TEACHFEST

CONNECTICUT SUMMER ACADEMY

TeachFest Guide

July 2014 | Hartford

English Language Arts and Literacy in the Content Areas

CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Steps and resources for completing a text complexity and vocabulary analysis

Select a text for close reading

1. Review the "Guide to selecting a Complex Text for Close Reading."
2. Reread your text choices.
3. Ask yourself, "Is this text worthy of the additional class time and exploration it will demand?"
4. Ask yourself, "Does this text present worthwhile opportunities to teach both content and literacy skills at my grade-level and in my subject area?"

Annotate your text

1. Review the document, "Annotation: A Critical Close Reading Tool."
2. Read your text, circling words that are likely to be unfamiliar or challenging to your students.
3. Reread your text many times, each time with a different lens, noticing, underlining, and jotting noteworthy attributes of the text such as: important or key ideas, the development of ideas across a text, relationships between ideas, significant craft moves, vocabulary and word choice, the use of illustrations and text features.
4. Continue to annotate the text each time you read it.

Discuss your text

1. Review the documents, "Defending your text" and "Guide to implementing a text talk."
2. Reread your annotations of the text.
3. Using the "Defending your text thought-catcher" jot notes to answer each question.
4. Make your case for choosing this text to a colleague.

Determine the quantitative text-complexity dimensions

1. Review the document "Guide to selecting a Complex Text for Close Reading."
2. Look up the Lexile level using a tool such as Lexile.com.
3. Look up the word count.

Use the qualitative text-complexity rubrics to analyze the text's features

1. Review the qualitative text-complexity rubric for your genre and the document "Support for using the qualitative rubrics."
2. For each dimension of text-complexity, ask yourself, "What specific features of this text will be challenging for students?" and "According to the text-complexity rubric, where does this text seem to fall on the continuum from 'slightly complex' to 'exceedingly complex'?"
3. Jot your notes in the text-complexity analysis template.

Identify and sort the key vocabulary in your text

1. Review the document "Identifying and sorting high value vocabulary words."
2. Reread your text and earlier annotations, noting the Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words.
3. Note the "high value" words by asking yourself:
   - Which of these words are essential to understanding the text?
   - Which of these words have a high potential for appearing in future texts or in life?
   - Which of these words are inherently valuable teaching opportunities (e.g., are part of a word family, use common roots, prefixes and suffixes, etc.)?
4. Jot your notes in the vocabulary analysis quadrant template.

Determine your text's big takeaway

1. Use your text annotations and text complexity analysis to begin to identify the big takeaway in your text:
   - Why am I using this text?
   - What makes this text complex?
   - What do I really want students to get out of reading and rereading this piece?
   - What should students understand after they read this text closely?
   - What conclusion(s) should students draw from this text?
   - What do students need to understand about the text in order to draw these conclusions?
2. Ensure that your big takeaway is about the whole text! Use the Pathway from Fisher and Frey to guide you to key ideas about the whole text.
3. Vertically analyze the reading standards to find the "sweet spot" for the text and grade level.

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Common Core Shifts for English Language Arts/Literacy

1. Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic language**

Rather than focusing solely on the skills of reading and writing, the Standards highlight the growing complexity of the texts students must read to be ready for the demands of college and careers. The Standards build a staircase of text complexity so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. Closely related to text complexity—and inextricably connected to reading comprehension—is a focus on academic vocabulary: words that appear in a variety of content areas (such as *ignite* and *commit*).

2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in **evidence from text**, both literary and informational

The Standards place a premium on students writing to sources, i.e., using evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge or experience, the Standards expect students to answer questions that depend on their having read the text or texts with care. The Standards also require the cultivation of narrative writing throughout the grades, and in later grades a command of sequence and detail will be essential for effective argumentative and informational writing.

Likewise, the reading standards focus on students' ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas and details based on text evidence. Students should be able to answer a range of *text-dependent* questions, questions in which the answers require inferences based on careful attention to the text.

3. **Building knowledge** through **content-rich nonfiction**

Building knowledge through content rich non-fiction plays an essential role in literacy and in the Standards. In K–5, fulfilling the standards requires a 50–50 balance between informational and literary reading. Informational reading primarily includes content rich non-fiction in history/social studies, science and the arts; the K–5 Standards strongly recommend that students build coherent general knowledge both within each year and across years. In 6–12, ELA classes place much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. In grades 6–12, the Standards for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects ensure that students can independently build knowledge in these disciplines through reading and writing.

To be clear, the Standards do require substantial attention to literature throughout K–12, as half of the required work in K–5 and the core of the work of 6–12 ELA teachers.

What is the LearnZillion definition of close reading?

At LearnZillion, we are defining close reading as the process of reading and rereading a complex text over an extended period of time in order to develop grade level thinking skills, as well as word and world knowledge. In the LearnZillion close reading model, close reading lessons take place over a 5-day period. During this time, students explore and analyze the text at the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph/section, and whole text level with the goal of uncovering multiple layers of meaning through a scaffolded approach. Teachers play a critical role in the close reading process not only by posing carefully crafted and sequenced text-dependent questions and guiding productive discussions, but also through modeling, think-alouds, and direct instruction that is essential to developing student reading skills. The ultimate goal of close reading, in concert with other essential instructional practices, is to grow strong readers who are equipped to tackle complex text independently and who take joy in the process of reading, writing, and thinking about text.

LearnZillion Close Reading Lesson Plans have the following features:

- Close reading and re-reading of a text over five sessions.
- Lessons are ~45 minutes long.
- Texts used in lessons are short, complex texts (including picture books) or passages from a longer text, that fall within the recommended Lexile band of the given grade-level. Teachers play a critical role in supporting all students, regardless of their reading abilities, to access the text.
- Students engage in writing and speaking about the text and use evidence to justify and support ideas.
- Student engagement with the text is critical not only for making meaning of it but also for skill growth and mastery.
- Student mastery is measured through participation in accountable discussion and a range of written products, such as short written responses of one to ten sentences, longer written pieces, and other products such as notes and sketches.

