Using Pre-made Reader Templates to make Decodable and Leveled Books in Bloom

Intended audience

This material is intended for authors who will use templates created by others, in order to make books that fit within the constraints of each template.

What you should already know

Although Bloom is easy to learn and use, there are several parts to it. In this document we just want to focus on making use of *reader templates*. So we won't be explaining *everything* about the program in this document. Instead, we assume that you have at least used Bloom a little bit. You should have experimented with making a new book using the "Basic Book" template. You should know how to add new pages, and how to add illustrations.

What you will learn

You will learn how to install a "Reader Template Bloom Pack" that has been set up for your own language. You will then learn how to select a template that fits the kind of book you want to create, and to use the helps that Bloom will give you to select words and keep your book the appropriate level.

Definitions

A **Leveled Reader** is a book that is written specifically for a student who is at a certain stage of reading development. A number of factors go into making a book appropriate for a given level.

A **Decodable Reader** is a book that carefully limits the letters and words used so that it fits what a new reader is ready for. In Bloom terms, Decodable Readers each have a *stage* that defines which letters and sight words are appropriate. We use the word *stage* so that we don't get it confused with the *levels* of *Leveled Readers.*

A **Reader Template** is an empty book that will show up in your "Sources for New Books" area. These should have been created for you by a literacy specialist who has created a separate template for each decodable stage or leveled reader. When you use one of these to make a book, you will get help in selected words for a decodable book, or keeping to an appropriate level for a leveled book. The font, font size, line spacing, and word spacing will already be set up for you, as appropriate for the kind of book you are making.

A **Bloom Pack** is a file that bundles up one or more templates into a single, easy-to-share file. Once you have Bloom installed, double-clicking on a Bloom Pack causes Bloom to wake up and unbundle those templates onto your computer. Then next time you run Bloom, you'll see those

templates are now available to you for making new books. Usually, Bloom Packs contain *shell books*, books with images and content in one or more major languages so that you can translate the text. In this document, however, we'll be using a special kind of Bloom Pack called a **Reader Template Bloom Pack** that contains just **Reader Templates** (described previously). A literacy specialist should consult a companion document, "Building and Distributing Reader Templates in Bloom" for instructions on how to make these.
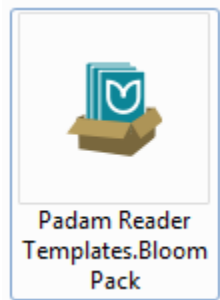
Getting set up in Bloom

If you haven't done so already, get Bloom installed and make yourself a new *Vernacular Collection.* Try making some new books for fun, using the "Basic Book" template. When you feel comfortable with adding pages, adding images, etc., you're ready to move on to using a Reader Template.

Unpacking a Bloom Pack

You should get a your Reader Template Bloom Pack from whoever is setting up templates for your language. It may come to you, for example, on a USB stick (jump drive). Follow these steps:

1. If Bloom is running, click the red "X" in the top right corner to close it.
2. Find your BloomPack (the name will end in ".BloomPack"). It will look like this (but with a different name):

