

MODULE | **2**

Linking research with practice: A local assessment toolkit to guide school leaders



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Tools for Examining Text Complexity

Introduction

“The instruction and assessment of reading comprehension presents unique challenges to classroom teachers and test developers alike; and the criteria used in selecting a variety and range of appropriate texts is essential to meeting those purposes. In the classroom, students learn to apply and practice a variety of reading strategies, for different purposes and with different text types. Over time, students who are exposed to a variety of text types with increasing complexity also learn how text features differ by genre, and they gain confidence in peeling back the layers of complexity for a deeper understanding of what is read. ... Passages for reading assessment, drawn from “authentic” text whenever possible, should always include both literary and informational texts. A series of questions accompanying each reading passage may include initial understanding of text, analysis and interpretation of text, or a combination of both types of questions, especially for longer texts” (Hess & Biggam, p.1, 2004).

Criteria for determining increasing text complexity include eight factors that interact to affect the relative difficulty of texts. These factors include:

- 1 Length of Text** affects the ability of students to sustain engagement with the text.
- 2 Format and Layout of Text** includes how the text is organized, size and location of print and white space, graphics, and other book/print features (e.g., numbering, bullets, graphics or visual images) that support the organization and presentation of the information.
- 3 Genre and Characteristic Features of the Text** When students have begun to generalize what is typical of each genre of text (e.g., a fable is a fantasy story with a lesson; a play presents dialogue in a way distinct from narrative texts; an essay generally begins with a thesis/proposition and lays out supporting evidence for it; historical fiction is not all fact-based)

they are better able to anticipate how information will be organized, thus supporting their comprehension when encountering new /unfamiliar texts.

- 4 Purpose & Level of Reasoning Required** to interpret the author’s purpose and message can be quite complex while the actual words and sentence structure appear on the surface to be simplistic. For determining the complexity of this factor, consider the sophistication of themes and ideas presented, or use of abstract metaphors and other literary devices. Additionally, complex visual or symbolic images in multi-modal texts (e.g., repeated images, called motifs, may require deeper analysis to get at their significance – how are they connected to theme; are there embedded iconic images of historical significance that require understanding of their context; juxtaposition of text and images that reveal humorous irony or contradiction).
- 5 Text Structures** are the *internal organizational structures* used within paragraphs or longer texts, appropriate to genre and purpose. Research in literacy learning indicates that: a) an understanding of various text structures and their purposes enhances student’s ability to comprehend what is read; and b) that some text structures are more easily learned and understood before other more complex structures. Increasingly complex structures tend to follow this general progression: sequence (procedure), chronology (time order), description, definition, compare-contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution, proposition- support, critique, and inductive-deductive. Each text structure has associated semantic cues and signal words and phrases that help readers understand how the information is organized, as well as to compose their own texts with greater coherence and clarity (Hess, 2008).
- 6 Discourse Style** (e.g., sarcasm, satire, humor, irony) provides a view into author’s perspective, style, voice, and sometimes potential biases, as well as adding a more complex dimension of language use for readers to interpret.
- 7 Word Difficulty and Language Structure** includes vocabulary and sentence type and complexity of words or structure, often determined through the use of multiple readability formulas, such as Lexiles.
- 8 Background Knowledge and/or Degree of Familiarity with Content** needed by the reader to understand the content (e.g., historical, geograph-

ical, or literary references) will greatly inhibit or enhance comprehension depending on both the degree to which a student has read widely and discussed texts in the past (building background/world knowledge) and how well prepared they are to read a text that might require additional background knowledge for deeper comprehension (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" includes historical and biblical references).

See also Karin Hess' explanation of the 8 text complexity factors with related research in a YouTube Video, "Text Complexity Tools" (10 minutes).

More about Words and Language Features (adapted from Beck, I., Mckown, M., & Kucan, L. *Bringing Words to Life*, 2002, 2008) Also see CCSS for ELA, Appendix A (pages 33-35) for examples.