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Example Text Complexity Analysis

Text complexity analysis			
Text and Author	When I Grow Up, I Want to be" - Margaret Webb Pressler	**Where to Access Text**	Reprinted by permission of the Washington Post Kid's Post, Attached.
Text Description			
This text is a non-fiction newspaper article that engages students' interest by asking, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" After a short introduction that sums up the main ideas of the article, the article profiles four adults (television reporter Eun Yang, brain surgeon Benjamin Carson, teacher Sheila Hensley, and monkey expert Russ Mittermeier) about what their dreams were when they were growing up and how they worked to accomplish their dreams. Each person is covered in his or her own section, including direct quotes from each person. The article does not have a conclusion.			
Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	950 - 4th Grade	**Text Length**	1647 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		**Text Structure/Organization**	
Meaning and central idea of the text (pursuing childhood dreams with perseverance leads to a successful career) is somewhat explicitly stated in the introduction and can be implied from the examples and context given in each person's section.		No graphics. Text feature used: headings (each person's profession and name). Headings contribute to understanding that each person has a successful career. Some explicit connections between the main idea and each person profiled. Exhibits traits common to newspaper articles. Each section of the text relates in chronological order the events of the person's life. Lots of quotations used.	
Prior Knowledge Demands		**Language Features**	
Everyday, practical knowledge of careers is necessary. Requires some discipline-specific knowledge of the different careers. No references to other texts or ideas.		Largely contemporary and conversational. Familiar and easy-to-understand, some discipline-specific words for each career area.	
Potential Reader/Task Challenges			
Engaging and accessible subject matter that is very emotional- and age-appropriate for 4th graders. Most students should have the experiences necessary to access the content of the article. The four people profiled represent diverse backgrounds. Finding the main idea of the text may be challenging since it must be inferred in each section and complied together for all four people.			
Big Takeaway			
Turning a dream into reality takes hard work and perseverance. The four professionals profiled in the article had to overcome many obstacles to achieve their childhood dreams, including poverty, learning disabilities, behavioral challenges, and people who said that they would never be successful. By taking risks, persevering, and staying focused, the individuals in the article prove, that "the difference between wanting to do something when you grow up, and actually doing it, is how hard you work for it."			

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Example Vocabulary Analysis

	Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete)	Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. there are multiple meanings and/or are part of a word family)
Words that can be determined in context	• Neurosurgeon (Tier 3) • Dyslexia (Tier 3) • Primates (Tier 3) • Lemur (Tier 3) • Jungle (Tier 2) • Endangered (Tier 2) • Uakari (Tier 3) • Microphone (Tier 2) • Trophy (Tier 2) • Amazon (Tier 2) • Endangered (Tier 2)	• Operates (Tier 2) • Pursue (Tier 2) • Bookworm (Tier 2) • Skyrocketed (Tier 2) • Misbehaved (Tier 2)
Words that cannot be determined in context	• Captivity (Tier 2) • Scholarships (Tier 2) • Tarzan (Tier 3) • Species (Tier 2) • Conservation	• Anchor (as in “news anchor”) (Tier 2) • Foundation (Tier 2) • Order (“order of mammals”) (Tier 3) • Order (as in, sequence) (Tier 2) • Impression (Tier 2)

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Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric[1]

LITERATURE

Text Title_____ Text Author_____

	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
TEXT STRUCTURE	○ **Organization:** Is intricate with regard to such elements as point of view, time shifts, multiple characters, storylines and detail ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, illustrations or graphics are essential for understanding the meaning of the text	○ **Organization:** May include subplots, time shifts and more complex characters ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, illustrations or graphics support or extend the meaning of the text	○ **Organization:** May have two or more storylines and occasionally be difficult to predict ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, a range of illustrations or graphics support selected parts of the text	○ **Organization:** Is clear, chronological or easy to predict ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, either illustrations directly support and assist in interpreting the text or are not necessary to understanding the meaning of the text
LANGUAGE FEATURES	○ **Conventionality**: Dense and complex; contains abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Complex, generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly complex sentences with several subordinate clauses or phrases; sentences often contain multiple concepts	○ **Conventionality**: Fairly complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Fairly complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words	○ **Conventionality**: Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning ○ **Vocabulary:** Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar or overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Primarily simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions	○ **Conventionality**: Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand ○ **Vocabulary:** Contemporary, familiar, conversational language ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly simple sentences
MEANING	○ **Meaning:** Multiple competing levels of meaning that are difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit or subtle, often ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text	○ **Meaning:** Multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify or separate; theme is implicit or subtle and may be revealed over the entirety of the text	○ **Meaning:** Multiple levels of meaning clearly distinguished from each other; theme is clear but may be conveyed with some subtlety	○ **Meaning:** One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text.
KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores complex, sophisticated or abstract themes; experiences portrayed are distinctly different from the common reader ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Many references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores themes of varying levels of complexity or abstraction; experiences portrayed are uncommon to most readers ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Some references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores several themes; experiences portrayed are common to many readers ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Few references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores a single theme; experiences portrayed are everyday and common to most readers ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** No references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements

[1] Adapted from Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards, Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Science and Technical Subjects (2010).

Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Text Title_____ Text Author_____

	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
TEXT STRUCTURE	○ **Organization:** Connections between an extensive range of ideas, processes or events are deep, intricate and often ambiguous; organization is intricate or discipline-specific ○ **Text Features**: If used, are essential in understanding content ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, intricate, extensive graphics, tables, charts, etc., are extensive are integral to making meaning of the text; may provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text	○ **Organization:** Connections between an expanded range ideas, processes or events are often implicit or subtle; organization may contain multiple pathways or exhibit some discipline-specific traits ○ **Text Features**: If used, directly enhance the reader's understanding of content ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, graphics, tables, charts, etc. support or are integral to understanding the text	○ **Organization:** Connections between some ideas or events are implicit or subtle; organization is evident and generally sequential or chronological ○ **Text Features**: If used, enhance the reader's understanding of content ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, graphic, pictures, tables, and charts, etc. are mostly supplementary to understanding the text	○ **Organization:** Connections between ideas, processes or events are explicit and clear; organization of text is chronological, sequential or easy to predict ○ **Text Features**: If used, help the reader navigate and understand content but are not essential to understanding content. ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, graphic, pictures, tables, and charts, etc. are simple and unnecessary to understanding the text but they may support and assist readers in understanding the written text
LANGUAGE FEATURES	○ **Conventionality**: Dense and complex; contains considerable abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Complex, generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly complex sentences with several subordinate clauses or phrases and transition words; sentences often contains multiple concepts	○ **Conventionality**: Fairly complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Fairly complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words	○ **Conventionality**: Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning ○ **Vocabulary:** Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Primarily simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions	○ **Conventionality**: Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand ○ **Vocabulary:** Contemporary, familiar, conversational language ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly simple sentences
PURPOSE	○ **Purpose:** Subtle and intricate, difficult to determine; includes many theoretical or abstract elements	○ **Purpose:** Implicit or subtle but fairly easy to infer; more theoretical or abstract than concrete	○ **Purpose:** Implied but easy to identify based upon context or source	○ **Purpose:** Explicitly stated, clear, concrete, narrowly focused
KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on extensive levels of discipline-specific or theoretical knowledge; includes a range of challenging abstract concepts ○ **Intertextuality:** Many references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on moderate levels of discipline-specific or theoretical knowledge; includes a mix of recognizable ideas and challenging abstract concepts ○ **Intertextuality:** Some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on common practical knowledge and some discipline-specific content knowledge; includes a mix of simple and more complicated, abstract ideas ○ **Intertextuality:** Few references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on everyday, practical knowledge; includes simple, concrete ideas ○ **Intertextuality:** No references or allusions to other texts, or outside ideas, theories, etc.

Support for using the Qualitative Rubrics

Meaning/Central Ideas	Text Structure/Organization
• How dense and complex are the ideas presented in the text? • How many levels of meaning are included? • Are the levels of meaning clearly stated? • Is the purpose of the text clear? • How clear is the theme or message? How hard does the reader have to work to determine theme or message?	• How simple or complex is the structure and the connections between ideas? • Does the author follow or bend the rules of a specific genre? • Does the text follow traditional text structures that the reader could use to support their reading? • Does the narrative follow chronological order, or is time used more complexly? • How reliable is the narrator? Does the narrator stay consistent through the text? Does the narrator have a complete or a limited perspective? • What text features are included to help the reader navigate the text? • What graphics or illustrations are included, how easy are they to understand, and how vital are they to understanding the main ideas of the text?
Prior Knowledge Demands	**Language Features**
• How much content knowledge or background knowledge does a reader need to have to access the text? • Would a typical student at this grade level have gained this knowledge in his or her personal life or academic experiences or is the story clearly fantastical? • Is the cultural knowledge/perspective included in the text likely to match up with the cultural experiences of a typical student at this grade level? • Does the text require the reader to be familiar with other texts?	• How conventional and clear is the language of the text? • Is the text written in standard English, or is a variation (such as regional dialects or vernaculars) used? • Is the language modern and conversational, or is it archaic, formal, scholarly, or from only one certain time period? • Are literary devices (such as metaphors, personification, symbolism, irony, idioms, or clichés) used? • Are the sentences straightforward or complex?

This document includes information adapted from Rigorous Reading by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher (2013), Falling in Love with Close Reading by Christopher Lehman and Kate Roberts (2013), and Student Achievement Partners' "Companion to the Qualitative Dimensions Scale." See these resources for further information.

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Identifying and sorting high value vocabulary words

As the Common Core State Standards demand the use of more complex texts in classrooms across the country, it is imperative to rethink one of the biggest obstacles to comprehension--vocabulary. Making meaning of text is directly connected to knowing the meaning of words as they are used in context. Yet, so may of us struggle to find the time or an effective means for teaching vocabulary to our students regardless of their individual reading level. Close reading offers teachers a new pathway to incorporating more vocabulary into instruction and student learning.

Three Tiers of words

Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards notes that the three "tiers" of words outlined by Isabel L. Beck, et. al. (2002, 2008) are a helpful frame for sorting vocabulary words that students will encounter while reading.

- Tier 1: These words are common in everyday speech, typically learned in early grades, and will be very familiar to most native English speakers.
    - *Examples: house, walk, skinny, red*

- Tier 2: Sometimes called "general academic vocabulary" these words are more likely to appear in written texts than in speech and often represent more nuanced or precise language
    - *Examples: dwelling, traipse, gaunt, crimson*

- Tier 3: These are referred to in the Standards as domain-specific words and are those specific to a particular topic or field of study. They are often key to understanding information and concepts in non-fiction texts and are frequently defined within the text or text features
    - *Examples: ecosystem, bipedalism, cachectic, erythematous*

While all three tiers are critical for readers' comprehension, Tier 2 and Tier 3 words typically demand more deliberate teaching time.

Steps for identifying worthy vocabulary words in a complex text

1. Reread your text and earlier annotations noting the Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words.
2. Note the "high value" words by asking yourself:
    - "Which of these words are essential to understanding the text?"
    - "Which of these words have a high potential for appearing in future texts or in life?"
    - "Which of these words are inherently valuable teaching opportunities (e.g., are part of a word family, use common roots, prefixes and suffixes, etc.)?"
3. Jot your notes in the vocabulary analysis quadrant template.

