

### **Text Complexity Tools (Kansas)**

Text complexity is a key aspect of the Common Core ELA & Literacy standards. The Kansas State Department of Education has developed the resources that follow to support teachers as they review and assess student reading materials using the Common Core text complexity model. The tools include a description and chart for evaluating quantitative measures of text complexity, rubrics for evaluating qualitative measures of text complexity, and a set of guiding questions related to reader and task considerations. Templates are included for teachers to record and catalog their work related to text complexity. Grade level examples are provided, as available. For more information about the Common Core text complexity model, please see Appendix A to the standards and resources at this website: [http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital\\_Resources/The\\_Common\\_Core\\_State\\_Standards\\_Supporting\\_Districts\\_and\\_Teachers\\_with\\_Text\\_Complexity.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/The_Common_Core_State_Standards_Supporting_Districts_and_Teachers_with_Text_Complexity.html)

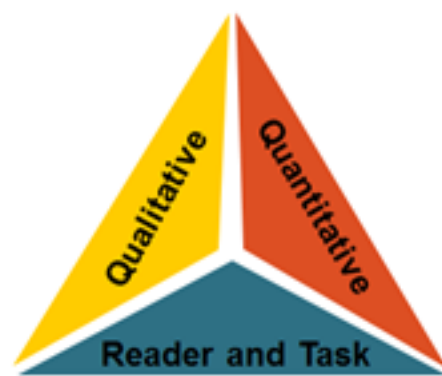
# Resources for Text Complexity Developed by the Kansas State Department of Education

Also available @ <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4778>

## Using the Text Complexity Triangle as Suggested in Appendix A of the Common Core Standards to Evaluate Texts

The *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* outlines a three-part model for measuring text complexity.<sup>1</sup> As suggested by Figure 1, the three parts are qualitative dimensions (aspects of text best measured by attentive human readers), quantitative dimensions (aspects of text such as word length/frequency, sentence length, cohesion best measured by computer algorithms) and reader and task considerations (variables such as the reader's cognitive capabilities, motivation, reading purpose, and the knowledge and experiences unique to each reader).

**Figure 1. The Common Core Standards' Three-Part Model of Text Complexity<sup>2</sup>**



For many years the formal evaluation of text complexity has often been limited to quantitative measures such as Flesch-Kincaid, Dale-Chall, Lexile, ATOS, and Coh-Metrix. Although any tool for measuring text is certainly useful, each is also imperfect as well. Many prose and dramatic texts, for example, can be measured quite suitably and their evaluations can greatly inform instructional use. However, the very same measures may not be as suitable for poetry or for texts with features to aide students just learning to read and such evaluations may not prove as useful in informing instruction. In such instances, it is believed preference should be given to qualitative measures when evaluating such texts.<sup>3</sup>

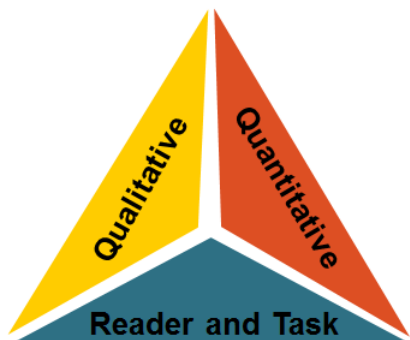
Likewise, educators must employ their own professional judgment in matching texts to individual students and tasks. Because different readers bring unique abilities and dispositions to the endeavor, educators must consider these elements as well when planning instruction. In some instances, these reader and task considerations sometimes outweigh both the qualitative and quantitative measures available.

Because no single tool and no single measure of text complexity is perfect, educators should consider all three parts of the text complexity triangle before selecting instructional texts.

<sup>1</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010).

<sup>3</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010).



## Kansas Common Core Standards

# Quantitative Measures Ranges for Text Complexity Grade Bands

Text Complexity Grade Bands	Suggested Lexile Range	Suggested ATOS Book Level Range**
K-1	100L – 500L*	1.0 – 2.5
2-3	450L – 790L	2.0 – 4.0
4-5	770L – 980L	3.0 – 5.7
6-8	955L – 1155L	4.0 – 8.0
9-10	1080L – 1305L	4.6 – 10.0
11-CCR	1215L – 1355L	4.8 – 12.0

\* The K-1 suggested Lexile range was not identified by the Common Core State Standards and was added by Kansas.

