



**Module 2:
Selecting High-Quality, Content-Rich,
and Appropriately-Complex
Texts for Read Aloud**

Objectives and Standards *(page 19)*

Objective

- Understand measures of text complexity and practice analyzing and selecting texts for read aloud.
- Understand the importance of balancing text complexity measures when selecting texts.
- Explore characteristics of high-quality and content-rich texts.

Link to Tennessee Academic Standards

Range of Reading and Level and Text Complexity –
Standard #10 (R.RRTC.10)

Cornerstone: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

TEAM Alignment

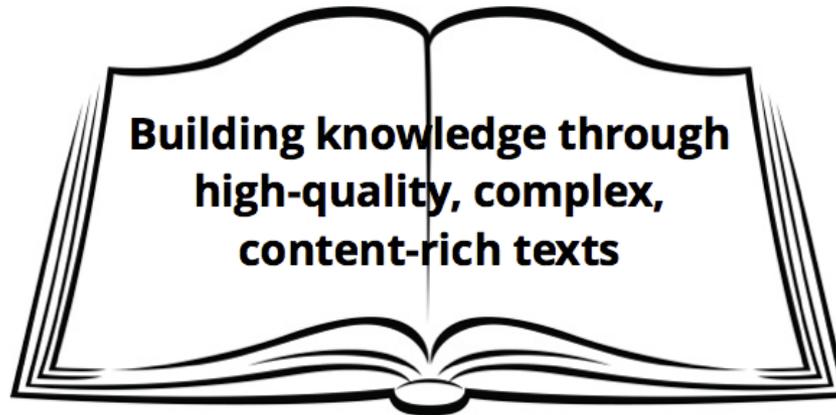
- Teacher Content Knowledge
- Standards and Objectives
- Activities and Materials
 - Support the lesson objective
 - Are challenging
 - Sustain students' attention
 - Elicit a variety of thinking
 - Are relevant to students' lives
 - **Texts and tasks are appropriately complex**

Guiding Principle



Guiding Principle #1

All students need regular practice with **high-quality, content-rich, and appropriately-complex texts** that build knowledge and vocabulary. In the early grades, the primary method for engaging students with these kinds of texts is through read alouds.



Selecting Texts for Read Aloud

Specifically, reading aloud builds oral language and vocabulary, listening comprehension - a precursor to reading comprehension - content knowledge, concepts of print and alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness. **Equally important, reading aloud is one way we enculturate young children into literacy – helping them acquire the language, values, practices and dispositions of the literate world.**

- Hoffman, Teale & Yodota, *Young Children*, 2015

Activity: Selecting Texts for Read Aloud

Create a list of books that you read aloud to students this past year and the reason(s) why you chose each particular text.

Read Aloud Book Title	Reason(s) for Selecting this Text

- Do the texts we choose to read to students impact the “language, values, practices and dispositions” they develop as early readers? Why or why not?

Share: Selecting Texts for Read Aloud

Number Off – At your table, number off 1-6. Find the corresponding number on the wall. Grab your manual, and move to your number. Discuss your responses with members of your number group.

Read Aloud Book Title	Reason(s) for Selecting this Text

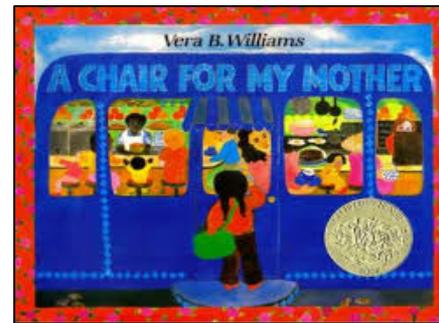
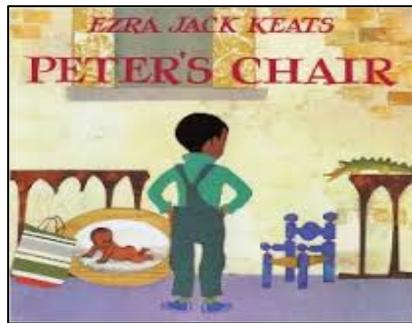
- Do the texts we choose to read to students impact the “language, values, practices and dispositions” they develop as early readers? Why or why not?

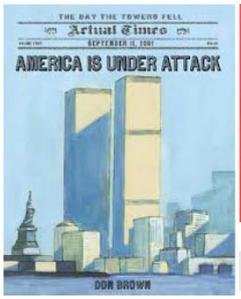
Selecting Texts with Purpose

The first step in selecting a text for read aloud is determining if the text is **purposeful**.

- Does engagement with this text make sense given my current **instructional aims**?
- Is the content of this text appropriate for **my students**, given their age, strengths, needs, and experiences?

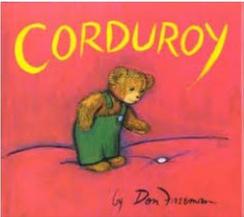
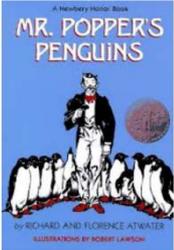
If you answer “no” to either of these questions, select a different text!





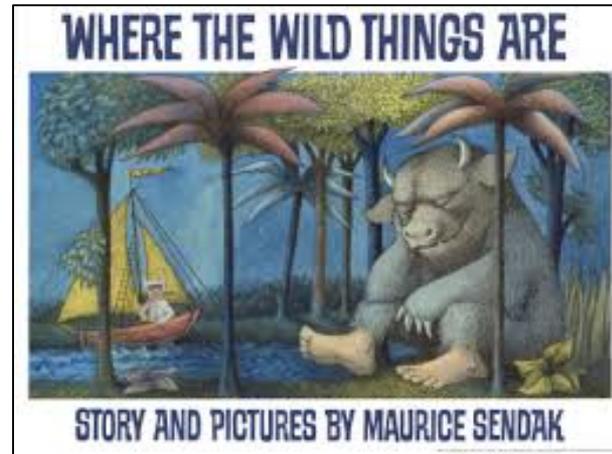
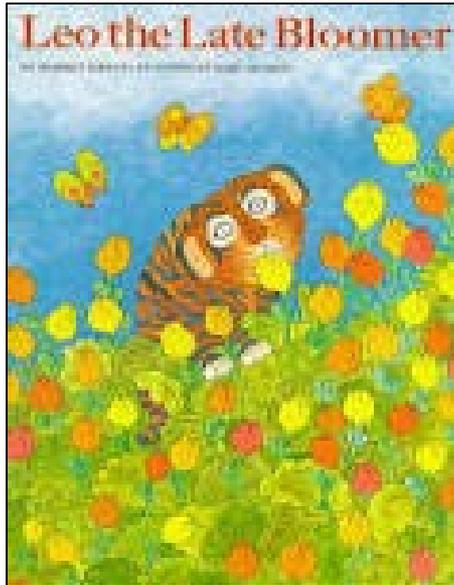
Practice: Selecting Texts with Purpose

Read the following texts and the likely strengths, needs, and experiences of your students. Would you select these texts for the **first month of school**? Why or why not?

Text	Summary
	<p>In this picture book, a bear leaves the safety of his department store shelf in order to do almost anything to be adopted by a little girl.</p>
	<p>In this chapter book, a penguin is sent to Mr. Popper's doorstep, and later another joins. He has a large freezing plan installed in his cellar, where the two penguins hatch and raise their young. With a family of 8 penguins, Mr. Popper trains them and creates a traveling act.</p>
	<p>The events of September 11, 2001 changed the world forever. In the fourth installment of the Actual Times informational text children's series, Don Brown narrates the events of the day in a way that is both accessible and understandable for young readers.</p>

What is Text Complexity?

Text complexity is a measure of how challenging a text is for a child at their particular grade level.



Text Complexity and Why It Matters

One of the key shifts of the Tennessee Academic Standards is that all students must be able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through grade levels. By the time they graduate, students must be able to read and comprehend independently and proficiently **the kinds of complex texts commonly found in postsecondary and the workforce.**

Activity: Text Complexity and Why It Matters

In a group of four, read the excerpts in your participant manual. Highlight information that is personally impactful. Then, discuss the following questions:

- What is text complexity and why does it matter?
- Why is exposing students to complex texts in the early grades important?
- How can we expose young students to complex texts in ways that are developmentally appropriate?

Remember...

In the early grades, children must be exposed to complex text in order to build strong foundations for high-level reading and writing. Because children's independent reading skills are still developing, interactive teacher read alouds serve to engage children with appropriately-complex texts.



Text Complexity Measures *(page 28)*

Text complexity encompasses three interdependent measures:

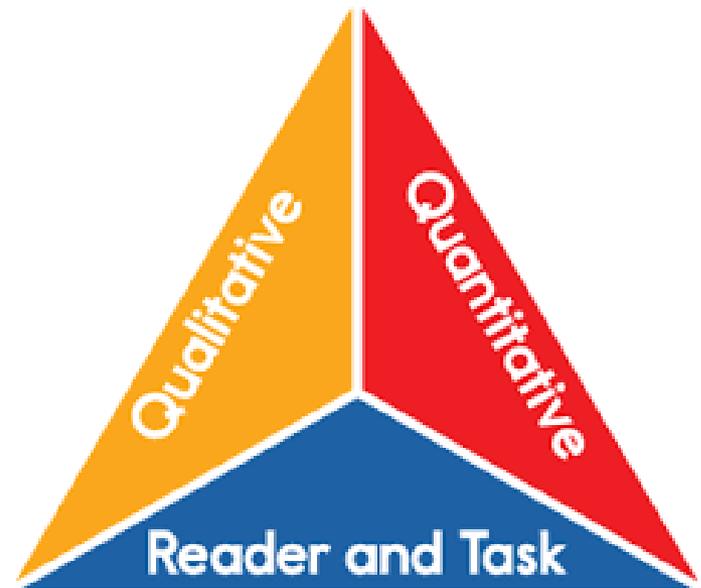
- Qualitative Complexity
- Quantitative Complexity
- Reader and Task Considerations



Text Complexity Measures (page 28)

Elevator Pitch – Read the information in your manual. Highlight key words and phrases. Then, deliver a 20-second “elevator pitch” where you summarize and share a definition of the text complexity measures with a partner.

- Qualitative Complexity
- Quantitative Complexity
- Reader and Task Considerations



Guidelines for Text Complexity Analysis

Text complexity is measured through a three-step process:

First, determine the quantitative complexity of the text



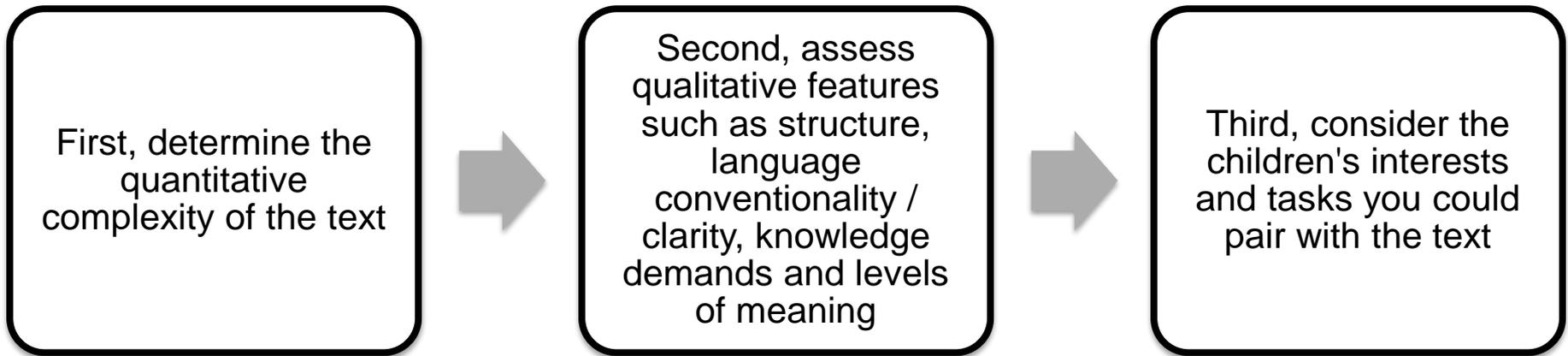
Second, assess qualitative features such as structure, language conventionality / clarity, knowledge demands and levels of meaning



Third, consider the children's interests and tasks you could pair with the text

Guidelines for Text Complexity Analysis

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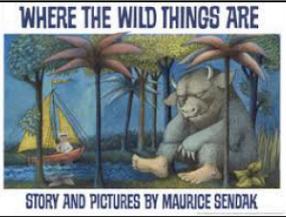


Team Diagram – With your table group, create your own diagram to illustrate the process for analyzing text complexity.

Example: Quantitative Analysis Comparison

Read the text excerpts printed in your manual. Then, discuss the following question with a partner:

- What do you notice about the **quantitative complexity** of these texts? What features make one more complex than the other?

	Lexile: 120	<p>“Leo couldn’t do anything right. He couldn’t read. He couldn’t write. He was a sloppy eater. And, he never said a word. “What’s the matter with Leo?” asked Leo’s father. “Nothing,” said Leo’s mother. “Leo is just a late bloomer.”</p>
	Lexile: AD 740	<p>“That very night in Max’s room a forest grew and grew and grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around and an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max and he sailed off through night and day and in and out of weeks and almost over a year to where the wild things are”</p>

Example: Quantitative Analysis Comparison

Lexile to Grade Level Correlation

Grade	Independent Reader Measures 25 th percentile to 75 th percentile
1	Up to 300L
2	140L to 500L
3	330L to 700L
4	445L to 810L
5	565L to 910L
6	665L to 1000L
7	735L to 1065L
8	805L to 1100L
9	855L to 1165L
10	905L to 1195L
11 and 12	940L to 1210L

Practice:

- 480L
- 700L

In which grade levels would these text fits?

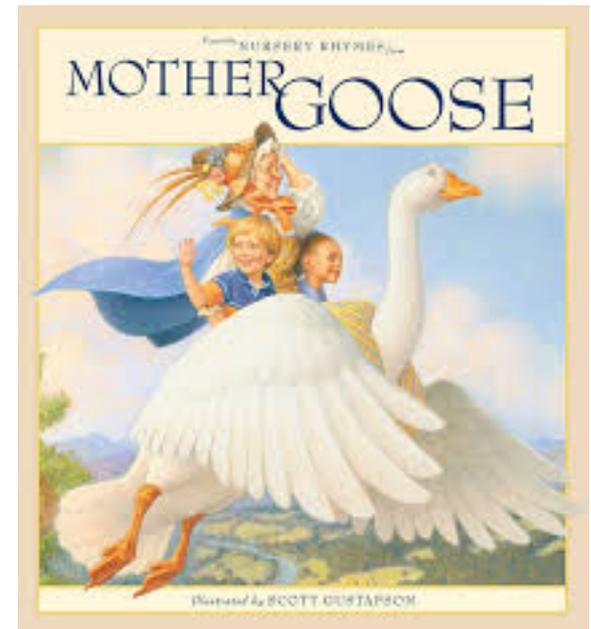
In which grade levels would these texts be at the high end of the complexity band?

Why quantitative complexity must be considered before reading!

From Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes:

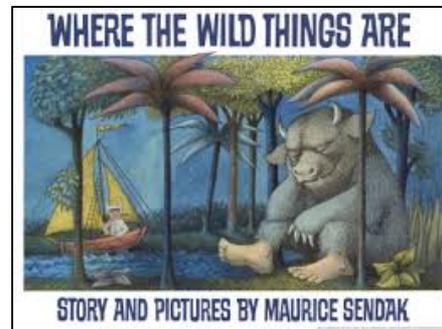
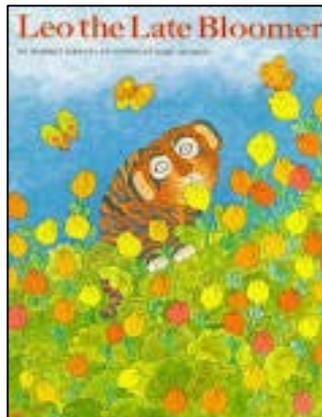
Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells,
Sing cuckolds all in a row.



Example: Qualitative Text Complexity

- Read the two examples of qualitative text analysis in your manual. Reference the rubric for literature on page 34. Then, discuss the following questions with your table:
 - What makes a text more or less qualitatively complex?
 - How are these two texts similar and different in terms of their qualitative complexity? Find specific examples.
 - What other reflections do you have about qualitative complexity?

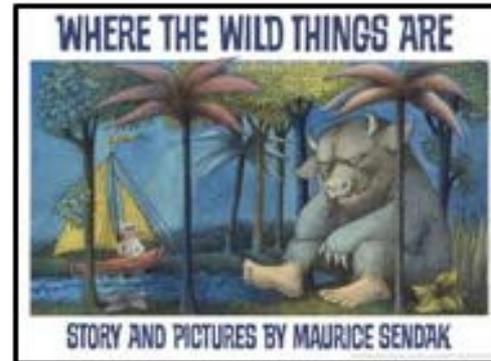
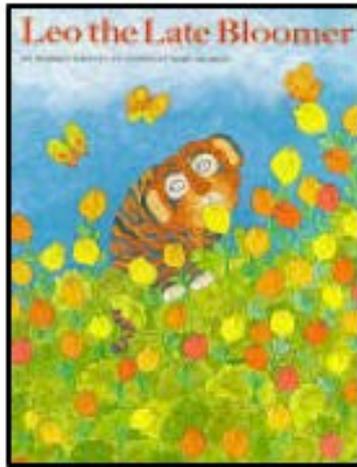


Reader and Task Considerations

- After analyzing a text for complexity, consider
 - The needs and interests of the reader (your students!), and
 - The type of task that will support students in comprehending the text's meaning(s).

Reader Considerations

- Will my students enjoy this text? Will they find it engaging?
- What will challenge my students most in this texts? What supports can I provide?



Task Considerations

What do you want students to demonstrate after reading this text? (e.g. key text understanding, academic vocabulary, fluency, etc.?)

- Use the answer to identify which **Tennessee Academic Standards** will be the instructional focus of the text and the content of questions about the text

Based on clear understanding of each child's reading ability, what aspects of the text will likely pose the most challenge for your children?

- Use the answer to guide the design of instructional **supports** so that all the children can access the text independently and proficiently through multiple readings of the text

How is this text best presented to children and how can this text be used with other texts?

- Use the answer to determine how the text "fits" with a larger **unit** of instruction. Can the text serve as an "anchor" text? Does the text require background knowledge that could be learned by reading other texts?

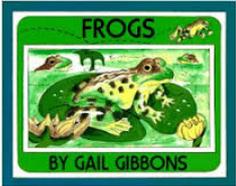
Read the chart in your manual.

Circle the row that your teachers consider most consistently.

Draw a square around the row that your teachers need more practice considering.

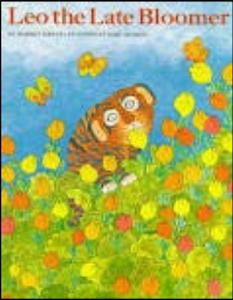
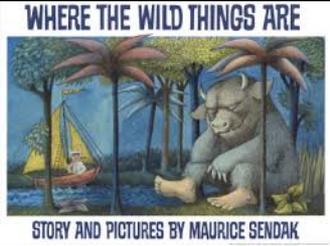
Reader and Task Considerations – What is a Task?

- A task is an instructional activity that students complete after reading or listening to a text. An effective task should:
 - Support students in comprehending the meaning(s) of the text
 - Hinge on a thoughtful prompt that is based on Tennessee Academic Standards
 - Provide opportunities to express comprehension through speaking, drawing, or writing
 - Be appropriately complex

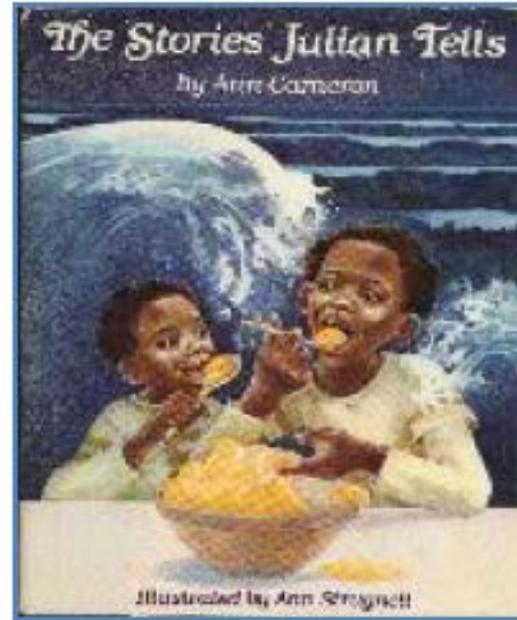
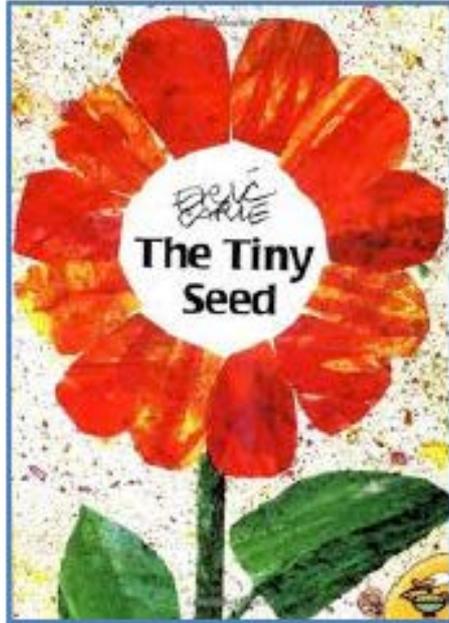
Text	Possible Instructional Task
	Draw a timeline that illustrates the sequence of the story. Then, add captions, using transition words to help the reader understand the different events that happened.
	Write a one-paragraph essay describing the life cycle of a frog. Your paragraph should include transition words that help the reader understand the difference phases in the life cycle. Then, draw and label an illustration that supports your paragraph.

Reader and Task Considerations

- With a small group, brainstorm possible tasks to pair with these two texts:

Text	Possible Instructional Task
	
	

Example: Text Complexity Analysis



- How does analyzing the complexity of the text help you better understand the text and what students need to know and do to comprehend it?

Practice: Text Complexity Analysis

The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams

Quantitative Complexity: AD820L

Qualitative Complexity (*rubric is on page 34*)



Levels of Meaning/Purpose:	Structure:
Language Conventinality and Clarity:	Theme and Knowledge Demands:

As you work through this text, reflect on how analyzing its complexity helps you better understand what students will need to know and do to comprehend it.

Balancing Measures of Text Complexity

(page 51)

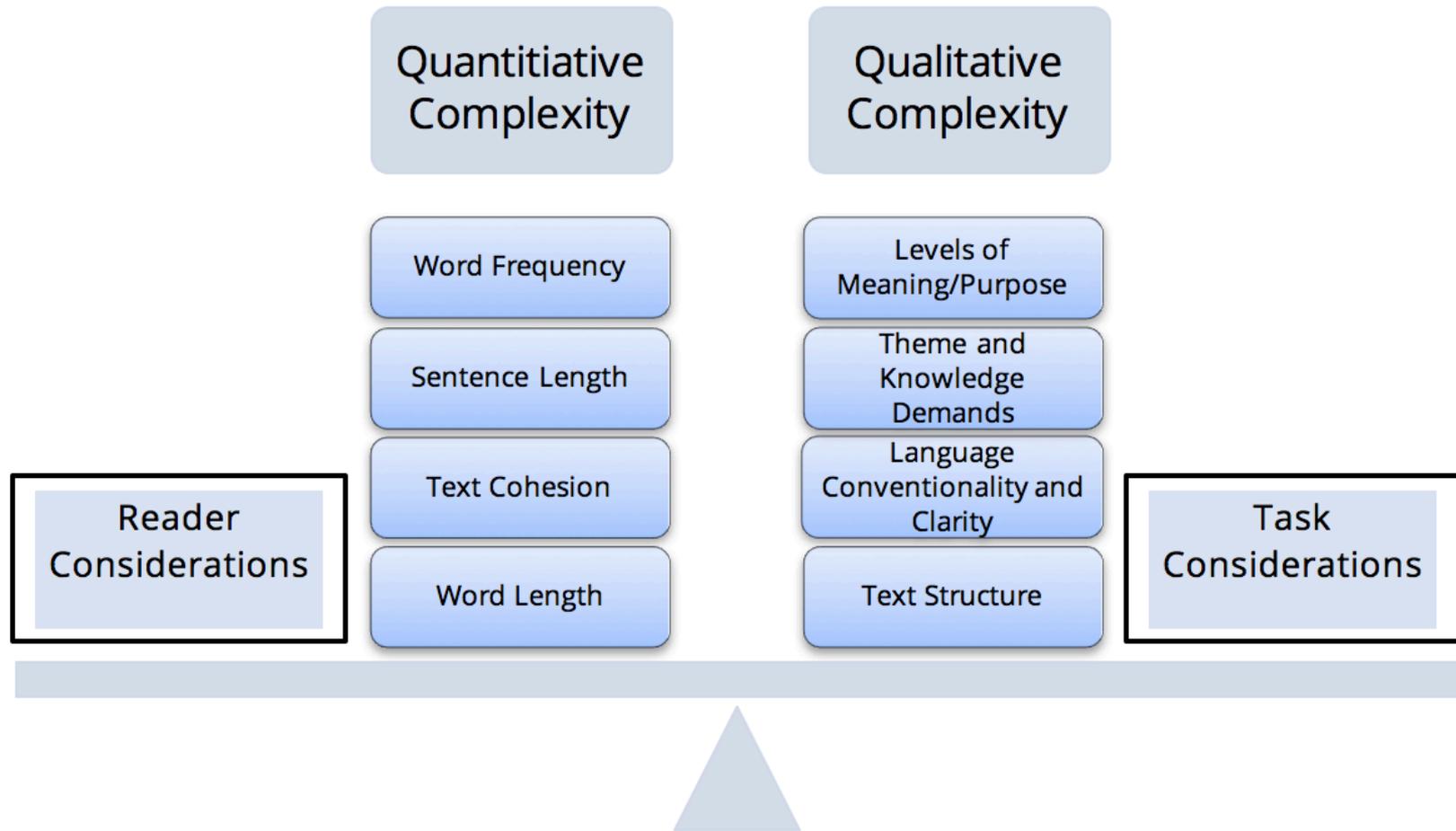
Review the information printed in your manual. Then, discuss the questions below.

- What does it mean for texts to be appropriately complex?
- In your own words, what does it mean to “balance” measures of text complexity?



- **\$2 Summary** – With each word worth 10 cents, write a \$2 summary of what it means to balance measures of text complexity.

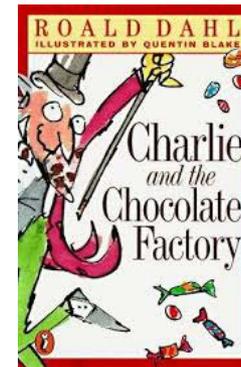
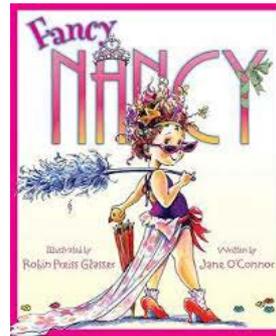
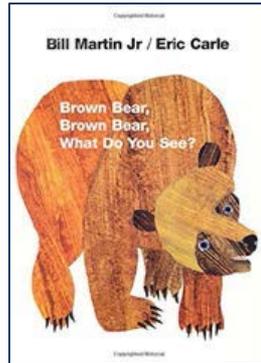
Balancing Measures of Text Complexity



Text Complexity and Purpose for Reading

Engaging students with complex texts is important for developing their knowledge and vocabulary and preparing them for the demands of future grade levels. However, not every text students engage with should be complex. **The purpose of the reading activity should inform the type, and complexity level, of the text selected.**

- How are these texts different?
- How would you use these texts in your classroom? What is the difference in purpose?



Layering Texts to Balance Complexity

(page 54)

By creating **text sets**, teachers can ensure that children are intentionally exposed to a variety of interesting and complex literary and informational texts.

Read the information about text sets on page 54. Highlight key words and phrases that help you understand the purpose of text sets. Then, complete the “Exploring Text Sets” activity on the next page.

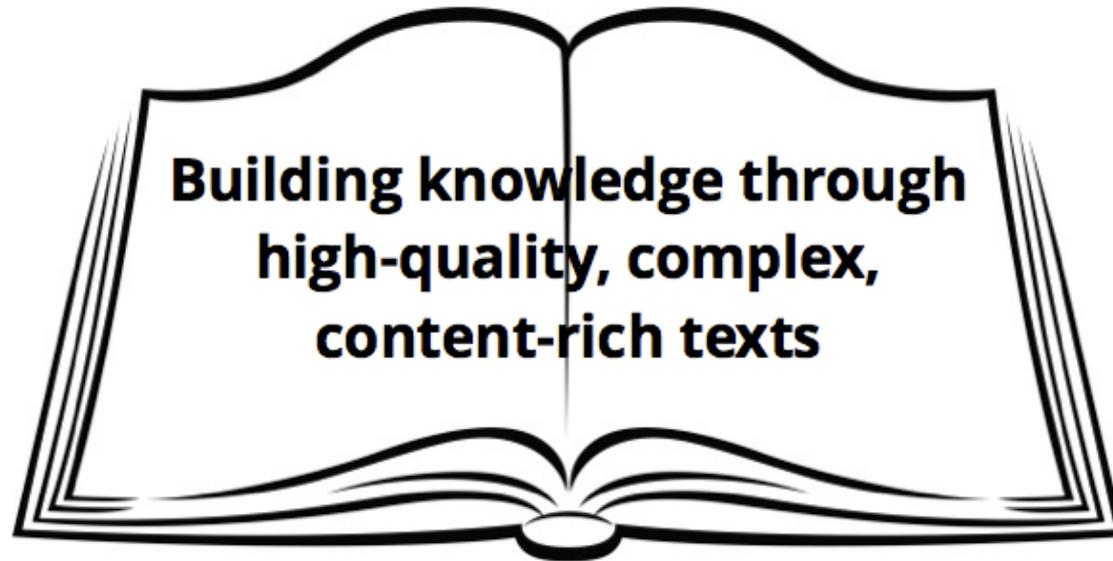
- **How do these different text sets layer resources to create a balance of text types and complexities?**

Text Set	Page #
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs (Grade K)	228
Mooncake (Grade 1)	252
“Thirsty Planet” (Grade 2)	274
Because of Winn Dixie (Grade 3)	298

Text Sets – more to come!

- Tomorrow we'll talk more about text sets and learn how to make our own 😊

High-Quality and Content-Rich Texts



High-Quality Texts

- Read an excerpt from the article *The Book Matters! Choosing Complex Narrative Texts to Support Literacy Discussion*. Specifically, read the section titled “Characteristics of literature that support complex processing in read-aloud discussions” (marked with a star).

These studies reveal how teachers and 5- to 8-year-old children can work collaboratively to construct multilayered interpretations of texts in read-alouds (see “Why the Book Matters for Literary Discussion in the Early Grades”).



