The Common Core State Standards and Text Complexity

Elfrieda H. Hiebert

TextProject & University of California, Santa Cruz

For a long time educators have asked questions about what makes a text difficult. Why is it harder for students to read some books than others? How are we to help students select texts that will promote their reading while not frustrating them? What type of texts will increase reading achievement most effectively? What texts will motivate students to read more to reinforce skills they need to learn and to develop a life-long enjoyment of reading?

In comparing the first three texts in Table 1 with the last three texts, it is obvious that the first set is "easier" than the second set. But in comparing the first three texts with one another from the perspective of students who are learning to read, the differences are not as clear. Similarly, it is not obvious which of the last three texts would be most appropriate for a group of struggling readers in the fifth grade.

Determining text difficulty is complex. Any reading act involves a text—something with written language on it. That is what makes reading different from getting information from oral language. But the reading of any text is also influenced by the characteristics of readers (what does the reader know? How well does the reader recognize new words or think strategically) and context (is the reader given assistance in pronouncing words)? For a long part of the history of American reading education, determining text complexity has been either to rely on people's judgments (typically those of editors in publishing houses and expert consultants that they hire) or quantitative formulas (numbers that rate the relative difficulty of a text, e.g. readability formulas).

The question of text complexity is especially important at the present time because of the expectations established in the Common Core State Standards.[1] At least in the near future, the view of text complexity is going to be powerful in terms of the assessments that students are given, and it is going to determine how we view students' accomplishments and also the kinds of texts that are given to them.

Objectives: After studying this chapter you will be able to:

1. Describe the emphasis on text complexity within the Common Core Standards (CCS).

2. Explain three overall approaches to text difficulty.

3. Implement informed choices of text using a combination of the three approaches.

Text Complexity and the CCSS

Beginning in the middle to late 1980s, states began to develop standards that describe what students should know at particular grades. Typically, the guidelines for reading and language arts of many states have simply described the kinds of strategies and knowledge that readers should have at particular grades. The level of text to which that knowledge was to be applied was not prescribed. The typical phrase in a state standards document was "on-grade-level" text. It was not clear how "on-grade-level" was determined nor how complexity of text was defined. Another challenge was that "on-grade-level" could mean texts were determined to be on different grade levels depending on the expectations of schools and communities.

Text complexity for particular grades may have been left ambiguous in the past within standards documents but the situation changed with the CCSS. The CCSS has an entire standard devoted solely to text complexity. Standard 10 defines a grade-by-grade "staircase" of increasing text complexity that rises from beginning reading to the college and career readiness level. The Reading standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read

and the skill with which they read.

The CCSS Initiative takes a perspective on text complexity that is similar to one that scholars have taken for almost 100 years[2]. According to this view, three factors need to be considered in determining the difficulty of a text:

Quantitative: To get a sense of the difficulty of government documents and also school texts, scholars have worked hard for almost 100 years to get quantitative measures of the difficulty of a text. You probably have such a measure on your computer such as the Flesch-Kincaid.[3] Application of the software indicates that, at least at this point, this chapter has a difficulty that is estimated to be at grade 10.1.

Qualitative: It's hard to say that a classic such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*[4] is "three times" harder than the latest John Grisham novel[5] but even a fairly quick overview of these two books leaves a reader with the sense that these two books are different in some important ways. Such differences are described as qualitative and, while identifying qualities that distinguish a classic and a simple "good-read" can be difficult, literary and education experts have identified features such as the levels of meaning (e.g., readers need to make inferences to understand a character's motive).

Reader-task components: The system also recognizes that features of those who are reading a text such as their motivation and prior knowledge will influence comprehension of a text. For example, someone who knows a great deal about World War II will respond quite differently to the bestseller *Unbroken*[6] than someone who doesn't have any background knowledge about World War II. This part of the equation also recognizes that there are ways in which teachers and situations can influence how comprehensible a text is for a reader. For example, listening to an audiotape of a text or the support of an

instructor in understanding a text are likely to influence readers' comprehension.