\*\* Taken from *Accelerated Reader and the Common Core State Standards*, available at the following URL:  
<http://doc.renlearn.com/KMNet/R004572117GKC46B.pdf>



# TEXT COMPLEXITY: QUALITATIVE MEASURES RUBRIC

## LITERARY TEXTS



### LAYERS OF MEANING

#### High

- **Meaning:** multiple layers of interpretation exist and most lean toward complex, abstract meaning

#### Middle High

- **Meaning:** three or more layers of interpretation exist and include some complex and abstract meaning

#### Middle Low

- **Meaning:** at least two layers of interpretation exist largely made up of simple, concrete meaning

#### Low

- **Meaning:** a single interpretation of simple, concrete meaning predominates

### STRUCTURE

#### High

- **Narrative Structure:** complex, implicit, and unconventional
- **Narration:** many shifts in point of view and/or perspective
- **Order of Events:** not in chronological order
- **Use of Graphics:** sophisticated graphics, essential to understanding the text, may also provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text

#### Middle High

- **Narrative Structure:** some complexities, more implicit than explicit, some unconventionality
- **Narration:** occasional shifts in point of view and/or perspective
- **Order of Events:** several major shifts in time, use of flashback
- **Use of Graphics:** some sophisticated graphics, may occasionally be essential to understanding the text

#### Middle Low

- **Narrative Structure:** largely simple structure, more explicit than implicit, largely conventional,
- **Narration:** few, if any, shifts in point of view and/or perspective
- **Order of Events:** occasional use of flashback, no major shifts in time
- **Use of Graphics:** largely simple graphics, supplementary to understanding of the text

#### Low

- **Narrative Structure:** simple, explicit, conventional
- **Narration:** no shifts in point of view or perspective
- **Order of Events:** chronological
- **Use of Graphics:** use of simple graphics, unnecessary to understand the text

### LANGUAGE CONVENTIONALITY AND CLARITY

#### High

- **Meaning:** implicit or inferred meaning, heavy use of figurative or ironic language, may be purposefully ambiguous or misleading at times
- **Register:** generally unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic

#### Middle High

- **Meaning:** some implicit or inferred meaning, use of figurative or ironic language
- **Register:** occasionally unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic

#### Middle Low

- **Meaning:** largely explicit and literal meaning, subtle use of figurative or ironic language
- **Register:** largely contemporary, familiar, conversational, rarely unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic

#### Low

- **Meaning:** explicit and literal meaning, little or no use of figurative or ironic language
- **Register:** contemporary, familiar, conversational

### KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS

#### High

- **Life Experiences:** explores complex, sophisticated, multiple themes; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are distinctly different from the common reader
- **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** many references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements
- **Subject Matter Knowledge:** requires extensive, perhaps specialized content knowledge

#### Middle High

- **Life Experiences:** explores multiple themes of varying levels of complexity; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are uncommon to most readers
- **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** some references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements
- **Subject Matter Knowledge:** requires moderate levels of content knowledge

#### Middle Low

- **Life Experiences:** explores a single complex theme; experiences portrayed are common to many readers or are clearly fantasy
- **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** few references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements
- **Subject Matter Knowledge:** requires some content knowledge

#### Low

- **Life Experiences:** explores a single theme; experiences portrayed are everyday and common or are clearly fantasy
- **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** no references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements
- **Subject Matter Knowledge:** requires only everyday content knowledge



# TEXT COMPLEXITY: QUALITATIVE MEASURES RUBRIC

## INFORMATIONAL TEXTS



### LEVELS OF PURPOSE

High	Middle High	Middle Low	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Purpose:</b> subtle, implied, difficult to determine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Purpose:</b> implied, but fairly easy to infer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Purpose:</b> implied, but easy to identify based upon context or source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Purpose:</b> explicitly stated</li> </ul>

### STRUCTURE

High	Middle High	Middle Low	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Organization of Main Ideas and Details:</b> highly complex; not explicit, must be inferred by the reader</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Text Features:</b> if used, are essential in understanding content</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Use of Graphics:</b> sophisticated graphics, essential to understanding the text, may also provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Organization of Main Ideas and Details:</b> complex but largely explicit; may exhibit traits common to a specific subject or discipline</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Text Features:</b> if used, greatly enhance the reader's understanding of content</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Use of Graphics:</b> some sophisticated graphics, may occasionally be essential to understanding the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Organization of Main Ideas and Details:</b> may be complex, but clearly stated and generally sequential</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Text Features:</b> if used, enhance the reader's understanding of content</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Use of Graphics:</b> largely simple graphics, supplementary to understanding of the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Organization of Main Ideas and Details:</b> clearly stated and sequential</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Text Features:</b> if used, help the reader navigate and understand content but are not essential</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Use of Graphics:</b> use of simple graphics, unnecessary to understand the text</li> </ul>

### LANGUAGE CONVENTIONALITY AND CLARITY

High	Middle High	Middle Low	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Meaning:</b> dense and complex; may be abstract, ironic, and/or figurative; language may be purposefully ambiguous or misleading</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Register:</b> generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Meaning:</b> somewhat complex; may occasionally be abstract, ironic, and/or figurative</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Register:</b> occasionally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Meaning:</b> largely explicit and easy to understand with few occasions of more complex meaning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Register:</b> largely contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Meaning:</b> explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Register:</b> contemporary, familiar, conversational</li> </ul>

### KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS

High	Middle High	Middle Low	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> requires extensive, perhaps specialized or even theoretical subject-specific knowledge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Intertextuality:</b> many references/allusions to other texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> requires moderate levels of subject-specific knowledge; some theoretical knowledge may enhance understanding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Intertextuality:</b> some references/allusions to other texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> largely everyday, practical knowledge is necessary; requires some subject-specific knowledge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Intertextuality:</b> few references/allusions to other texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> requires only everyday, practical knowledge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Intertextuality:</b> no references/allusions to other texts</li> </ul>

# Questions for Professional Reflection on Reader and Task Considerations

## Cognitive Capabilities

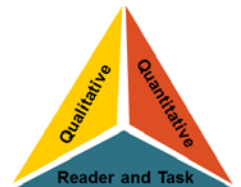
- Does the reader possess the necessary **attention** to read and comprehend this specific text?
- Will the reader be able to **remember and make connections** among the various details presented in this specific text?
- Does the reader possess the necessary **critical/analytic thinking skills** to understand the relationships between the main idea, purpose, and/or theme of the text and the various details used to support that main idea, purpose, and/or theme?
- Will this specific text help to develop the **attention, memory, and critical/analytic thinking skills** necessary for future reading endeavors?

## Reading Skills

- Does the reader possess the necessary **inferencing skills** to “read between the lines” and make connections among elements that may not be explicit in this specific text?
- Does the reader possess the necessary **visualization skills** to imagine what is occurring or what is being described in this specific text?
- Does the reader possess the necessary **questioning skills** to challenge the ideas being presented in this text and consider those ideas from multiple points of view?
- Does the reader possess the necessary **comprehension strategies** to manage the material in this specific text?
- Will this specific text help to develop the **inferencing skills, visualization skills, questioning skills, and comprehension strategies** necessary for future reading endeavors?

## Motivation and Engagement with Task and Text

- Will the reader **understand the purpose**—which might shift over the course of the reading experience—for reading this specific text (i.e., skimming, studying to retain content, close reading for analysis, etc.)?
- Will the reader be **interested in the content** of this specific text?



# Questions for Professional Reflection on Reader and Task Considerations

- Might the reader **develop an interest in this content** because of this text?
- Will the reader be **interested and engaged with the style of writing and the presentation of ideas** within this specific text?
- Will the text **maintain the reader's motivation and engagement** throughout the reading experience?

## Prior Knowledge and Experience

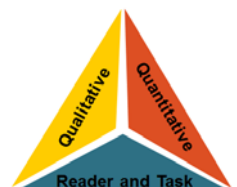
- Does the reader possess **adequate prior knowledge and/or experience regarding the topic** of this specific text to manage the material that is presented?
- Are there any **explicit connections** that can be made between what content the reader will encounter in this specific text and other learning that may occur in this or another class?
- Does the reader possess **adequate prior knowledge and/or experience regarding the vocabulary** used within this specific text to manage the material that is presented?
- Does the reader possess **adequate knowledge of and/or experience with the genre** of this specific text to manage the material that is presented?

## Content and/or Theme Concerns

- Are there any **potentially concerning elements of content or theme** that might contribute to students, teachers, administrators, and/or parents feeling uncomfortable with reading this specific text?
- Does the reader possess the **maturity** to respond appropriately to any potentially concerning elements of content or theme?

## Complexity of Associated Tasks

- Will the **complexity of any before-, during-, or after-reading tasks** associated with this specific text interfere with the reading experience?
- Will the **complexity of any questions asked or discussed** concerning this text interfere with the reading experience?





# Text Complexity Analysis of

**Qualitative Measures**

**Quantitative Measures**

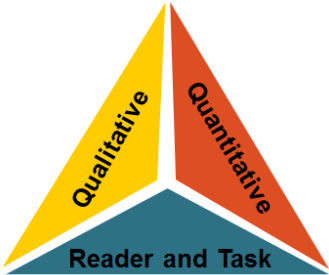
Levels of Meaning/Purpose:

Structure:

**Reader-Task Considerations**

Language Conventinality and Clarity:

Knowledge Demands:



**Recommended Placement**



Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualitative Measures**

*Levels of Meaning:*

*Structure:*

*Language Conventinality and Clarity:*

*Knowledge Demands:*  
Life  
Culture



Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualitative Measures**

*Levels of Meaning:*

*Structure:*

*Language Conventinality and Clarity:*

*Knowledge Demands:*  
Life  
Culture



Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualitative Measures**

*Levels of Meaning:*

*Structure:*

*Language Conventinality and Clarity:*

*Knowledge Demands:*  
Life  
Culture

**Quantitative Measures**

**Reader-Task Considerations**

**Recommended Placement**

**Quantitative Measures**

**Reader-Task Considerations**

**Recommended Placement**

**Quantitative Measures**

**Reader-Task Considerations**

**Recommended Placement**