- **Tier 1 Words:** Words that rarely require instructional attention in school; familiar words with high frequency, everyday use. These words are generally of Anglo-Saxon origin and not considered a challenge for native speakers of English.
- **Tier 2 Words:** Words with high utility determined by use in context; considered high frequency use for mature language users; found across a variety of domains and texts; vary according to age and development; and include words we assume students know, but often they have only "heard" the word. These include words the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) refer to as "academic words" (e.g., glance, confident, commotion, regret, relative, faltered, solution). Exposing students to texts with different connotations for the same words or phrases moves beyond definitional understanding to building deeper conceptual understanding.
- **Tier 3 Word:** Low frequency words, often limited to content-specific domains; important to learn when the specific need arises; critical for content area learning; found most often in informational texts. These are words the CCSS refers to as "domain-specific words" (e.g., lava, legislature, circumference).

Additional Text Complexity Readings & Resources

Text Structures: Hess, K. (2008). "Teaching and assessing understanding of text structures across grades" [online] available: http://www.nciea.org/publications/TextStructures_KH08.pdf

Text Complexity:

CCSS for ELA, Appendix A (pages 2-10). [online] available:

http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf

Hess, K. & Biggam, S. (2004) "A discussion of text complexity, grades K-high school" published by NH, RI, and VT Departments of Education as part of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) Grade Level Expectations for Reading. [online] available:

http://www.nciea.org/publications/TextComplexity_KH05.pdf

Hiebert, E. "Supporting students' movement up the staircase of text complexity." *Reading Teacher*, 66(6), 459-467.

TextProject: TextProject (www.textproject.org) aims to bring beginning and struggling readers to high levels of literacy using a variety of strategies and tools, particularly the texts used for reading instruction. Free materials, articles, and webinars are available at the website.

Find a Book: This free book search utility (<http://www.lexile.com/fab>) makes it easy for young people to find books at their reading level, whether they are reading for school or for pleasure. Lexile measures match a young person's reading ability with high-interest books at an appropriate level of difficulty to help him or her grow as a reader. The site includes a growing collection of English and Spanish fiction and nonfiction books.

On the following pages, are a planning worksheet (p. 3) for examining texts and planning instruction; an annotated text illustrating a qualitative analysis of text complexity (pp. 4-5), followed by text complexity rubrics with descriptors of a continua of increasing complexity for informational (p. 6) and literary texts (p. 7); and a sample compilation worksheet for ranking local benchmark texts at each grade level (p. 8). The text complexity rubrics were developed and refined for use in classrooms with middle and high school teachers in NYC involved in a pilot project during the 2010-2011 school year, under the direction of Sheena Hervey (AUSSIE) and Karin Hess (NCIEA).



TOOL 6

PLANNING WORKSHEET

Analyzing Qualitative Features of Text Complexity for Instruction & Assessment



Text or text passage:	Genre:
Approximate reading time: (indicate silent or oral)	Lexile or Level:
CCSS suggested Lexile range for this grade level	(see also page 8, CCSS Appendix A):

Factors that Influence Text Complexity	Rubric Ratings (1-4)	Characteristics of this Text	Identify Best/Most Appropriate Standards for Assessment
Length of Text			Aligned to standards:
Format and Layout of Text (e.g., bold key words, visuals, inset text with definitions, white space, signposts, enhancements - color coding, font size, etc.)		To what degree does the text format and layout support or inhibit comprehension?	Supports/scaffolding
Genre & Characteristic Features of Genre (e.g., sub- or chapter headings, captioned photos, labeled diagrams)		What do you expect students to notice?	
Purpose, Level of Meaning, & Reasoning Required by Reader (e.g., sophistication or complexity of themes or ideas presented)		Theme(s)/Key Concept(s) Explicit-Implied Purposes	Aligned to standards: Supports/scaffolding
Text Structure (sequence, chronology, description, definition, compare/contrast, cause/effect, problem/solution, proposition/support, judgment/critique, inductive/deductive) Discourse Style (sarcasm, satire, irony, humor, etc.)		Text Structure(s) Semantic cues/signal words Discourse style (e.g., employs use of literary devices)	Aligned to standards: Supports/scaffolding
Words, Language Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word length, frequency Sentence length; simple/complex with transitions Potential levels of meaning (single/multiple; explicit-implicit) Precise/nuanced meaning Domain/specific meaning 		Tier 2 words-academic words (precise, contextual, literal, figurative, archaic) Tier 3 words (technical, content/domain-specific)	Aligned to standards: Supports/scaffolding
Background Knowledge Demands or Degree of Familiarity with Content Required (e.g., prior knowledge, multiple perspectives, embedded citations)		Embedded references (literary, historical, cultural, economical, political, etc.)	Aligned to standards: Supports/scaffolding