Such a three-part system of text complexity fits with what is known about texts and readers. But even though this three-part system is a reasonable one, examples of all of the system's components were not available when the standards were released. In its final form, the CCSS gives explicit guidance for determining only the quantitative component and, even for that component, it describes only one scheme—Lexiles, a recent form of a readability formula.[7] The term "Lexiles" will be explained extensively in subsequent parts of this chapter. But, at this point, what is important to know is that Lexiles are a recent type of readability formula that uses digital technology. Digital technology means that a quantitative formula can be applied to thousands and thousands of texts, which is the case with Lexiles. In fact, Lexiles have been applied to all of the books available on sale at the Barnes & Noble website. If you want to check out titles of books that you're reading, you can find their Lexiles at www.lexile.com.

Within the CCSS, the Lexiles have been recalibrated from longstanding recommendations for particular grade levels to a grade-by-grade "staircase" from beginning reading to the college and career readiness level. Beginning with the grade 2-3 band, Lexiles have been increased to ensure that high school texts have the difficulty of texts assigned in college classes and used in many careers. The specific Lexiles by grade bands, the ease of obtaining Lexile scores, and the lack of ready access to validated qualitative rubrics mean that considerable weight could be placed on Lexiles in choosing texts for instruction and assessment in schools over the next decade (if not beyond that).

Much of this weight could be laid on the shoulders of teachers who could be asked to have their students read texts that are simply too difficult for them. Giving students texts that are too difficult for them does not support their growth in reading capacity—the central goal of the

CCSS. As professionals, you need to be able to evaluate the data on Lexiles. You also need to be able to supplement this data with qualitative information on the texts as well as on your knowledge of students and the situations in which you're asking students to read texts. The next section gives you additional background to understand the appropriate uses and shortcomings of quantitative measures such as Lexiles and also ways in which quantitative data needs to be evaluated in relation to professional wisdom about the features and content of texts, the capabilities and interests of students, and the contexts in which students are reading the texts.

Three Primary Approaches to Text Complexity

Quantitative information

For almost a century, readability formulas have been used in American schools to describe the difficulty of texts. An estimate is that over 200 readability formulas have been developed.[8] With few exceptions, readability is established through formulas that use information on two features of texts: (a) the complexity of the sentences and (b) the complexity of the vocabulary in the text. The first component is almost always measured in number of words in sentences. There is a little more variability in how vocabulary complexity is measured. Some readability formulas like the Dale-Chall (1948)[9] compare the words in a text to those on a list of words that have been identified as appropriate for different grade levels. One very popular readability formula developed by Fry (1968) [10] counts the number of syllables. Fry's view was that, the more syllables in a word, the harder it is.

Lexiles are based on a third system of measuring vocabulary complexity. Words in samples of a text are compared to a database that began with a group of approximately 135,000 unique words and now has expanded to include many more unique words (although likely not all of the approximately 750,000 words in the British National Corpus.[11] A log of the mean

frequency of the words in the text is used in a formula with the mean sentence length. The computation produces a lexile that can be placed on a scale, which spans 0 (easiest texts) to 2000 (most complex texts). For example, the Lexile for a well-loved and award-winning book, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*[12] *(*which appears in Table 1)*,* is 430, while *Green Eggs and Ham*[13] has a Lexile of 30 and *Pride and Prejudice*[14] is given a Lexile of 1030. These numbers are consistent with a general direction that makes sense to most educators acquainted with these texts. *Green Eggs and Ham* is easy; *Sarah, Plain and Tall* is somewhat harder; and *Pride and Prejudice* is the most complex of the three.

When an individual text is examined for purposes of instruction and independent reading, however, particular features of a text can mean the lexile is not sufficient to predict how well a student may be able to read a particular text. For example, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*[15] and *The Old Man and the Sea*[16] have the same lexile: 940. While the Harry Potter book is by no means a simple one, it has a style and content that likely make it more comprehensible to a sixth grader than the Hemingway text.

