

# WordWeavers

## Decodable Novel Series

Phonics Density Targets & Progression Map

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A Technical Guide for Writers & Curriculum Designers

9 Books × 5 Reading Levels × 3 Years of Growth

WordWeavers Literacy Project • 2025–2026

## The Big Idea: Why Layered, Not Pattern-Separated

Here's the thing about turning a curriculum into novels — the phonics control has to work differently. In a 500-word daily decodable, you can engineer every single word. You can hit 70% high-frequency words and place your target patterns like a surgeon. Over 20,000 words? That's not possible without the prose reading like it was written by a committee of robots.

So instead of controlling individual words, you control density zones across chapters. And instead of organizing books by phonics pattern (one book for vowel teams, one for blends), you organize by reading development stage. Every book contains all patterns — what changes is the ratio, the complexity ceiling, and how much scaffolding surrounds the harder words.

In a daily decodable, you repeat target words 3–5 times in 500 words. That's forced. In a novel, you repeat them 15–20 times across 20,000 words. That's natural. The word “Academy” appears in every chapter because it's where the story happens. “Prophecy” recurs because the characters can't stop thinking about it. The phonics practice is invisible because it's driven by narrative necessity, not instructional design. For each book, identify ~200 words that will recur frequently enough to become automatic through exposure. These include: character names, location names, recurring objects, key plot terms, and the 96 POSSUM vocabulary words for that series. These anchor words do the heavy lifting of phonics instruction. Everything else just needs to be readable, not perfectly controlled.

This document maps out exactly what that looks like. Book by book, level by level, with actual percentage targets, word-complexity ceilings, and chapter-length guidelines grounded in the data from your existing decodable texts. Targets and percentages are useless if the book reads like a phonics exercise. Here's how to hit the numbers without sacrificing the story:

### Book 1: MythKeepers Academy

**Phonics role:** Foundation builder. ALL patterns introduced. Heavy scaffolding at every level. This is where struggling readers learn to trust that they can read a whole book. Vowel teams and R-controlled patterns get the most repetition. Blends and digraphs appear in high-frequency words readers likely recognize already. Multisyllabic words build slowly through the back half.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>BOOK DIMENSIONS</b>					
<b>Total Word Count</b>	15,000–18,000	22,000–28,000	32,000–40,000	45,000–55,000	55,000–70,000
<b>Chapter Count</b>	24–30	24–28	22–26	20–24	20–24
<b>Words Per Chapter</b>	550–700	850–1,100	1,400–1,700	2,000–2,500	2,800–3,200
<b>Target Lexile</b>	400–600L	550–750L	700–950L	900–1100L	1000–1200L
<b>PHONICS CONTROL</b>					
<b>Avg HFW %</b>	58–62%	55–60%	48–52%	42–46%	35–40%
<b>Avg Sentence Length</b>	5 words	6 words	8 words	9 words	10 words
<b>Syllable Ceiling</b>	2–3 (Ch 1–12) 3–4 (Ch 13–24)	3–4 throughout	4–5 throughout	No ceiling	No ceiling
<b>Target Pattern Density</b>	4–6 per chapter	6–8 per chapter	8–12 per chapter	Organic	Organic
<b>PHONICS FOCUS AREAS</b>					
<b>Chapters 1–8</b>	CVC, simple vowel teams (ea, ee, oa, ai)	Vowel teams in multisyllabic context	All vowel teams, compound sentences	Literary vocab emerging	Full YA voice
<b>Chapters 9–16</b>	R-controlled (ar, or, er, ir, ur) + vowel teams	R-controlled in 3+ syllable words	All 6 syllable types active	Academic vocabulary	College-prep vocab

<b>Chapters 17–24</b>	Blends/digraphs + multisyllabic intro (3 syl)	Prefixes (un-, re-, pre-) with roots	Morphology emerging	Complex morphology	Sophisticated syntax
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## Book 2: Tomorrow Thieves