Further Reading

Common Core State Standards for English Language and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards, "Vocabulary," pages 32-35.

Liben, David. "Which Words do I Teach and How?" Student Achievement Partners, 2013, http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Liben_Vocabulary_Article.pdf

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Example vocabulary quadrant from the text "When I grow up, I want to be" (4th grade)

	Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete)	**Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. words with multiple meanings and/or that are part of a word family)**
Words that can be determined in context	• Neurosurgeon (Tier 3) • Dyslexia (Tier 3) • Primates (Tier 3) • Lemur (Tier 3) • Jungle (Tier 2) • Endangered (Tier 2) • Uakari (Tier 3) • Microphone (Tier 2) • Trophy (Tier 2) • Amazon (Tier 2) Although these words can likely be determined in context, given their concrete and singular nature, they do not need excessive exploration or classroom time. The teacher will give definitions to students directly during the read aloud. Depending on grade-level, students may define these words using notes on the text as they follow along during the read aloud.	• Operates (Tier 2) • Pursue (Tier 2) • Bookworm (Tier 2) • Skyrocketed (Tier 2) • Misbehaved (Tier 2) Vocabulary in this quadrant can be defined in context and offers value to building student word knowledge because they are likely to have multiple meanings or occur frequently in text and life. These words may be used to teach students how to use context clues to define an unfamiliar word and are the subject of a text-dependent question (e.g., "What does the word…mean in that sentence? How do you know?").
Words that cannot be determined in context	• Captivity (Tier 2) • Scholarships (Tier 2) • Tarzan (Tier 3) • Species (Tier 2) Like the words in the quadrant above, these words generally will have a singular and concrete meaning. However, they typically cannot be determined in context. They also may not offer as much value in building word knowledge, so teachers may simply give students the meaning quickly and directly.	• Anchor (news anchor) (Tier 2) • Foundation (Tier 2) • Order ("order of mammals") (Tier 3) • Order (as in, sequence) (Tier 2) • Impression (Tier 2) This group of words cannot be defined using context and will usually have multiple meanings. These are the words that demand teaching and discussion. They can be explored as part of a text-dependent question response or directly as the subject of a text-dependent question. This work builds both word and world knowledge.

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Annotation: A critical close reading tool

What is annotating?

Annotating is the process of marking and taking notes **on a text** to make the most of the reading process. Usually this includes highlighting, underlining, circling, arrows, and making notes in the form of paraphrasing, summary, or original ideas.

Why annotate?

Whether you're annotating as an adult reader, as a teacher planning your close reading, or guiding your *students* to annotate, annotation is an important part of finding meaning in the text and a critical element of close reading. It serves to deepen comprehension by thinking beyond the words and it makes it easy to go back to the text to find important information or key moments. This supports Common Core instructional shifts such as close reading and writing-about-reading. As a teacher, it's not only important to help your students annotate, it is also critical that ***you*** annotate the texts you plan to teach as an early step in planning for close reading.

How do you annotate?

There are many approaches to annotating a text, but the key is that your annotations should go beyond noting the plot or the important facts. Your annotations should dig below the surface to reveal your observations about connections across the text, repeated themes, symbols, words, questions that you still have, and the bigger points the author is trying to make. Here's one process that you may want to try:

- Read the text the first time through, noting unfamiliar or difficult words or concepts.

- Reread the text many times, each time with a different lens. Depending on your purpose for reading, lenses you apply might include:
    - Important ideas, key understandings, big takeaways, deeper meaning, author's message
    - Development of ideas or arguments across a text
    - Relationships between ideas and elements in the text or story (characters, setting, plot, etc.)
    - Significant craft moves such as organization and structure, use of metaphor, imagery, symbolism, tone, and mood
    - Vocabulary and word choice
    - Use of rhyme or rhythm
    - Use of illustrations or other text features
    - Common Core State Standards in your grade-level. Are there any standards that the text simply "screams" to teach?

- When reading longer texts, it's important to annotate across the text. Paraphrasing or summarizing key sections or chapters, jotting down what stands out, or even creating a new "title" for each chapter can help readers pick up the text later and remember its meaning so far.

- Develop a system of annotation that is meaningful to you. For example, check marks could indicate ideas or arguments you find particularly strong, stars could mark evidence, boxes or circles could indicate Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, exclamation points could note important or surprising moments, and question marks highlight confusing places.

What does annotation look like?

What annotation looks like can vary widely depending on the person and the text. For example, when reading poetry, annotation tends to be much more dense, whereas in longer texts, there may be less annotation. The bottom line, however, is that annotating a text is a personal process that reflects the individual reader's approach to making meaning of text. The following page shows an example annotated text, and more examples can be found online.

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Speech on the Assassination of Martin Luther King

By Robert F. Kennedy

Delivered on April 4, 1968 in Indianapolis, Indiana

audience

In April 1968, Robert F. Kennedy was running for President of the United States. His older brother, former President John F. Kennedy, had been shot and killed four-and-a-half years earlier in Dallas, Texas. While on the way to speak to a large, mostly African American crowd in downtown Indianapolis, Kennedy learned of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Many in the crowd had not yet heard the news, and Kennedy's staff worried that it could spark riots and violence. Kennedy delivered the following speech. While the news of King's death did result in rioting in cities across the country, Indianapolis remained relatively calm. Two months later, Kennedy himself was shot and killed in California.[1]

How is the meaning of the speech impacted knowing RFK is assassinated months later?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm only going to talk to you just for a minute or so this evening, because I have some -- some very sad news for all of you -- Could you lower those signs, please? -- I have some very sad news for all of you, and, I think, sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world; and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee.

audience

from - so violently killed

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort. In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it's perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black -- considering the evidence evidently is that there were white people who were responsible -- you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge.

what does this mean?

