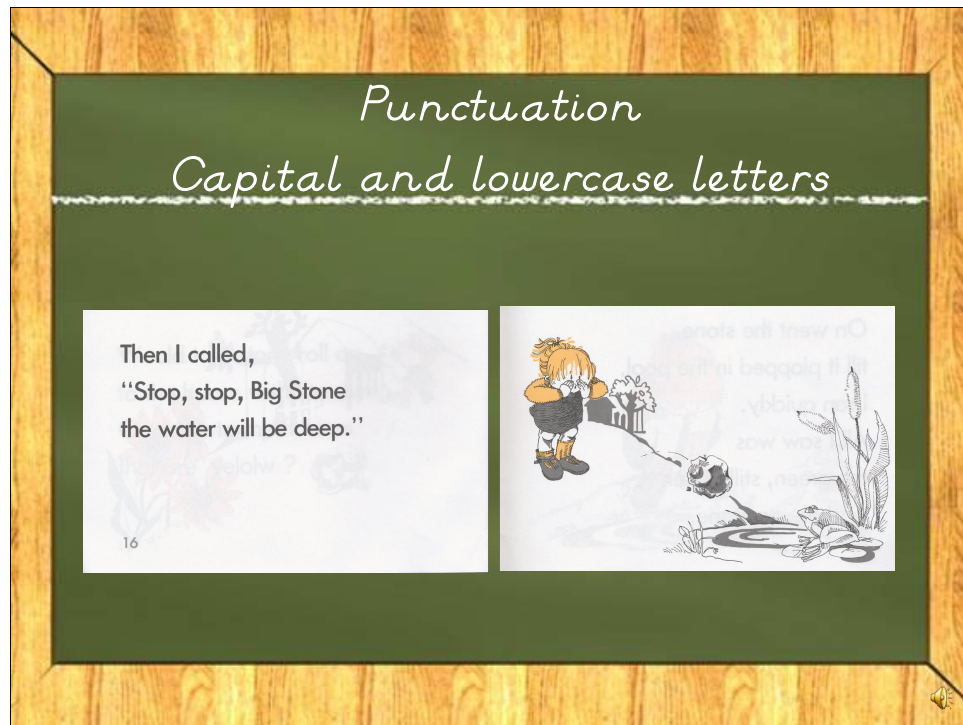
The teacher will ask, "What is wrong with the writing on this page?"

The teacher will then read the text on page 14 slowly, as if it were printed correctly.

The student will receive 1 point for one error noticed.

The teacher will ask, "What this for?" pointing to the question mark. The student will receive 1 point for explaining the function of the mark or naming it.





On pages 16 and 17, the teacher is testing for the child's understanding punctuation and upper-case and lower-case letters

The teacher will read the text on page 16. The teacher will ask, "What's this for?"

The teacher will point to the period. The child will receive 1 point for explaining the function of the mark or naming it.

The teacher will point to the comma. The child will receive 1 point for explaining the function of the mark or naming it.

The teacher will point to the quotation marks. The child will receive 1 point for explaining the function of the mark or naming it.

The teacher will then point to the upper-case S and say, "Find a little letter like this."

The teacher should point to the lowercase s if the child is not successful.

The teacher will then point to the upper-case T and say, "Find a little letter like this."

The teacher will then point to the upper-case B and say, "Find a little letter like this."

The child will receive one point if Both the lowercase t & lowercase b are located.