Introduction to *Bearing Witness: Portraits of Americans Dreaming*

Introduction to *Portraits of Americans Dreaming*

Since its founding in 1776, the United States has promoted itself as the land of opportunity. In the early years of the nation, the dream was tied to the widespread availability of land. Over time, it has evolved to signal a person's ability, through effort, to achieve prosperity regardless of their origins. In addition, it is the opportunity to make individual choices without the prior restrictions that limited people according to their class, caste, religion, race, or ethnicity. At its most expansive, the dream includes the belief that one's children will grow up safe, healthy, and educated; that they will become capable of a career and even greater prosperity, without barriers due to class, race or gender.

The term "American Dream" was first used by historian [James Truslow Adams](#) in his book *Epic of America* (1931):

The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the [European upper classes](#) to interpret adequately, also too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of [social order](#) in which each [man and each woman](#) shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous [circumstances](#) of birth or position.

Adams also wrote:

The American Dream...that has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century has not been a dream of material plenty, though that has doubtlessly counted heavily. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as a man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class.

[Martin Luther King](#) used the concept of the American Dream to anchor the Civil Rights movement. In his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963), he wrote:

We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands... when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

This dream has not been easy to sustain and realize. Some would say that it is a myth – even a mirage – that eludes most Americans. Numerous authors, such as [Sinclair Lewis](#) in his 1922 novel *Babbitt*, satirized the materialism and shallowness that he saw in the chase for the American dream. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway describes how the pursuit of opportunity became "the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." In 1949 [Arthur Miller](#) wrote the play "[Death of a Salesman](#)" in which the American Dream is portrayed as a fruitless pursuit that destroys and deludes.

Numerous complex sentences with subordinate clauses and

Archaic language

Figurative language

Meaning includes more complex concepts and a higher level of detail and while is implicit throughout the text, is explicitly stated at the end

Quotes with minimal signposting

Complex sentences with multiple concepts

Vocabulary with multiple meaning

Obscure citations

Text complexity analysis sample for *Bearing Witness: Portraits of Americans*

	Simple Text [1]	Somewhat Complex Text [2]	Complex Text [text mostly ranked a "3"]	Very Complex Text [4]
Layout Format	Consistent placement of text, regular word and line spacing, often large plain font Graphics, captioned photos, labeled diagrams that directly support and help interpret the written text	May have longer passages of uninterrupted text, often plain font Graphs, photos, tables, charts, diagrams that directly support the text	Longer passages of uninterrupted text may include columns or other variations in layout, often smaller more elaborate font Essential integrated graphics, tables, charts, formulas (necessary to make meaning of text)	Very long passages of uninterrupted text that may include columns or other variations in layout, often small densely packed print Extensive/complex, intricate, essential integrated tables, charts, formulas necessary to make connections or synthesize concepts presented
Purpose & Meaning	Supportive signposting and/or enhancements A single or simple purpose conveying clear or factual information Meaning is clear, concrete with a narrow focus	Indexes, glossaries, occasional quotes, references Reduced signposting and enhancements Purpose involves conveying a range of ideas with more detailed information or examples Meaning is more involved with a broader focus	Embedded quotes, concluding appendices, indexes, glossaries, bibliography Minimal signposting and/or enhancements Purpose includes explaining or interpreting information, not just presenting it Meaning includes more complex concepts and a higher level of detail	Abstracts, footnotes, citations and detailed indexes, appendices, bibliography Integrated signposting conforming to disciplinary formats. No enhancements Purpose may include examining/evaluating complex, sometimes theoretical and contested information Meaning is intricate, with abstract theoretical elements
Structure/Discourse	Discourse style & organization of the text is clear or chronological and/or easy to predict Connections between ideas, processes, or events are explicit and clear One primary text structure is evident	The organization of the text may include a thesis or reasoned explanation in addition to facts Connections between some ideas, processes or events are implicit /subtle Includes a main text structure with 1-2 embedded structures	Organization of the text may contain multiple pathways, more than one thesis and/or several genres Connections between an expanded range ideas, processes, or events are deeper and often implicit or subtle. Includes different text structure types of varying complexity	Organization of the text is intricate or specialized for a particular discipline or genre Connections between an extensive range ideas, processes or events are deep, intricate and often implicit or subtle Includes sustained complex text structure types and/or specialized, hybrid text types
Language Features	Mainly simple sentences Simple language style, sometimes with narrative elements Vocabulary is mostly familiar or defined in text	Simple and compound sentences with some more complex constructions Increased objective style and passive constructions with higher factual content Includes some unfamiliar, context-dependent or multiple meaning words	Many complex sentences with increased subordinate phrases and clauses or transition words Objective/passive style with higher conceptual content and increasing nominalization Includes much academic (nuanced) vocabulary and/or some domain specific (content) vocabulary	Mainly complex sentences, often containing multiple concepts Specialized disciplinary style with dense conceptual content and high nominalization Includes extensive academic (nuanced, precise) and/or domain specific (content) vocabulary
Knowledge Demands	General topic is familiar, with details known by reader Simple, concrete ideas	General topic is familiar, with some details new to reader (cultural, historical, literary, political, legal, etc.)	General topic is somewhat familiar but with many details unknown to reader Some challenging, abstract concepts	General topic is mostly unfamiliar with most details unknown to reader (cultural, historical, literary, political, legal, etc.) Many new ideas/perspectives, abstract concepts