**Phonics role:** Morphological bridge. This is where Latin roots become the primary decoding strategy. Vowel teams and R-controlled patterns aren't being taught anymore — they're assumed. The sci-fi setting naturally introduces technical vocabulary (construct, infrastructure, temporal) that puts word-part analysis front and center. The HFW percentages drop because readers are now handling more complex words independently.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>BOOK DIMENSIONS</b>					
<b>Total Word Count</b>	17,000–21,000	25,000–32,000	35,000–45,000	50,000–60,000	60,000–75,000
<b>Words Per Chapter</b>	650–850	1,000–1,300	1,500–1,800	2,200–2,700	3,000–3,500
<b>Target Lexile</b>	450–650L	600–800L	750–1000L	950–1150L	1050–1250L
<b>PHONICS CONTROL</b>					
<b>Avg HFW %</b>	54–58%	50–55%	44–48%	38–42%	30–35%
<b>Avg Sentence Length</b>	5 words	6 words	8 words	9 words	10 words
<b>Syllable Ceiling</b>	3–4 throughout	4–5 throughout	5+ throughout	No ceiling	No ceiling
<b>MORPHOLOGY FOCUS</b>					
<b>Primary Root Families</b>	-STRUCT-, -PORT-, -DICT-	+ -SPEC-, -TRACT-	+ -TEMP-, -LECT-	All roots active	All roots + derivatives
<b>Root Words Per Chapter</b>	3–5 (with context clues)	5–7	8–12	Organic	Organic

## Book 3: Memory Merchants

**Phonics role:** Greek/Latin root mastery. PHOTO, GRAPH, CHRON, GEO families dominate. Foundation phonics (vowel teams, R-controlled, blends) are fully automatic at this point — no scaffolding needed. The gap between levels narrows significantly. A Level 1 reader in Book 3 is reading roughly what Level 2 was in Book 1.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>BOOK DIMENSIONS</b>					
<b>Total Word Count</b>	20,000–25,000	28,000–35,000	38,000–48,000	52,000–65,000	65,000–80,000
<b>Words Per Chapter</b>	750–1,000	1,100–1,400	1,600–2,000	2,300–2,800	3,000–3,500
<b>Target Lexile</b>	500–700L	650–850L	800–1050L	1000–1200L	1100–1300L
<b>PHONICS CONTROL</b>					
<b>Avg HFW %</b>	50–55%	46–50%	40–45%	35–40%	28–33%

<b>Avg Sentence Length</b>	5 words	6 words	8 words	9 words	10 words
<b>Greek/Latin Root Density</b>	4–6 per chapter	6–10 per chapter	10–15 per chapter	Organic	Organic

## Year 2: Navigating Connection

By Year 2, the phonics instruction is largely invisible. What’s building is automaticity, morphological reasoning, fluency, and transfer to academic language. The five levels still exist, but the gap between them compresses. These books read more like real novels at every level.

### Book 4: Code Breakers

**Phonics role:** Automaticity builder. The tech-world setting naturally introduces -TECH-/-TECT- root families (technology, architect, detection, protective). Foundation patterns are fully automatic. The focus shifts to reading speed and self-correction strategies. Level 1 in Book 4 ≈ Level 2 in Book 1.

### Book 5: Thread Weavers

**Phonics role:** Fluency and prosody. The social-emotional focus means lots of dialogue, lots of internal monologue — text types that naturally build reading rhythm. Morphological focus on relationship vocabulary (connection, community, authentic, isolation). Multisyllabic words with closed syllables.

### Book 6: Branch Walkers

**Phonics role:** Academic transfer bridge. The multiverse/decision-tree setting introduces probability, consequence, and systems-thinking vocabulary that transfers directly to content-area reading. By the end of this book, readers should handle grade-level textbook language.

