

2012 Common Core State Standards Summer Institute

Qualitative Features of Text Complexity Explained Companion to the Qualitative Dimensions Scale *Taken from CCS ELA Appendix A (p. 6)*

(To be consulted in filling out the rubric and in conjunction with anchor texts)

Structure (could be story structure and/or form of piece)

- Simple → Complex
- Explicit → Implicit
- Conventional → Unconventional
- Events related in chronological order → Events related out of chronological order (chiefly literary texts)
- Traits of a common genre or subgenre → Traits specific to a particular discipline (chiefly informational texts)
- Simple graphics → sophisticated graphics
- Graphics unnecessary or merely supplemental to understanding the text → Graphics essential to understanding the text and may provide information not elsewhere provided

Language Demands: Conventionality and Clarity

- Literal → Figurative or ironic
- Clear → Ambiguous or purposefully misleading
- Contemporary, familiar → Archaic or otherwise unfamiliar
- Conversational → General Academic and domain specific
- Light vocabulary load¹: few unfamiliar or academic words → Many words unfamiliar and high academic vocabulary present
- Sentence structure² straightforward → Complex and varied sentence structures

Knowledge Demands: Life Experience (literary texts)

- Simple theme → Complex or sophisticated themes
- Single theme → Multiple themes
- Common everyday experiences or clearly fantastical situations → Experiences distinctly different from one's own
- Single perspective → Multiple perspectives
- Perspective(s) like one's own → Perspective(s) unlike or in opposition to one's own

Knowledge Demands: Cultural/Literary Knowledge (chiefly literary texts)

- Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required → Cultural and literary knowledge useful
- Low intertextuality (few if any references/allusions to other texts) → High intertextuality (many references/allusions to other texts)

Knowledge Demands: Content/Discipline Knowledge (chiefly informational texts)

- Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required → Extensive, perhaps specialized discipline-specific content knowledge required
- Low intertextuality (few if any references to/citations of other texts) → High intertextuality (many references to/citations of other texts)

Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary texts) or Purpose (chiefly informational texts)

- Single level of meaning → Multiple levels of meaning
- Explicitly stated purpose → Implicit purpose, may be hidden or obscure

¹ Though vocabulary can be measured by quantifiable means, it is still a feature for careful consideration when selecting texts

² Though sentence length is measured by quantifiable means, sentence complexity is still a feature for careful consideration when selecting texts