

Resource Guide: Choosing an Appropriately Complex Text

The purpose of this Resource Guide is to outline the criteria for determining if a text is appropriately complex for rigorous and equitable reading instruction. Information will be outlined to provide an at-a-glance resource. For a more in-depth explanation and examples, please refer to the CCSS Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards (link is below).

To choose texts that are appropriately complex for your grade level, use these 3 criteria:

1. **Qualitative** dimensions of text complexity
2. **Quantitative** dimensions of text complexity
3. Considerations for the **readers and task**

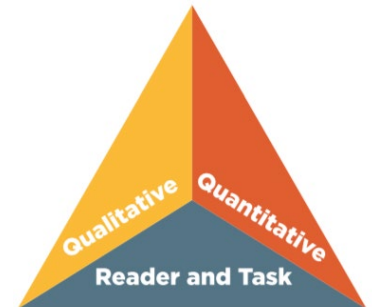


Figure 1: The Standards' Model of Text Complexity

What is the difference between quantitative and qualitative dimensions of text complexity?

Qualitative dimensions refer to aspects of the text that are best measured by an attentive human reader. (For example: levels of meaning or purpose, knowledge demands, etc.)

Quantitative dimensions refer to aspects of the text that can be best measured by an algorithm or computer software. (For example: Average sentence length, word length or frequency of word use, etc.) The most commonly used method for measuring quantitative complexity is Lexile level. Use links below for more information.

What does it mean to consider the reader and task?

When considering the readers in your class, you want to contemplate items that would allow for maximum engagement and knowledge building. This would mean considering the cultural and linguistic responsiveness of a text, knowledge and/or experiences of the readers, etc.

When considering the task, you want to contemplate activities students will be doing with the text to ensure the text chosen will push thinking and participation within the task. This means thinking about the purpose or complexity of the task and text dependent questions students will answer, etc.

What resources can I use to help choose an appropriately complex text?

For guidance on **quantitative** complexity, use resources found aligned to Lexile level. Lexile is a resource that is also identified within CCSS Standard 10.

Find a known book's Lexile level: <https://fab.lexile.com/>

Analyze unknown text with the Free Lexile Analyzer: <https://la-tools.lexile.com/free-analyze/>

For guidance on **qualitative** complexity, check out Achieve the Core's Qualitative Measures Rubric or the information found in CCSS Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards.

Achieve the Core: <https://achievethecore.org/page/2725/text-complexity>

CCSS Appendix A: http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf

CCSS Appendix B: http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf