

Measuring Text Complexity

This guide is designed for educators to use to analyze the quantitative and qualitative complexity of a text and consider implications for planning and instruction.

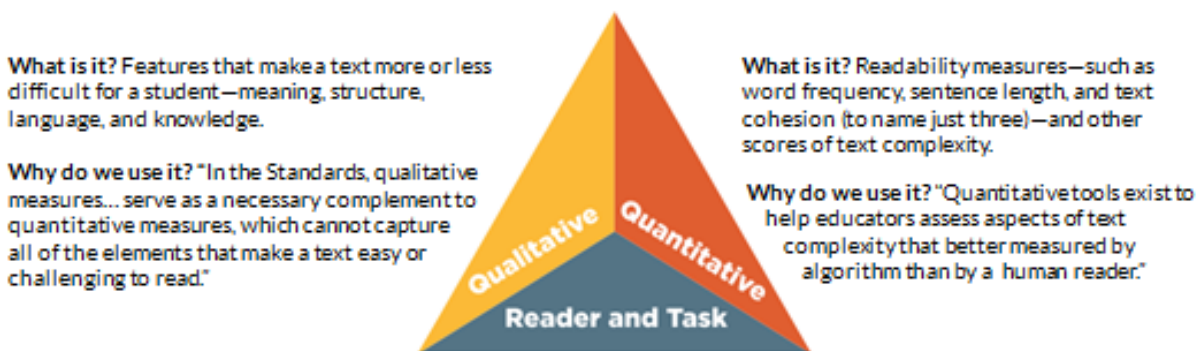


Figure 1: The Standards' Model of Text Complexity

What is it? Reader variables (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and task variables (such as purpose and the complexity generated by the task assigned and the questions posed).

Why do we use it? “Teachers employing their professional judgment, experience, and knowledge of their students and their subject are best situated to make... appraisals [about reader and task].”

Adapted from Common Core, Appendix A

1. Understand the text’s quantitative complexity and associated grade band by identifying the Lexile level.

- Use the [Lexile Framework](#) to identify the quantitative measure of complexity of a text by entering the title of the text in the search field in the upper right hand corner.
- Use the following chart to ensure your text falls within the Lexile range for your grade band:

Text Complexity Grade Band in the Standards	Old Lexile Ranges	Lexile Ranges Aligned to 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

2. Read the text and analyze the text’s qualitative complexity.

- After identifying the quantitative complexity of the text, read the text to identify the features that will be easy or challenging for students when it comes to reading the text. Consider the meaning, structure, language, and knowledge. (This [rubric](#) offers a range of indicators for each of these four components of qualitative complexity.)
- As you read, annotate the text and underline examples of qualitative complexity within the text, and use the following table to capture your findings:

Meaning	Structure
Language	Knowledge

3. Use your knowledge to match your readers to the text with an instructional task.

- Reflect on the following guiding questions as you think about the complexities of the text, your readers, and instructional tasks:
 - What will be most challenging about the text for students?
 - How is this text similar to or different than the texts students have been reading?
 - What support will students need in order to navigate the most challenging parts of the text?

4. Make a decision about whether to use the text and begin to create a plan.

- Reflect on the following guiding questions as you think about the complexities of the text and implications for planning and instruction:
 - Based on the complexities of this text, do I want to use this text as part of upcoming instruction? Why? Why not?
 - Based on the complexities of the text, what type of culminating task will I plan to assess student learning?
 - What instructional support will I offer students to help them make meaning of the text?
 1. Consider opportunities for partner/whole-group work, writing, discussion, etc.)
 2. Remember to provide supports and engage students in close reads of the sections of the text that are tricky, as identified through your analysis.
- Learn more about how to create high-quality lessons based on this text with our [text-based approach to planning](#). This approach helps you leverage your analysis to create a strategic plan for supporting students in engaging with complex texts.