Characteristics of literature that support complex processing in read-aloud discussions

Although *how* to read is a frequent topic of studies in the read-aloud literature, much less often researched is the issue of *what* to read—how the quality of literature impacts the quality of the read-aloud discussion (Teale, Yokota, & Martinez 2008). Essentially, some children’s books provide

more to think and talk about than others. To help children process complex texts in read-aloud discussions, it is important for teachers to first choose texts that can support complex interpretations. Although this article focuses on choosing high-quality narrative literature or stories, similar principles apply to selecting informational books. Appropriate narratives for young children contain accounts of connected events that typically surround a central problem and lead to a resolution.

The following sections outline characteristics of high-quality narrative children’s literature to guide teachers’ selections of texts. For each characteristic, we begin with a definition and explanation, followed by an exemplar text.

Resources for Locating Complex Children’s Literature

Associations and centers book lists

American Library Association—Recommended Reading
www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alaibraryfactsheet23#children

American Library Association—Notable Books
www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/nbc

International Literary Association—Choice Books List
www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices.html

Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents
<https://chicanolib.org/2007/12/02/barahona-center/>

As you read, reflect on the following questions:

- What does it mean for a text to be high quality?
- How do these characteristics of high-quality literature help children become better readers?

High-Quality Texts

- **Number Off** – At your table, number off 1-6 (choose a different number than before!). Find the corresponding number on the wall. Bring your manual and notes, and find a partner with your same number.
 - What does it mean for a text to be high quality?
 - How do these characteristics of high-quality literature help children become better readers?

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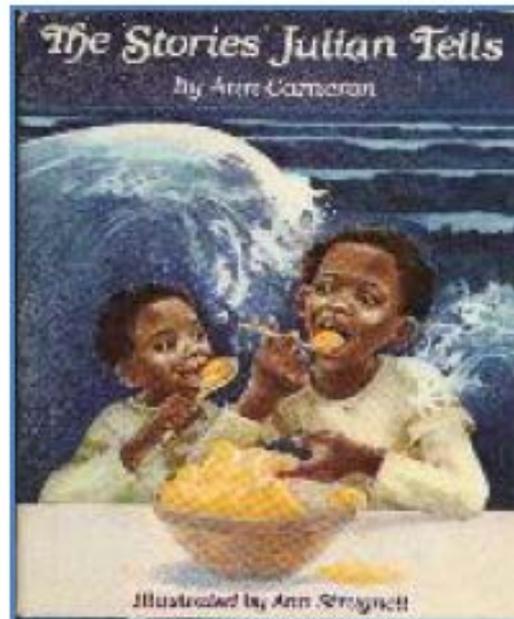
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International Literary Association—Choice Books List www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices.html	Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents https://chicanolitbib.wordpress.com/2007/12/02/barahona-center/

Practice: High-Quality Texts

- Read the synopsis of *The Stories Julian Tells*. Then, discuss the following question:
 - How does this text reflect the traits of high-quality literature?



Additional Criteria for High-Quality Literature (pages 66-67)

- Consider making lists of texts that meet each criteria
 - Theme
 - Characters
 - Plot
 - Setting
 - Language
 - Illustrations

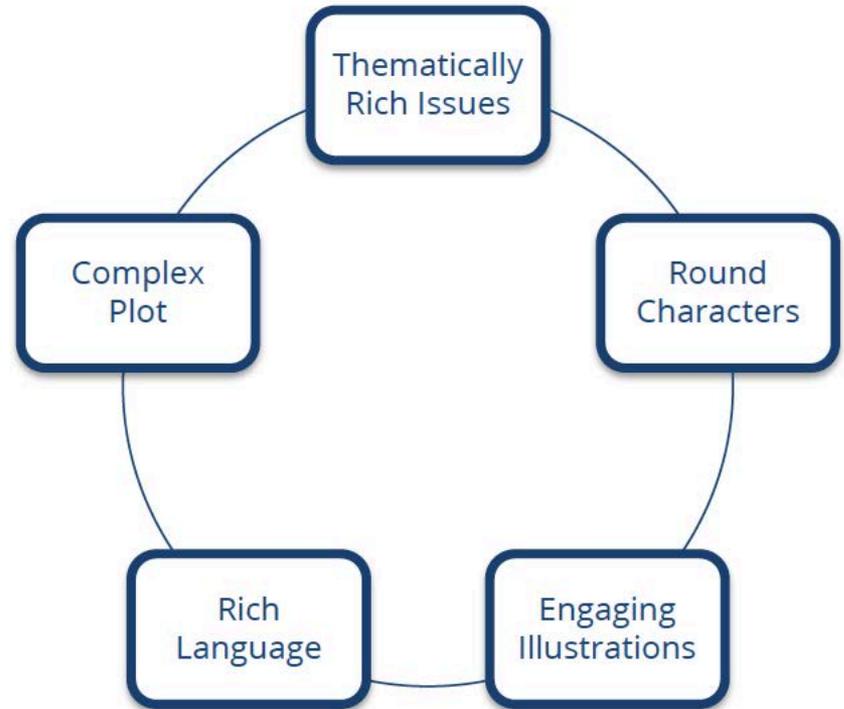
Remember...

- Engaging students with high-quality texts makes reading enjoyable and helps foster a love of reading.



Connecting Qualitative Complexity and High-Quality Criteria

Levels of Meaning/Purpose:	Structure:
Language Conventinality and Clarity:	Theme and Knowledge Demands:



What connections do we see between the dimensions of qualitative complexity and the traits of high-quality texts?

Content-Rich Texts

- Providing **balanced book collections** at all grade levels is **vital to engagement** during both reading instruction and self-selection. This work suggests that a balanced collection includes lots of informational titles and a variety of print materials. Pappas (1993) found that children as young as kindergarten showed a **preference for informational text** and Mohr (2006) noted that **nonfiction books were the overwhelming choice** of first grade students. In addition, Marinak and Gambrell (2007) found that third grade boys and girls valued reading newspapers and magazines as well as books.

Content-Rich Texts *(page 68)*

- Read the information on page 68. Use the following key to take notes:
 - ! – This is a new idea for me
 - ✓ – This is an idea I've already thought about and agree with
 - ? – I have a question about this

Practice: Content-Rich Texts

- Form a group of three, with each member choosing one of the three informational articles:
 - *Public Spaces*
 - *New Animal Species*
 - *Save the World: A little change can make a big difference*
- Read your article and determine if it does or does not meet the traits of a content-rich texts. Share your findings with your group.

Note: All three articles are in the grades 3-4 lexile band and could be used as read aloud material in a lower elementary classroom.

Remember...

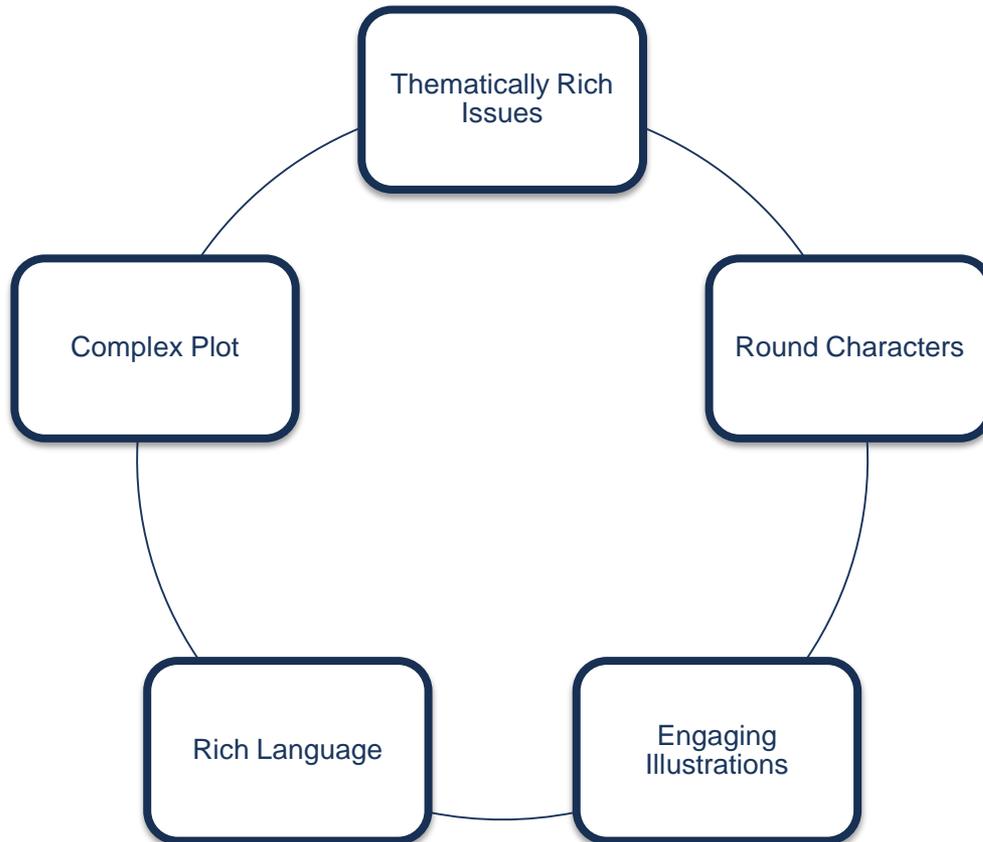
- Engaging students with content-rich texts builds knowledge and invites students to pursue interests and questions.



6 Reasons to Use Informational Text in Primary Grades *(page 73)*

- Our standards call for a 50/50 split between literary and informational text. This article is a helpful resource in getting people on board with the importance of non-fiction!

Which characteristics are the same for both literary and informational text?



- Does the text contain **new** information that students likely don't already know?
- Does the text **build background knowledge** that will help students comprehend later texts and experiences?
- Does the text contain information that is **useful** in the real world?
- Does the text contain information that is **relevant** to students' needs or interests? Does it help them **answer questions** or **solve problems**?
- Does the text contain information that helps students **connect** their own experiences and situations to others and to the broader world?
- Is the content of the text **authentic** and does it lend itself to **further research, exploration, and inquiry**?

Reflection

Revisit the list of read aloud texts you generated at the beginning of the module. Then, answer the questions in your manual.

- Considering the information on text complexity and quality, would you still choose those same texts in the future?
- **How will this information on text complexity and quality impact the way you select texts for future read alouds?**

Remember...

Early grades teachers should purposefully select read aloud texts that are complex, high-quality, and content-rich. These kinds of texts support complex interactions with text, develop a love for and interest in reading, and build students' knowledge and vocabulary.