   Padam Reader
   Templates.Bloom
   Pack

3. Double click on it. You will get a message from Bloom telling you that it is ready to use.

   Note: if the person who gave you the Bloom Pack makes a new version and gives that to you, that's fine. Just repeat these steps. Bloom will confirm that you want to replace your old templates with the new ones.
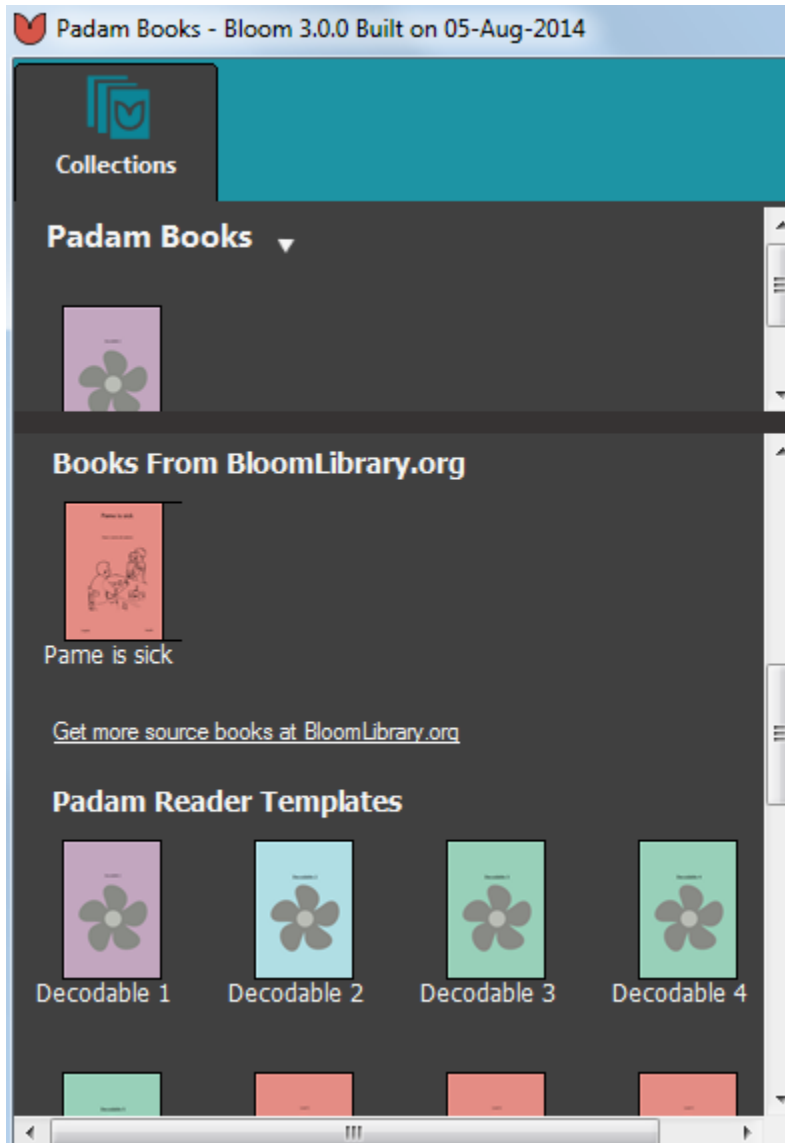
Leveled Readers

In this section, you will learn how to use a leveled reader template that has already been prepared for your language.

Starting a book based on a leveled reader

Once you have a reader template available to you, here are some steps you can follow:

1. Run Bloom. It should open again to your Vernacular Collection.
2. In the Collections Tab, look down at the "Sources for New Books" area. Scroll through there and locate the group of templates that came in from the Reader Template Bloom Pack. The exact names will vary, but if your language was named "Padam", you might see something like this:

3. You should see several templates there, named by what kind of template they are. If it is not clear which one you should use, ask the person who set up the templates to show you which one you should start with.

Note that in this section, we're only describing what you will do and see with **leveled** readers templates. If you want to start with a **decodable** reader template instead, skip to the next major section, where we talk about that.

4. Select the template you want.
5. Click **Making a book using this source.**

As usual, Bloom creates a new book and takes you to it in the Edit Tab. As usual, it already contains the cover, the Title Page, etc. If you like, go ahead and set the title of your book, and choose a cover image. Or just skip that and come back to it later.

Your template may already come with pages and images. Or it might be empty except for the front-matter and back-matter. It just depends on what was in this template when your colleague made the Reader Template Bloom Pack.

6. Get to a page where you can start entering text. That means either select an existing page, or add a new one by clicking on one of the page templates on the right.

Using the Leveled Reader Tool
Now let's look at your *Leveled Reader Dashboard*:

Leveled Reader Tool

Level 1 of 6

Word counts
This Page

	Max	Actual
per page	2	0
per sentence	2	0

This Book

	Max	Actual
total	20	0
per page	2	0
unique		0

Set up Levels

For this Level

Keep in mind
- Vocabulary
- Formatting
- Predictability
- Illustration support
- Concrete, Familiar Topics

Notice that there are numbers that keep you informed about the number of words you are using, and compares them to the maximum you should be using for this level. The dashboard shows you the number of words on this page, in the sentences on this page, and in the book. Finally, notice the row labeled "unique". *Unique* here means we only count a word the first time it is used. Notice that we have used 5 words here, but only 3 are *unique:*

"Go go go" I said.

