Text Complexity &

The KY Core Academic Standards for ELA and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science & Technical Subjects
Who is participating today?

A. Elementary teacher
B. Middle grades teacher
C. High school teacher
D. Library/Media Specialist
E. Administrator/other
Advantages to Common Core Standards

• A focus on college and career readiness
• Inclusion of the four strands of English Language Arts:
  • Reading
  • Writing
  • Listening and speaking
  • Language
• The benefits of an integrated literacy approach – all KY educators have a shared responsibility for literacy instruction, regardless of discipline or content area.
• A focus on results rather than means – (“the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed” (p. 4).)
• Efficiencies of scale – common standards allow for greater collaboration among states in the areas of
  • Professional development
  • Resource development
  • Teaching tools
How familiar are you with text complexity in Common Core Standards for ELA & Literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects?

A. Not very familiar; I’ve not read the appendices section on text complexity
B. Somewhat Familiar; I’ve read the appendices section on text complexity
C. Familiar; I’ve read and discussed text complexity with others
D. Very familiar; I could be conducting this webinar on text complexity in the Common Core Standards.
What are the big “take-aways” from the Standards and Exemplar Texts?

- More emphasis on informational texts in the curriculum
- More grade-level challenging texts (“stretch texts”)
- Appropriate scaffolding for students to access and understand more challenging texts
Included within the Standards is an enhanced focus on text complexity.

Specifically, within reading standard #10:

Anchor Standard:

R.CCR.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Example Grade-level Standard (6th grade):

RI.6.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
WHY: Rationale for Text Complexity

The complexity of K-12 texts decreased.

The complexity of reading demands in college/career increased.
So...

What do the KY Core Academic Standards mean by text complexity?

What is a text complexity band?

and

How do we ensure the texts our students are reading are in the appropriate text complexity band?
Text complexity is defined by

1. **Qualitative measures** – levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands often best measured by an attentive human reader.

2. **Quantitative measures** – readability and other scores of text complexity often best measured by computer software.

3. **Reader and Task considerations** – background knowledge of reader, motivation, interests, and complexity generated by tasks assigned often best made by educators employing their professional judgment.
How do we determine the grade-level complexity of a text?

**Quantitative**
- Readability measures--Lexile, Frye, etc.

**Qualitative**
- **Levels of Meaning**
- **Language Conventionality & Clarity**
- **Structure**
- **Knowledge Demands**

**Reader & Task**
- Teacher judgment based on knowledge of students
## Quantitative Measures Ranges for Text Complexity Grade Bands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Complexity Grade Band In the Standards</th>
<th>Old Lexile Ranges</th>
<th>Lexile Ranges Aligned to CCR expectations</th>
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</tr>
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</table>
Where do we find texts in the appropriate text complexity band?

We could....

Choose an excerpt of text from Appendix B

Use available resources to determine the text complexity of other materials on our own

or...

![Text Complexity Grid](image)
A Four-step Process:

1. Determine the quantitative measures of the text.
2. Analyze the qualitative measures of the text.
3. Reflect upon the reader and task considerations.
4. Recommend placement in the appropriate text complexity band.
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

Measures such as:

- Word length
- Word frequency
- Word difficulty
- Sentence length
- Text length
- Text cohesion
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

The Quantitative Measures Ranges for Text Complexity:

This document outlines the suggested ranges for each of the text complexity bands using:

1. Lexile Text Measures

---or---

2. Other readability measures (e.g., Frye, Accelerated Reader)

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Step 1: Quantitative Measures

Let’s imagine we want to see where a text falls on the quantitative measures “leg” of the text complexity triangle, using either the Lexile text measures or other measures.

For illustrative purposes, let’s choose Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. 
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

For texts not in the Lexile database, consider using the Lexile Analyzer:
http://www.lexile.com/analyzer/

• Registration is required (free)  
  http://www.lexile.com/account/register/
• Allows user to receive an
  “estimated” Lexile score
• Accommodates texts up to 1000
  words in length
• Texts of any length can be
  evaluated using the Professional
  Lexile Analyzer—educators can
  upgrade to this tool for free by
  requesting access
  http://www.lexile.com/account/profile/access/
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

Additional Resources for Lexile Measures:

• Overview video
  http://www.lexile.com/about-lexile/lexile-video/

• “What Does the Lexile Measure Mean?”