GRADIENTS IN COMPLEXITY:

Text Complexity Rubric for **Informational** Texts



Informational Text Analyzed (author, date):

Overall Complexity Rating:

Notes:

	Simple Text [1]	Somewhat Complex Text [2]	Complex Text [3]	Very Complex Text [4]
Format Layout	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent placement of text, regular word and line spacing, often large plain font <input type="checkbox"/> Graphics, captioned photos, labeled diagrams that directly support and help interpret the written text <input type="checkbox"/> Simple indexes, short glossaries <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive signposting and/or enhancements	<input type="checkbox"/> May have longer passages of uninterrupted text, often plain font <input type="checkbox"/> Graphs, photos, tables, charts, diagrams directly support the text <input type="checkbox"/> Indexes, glossaries, occasional quotes, references <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced signposting and enhancements	<input type="checkbox"/> Longer passages, uninterrupted text may include columns or other variations in layout, often smaller more elaborate font <input type="checkbox"/> Essential integrated graphics, tables, charts, formulas (necessary to make meaning of text) <input type="checkbox"/> Embedded quotes, concluding appendices, indexes, glossaries, bibliography <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal signposting and/or enhancements	<input type="checkbox"/> Very long passages, uninterrupted text that may include columns or other variations in layout, often small densely packed print <input type="checkbox"/> Extensive/complex, intricate, essential integrated tables, charts, formulas necessary to make connections or synthesize concepts presented <input type="checkbox"/> Abstracts, footnotes, citations and/or detailed indexes, appendices, bibliography <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated signposting conforming to disciplinary formats. No enhancements
Purpose and Meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> A single or simple purpose conveying clear or factual information <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning is clear, concrete with a narrow focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose involves conveying a range of ideas with more detailed information or examples <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning is more involved with a broader focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose includes explaining or interpreting information, not just presenting it <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning includes more complex concepts and a higher level of detail	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose may include examining/evaluating complex, sometimes theoretical and contested information <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning is intricate, with abstract theoretical elements
Structure & Discourse	<input type="checkbox"/> Discourse style & organization of the text is clear or chronological and/or easy to predict <input type="checkbox"/> Connections between ideas, processes, or events are explicit and clear <input type="checkbox"/> One primary text structure is evident (e.g., sequence, description)	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization of the text may include a thesis or reasoned explanation in addition to facts <input type="checkbox"/> Connections between some ideas, processes, or events are implicit or subtle <input type="checkbox"/> Includes a main text structure with 1-2 embedded structures	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization of the text may contain multiple pathways, more than one thesis and/or several genres <input type="checkbox"/> Connections between an expanded range ideas, processes, or events are deeper and often implicit or subtle <input type="checkbox"/> Includes different text structure types of varying complexity	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization of the text is intricate or specialized for a particular discipline or genre <input type="checkbox"/> Connections between an extensive range ideas, processes, or events are deep, intricate and often implicit or subtle <input type="checkbox"/> Includes sustained complex text structure types and/or specialized, hybrid text types, including digital texts
Language Features	<input type="checkbox"/> Mainly simple sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Simple language style, sometimes with narrative elements <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary is mostly familiar or defined in text	<input type="checkbox"/> Simple and compound sentences with some more complex constructions <input type="checkbox"/> Increased objective style and passive constructions with higher factual content <input type="checkbox"/> Includes some unfamiliar, context-dependent or multiple meaning words	<input type="checkbox"/> Many complex sentences with increased subordinate phrases and clauses or transition words <input type="checkbox"/> Objective/passive style with higher conceptual content and increasing nominalization <input type="checkbox"/> Includes much academic (nuanced) vocabulary and/or some domain specific (content) vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> Mainly complex sentences, often containing multiple concepts <input type="checkbox"/> Specialized disciplinary style with dense conceptual content and high nominalization <input type="checkbox"/> Includes extensive academic (nuanced, precise) and/or domain specific (content) vocabulary
Bk Knowledge Demands	<input type="checkbox"/> General topic is familiar, with some details known by reader <input type="checkbox"/> Simple, concrete ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> General topic is familiar, with some details new to reader (cultural, historical, literary, political, legal, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Both simple and more complicated, abstract ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> General topic is somewhat familiar but with many details unknown to reader (cultural, historical, literary, political, legal, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> A range of recognizable ideas and challenging abstract concepts	<input type="checkbox"/> General topic is mostly unfamiliar with most details unknown to reader (cultural, historical, literary, political, legal, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Many new ideas, perspectives and/or complex, challenging, abstract and theoretical concepts