	Max	Actual
total	23	5
per page	5	5
unique	8	3

Notice that the numbers in the "Actual" column in screenshot above are all 0. This is because there are no words yet on the page. Do you see the color is green? That means that this number fits within the limits for this level. If you go beyond those limits, the number will turn orange, as will the sentence with too many words:

There are way too many words here. But this one is ok.

Word counts
This Page

	Max	Actual
per page	5	12
per sentence	5	7

This Book

	Max	Actual
total	23	12
per page	5	12
unique	8	12

Beyond Words Counts

So Bloom will help you remember not to use too many words. That's the good news. The bad news is there's **so much more** to making a leveled reader than just limiting your words, and computers are not smart enough to help you with all those other things. So learning to make a good leveled reader will normally require training and workshop activities. What we *have* done in Bloom is to give you a few reminders, in the dashboard, of things you should keep in mind as you work on a book:

Keep in mind
- Vocabulary
- Formatting
- Predictability
- Illustration support
- Concrete, Familiar Topics

At any time, you can click on one of these links to read a short summary of the topic, to refresh your memory.

Using a Decodable Reader Template

In this section, you will learn how to use a decodable reader template that has already been prepared for your language. You should have already unpacked the Reader Template Bloom Pack as described earlier in this document.

1. In the Collections Tab, look down at the "Sources for New Books" area. Scroll through there and locate the group of templates that came in from your Bloom Pack.
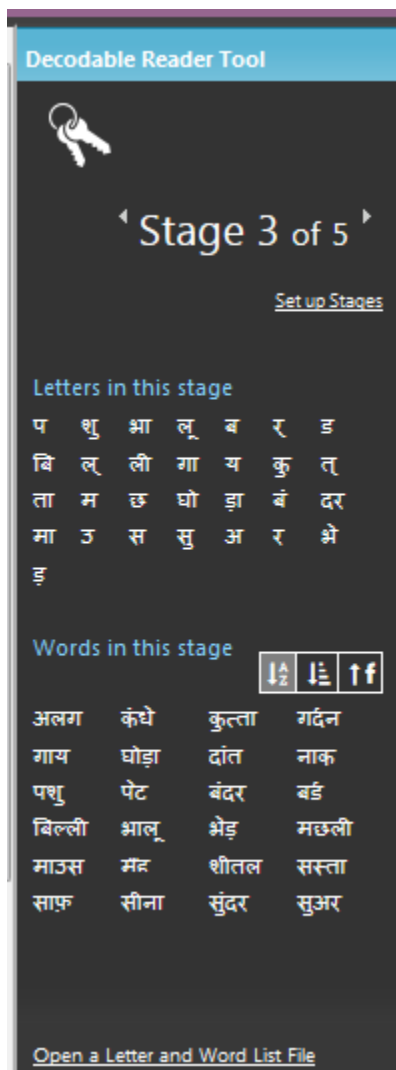
2. You should see several templates there, named by what kind of template they are. If it is not clear, ask the person who set up the templates to show you which one you should start with.

3. Select the template you want.
4. Click **Making a book using this source.**

   As usual, Bloom creates a new book and takes you to it in the Edit Tab. As usual, it already contains the cover, the Title Page, etc. If you like, go ahead and set the title of your book, and choose a cover image. Or just skip that and dive into the decodable goodness.

   Your template may already come with pages and images. Or it might be empty except for the front-matter and back-matter. It just depends on what was in this template when your colleague made the Reader Template Bloom Pack.

5. Get to a page where you can start entering text. That means either select an existing page, or add a new one by clicking on one of the page templates on the right.

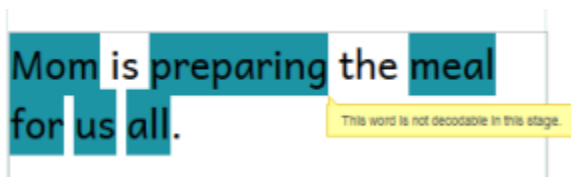Now let's look at what we'll call your *Decodable Reader Dashboard*:

At the very top, you will see the stage number that this template has selected for you. There is a control to change the stage, but normally you should not touch that. Instead, if you decide you have opened the wrong template, go back to the Collection Tab and chose the correct template.