Scholars have long been aware of the problems with readability formulas, many of which were summarized in a national report in the 1980s.[17] One problem is that sentence length can influence the readability level. Narratives (i.e., stories) often have dialogue and the sentences of oral language are often short. Short sentences do not necessarily make a text easy to read. In the text segment from *Sarah, Plain and Tall* in Table 1, Anna is carrying on an internal dialogue in which she is expressing her frustration with her younger brother's persistent questions about their dead mother. The Lexile for the text indicates that a reader with end of-first-grade proficiency should be able to read the text. The content, however, is more appropriate for a third or even fourth grader (and is reflected by the fact that the book was awarded the prestigious

Newbery award for best fiction for children the year it was published). The presence of dialogue and typically shorter sentences in narratives than in informational texts means that readability formulas such as Lexiles typically *underestimate* the difficulty of a text.

There are also several problems with the ways in which vocabulary is computed that means that the difficulty of informational texts is often *overestimated*. One problem is that the writers of informational texts typically repeat words often because, in a content area like science or social studies, there are no synonyms for words such as *photosynthesis*. Since many of these words are rare, that means that the vocabulary of a text will be rated as very difficult. Readers, however, pick up a word after one or two uses of it and it becomes "easier" to read. The readability formula, however, does not take this into account. The repetition of the infrequent words can be an aid to comprehension and vocabulary learning. Further, the words in an informational text usually relate to a theme that also can make words easier to comprehend.

The "rare word" phenomenon that leads to a high (i.e., more difficult) readability is not limited to informational texts. Often names of characters or places in stories are rare and are repeated often, such as *Mudge* in *Henry and Mudge*[18] (see Table 1) increasing the purposed difficulty of the text. *Mudge* is a very infrequent word and its repetition (30 times in the entire text) means that the text is rated harder than *Sarah: Plain and Tall* even though *Henry and Mudge* is a very straightforward book appropriate for second graders.

What professionals need to be bear in mind is that readability formulas give an overall indication of the difficulty of a text relative to thousands of other texts. Once a book has been established to be in a particular grade span, the hard work for the professional begins of understanding the demands of the book for students begins.

Qualitative Measures

Benchmark Texts. One way of establishing whether texts are appropriate for particular

students is to do a "comparison" with a text that educators agree represents the demands of a

particular grade level. These are often referred to as benchmark texts. The CCSS provides

exemplar texts but these have not been validated by either teachers or through a variety of

analyses so at this time they cannot be considered benchmark texts. Jeanne Chall, with a group

of colleagues, identified a set of texts almost two decades ago and validated them with teachers

and school administrators.[19] To make the texts more relevant to students today, these benchmark

texts have been refined and are identified in Table 2 (a report of the validation process is

available from the author).

A comparison of *The Birchbark House*[20] to the book benchmarks in Table 2 makes it

clear that it is very similar to the benchmark texts for grade five, even though it has a Lexile of

860 which places it in *The Birchbark House* has a Lexile of 860 which places it in grade four

according to the new levels in the CCSS. Its content is very similar to *Island of the Blue*

Dolphins [21] which, for several generations, has been a book enjoyed by fifth and even sixth

graders. The heroine of *The Birchbark House* must deal with the challenges brought on by the

appearance of Europeans, different in form but similar in their dilemmas as the heroine of *Island*

of the Blue Dolphins.

Qualitative dimensions. As I described earlier, educators and literary experts work to

define dimensions that describe features of texts that move from simple to more complex

features. The CCSS identified four such dimensions and, in Table 3, I have provided a fleshed

out description of each of those dimensions at three points in time—the beginning, middle, and

end of the elementary years. I will apply these dimensions to several of books shortly but, before

doing that, it is also important to understand ways of describing readers and the tasks they are asked to do with texts.

