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To my parents, John and Rose Mary Alderson.

I wish they had lived to see this book, for their support and encouragement to me throughout my education and beyond were of the utmost importance. I only hope they would not have been too disappointed that I did not become the Town Clerk of Burnley, as my mother hoped.

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Series Editor's Preface

Reading, through which we can access worlds of ideas and feelings, as well as the knowledge of the ages and visions of the future, is at once the most extensively researched and the most enigmatic of the so-called language skills. Reading has been investigated from numerous perspectives – by linguists, psychologists, educators and second language researchers, and a huge volume of research is now available. Reading also plays a critical role in applied linguistics research and in the day-to-day professional life of the language teacher. Similarly, the assessment of reading ability is of critical importance in a wide range of educational and professional settings, and the need for expertise in this area is widespread. This book brings together what is known about reading and its assessment into one volume in order to provide practical guidance to teachers and others who need to develop tests of reading, be this for their own classes, for large-scale proficiency tests or for conducting research in applied linguistics.

The author of this book, Charles Alderson, has extensive experience in both teaching and testing reading, and has conducted considerable research himself in these areas. He is one of the world's leading authorities in language assessment in general, and in the assessment of reading in particular. Furthermore, his long experience as an educator, mentor and teacher trainer has enabled him to distill from the vastness of the reading research literature those concepts, ideas and frameworks that are most relevant to reading assessment, and to present an array of often complex information in a way that is readily accessible to practitioners.

This book guides the reader through a wealth of research in reading and assessment, with a clear focus on practical applications, and is illustrated throughout with examples from actual tests of reading. Alderson first surveys the theoretical and conceptual foundations of

reading, clearly delineating the implications of these for reading assessment. He then draws on his own experience in assessment to discuss practical issues such as developing specifications for reading tests, designing and writing reading test tasks, and specifying the purposes for which reading tests are intended. The discussion draws on a variety of situations, including the classroom assessment of second-language reading and first-language literacy, large-scale assessments for high-stakes decisions in educational settings and assessment for professional certification and employment. The main points are illustrated with a range of examples, including multiple-choice items, cloze tests, as well as assessment techniques such as reading aloud, impressionistic judgements, miscue analysis, and self-assessments. The last two chapters explore areas that have to date been largely considered too difficult to assess: developmental stages or levels of reading ability, and the strategies and processes involved in reading.

Throughout the book, Alderson draws on both the theoretical insights from reading research and the fundamental requirements and demands of assessment, and describes how these can fruitfully inform reading assessment practice. In a nutshell, this book offers a principled approach to the design, development and use of reading tests, and thus exemplifies the purpose of this series to bring together theory and research in applied linguistics in a way that is useful to language testing practitioners.

Lyle F. Bachman

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Abbreviations

ACTFL	American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages
ALBSU	Adult Literacy Basic Skills Unit
ALTE	Association of Language Testers in Europe
ASLPR	Australian Secondary Language Proficiency Ratings
CAE	Certificate in Advanced English
CCSE	Certificate in Communicative Skills in English
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
CUEFL	Communicative Use of English as a Foreign Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELTS	English Language Testing Service
EPTB	English Proficiency Test Battery
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETS	Educational Testing Service
FCE	First Certificate in English
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IRI	Informal Reading Inventory
JMB	Joint Matriculation Board of Northern Universities
KET	Key English Test
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NEA	Northern Examining Authorities
PET	Preliminary English Test
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
TEEP	Test in English for Educational Purposes

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TLU	Target Language Use
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
UETESOL	University Entrance Test in English for Speakers of Other Languages