• “Lexile Measures and the Common Core State Standards”

• KDE Lexile Resource Page
  http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Literacy/Lexile+for+Reading/Lexile+Information+for+Schools+and+Families.htm

• KY Lexile Map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Examples of Text Complexity</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1700L</td>
<td>The Harlem Renaissance</td>
<td>To this class of things pertain corporeal nature, in general, and its extension, the figure of extended things, their quantity or magnitude and number, as also the place in which they are, the time which measures their duration, and so on. That is possibly why our reasoning is not unjust when we conclude from this that Physics, Astronomy, Medicine and all other sciences which have as their end the consideration of composite things, are very dubious and uncertain, yet that Arithmetic, Geometry and other sciences of that kind which only treat of things that are very simple and very general, without taking great trouble to ascertain whether they are actually exterior or not, contain some measure of certainty and an element of the indubitable. (Rene Descartes, author) © 2004 by Racket Publishing Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600L</td>
<td>The Origins of the First World War</td>
<td>In fact, it is absolutely impossible to make out by experience with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action, however right it be itself, rests entirely on moral grounds and on the conception of duty. Sometimes it happens that with the sharpest self-examination we can find nothing beside the moral principle of duty which could have been powerful enough to move us to this or that action and to so great a sacrifice; yet we cannot from this infer with certainty that it was not really some secret impulse of self-love, under the false appearance of duty, that was the actual determining cause of the will. (Immanuel Kant, author) © 2004 by Kessinger Publishing Company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500L</td>
<td>Ring of Bright Water</td>
<td>And as to him who had been accustomed to dinner, since, as soon as the body required food, and when the former meal was consumed, and he wanted refreshment, no new supply was furnished to it, he was too and is consumed from want of food. For all the symptoms which I describe as belonging to this man I refer to want of food. And I also say that all men who, while in a state of health, remain for two or three days without food, experience the same unpleasant symptoms as those which I described in the case of him who had omitted to take dinner. (Hippocrates, author) © 2004 by Kessinger Publishing Company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400L</td>
<td>Nonfiction Economics</td>
<td>But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfixed the wearer—so that both men and women who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time—was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom: it had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself. She had a good sense at her needle; that is certain,” remarked one of her female spectators; “but did ever woman, before this woman, contrive such a way of showing it? Why, госпожи, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly magistrates, and make a joke out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment?” (Nathaniel Hawthorne, author) © 1984 by Beacon Books, Inc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300L</td>
<td>The Lives of a Cell</td>
<td>Under that doctrine, equality of treatment is accorded when the races are provided substantially equal facilities, even though these facilities be separate. In the Delaware case, the Supreme Court of Delaware adhered to that doctrine, but ordered that the plaintiffs be admitted to the white schools because of their superiority to the Negro schools. The plaintiffs contend that segregated public schools are not “equal” and cannot be made “equal,” and that hence they are deprived of the equal protection of the law. Because of the dubious import unreadable of the question presented, the Court took no action. The case was heard in the 1957.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200L</td>
<td>Black, Blue and Gray</td>
<td>1230L</td>
<td>Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) * 1210L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

The Lexile® Framework for Reading
Matching readers with texts

- To Kill A Mockingbird
  Author: Lee Harper
  Summary: THE UNCONDITIONED AND UNCONDITIONAL WISDOM AND CHILDREN IS SHOWN TO BE SURPASSED WITH THIS STORY OF...
  870L
  Pages: 281

- Story Behind Harper Lee's To ...
  Author: Giddens-White, Bryon
  1050L
  Pages: 56
  Ages: 8 to 12
  Series: History in Literature Ser.
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

Lexile Text Measure: 870L
Scholastic Grade Level Equivalent: 8.1

In which of the text complexity bands would this novel fall?
### KY Core Academic Standards

#### Quantitative Measures Ranges for Text Complexity Grade Bands

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The highlighted row indicates the range for grades 4-5, which aligns to the new Lexile Ranges.
Step 1: Quantitative Measures

Remember, however, that the quantitative measures is only the first of three “legs” of the text complexity triangle.

Our final recommendation may be validated, influenced, or even over-ruled by our examination of qualitative measures and the reader and task considerations.
Step 2: Qualitative Measures

Measures such as:

- Levels of meaning
- Levels of purpose
- Structure
- Organization
- Language conventionality
- Language clarity
- Prior knowledge demands
Step 2: Qualitative Measures

The Qualitative Measures Rubrics for Literary and Informational Text:

Kansas has developed a rubric for literary text and a rubric for informational text that allows educators to evaluate the important elements of text that are often missed by computer software that tends to focus on more easily measured factors.
Step 2: Qualitative Measures

Because the factors for literary texts are different from information texts, these two rubrics contain different content. However, the formatting of each document is exactly the same.

And because these factors represent continua rather than discrete stages or levels, numeric values are not associated with these rubric. Instead, four points along each continuum is identified: high, middle high, middle low, and low.
Step 2: Qualitative Measures

So...

How is the rubric used?

And how would *To Kill a Mockingbird* fare when analyzed through the lens of the Literary Text Rubric?
### TEXT COMPLEXITY: QUALITATIVE MEASURES RUBRIC

**LITERARY TEXTS**

#### LEVELS OF MEANING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle High</th>
<th>Middle Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Multiple Levels of Complex Meaning</td>
<td>X Multiple Levels of Meaning</td>
<td>☐ Single Level of Complex Meaning</td>
<td>☐ Single Level of Simple Meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### STRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle High</th>
<th>Middle Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Narrative Structure: complex, implicit, and unconventional</td>
<td>X Narrative Structure: some complexities, more implicit than explicit, some unconvoluntarity</td>
<td>☐ Narrative Structure: largely conventional, few, if any, narrative shifts</td>
<td>☐ Narrative Structure: largely conventional, few, if any, narrative shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Narration: many shifts in point of view</td>
<td>X Narration: occasional shifts in point of view</td>
<td>☐ Narration: few, if any, shifts in point of view</td>
<td>☐ Narration: few, if any, shifts in point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Order of Events: not in chronological order</td>
<td>X Order of Events: several major shifts in time, use of flashback</td>
<td>☐ Order of Events: not in chronological order</td>
<td>☐ Order of Events: not in chronological order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Use of Graphics: sophisticated graphics, essential to understanding the text</td>
<td>X Use of Graphics: some sophisticated graphics, may occasionally be essential to understanding the text</td>
<td>☐ Use of Graphics: largely conventional, not essential</td>
<td>☐ Use of Graphics: largely conventional, not essential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### LANGUAGE CONVENTIONALITY AND CLARITY

<table>
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<th>Middle High</th>
<th>Middle Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Meaning: implicit or inferred meaning, heavy use of figurative or ironic language, may be purposefully ambiguous or misleading at times</td>
<td>X Meaning: some implicit or inferred meaning, use of figurative or ironic language</td>
<td>☐ Meaning: largely explicit meaning, subtle use of figurative or ironic language</td>
<td>☐ Meaning: largely explicit meaning, subtle use of figurative or ironic language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Register: generally unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic</td>
<td>X Register: occasionally unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic</td>
<td>☐ Register: largely conventional, familiar, conversational, generally familiar</td>
<td>☐ Register: largely conventional, familiar, conversational, generally familiar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle High</th>
<th>Middle Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Life Experiences: explores complex, sophisticated, multiple themes; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are distinctly different from the common reader</td>
<td>X Life Experiences: explores multiple themes of varying levels of complexity; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are uncommon to most readers</td>
<td>☐ Cultural/Literary Knowledge: few references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements</td>
<td>☐ Cultural/Literary Knowledge: no references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Cultural/Literary Knowledge: many references/allusions to other texts (intertextuality) and cultural elements</td>
<td>☐ Subject Matter Knowledge: requires moderate levels of content knowledge</td>
<td>☐ Subject Matter Knowledge: requires some content knowledge</td>
<td>☐ Subject Matter Knowledge: requires only everyday content knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Qualitative Measures

From examining the quantitative measures, we knew:

Lexile Text Measure: **870L**

Scholastic Grade Level Equivalent: **8.1**

But after reflecting upon the qualitative measures, we believe:
Step 2: Qualitative Measures

Our initial placement of *To Kill a Mockingbird* into a text complexity band changed when we examined the qualitative measures.

Remember, however, that we have completed only the first two legs of the text complexity triangle.

