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Working Together for Student Success

Qualitative Features of Text Complexity Explained for Nonfiction

Accessible Features	Complex Features
Background Knowledge	
How much background knowledge is necessary to understand the text? *(Consider content-specific knowledge and references/allusions to other works)*	
O Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required	O Extensive, perhaps specialized discipline-specific content knowledge required
O Low intertextuality (few if any references to/citations of other texts)	O High intertextuality (many references to/citations of other texts)
Purpose	
How clear are the purpose, point of view, and central idea of the text? *(Consider if they are explicitly stated or implicit)*	
O Explicitly stated purpose	O Implicit purpose, may be hidden or obscure
Text Structure	
How is the text structured? *(Consider if it is a familiar structure [e.g., chronological] or a more complex structure that may be unfamiliar to students at this level)*	
O Simple	O Complex
O Explicit	O Implicit
O Conventional	O Unconventional
O Traits of a common genre or subgenre	O Traits specific to a particular discipline
Language Features (continued on next page)	
What are the language features of the text? *(Consider if the language used is mostly literal or figurative, clear or abstract, familiar/contemporary or archaic/jargon)*	
O Literal	O Figurative or ironic
O Clear	O Ambiguous or purposefully misleading
O Contemporary, familiar	O Archaic or otherwise unfamiliar
O Conversational	O General academic or domain specific vocabulary
O Light vocabulary load, few unfamiliar or academic words[1]	O Many words unfamiliar and high academic vocabulary present

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[1] While vocabulary can be measured by quantifiable means, it is still a feature for careful consideration when selecting texts. A helpful tool for evaluating academic vocabulary is located here: http://achievethecore.org/academic-word-finder/

⭘ Sentence structure straightforward[2]	⭘ Complex and varied sentence structures
Illustrations/graphics	
How are illustrations/graphics (if included) used? *(Consider if the illustrations/graphics add clarification or add to the complexity)*	
⭘ Simple graphics	⭘ Sophisticated graphics
⭘ Graphics unnecessary or merely supplemental to understanding	⭘ Graphics essential to understanding the text and may provide information not elsewhere provided

Quantitative Measures

Grade Band	ATOS	Degrees of Power®	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework®	Reading Maturity	Text Evaluator
2nd-3rd	2.75-5.14	42-54	1.98-5.34	420-820	3.53-6.13	100-590
4th-5th	4.97-7.03	52-60	4.51-7.73	740-1010	5.42-7.92	405-720
6th-8th	7.00-9.98	57-67	6.51-10.34	925-1185	7.04-9.57	550-940
9th-10th	9.67-12.01	62-72	8.32-12.12	1050-1335	8.41-10.81	750-1125
11th-CCR	11.20-14.10	67-74	10.34-14.2	1185-1385	9.57-12.00	890-1360

For grade _____, holistically, this text should be considered:

_____ ACCESSIBLE

_____ MODERATELY COMPLEX

_____ HIGHLY COMPLEX

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[2] While sentence length is measured by quantifiable means, sentence complexity is still a features for careful consideration when selecting texts.