

TEXT COMPLEXITY

How do we determine Text Complexity for our Students?*

The purpose of determining text complexity is to support each student in becoming independent and proficient readers of a wide range of texts, including various literary genres and styles, literary non-fiction like essays, autobiography and biography, and informational text including technical subjects. Both career and college demand stamina to read increasingly complex texts for understanding content and applying that understanding to new situations, whether in the work, academic or everyday life settings.

There are three criteria for determining appropriate text complexity at each grade level band: 1) quantitative, 2) qualitative, and 3) reader and task assignment.

1.0 QUANTITATIVE

Determine the quantitative measures of the text by using the increased rigor of the lexile range for each grade band below and the tools provided at <http://www.lexile.com/http://www.lexile.com/>

1.1 Quantitative measures ARE determined by:

- Word length
- Word frequency
- Word difficulty
- Sentence length
- Text length
- Text cohesion

1.2 Higher lexile ranges to ensure increasing stamina in reading more complex texts:

Text Complexity Grade Bands	Suggested Lexile Range
6-8	955-1155
9-10	1080-1305
11-12	1215-1355

1.3 Important tools for teachers, students, and parents:

- Texts can be evaluated by using the Lexile Analyzer
- Allows student to receive and estimated lexile score
- Helps students find a book at the appropriate level
- Strategies for parents to support students: <http://www.lexile.com/using-lexile/lexile-at-home/>

*Thanks to Matt Copeland and his team at the Kansas State Department of Education for the work they have done on text complexity and their generosity in sharing it through their website and webinars.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

2.0 QUALITATIVE

2.1 Analyze the qualitative measure of the text based on a continuum of SEVEN measures:

- **Levels of Meaning:** Single level of meaning TO Multiple levels of meaning
- **Levels of Purpose:** Explicitly stated purpose TO Implicit purpose
- **Structure:**
 - Conventional or familiar TO Unconventional or unfamiliar
 - Chronological order TO non-chronological
 - Simple graphics TO sophisticated graphics
- **Language Conventinality and Clarity**
 - Literal TO Figurative
 - Clear TO Ambiguous
 - Contemporary, familiar TO Archaic, unfamiliar
 - Conversational TO General academic & domain specific
- **Knowledge Demands: Life Experiences**
 - Single theme(s) TO Multiple, Complex or Sophisticated themes
 - Common, everyday experiences TO Experiences different from own
 - Single perspective TO Multiple perspectives
 - Similar perspectives to one's own TO Perspectives different from or in opposition to one's own
- **Knowledge Demands: Cultural/Literary Knowledge**
- **Knowledge Demands: Content/Discipline Knowledge**
 - Everyday knowledge TO Cultural knowledge or Specialized content-specific knowledge
 - Few references or allusions to other texts TO Many references or allusions to other texts

TEXT COMPLEXITY

TITLE OF TEXT _____ **AUTHOR** _____ **SOURCE:** _____

1.0 QUANTITATIVE MEASURES FROM APPENDIX A

Please Check Lexile Range (you will use Lexile Analyzer at www.lexile.com)

- ____ 955-1155 = Grade band 6-8
- ____ 1080-1305 = Grade band 9-10
- ____ 1215-1355 = Grade band 11-12

2.0 QUALITATIVE MEASURES FROM APPENDIX A: How to use this rubric: Read the passage for inclusion into the FlexBook, since it will be informational text it should not be too difficult to assess. If you have more than 5 Xs in the MORE COMPLEX column you should raise the complexity on the Lexile continuum.

Dimensions of Text Complexity	LESS COMPLEX	X	MORE COMPLEX	X
Levels of Meaning	Single level meaning		Multiple levels of Meaning	
Levels of Purpose	Explicitly stated purpose		Implicit purpose	
Structure	Conventional or familiar		Unconventional or unfamiliar	
	Chronological Order		Non-chronological order	
	Simple graphics		Sophisticated graphics	
Language Conventionality and Clarity	Literal		Figurative	
	Clear		Ambiguous	
	Contemporary, familiar		Archaic, unfamiliar	
	Conversational		General academic, domain-specific	
Knowledge Demands: Experience	Single Theme		Multiple, complex themes	
	Common, everyday experiences		Experiences different from ones own	
	Single perspective		Multiple perspectives	
Knowledge Demands: Cultural/Literary Knowledge AND Content/Discipline Knowledge	Similar perspective to one's own		Perspectives different from or in opposition to one's own	
	Everyday knowledge		Cultural or specialized, content-specific knowledge	
	Few references or allusions to other texts		Many references of allusions to other texts	

RECOMMENDATION FOR TEXT COMPLEXITY PLACEMENT - Rationale:

GRADE	Less Complex	Middle Range	High Complexity
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

TEXT COMPLEXITY

3.0 READER AND TASK CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE TEACHER: Knowing the Reader – Taken from Appendix A Criteria

3.1 Cognitive:

- 3.1.1 How does this reader pay attention?
- 3.1.2 How does the reader remember and understand the key ideas and details in the reading?
- 3.1.3 How does the reader use critical, analytical thinking skills?
- 3.1.4 How does the reader use inference to understand the meaning of a text by reading between the lines?
- 3.1.5 How does the reader use visualization to imagine what is occurring or being described in the text?
- 3.1.6 How does the reader question the text?
- 3.1.7 Will this text support the reader in developing the above abilities?