We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization -- black people amongst blacks, and white amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion, and love.

difference?

difference?

For those of you who are black and are tempted to fill with -- be filled with hatred and mistrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man.

Why not 'and'?

But we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond, or go beyond these rather difficult times.

what are the dashes for?

My favorite poem, my -- my favorite poet was Aeschylus. And he once wrote:

> *Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget*
> *falls drop by drop upon the heart,*
> *until, in our own despair,* - uses 'despite' play
> *against our will,*
> *comes wisdom*
> *through the awful grace of God.* ← oxymoron

from Agamemnon Ancient Greek

What is RFK's point? he can't generalize about killer?

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love, and wisdom, and

Rule of 3

contrast

compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black. -speaks to everybody's pain.

So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King -- yeah, it's true -- but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love -- a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times. We've had difficult times in the past, but we -- and we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; and it's not the end of disorder. Rule of 3/ tone

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings that abide in our land.

the vision

And let's dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.

Thank you very much.

same contrast/word choice

appeal to a higher force

Reviscate 'difficult times' to live the vision of 'justice, understanding & compassion' - the goal of MLK.

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[1] Boomhower, Ray E. (2008). *Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Guide to facilitating successful text talks with your colleagues

Why start the close reading planning process with text talks?

The Common Core State Standards demand that students read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts and speak and write logically, using evidence to support their conclusions, about the text. The first, and oft-overlooked, step to moving students to meet the Standards, however, is making sure that we as instructional leaders fully understand the meaning of texts ourselves. Implementing a text-talk with your colleagues is a great place to start this process and help you prepare for teaching a complex text at the level of the Standards. Sometimes, this process can reveal new or more nuanced understandings of a text that you have taught for many years. By tapping into the wisdom and expertise of your colleagues, text talks can jump start your planning for a given text.

Step 1: Select a text and a "team"

We recommend working in grade-level or grade-band teams of three to six colleagues. Working with a team that represents different subject areas and experience levels will add to the richness of your discussion. All Common Core State Standards support literacy, so don't overlook your colleagues in other content areas and ancillary subjects such as art and physical education. There are many different factors that go into selecting a text for a text-talk. In addition to text-complexity considerations, you will want choose a text that is short enough for you and your colleagues. You may also want to focus on a text that you plan on teaching in the upcoming weeks.

Step 2: Read the text independently, annotating

Share the text with your team at least a few days in advance of the text talk and set the expectation that everyone will arrive at the talk having read and annotated the text at least once. The more deeply and thoroughly your colleagues have read the text, the more successful your talk will be.

Step 3: Come together for a text talk

We've found that the following agenda works well (times are suggestions only and can vary depending on time available):

I) Welcome your team to the text talk (1 minute)
II) Introduce the objectives of the text talk (5 minutes)
   a. Enjoying the text together
   b. Completing a text-complexity analysis
   c. Identifying the big takeaways in the text and the textual evidence that led to this thinking
III) Start by discussing the text as adult readers (take your teacher hat off) using the guiding questions on the next page (15-25 minutes).
IV) Move into a discussion of text-complexity using the qualitative rubrics as necessary and the guiding questions on the next page (15-25 minutes). Chart your thinking on a text-analysis template.
V) Reflect together (10 minutes).
   a. How did the text talk change your initial conclusions about the text?
   b. Did your understanding of text-complexity shift?
   c. What next steps can we take to integrate these insights into our instruction?

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Guiding Questions for Text Talks

Use the questions below as a guide and jumping off place for exploring your text.

Take your teacher-hat off:

- What sections or moments of the text speak to you? Why?
- What choices did the author make about introducing information or telling the story?
- What "craft moves" (e.g. structure, word choice, figurative language, etc.) stand out to you?
- How does the author develop ideas, arguments, or themes across the text?
- How does the author use words and phrases for effect? What other literary devices jump out at you?
- What or who in the text do you want to know more about?
- Are there parts where you needed to slow down or reread? What caused you to do this?
- Why did the author write this text in this way?
- What message, theme, or central idea do you take away from this text?

With your teacher hat on:

- What is the big takeaway that you would want a student to understand after studying this text?
- Which parts of the text are the most challenging? Where will students struggle the most? Why?
- What questions are worth exploring further?
- What is left unsaid in the text? Why?
- What choices did the author make in the way that he/she introduced information and/or told the story? Why did he/she make these choices? What is their effect?
- What does the text simply "scream" for you to teach?
- As a reader, what do you gravitate towards in this text? What is most interesting to you? Why?
- What standards in your grade-level seem particularly well-suited to teach using this text?

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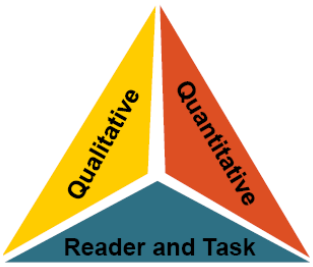
Guide to Selecting a Complex Text for Close Reading: 4 Considerations

1. Consider text complexity

- Three measures of text complexity:
    - Qualitative
    - Quantitative
    - Reader & Task



- Hard words don't automatically mean that a text is complex! The difficulty of the words (readability) is just one measure of text complexity. A text can contain words that are easier to read and still be complex due to its qualitative measures or due to the specific reader or task.

- Become familiar with the levels of text complexity for your grade level band.

- Become familiar with common texts within your grade level band.

- Complex texts should stretch towards the higher end of the grade level complexity band to ensure that all students are given access to and are being taught how to comprehend grade-level texts. If a complex text is beyond a student's independent reading level, the teacher will use instructional scaffolds to ensure access to the text.

> *"Complex texts require a slower labor. Readers can't proceed to the next paragraph without grasping the previous one, they can't glide over unfamiliar words and phrases, and they can't forget what they read four pages earlier. They must double back, discern ambiguities, follow tricky transitions, and keep a dictionary close at hand. Complex texts force readers to acquire the knack of slow linear reading. If they rarely encounter complex texts, young students won't even realize that such a reading tack is a necessary means of learning. Unready students might be just as intelligent and motivated as the ready ones are, but they don't possess the habits and strategies needed to carry on."*
>
> Mark Bauerlein, "Too Dumb for Complex Texts?" Educational Leadership, February 2011

A Balance of Three Measures of Text Complexity

Measure	How Measured?	Example
Qualitative	**By an attentive reader:** Levels of meaning/purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity, knowledge demands, emotional/age-appropriateness	Qualitative Measures Rubric for Literary and Informational text Fountas & Pinnell Levels
Quantitative	**By computer software:** Readability measures, including word and sentence analysis	Lexile (see "Lexile Ranges" chart on the following page") Fry ATOS
Matching Text to Reader and Task	**By a skilled educator:** Considerations of reader and considerations of task	Motivation Knowledge Experiences Emotional/age-appropriateness Purpose of task Complexity of task Complexity of questions posed

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Common Core State Standards Text Complexity Bands and Associated Lexile Ranges (in Lexiles)
From the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts Literacy in History/social studies, science, and technical subjects, Appendix A

Text Complexity Grade Band in the Standards	Old Lexile Ranges	Lexile Ranges Aligned to College and Career Readiness (CCR) expectations**
K-1*	N/A	N/A
2-3	450-725	450-790
4-5	645-845	770-980
6-8	860-1010	955-1155
9-10	960-1115	1080-1305
11-CCR	1070-1220	1215-1355

*Note that there are not Lexile ranges for grades K-1, often texts for these grades are not suitable for quantitative analysis. Teachers of primary grades should conduct close readings in a read aloud format.

**Certain genres of text, particularly poetry, are not suitable for quantitative analysis. Rich close reads of these texts can and should still be done. For poetry, teachers should heavily weigh reader and task considerations when selecting a poem.

2. Consider your readers

- Reflect on your students as readers, including studying their reading data.
- What types and kinds of texts have been complex for your students? Why?
- What specific reading tasks have been complex for your students? Why?
- In close reading, students should struggle and grapple with texts that are increasingly complex for them. This is an opportunity for students to take reading strategies and turn them into automatic skills through instruction and practice.

3. Consider worth and length of text

- Does the text you're considering merit a deep dive and require repeated readings for true comprehension?
- An ideal text for close reading is rich and contains many teaching and thinking possibilities.
- Not every text should be read through close reading. Close reading is one structure within a teaching repertoire, and some wonderful texts that you love may not be good candidates for a close reading.
- Short texts work best! In a complex text, the reader will need to engage in multiple readings. Constraining the length of the text allows the reader to focus on more in a shorter period of time.
- Teachers may focus on a shorter section of a longer text. Complexity levels for the longer text may not be the same for the short section you choose. Be sure to evaluate the short section on its own merits.

4. Consider purpose for using text

- What units, genres, and/or kinds of texts will you be teaching next?
- Are there any genres or sub-genres that have been particularly complex for your students?
- Is there a genre or kind of text you've already taught that you'd like to teach again or that, based on student achievement, you need to teach again?
- Is there a genre or kind of text you've been unsuccessful with?

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Defending your text choice: Presenting

Selecting a worthwhile, complex text is one of the most important and difficult decisions you will make as you develop close reading instructional materials. Once you have selected a text that you think you want to use, you will want to get some feedback on that choice from a thought partner. Before sitting down with your partner to "defend" your text choice, take some time to answer the questions on the guide below.

Focus question	Your quick notes
Why did you choose this text? What makes it worthy of reading and rereading with your students?	
What instructional goals do you have for using this text?	
What choices did the author make? Why? What is the effect?	
Which parts are most challenging? Why?	
What does the text "scream" for you to teach?	

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Defending your text choice: Listening

Help your partner by listening to their "defense" of the text selected for close reading. Use the guiding questions below to as you listen and as a frame for providing your partner with feedback.

Focus question	Your quick notes
Are your partner's answers specific to this text? Do they use evidence from this text?	
Does your partner seem to have a clear idea of why this text is worth teaching and how it will help him/her accomplish instructional goals with students?	
Does the level of rigor match what is expected for students at this grade level?	
Has your partner thought about what makes this text complex and challenging?	
Is your partner considering multiple aspects of the whole text?	

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Annotated Text Complexity Analysis Template

Text complexity analysis			
Created by:	*Your first and last name goes here.*	**Event/Date:**	*E.g., TeachFest Connecticut: Summer Academy, July '14*
Text and Author	*Insert the full title of your text and its author (E.g., "A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 1, Scene 1" by William Shakespeare).*	**Where to Access Text**	*Directions for how teachers can find this text (E.g., "Download this text from Time for Kids" or "Check out from your school or local library").*

Text Description
Enter a brief description of this text here, just enough for someone who is unfamiliar with the text to get a basic summary and understand any major context or critical background.

Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	*Insert Lexile Level and grade. Lexile levels can be found online using a source such as Lexile.com. Publishers of trade books also often include this information in the book jacket or make it available online.*	**Text Length**	*Insert approximate text length in words, if possible.*

Qualitative *Use the Qualitative Measures Rubrics to determine the particular features of your text that make it complex.*	
Meaning/Central Ideas	**Text Structure/Organization**
What are the big ideas in the text? Is there a single meaning, or are there multiple levels of meaning? How so? Are the big ideas stated explicitly? Can the ideas be easily inferred or are they difficult to determine?	*How is the text organized? How sophisticated are the means of relaying the information or story? Are there graphics to support or extend the meaning? Are connections between ideas explicit or implied?*
Prior Knowledge Demands	**Language Features**
Does comprehension of the text demand prior knowledge of particular events, processes, topics, or life experiences? To what extent does perspective of the author or characters shape the reader's ability to make meaning of the text or situation? Is there content or discipline-specific knowledge readers must have? Are there cultural references or literary allusions? Will familiarity with a particular genre (e.g., myths) or type (e.g., scientific reporting) of writing assist the reader?	*What language features do you notice? Is the language literal or are there figurative, connotative, or ironic uses? Is the language contemporary or archaic? Overall, is the vocabulary likely to be familiar to students or are there many new words?*

Potential Reader/Task Challenges
What motivational, emotional, comprehension skill, knowledge, or experience challenges does this task pose for readers at your grade-level? Thinking about the big ideas in the text and potential questions/tasks that may address those ideas, what challenges will this text pose for readers at your grade-level?

Big Takeaway
What is the key idea that you want students to get out of the text when they finish reading? If you see more than one, try to focus on the one that seems most relevant for your instructional goals and your students. Big takeaways often include: theme, author's bias, author's point of view/purpose, relationships between ideas, central ideas, procedures/processes, author's claims, character's relationships, a powerful craft moves, or relationships among ideas in text.

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Annotated Vocabulary Analysis Template

	Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete)	Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. words with multiple meanings and/or that are part of a word family)
Words that can be determined in context	• *What words in the text can be determined in context?* • *And/or, which words have a concrete and singular definition and do not demand lengthy exploration?* • *Which words are you likely to "give" to students in-the-moment with a brief definition?*	• *What words in the text can be determined in context but also present opportunities to build student word knowledge?* • *Which words have multiple meanings or are likely to occur frequently in the future?*
Words that cannot be determined in context	• *What words in the text have a singular or concrete meaning but cannot be determined in context?* • *What words cannot be determined in context and are unlikely to appear frequently in the future?* • *Which words are you likely to "give" to students quickly and directly?*	• *What words in the text cannot be determined in context and have multiple meanings?* • *Which words are you most likely to spend class time exploring?* • *Which words present opportunities to build student word and world knowledge for the future?*

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Text Complexity Analysis Template

Text complexity analysis			
Created by:		**Event/Date:**	
Text and Author		**Where to Access Text**	

Text Description

Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level		**Text Length**	

Qualitative	
Meaning/Central Ideas	**Text Structure/Organization**
Prior Knowledge Demands	**Language Features**

Potential Reader/Task Challenges

Big Takeaway

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Vocabulary Analysis Template

	Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete)	Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. words with multiple meanings and/or that are part of a word family)
Words that can be determined in context		
Words that cannot be determined in context		

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Big Takeaways

A big takeaway is the key idea that the teacher most wants students to get out of the text when they are finished reading. It is such a big understanding that if the student misses it, they will miss the point of reading the text! Many texts that are worthy of close reading and rereading have more than one big takeaway. One of the teacher's jobs is to determine one big takeaway to focus on, dependent on their purpose for reading the text with students. Think about the process of comprehending a text like climbing a mountain. The summit of the mountain is the big takeaway.

Big takeaways often include:

- theme
- author's point of view/purpose
- central idea
- author's claims
- a powerful craft move
- author's bias
- relationships between ideas
- procedures/processes
- character's relationships
- relationships among ideas in text

Examples of Big Takeaways:

- In *Little Red Riding-Hood*, author E. Louise Smythe teaches the lesson that you shouldn't talk to strangers through a series of events in which the characters' actions lead to Red Riding-Hood and Grandma being eaten by the wolf.
- Turning a dream into reality takes hard work and perseverance. The four professionals profiled in the article "When I Grow Up" had to overcome many obstacles to achieve their childhood dreams, including poverty, learning disabilities, behavioral challenges, and people who said that they would never be successful. By taking risks, persevering, and staying focused, the individuals in the article prove, that "the difference between wanting to do something when you grow up, and actually doing it, is how hard you work for it."
- Robert F. Kennedy made this speech in Indianapolis in front of a large African American audience who expected a campaign message; instead they were told of the assassination of Martin Luther King. Indianapolis was quiet that night while black communities in the rest of the country raged violently. Kennedy's speech had such a powerful impact because RFK was able to identify with his audience and send a very succinct and meaningful message.
- Throughout *All Summer in a Day,* Ray Bradbury uses figurative language and unexpected craft moves such as onomatopoeia, untagged dialogue, and personification in order to bring the setting to life. Bradbury casts the "raining world" of Venus in a role as important as any of the human characters in the story. Through his description and word choice, the setting becomes a pivotal force that drives nearly every interaction and moment in the plot.
- Leo is affected very differently by the different settings in the story. He has drastically different thoughts, words, and actions when he is at school than when he is at home and in the car. At school he is "slower than the rest" but outside of school he is fast, even though he doesn't think of himself as such.

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Steps for Determining a Big Takeaway

1. Use your text annotations and text complexity analysis to begin to identify the big takeaway in your text:
   - Why am I using this text?
   - What makes this text complex?
   - What do I really want students to get out of reading and rereading this piece?
   - What should students understand after they read this text closely?
   - What conclusion(s) should students draw from this text?
   - What do students need to understand about the text in order to draw these conclusions?

2. Ensure that your big takeaway is about the whole text! Use the Pathway from Fisher and Frey to guide you to key ideas about the whole text.

