

# Text Complexity Resource: Information Sheet



## ELA Supporting Document: Text Complexity

### How was this resource developed?

As the Kansas State Department of Education's English Language Arts (ELA) team began to review revisions made to English Language Arts Standards in 2017, it became evident that while there was a strong emphasis on text complexity as it related to each grade level band, there were not many quick references for teachers regarding text complexity. While the pyramid on the right is the leading image associated with text complexity, it was difficult for teachers to find a definition of each piece that was easy and digestible. Two teachers on the ELA leadership team have since worked on a resource for Kansas teachers that not only defines each piece of the triangle but leads teachers through how to select text that is not only grade-level appropriate but is reviewed through the lens of its inherent student needs and considerations.

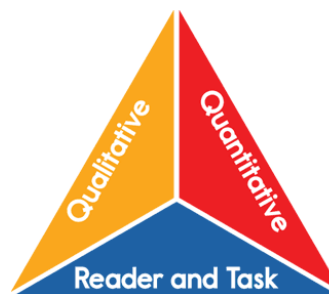
The intention of this resource is that teachers can use it to help select texts that are grade and student appropriate that can be taught in such a way that students can be challenged. While the textbook for a district may detail the Lexile and/or themes of a story, a text cannot divulge the needs for particular students. Only teachers can evaluate the reader and task element of any given text.

### How should these documents be used?

The text complexity infographic and teacher question infographic were made to help teachers not only better understand what text complexity is and means, but to also provide teachers a jumping off point when trying to determine if a text is appropriate for their classroom.

To begin, teachers should review the text complexity explanation guide to garner a clearer understanding of each component of the text complexity triangle. While many teachers are familiar with the quantitative piece of the triangle in the form of Lexile Scores, teachers often struggle to define the qualitative elements of a text.

This document should help to inform teachers of qualitative elements of a text for review before use. Additionally, this document is meant to highlight the many areas of consideration regarding your audience - the students.



Thus, knowing how to evaluate that part of the text complexity triangle assists teachers in choosing the literature for their class that is relevant, rigorous, culturally responsive and will help build positive and academic relationships with students.

It was with this knowledge that the ELA teachers began crafting the two text complexity documents:

1. One to help explain text complexity and
2. One to guide teachers through the process of evaluating a text for classroom use.

Once teachers have a deeper understanding of what text complexity is, it is time to begin applying its principles to their method of text selection. However, when selecting a text, teachers can have questions that impact their process. In order to provide teachers with answers to some of those frequently asked questions and accompanying resources, the teacher question infographic can be used. This document will not only provide a quick answer to regular issues faced by teachers, but it also has links to outside resources that can work to provide examples or supports for teachers moving through the process of selecting grade-appropriate texts.

## What do I need to know about Text Complexity?

**Quantitative:** Quantitative analysis of a text means looking at components that can be counted, such as sentence length, syntax, vocabulary and the number of rare words. This is typically a computer analysis that results in a numerical rating, such as Lexile or Flesch-Kincaid.

**Qualitative:** Qualitative analysis of a text means looking at its purpose and meaning along with the structure of the text and the knowledge demand it will put on students.

**Reader:** Aligning a reader with a complex text means analyzing what the reader will bring to the text. This means analyzing components such as their background knowledge and motivation in order to determine the level of challenge for an individual students.

**Task:** Task analysis means looking at how students will use a given text. The task is generally most well-known to the teacher.

## What are some considerations for planning with Text Complexity in mind?

**Quantitative:** Look at the sentence length, syntax, vocabulary level and number of rare words.

**Qualitative:** Examine the purpose and meaning of text, knowledge demand, levels of meaning, language clarity and structure of the text.

**Reader:** Determine the background knowledge and motivation of each individual reader.

**Task:** Evaluate how readers will be expected to interact with the text.

Consider the following as you plan with Text Complexity in mind:

1. The purpose and complexity of the text;
2. The nature of the task set forth (how students will interact with the text);
3. The level of challenge the text will present;
4. The level of support each student will need; and
5. Your students as readers.

## Resources:

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2016) *Text complexity: Stretching Readers with Texts and Tasks* Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin.

English Language Arts Standards » Standard 10: Range, Quality, & Complexity » Measuring Text Complexity: Three Factors. (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literac/standard-10-range-quality-complexity/measuring-text-complexity-three-factors/>

Text Complexity. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://achievethecore.org/page/2725/text-complexity>

For more information, contact:



Sarah Perryman  
Education Program Consultant, ELA  
[sperryman@ksde.org](mailto:sperryman@ksde.org)  
785-296-1074

Career, Standards and Assessment Services (CSAS)  
Kansas State Department of Education  
900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 653

[www.ksde.org](http://www.ksde.org)

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