TOOL 8

GRADIENTS IN COMPLEXITY:

Text Complexity Rubric for **Literary** Texts



Literary Text Analyzed (author, date):

Overall Complexity Rating:

Notes:

	Simple Text [1]	Somewhat Complex Text [2]	Complex Text [3]	Very Complex Text [4]
Format Layout	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent placement of text, regular word and line spacing, often large plain font <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous illustrations that directly support and help interpret the written text <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive signposting (e.g., chapter heading) and enhancements	<input type="checkbox"/> May have longer passages of uninterrupted text, often plain font <input type="checkbox"/> A range of illustrations that support selected parts of the text <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced signposting and enhancements	<input type="checkbox"/> Longer passages of uninterrupted text may include columns or other variations in layout, often smaller more elaborate font <input type="checkbox"/> A few illustrations that support the text OR includes images that require some interpretation <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal signposting or enhancements	<input type="checkbox"/> Very long passages of uninterrupted text that may include columns or other variations in layout, often small densely packed print <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal or no illustrations that support the text OR includes images/text layout that require deeper interpretation (e.g., symbolism or recursive reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated signposting conforming to literary devices. No enhancements
Purpose and Meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose usually stated explicitly in the title or in the beginning of the text (this is a story about...) <input type="checkbox"/> One intended level of meaning or lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Theme is obvious and revealed early in the text <input type="checkbox"/> Common themes	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose tends to be revealed early in the text, but may be conveyed with some subtlety <input type="checkbox"/> More than one level of meaning, with levels clearly distinguished from each other <input type="checkbox"/> Theme is clear and revealed early in the text, but may be conveyed with some subtlety <input type="checkbox"/> More than one possible theme	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose is implicit and may be revealed over the entirety of the text <input type="checkbox"/> Several levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify/separate <input type="checkbox"/> Theme(s) may be implicit or subtle, is sometimes ambiguous and may be revealed over the entirety of the text <input type="checkbox"/> Universal themes or archetypes (e.g., the hero's journey)	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose implicit or subtle, is sometimes ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text <input type="checkbox"/> Several levels and competing elements of meaning that are difficult to identify/separate and interpret <input type="checkbox"/> Theme(s) implicit or subtle, often ambiguous, and revealed over the entirety of the text <input type="checkbox"/> Universal themes or competing archetypes (e.g., warrior vs. hero)
Structure & Discourse	<input type="checkbox"/> Discourse style & organization of the text is clear, chronological and/or easy to predict or follow <input type="checkbox"/> Connections between events or ideas are explicit and clear <input type="checkbox"/> One primary text structure is evident (e.g., chronology)	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization of text may have two or more storylines/ additional characters and is occasionally difficult to predict <input type="checkbox"/> Connections among events or ideas are sometimes implicit or subtle <input type="checkbox"/> Includes a main text structure with 1-2 embedded structures	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization of text may include, subplots, time shifts and more complex characters <input type="checkbox"/> Connections among events or ideas are often implicit or subtle (e.g., flashback establishes chronology) <input type="checkbox"/> Includes different text types (diary entry or news story within narrative) of varying complexity	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization of text is intricate with regard to elements (e.g., narrative viewpoint, time shifts, multiple characters, storylines/subplots, detail) <input type="checkbox"/> Connections among events or ideas are implicit or subtle throughout the text <input type="checkbox"/> Includes sustained complex text types and hybrid or non-linear texts (story within a story)
Language Features	<input type="checkbox"/> Mainly short, simple sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Simple, literal language; predictable <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary is mostly familiar for grade level; frequently appearing words	<input type="checkbox"/> Simple and compound sentences with some more complex constructions <input type="checkbox"/> Mainly literal, common-use language <input type="checkbox"/> Some unfamiliar or context-dependent, multiple meaning or precise words	<input type="checkbox"/> Many complex sentences with increased subordinate phrases and clauses <input type="checkbox"/> Some figurative language or literary devices <input type="checkbox"/> Includes much academic vocabulary and some domain specific (content) vocabulary, precise language	<input type="checkbox"/> Many complex sentences, often containing nuanced details or concepts <input type="checkbox"/> Much figurative language or use of literary devices (metaphor, analogy, connotative language literary allusion, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Includes extensive academic and domain specific (content) vocabulary, and possibly archaic language
Bk Knowledge Demands	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal assumed personal experience or background knowledge needed <input type="checkbox"/> Simple, straightforward ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Some assumed personal experience and/or knowledge (e.g., cultural or historical) ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Both simple and more complex ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Much assumed personal experience and/or explicit references to cultural, historical, literary, or political knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> A range of recognizable ideas and challenging concepts or themes	<input type="checkbox"/> Extensive, demanding, assumed personal experience and implied cultural, historical, literary, or political knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Many new ideas, perspectives, and/or complex, challenging concepts