   Word -> Sentence -> Paragraph -> Chunks -> Entire Text -> Across Texts

3. Vertically analyze the reading standards to find the "sweet spot" for the text and grade level.
   - Look at your idea for your big takeaway,
   - Ask, "What reading, analytical, or thinking skills did I have to apply in order to arrive at this understanding?" and "What comprehension skills did I need in order to draw these conclusions?"
   - Jot down the skills.
   - Review the standards at your grade level, looking for the key nouns/verbs/expectations that align with your list of skills. Especially focus on standards 2-9, since standard 1 is implicit in every question.
   - Once you have a standard that the takeaway addresses, do a vertical analysis by looking at the corresponding standards in the grade above and below asking, "What is the sweet spot for my grade-level?"
   - Reread the original takeaway asking, "Does this understanding as written really require the student to meet the grade-level standard?" Revise language of takeaway if necessary.

An example of vertical standards analysis:

Big Takeaway Idea: Throughout Chapter 1 of Charlotte's Web, Fern Arable is already set up by E.B. White to be a kind and thoughtful character. As an example of this, she convinces her father to not kill the pig, Wilbur.

Skills Needed: Name character traits that the character exhibits; provide an example.

3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
RL.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.	**RL.3** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).	**RL.3** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Revised, Standards-Aligned Big Takeaway:
In Chapter 1 of Charlotte's Web, E.B. White establishes that Fern Arable is thoughtful, persistent, and passionate. She asks her father, "If I had been born small, would you have killed me?", which helps to convince her father to not kill the pig, Wilbur. Fern's reaction to being allowed to keep Wilbur as a pet shows her to be responsible, caring, and loving. For example, she teaches Wilbur how to drink milk from a bottle as though he were an "infant." At school, as she daydreams about her new pet, Fern is revealed to be a dreamer with an imagination.

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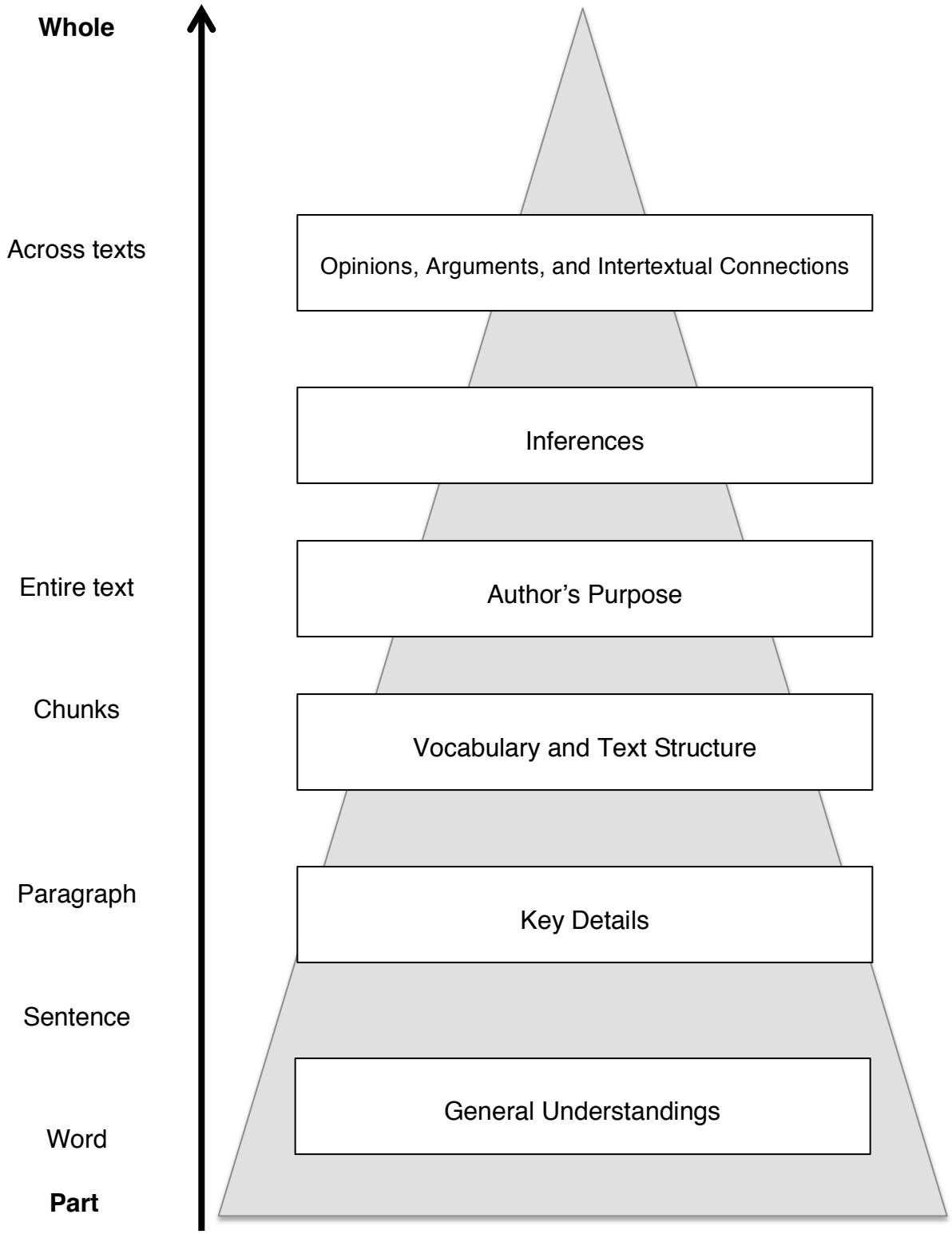
Pathways for Considering Ideas in Texts



Adapted from: Frey, Nancy and Douglas Fisher, *Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts*, Corwin Literacy, London: 2013. Page 52.

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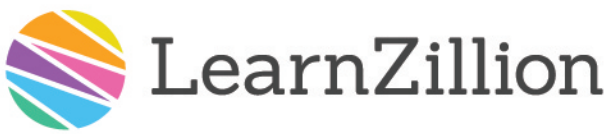
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