Year 2 Books 4–6	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>BOOK DIMENSIONS (ALL THREE BOOKS)</b>					
<b>Total Word Count</b>	22,000–28,000	30,000–38,000	40,000–52,000	55,000–68,000	68,000–85,000
<b>Words Per Chapter</b>	850–1,100	1,200–1,500	1,800–2,200	2,500–3,000	3,200–3,800
<b>Target Lexile</b>	550–750L	700–900L	850–1100L	1050–1250L	1150–1350L
<b>PHONICS CONTROL</b>					
<b>Avg HFW %</b>	48–52%	44–48%	38–42%	32–36%	25–30%
<b>Avg Sentence Length</b>	6 words	7 words	8 words	9 words	10 words
<b>Syllable Ceiling</b>	4–5 syllables	No ceiling	No ceiling	No ceiling	No ceiling
<b>Phonics Visibility</b>	Light scaffolding	Minimal	Invisible	Invisible	Invisible

## Year 3: Shaping the Future

These are your independence novels. By now, the Level 1 text reads roughly equivalent to Book 1’s Level 3. The phonics work is fully internalized. What’s still being built is advanced vocabulary, complex syntax, literary analysis, and the confidence to tackle any text. These books should be indistinguishable from commercial YA fiction at every level.

## Book 7: Echo Keepers

**Phonics role:** Emotional vocabulary depth. The emotion-echo setting demands precise feeling words — nuanced vocabulary that goes beyond “sad” and “happy.” This naturally builds the academic and literary vocabulary students need for high school.

## Book 8: Potential Seekers

**Phonics role:** Multiple-intelligence vocabulary. The concept of diverse abilities introduces specialized terminology across domains — artistic, kinesthetic, analytical, interpersonal. Readers encounter discipline-specific language in a low-stakes narrative context before hitting it in high school courses.

## Book 9: Legacy Builders

**Phonics role:** Full independence. Environmental, social justice, technological, artistic, and community vocabulary. This is the capstone — students should be reading at or near grade level by the end. The five levels converge significantly. Level 1 here should be readable by a student at roughly 5th–6th grade reading level.

Year 3 Books 7–9	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>BOOK DIMENSIONS (ALL THREE BOOKS)</b>					
<b>Total Word Count</b>	25,000–32,000	35,000–42,000	45,000–58,000	60,000–75,000	75,000–90,000
<b>Words Per Chapter</b>	1,000–1,300	1,400–1,700	2,000–2,400	2,800–3,200	3,500–4,000
<b>Target Lexile</b>	650–850L	800–1000L	950–1150L	1100–1300L	1200–1400L
<b>PHONICS CONTROL</b>					
<b>Avg HFW %</b>	44–48%	40–44%	35–40%	30–35%	22–28%
<b>Avg Sentence Length</b>	7 words	8 words	9 words	10 words	12 words
<b>Phonics Visibility</b>	Invisible	Invisible	Invisible	Invisible	Invisible
<b>Level 1 Equivalent</b>	≈ Book 1 Level 3	≈ Book 1 Level 4	At grade level	Above grade	College prep

## The Growth Trajectory: Level 1 Across All 9 Books

This is the table that tells the whole story. Follow Level 1 from Book 1 to Book 9 and you’re watching a struggling reader become a capable one. The HFW percentage drops as decoding automaticity rises. Sentence length grows as syntactic processing matures. The Lexile climbs steadily. And by Book 9, the reader who started at a 2nd-grade level is handling text that would challenge most 6th graders.

Metric	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	Bk 4	Bk 5	Bk 6	Bk 7	Bk 8	Bk 9
<b>HFW %</b>	60%	56%	52%	50%	48%	46%	46%	44%	44%
<b>Sent. Len</b>	7 wds	8 wds	9 wds	10 wds	11 wds	12 wds	11 wds	12 wds	13 wds
<b>Lexile</b>	500L	550L	600L	650L	700L	750L	750L	800L	850L
<b>Syl Ceil</b>	2–3	3–4	3–4	4–5	4–5	4–5	5+	5+	5+

<b>Ch. Length</b>	625	750	875	975	1050	1100	1150	1200	1300
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*Note: Book 9 (Legacy Builders) continues the trajectory. By this point, Level 1 is functionally equivalent to what Level 3 was in Book 1.*