You will also see a "Setup Stages" link. Unless you are responsible for setting up stages, don't click that either. It's for literacy specialists, not authors.

With that out of the way, let's look at the parts that will be helpful to you. First, there is a list of the letters that you want to use in this stage. You might be wondering, What if I accidently use a word with a letter I'm not supposed to use? We're glad you asked. Let's experiment:
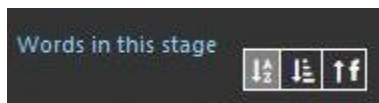
In the text area of the page, type some words. Type some that use only the letters listed, and some that use other letters. You'll see something like this:

Words that are not allowed in this stage are highlighted in blue.

Thinking of words that only use a small number of letters can be hard, so the next section, labeled "Words in this stage" lists words from your language that use only those letters. It also lists any *sight words* that are part of this stage. Sight words are words that may use letters that haven't been taught yet, but students will be learning to recognize these words anyways.
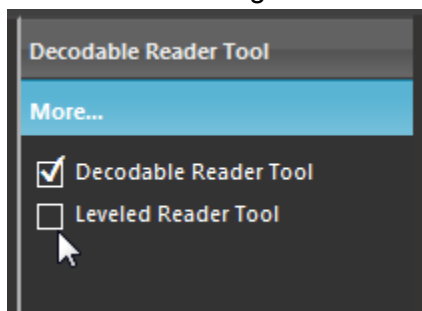
There's just one more thing to try out with decodable readers. Just above the list of words, notice that there are 3 little buttons:

Click one of the these buttons to sort the words in one of these three ways: alphabetically, by word length, or by frequency. *Frequency* means how common the word is. Now, Bloom doesn't actually know the frequency of the word in the language, so this is just based on how often the word occurred in the Sample Texts Bloom was given by the literacy specialist.

Finally, when doing a decodable reader, you may want to also check the book against *leveled reader* criteria for Level 1 or Level 2. To do that, follow these steps:

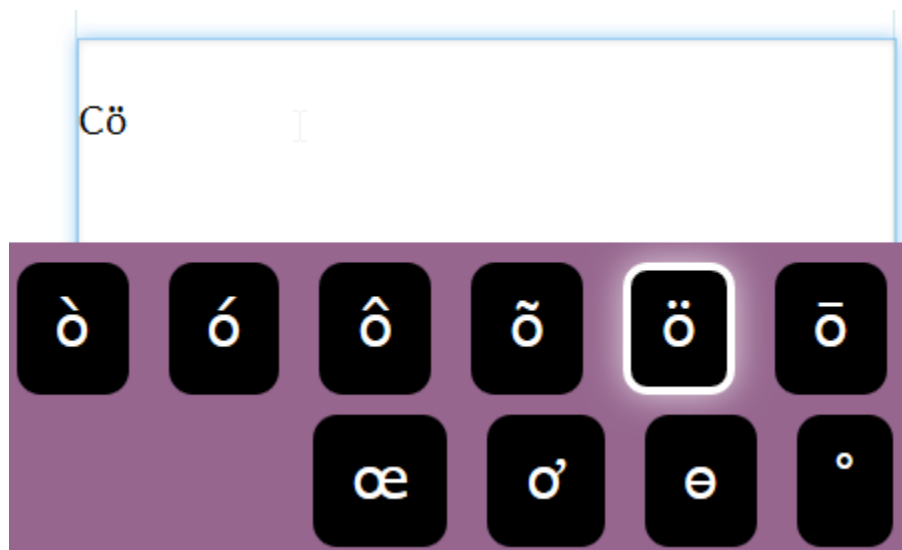1. Click on the rectangle labeled "More…" in the lower right hand corner:

2. It opens to show you the tools that are available. Click on the Leveled Reader Tool.
3. The Leveled Reader tool will open.
4. Go through your book, making sure that you don't see any of the orange warning blocks that would mean you are using too many words.

A Note on Entering Special Characters

Does your alphabet (writing system) have special characters, for example, ë, ĉ, Ç, ɨ, and ñ? Ideally, you will want to have a proper keyboarding system for your language. But in case you find yourself using Bloom without a way to type your language, Bloom does include a last-resort way to enter the letters you need.

Type a the letter, like 'o', and HOLD DOWN the key. The Special Character box will pop up.