SAMPLE PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TEXTS

Analyzed by (Alaska) Educators for Range of Complexity and Classroom Use

Author Publisher & Pub date	Title	Genre	Suggested Grade Level(s)	Lexile	Complexity Ratings (using Hess & Hervey rubric descriptors)					Other comments	Overall Low-Mid- High for grade(s)
					Format & Layout	Purpose & meaning	Text Structures/ Discourse	Language features	Knowledge demands		
Wade, P. & Macheras, D. (publisher unknown)	<i>Luk' ae</i>	Graphic novel	Gr 4	?	1 Easy to follow visuals and text	2 Salmon, effects of pollution	1	2 Domain-Specific	1	Use to introduce science concept - human impact on environment	L
Wallis, V. (1993) Harper Perennial	<i>Two Old Women</i>	Historical fiction	Gr 7-8	870	2 -3 Longer passages of uninterrupted text; a few illustrations support the text	2 Theme is clear, levels of complexity clearly distinguished	1-2 Text is clear, chronological, easy to predict Different text types	1-2 Simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions A few unfamiliar words (Gwitchin names)	1 Some assumed cultural knowledge	Presented as a traditional Native story	L-M
Huntington, S. (1993).Alaska Northwest Books	<i>Shadows on the Koyukuk</i>	Auto-biography (historical reflection and recollection)	Gr 9-10	1050	3 Longer passages of uninterrupted text; chapter headings; minimal signposts; maps	3 Explain and interpret some information; complex subjects	3 Time shift, complex characters, connections are subtle	2 Simple and compound sentences; some unfamiliar vocabulary	3 Much assumed personal experience and cultural knowledge	Well-written, complex biography	M-H
Proenneke, D. & Keith, S. (1999) Alaska Northwest Books	<i>One Man's Wilderness</i>	Auto-biography (journal entries)	Gr 9-10	950	2 Some longer passages, plain font. Range of illustrations. Signposting and enhance-ments.	1 Purpose explicitly stated, one level of meaning, theme is obvious	1 Organization of text is clear; connections are explicit	1 Simple sentences; literal language; familiar vocabulary	2 Some assumed personal experience and cultural knowledge		L