3.2 Motivation:

- 3.2.1 What topics, subjects, genres, and ideas interest the reader?
- 3.2.2 How does the reader determine a purpose for reading?(that is, skimming to get the gist of text, studying content for purpose of retaining information, close reading for analysis, pleasure)
- 3.2.3 What strategies does the reader use to understand challenging texts?
- 3.2.4 Will the reader be interested in this particular text?

3.3 Prior Knowledge and experience of:

- 3.3.1 Vocabulary considerations:
- 3.3.2 Topic
- 3.3.3 Culture

TEXT COMPLEXITY

3.0 READER AND TASK CONSIDERATIONS: THE STUDENT KNOWING SELF AS READER

3.1 Cognitive:

- 3.1.1 How do I pay attention?
- 3.1.2 How do I remember and understand the key ideas and details in the reading?
- 3.1.3 How do I use critical, analytical thinking skills? Do I know what these skills are?
- 3.1.4 How do I use inference to understand the meaning of a text by reading between the lines?
- 3.1.5 How do I use visualization to imagine what is occurring or being described in the text?
- 3.1.6 How do I question the text?
- 3.1.7 Will this text support ME in developing the above abilities?

3.2 Motivation:

- 3.2.1 What topics, subjects, genres, and ideas interest me as a reader?
- 3.2.2 How do I determine a purpose for reading?(that is, skimming to get the gist of text, studying content for purpose of retaining information, close reading for analysis, pleasure)
- 3.2.3 What strategies do I use to understand challenging texts?
- 3.2.4 Will I be interested in this particular text?

3.3 Prior Knowledge and experience of:

- 3.3.1 What words might prove challenging? What will I do to understand them?
- 3.3.2 Am I familiar with this particular topic in the text?
- 3.3.3 Am I familiar with the culture that this text represents?

TEXT COMPLEXITY

4.0 Supporting readers and teachers with Task Assignment OF AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF Literary non-fiction and Informational Texts (Use all the above elements of Text Complexity AND Effort Rubric, and Interest Survey)

Literary non-fiction: A branch of writing that employs the literary techniques usually associated with fiction or poetry to report on actual persons, places, or events.

The [genre](#) of creative nonfiction (also known as *literary nonfiction*) is broad enough to include [travel writing](#), [nature writing](#), [science writing](#) (writing about scientific subject matter, in a non-technical manner for an audience of non-scientists), [biography](#), [autobiography](#), [memoir](#), the [interview](#), and both the [familiar](#) (A short prose composition characterized by the persona quality of writing and distinctive voice of essayist) and [personal essay](#) (a short work of autobiographical nonfiction characterized by a sense of intimacy and a conversational manner).

EFFORT AND ACHIEVEMENT RUBRIC

Purpose: Students do not have a clear idea or even understand the relationship between effort and achievement. This self-assessment rubric is one method to help them be more conscious of that relationship as well as tracking their improved effort (building academic stamina).

Marzano's recommendations for classroom practice include:

- explicitly teach students that effort can improve achievement
- ask students to chart effort and achievement
- establish a rationale for recognition
- follow guidelines for effective and ineffective praise
- use the pause, prompt, and praise technique

Effort Rubric

- 4 I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to continue working on the task even when difficulties arose or a solution was not immediately evident. I viewed difficulties that arose as opportunities to strengthen my understanding.
- 3 I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to continue working on the task even when difficulties arose or a solution was not immediately evident.
- 2 I put some effort into the task, but I stopped working when difficulties arose.
- 1 I put very little effort into the task.

Achievement Rubric

- 4 I exceeded the objectives of the task or lesson.
- 3 I met the objectives of the task or lesson.
- 2 I met a few of the objectives of the task or lesson, but did not meet others.
- 1 I did not meet the objectives of the task or lesson.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

Student Reflective Writing after Self-Assessment

1. How has the quality of my work improved?
2. What new goal will I set for myself related to both my effort and my achievement?

INTEREST SURVEY: How do I get to know the students' interests?

There are a variety of student interest surveys that are on the web and free to use. Here is a sample:

From readwritethink:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/assessing-student-interests-strengths-30100.html>

From University of Connecticut:

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/CurriculumCompacting/section11.html>

From education.com:

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/assessing-interest-attitude-motivation/>

From Rutgers' Career Services:

<http://careerservices.rutgers.edu/PCCPinterests.shtml>

From National Center for Learning Disabilities:

<http://www.nclld.org/college-aamp-work/in-the-workplace/finding-the-right-job/assessing-interests-a-abilities>