Now, still holding down letter, use the arrow keys or the mouse to select the one you want. Now let go of the letter key.

Note that this feature is limited to languages that using latin/roman scripts.If you're using another script, you really need to have someone help you install a proper keyboarding solution for your script.
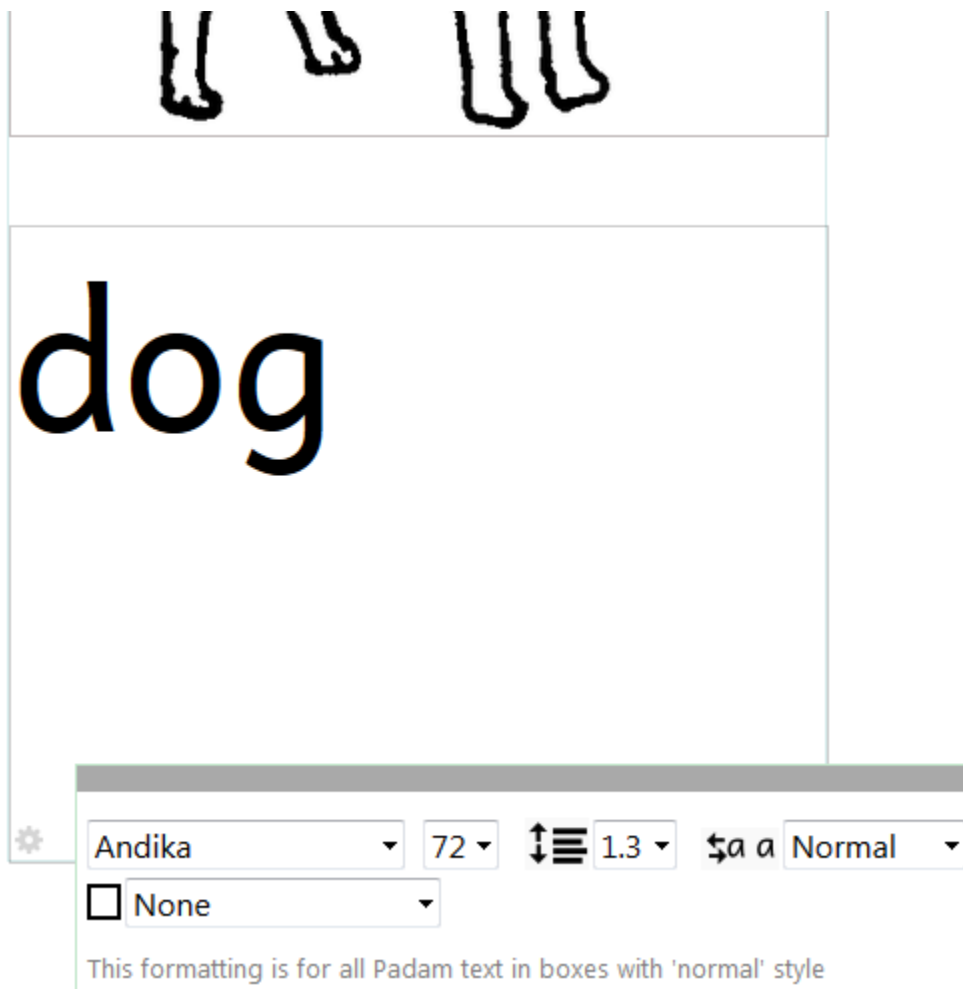
A Note on Changing Font Sizes

Ideally, the templates you use will already have carefully chosen fonts, font sizes, line spacing, and word spacing. If however your book requires an even larger font, you can change that yourself. For example, perhaps you are making a level 1 book that only has a single word, so you'd like to make that word *really big*. Here's how to do it.

1. Place the cursor inside of a text box. You will see a grey "cog" icon in the lower left:

2. When you click on that icon, you'll see a box full of options:

dog

Andika ▾ 72 ▾ ⬍☰ 1.3 ▾ ⇕a a Normal ▾

☐ None ▾

This formatting is for all Padam text in boxes with 'normal' style

3. Now add another page, and notice that this page already is using the larger font. When you change the formatting of a text box in Bloom, you are setting it for all similar boxes in the book. This helps you be consistent and saves you time:

cat