The **reader and task considerations** still remain.
Step 3: Reader and Task

Considerations such as:
- Motivation
- Knowledge and experience
- Purpose for reading
- Complexity of task assigned regarding text
- Complexity of questions asked regarding text
Step 3: Reader and Task Considerations

Questions for Professional Reflection on Reader and Task Considerations:

The questions provided in this resource, developed by Kansas teachers and DOE, are meant to spur teacher thought and reflection upon the text, students, and any tasks associated with the text.
The questions provided in this resource are largely open-ended questions without single, correct answers, but help educators to think through the implications of using a particular text in the classroom.
Step 3: Reader and Task Considerations

Reflecting upon the questions posed for Reader and Task Considerations and considering both the quantitative and qualitative measures already discussed, we have the following information to make a decision:

Lexile Text Measure: **870L**

Scholastic Grade Level Equivalent: **8.1**
Step 4: Recommended Placement

Based upon all the information—all three legs of the model—the final recommendation for *To Kill a Mockingbird* is...
Step 4: Recommended Placement

In this instance, Appendix B confirms our evaluation of the novel. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is placed within the grade 9-10 text complexity band.
Step 4: Recommended Placement

Template for Text Complexity Analysis and Recommended Placement Form:


This one-page template provides an opportunity to record the thinking involved in recommending the placement of a specific text into a text complexity band.

Keeping a record of such analysis and thinking might be useful documentation in the case that any questions arise in the future.
Text Complexity Analysis of

Qualitative Measures

Levels of Meaning/Purpose:

Structure:

Language Convenioality and Clarity:

Knowledge Demands:

Quantitative Measures

Reader-Task Considerations

Recommended Placement
Text Complexity Analysis of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

**Qualitative Measures**

**Levels of Meaning/Purpose:**
The book has multiple levels of meaning. Set in Alabama, the female main character Scout Finch struggles to understand issues of race and prejudice when her lawyer father defends a black man accused of raping a white woman.

**Structure:**
Although the story has a largely simple structure with a straightforward writing style, several issues complicate the narration and structure. Scout's narration is as an adult reflecting back on a few pivotal years of her childhood; flashback is used throughout. And at several points it seems as though the narration is from the point of view of a less-reliable Scout still in her childhood.

**Language Conventionality and Clarity:**
The characters speak in easily readable, conversational language. Some slang is indicative of the time period in which the novel is set, and there is some dialect.

**Knowledge Demands:**
Higher level themes of justice, prejudice, and civil rights are implied. Thinking at deeper levels is required to contemplate the personal, moral, and ethical struggles of the characters as set against the culture and society of the time period.

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**Quantitative Measures**

The ATOS formula (used with the Accelerated Reader program) identifies this title as having a book level of 5.6. A Lexile measure for this novel is 870L. Although the Lexile and ATOS levels fall in the 4th-5th grade text complexity band, the complexity of the book's theme, the issue of rape, and the length of the book would indicate that higher level reading skills are necessary, along with a consideration for the maturity level of the reader regarding the book's subject matter.

---

**Reader-Task Considerations**

These are to be determined locally with reference to such variables as a student's motivation, knowledge, and experiences as well as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the question posed. However, the complexity of the book's theme, the issue of rape, and the length of the book would indicate that higher level reading skills are necessary, along with a consideration for the maturity level of the reader regarding the book's subject matter.

Here in Kansas, educators might want to examine the following elements or issues: social and historical events of the late 50s, early 60s, and issues surrounding racial stereotyping and prejudice in the Deep South at this same time period.

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**Recommended Placement**

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a Pulitzer prize winner. It is a classic, and many teaching resources are available online at various websites. Although the quantitative measures suggest placement in the 4th-5th grade level text complexity band, the qualitative measures and reader and task considerations suggest that the novel is best placed at the 9th-10th grade complexity band. The Common Core Standards Text Exemplars also places the novel in the 9th-10th grade complexity band.

Reviewed by Julie Aikins, Chanute USD 413, aikinsj@usd413.org

2/17/2011
Poll: I can explain the 3 legs of text complexity to someone.

1. Yes
2. No
Additional Resources for Text Complexity

Text Complexity Bookmarks

Additional Examples of Completed Final Recommendations

• Diamond Willow
• Hunger Games
• How to Steal a Dog
• Countdown
After participating in this webinar, I know where to locate resources to assist me in choosing texts at an appropriate levels for my students.

1. Not really. I still need more information.
2. Somewhat. I can locate resources.
3. Yes. I know where to locate resources and will use them to plan instruction.
Many thanks to our colleagues at the Kansas Department of Education and their teachers for sharing the text complexity resources they developed.

For more information:

The May 2011 *Literacy Link* focuses on text complexity

http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/High+School/English+Language+Arts/Writing/Literacy+Link+Newsletter.htm

Cindy Parker                                      Saundra Hamon
Rebecca Woosley                                   Pam Wininger
Renee Boss                                        Linda Holbrook
Carol Franks                                      Kim Willhoite
April Pieper                                      Kathy Mansfield

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