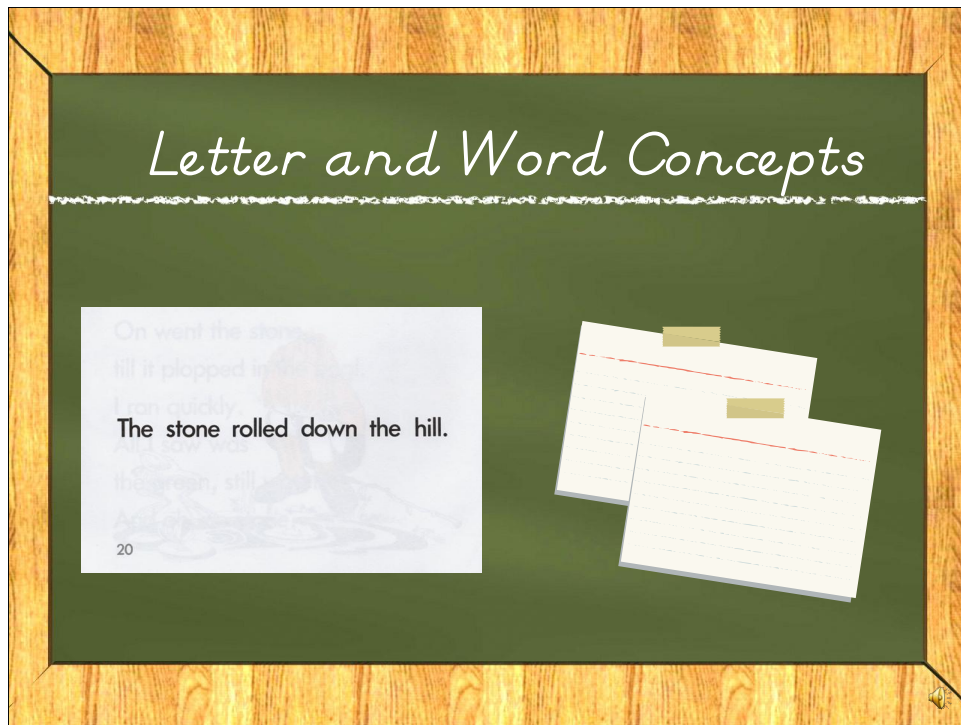
*Words that contain same letters  
in different order*

On went the stone  
till it plopped in the pool.  
I ran quickly.  
All I saw was  
the green, still water.  
And oh, no stone.

18



On pages 18 and 19, the teacher is testing for the child's understanding of anagrams.  
The teacher will say, "Show me 'was'" "Show me 'no'"  
The child will receive 1 point for both correct.



The teacher will need to have 2 index cards for the task on page 20. To start, the teacher will lay the index cards on page leaving all the text exposed. Letter and word concepts are being assessed.

The teacher will say, "The story says: 'The stone rolled down the hill.' I want you to push the cards across the story until all you see is one letter."

"Now show me two letters."

The child will receive 1 point for both are correct.

Next the teacher will say, "Show me one word" "Now show me two words."

The child will receive 1 point for both are correct.

The teacher will say, "Show me the first letter of a word" "Show me the last letter of a word"

The child will receive 1 point for both are correct.

The teacher will say, "Show me a capital letter." The child will receive 1 point if correct.

## *Scoring the Task*

- Expect younger children to score low
- Score should increase with direct instruction
- Concepts About Print Stanines
- Concepts About Print checklist

Teachers should expect young children to score low early in their schooling. Their scores should increase as their reading and writing improves. Teachers should retest at spaced intervals to confirm that improvement is occurring. The teacher can score the observation task based on the number of points received or be developing a checklist of the 24 skills tested.

## *What the assessment tells us?*

- ❖ This is NOT a prediction device!
- ❖ This assessment yields valuable information for future instruction.
- ❖ Children do not need to talk about these concepts, as long as they learn to work within the constraints of print.

A child's knowledge of print will change over the first few years of school. This task is not a predication device. Instead, it is yields the information needed for future instruction. To be a successful reader, a child must attend to all the conventions of print that are tested by this task. Change occurs from having little knowledge towards having a control of these concepts usually within two years. It is more important that a child understand the concepts surrounding print than it is for them to be able to discuss them.



## *When to assess?*

- First and second year students should be assessed in regards to concepts about print.
  - Usually Kindergarten and First Grade
- OR
- Within the first two years of beginning literacy learning

It is important for teachers to formally assess students within the first 6 weeks of school. This will provide teachers with a benchmark for tracking student progress. Students in kindergarten and first grade should be assessed or within the first two years of beginning literacy learning.