Readers and Tasks

Standards such as the CCSS can be viewed as a type of map that point educators to the goal for high school graduates to be reading texts used in colleges and careers. All students may not be at the same point at the same time (they never are) but they are all moving toward attaining the same capacities. What teachers need are milestones along the way to let them and their students check in to see where they are in relation to the goal. Once again, I turn to the work of Jeanne Chall, a premiere reading researcher of the last century. Chall identified six milestones or stages,[22] one of which she sub-divided and which I have chosen to present as a separate stage. These seven stages are presented in Table 4.

Readers are not always easy to place in stages since growth can be erratic and content can influence readers' actions. For example, young children love informational texts (and need to have an abundance of them), which seems somewhat at loggerheads with the distinction of learning content in stages 3 and 4. However, before readers can devote considerable attention to *new* content for which they do not have background knowledge they need to be sufficiently automatic with the "code" of written language. Chall's stages give a sense of the primary milestones that readers face in becoming proficient through the school years.

The tasks of reading, just as is the case with readers and texts, are also complex.[23] For purposes of an initial analytic scheme, however, task dimensions have been limited to three: (a) the social configuration, (b) form of response, and (c) the allocation of time. Each of these dimensions is represented in Figure 1. As this figure shows, each dimension of a task does not lend itself to a scale where one end represents "easy" and the other "difficult." Rather, the

critical component of these dimensions is the degree to which students are asked to be independent in the reading task and the level of open-endedness there is in both the kinds of response that is required from reading and in the time period that students have for the task. At one extreme, students are guided in every act of reading with time prescribed and the teacher monitoring their every response. At the other extreme, students are free to respond in whatever way they want to what they read (or even not to respond at all) and with little guidance from their teacher and with few time constraints. Neither of these extreme scenarios is typical of classroom life where the features of tasks shift from lesson to lesson. The elements in Figure 1 simply point to the features of decisions that teachers need to make in designing reading tasks in their classrooms.

How to Use the Three Forms of Information:

The Text Complexity Multi-Index

In this section, I'm going to show how professionals use the three forms of information to make choices about which texts to use with which students. I have named this process the Text Complexity Multi-Index (TCMI). You can think of the TCMI process much like making an on-line purchase in which you have to go through specific steps of selecting a product, entering your billing information and address, and confirming the purchase. Similarly, when you are considering which text to use with which students, you are analyzing a text through a series of steps—beginning with the quantitative, moving to the qualitative, and then considering the readers and task/context. To demonstrate the process, I'm going to use the Grade 2-3 texts that are excerpted in Table 1. The steps in the TCMI process are given in Table 5.

The first step in the process is to examine the quantitative data on Lexiles The information on the Lexiles places the texts in this order of difficulty: *The Fire Cat*[24] (480L),

Henry and Mudge (460L), and *Sarah: Plain and Tall* (430L). *Fire Cat* and *Henry and Mudge* have lexiles that are within the first part of the lexile range for grades 2-3. The lexile for *Sarah* falls below the grade 2-3 band into the K-1 levels.

But you'll remember the cautions that were raised about relying just on the overall Lexile. It's also important to look "inside" the Lexile at the two measures that are used in the formula: sentence length (Mean Sentence Length or MSL) and vocabulary/word frequency (Mean Log Word Frequency or MLWF).   From the examination of sentence length and vocabulary/word frequency, a different picture emerges. *Sarah* has the most common words. while *Henry and Mudge* has more uncommon words. I've already described the reason for *Henry and Mudge's* high vocabulary score—the 30 appearances of *Mudge* in the text. The situation with *Fire Cat* is similar--the names of characters appear frequently. Rare words in *Sarah* typically appear once or twice in the chapter or even the whole book.   But when these words appear, they are challenging (e.g., *hearthstones, wretched, holler*).

The quantitative analysis leaves us uncertain as to the appropriateness of assigning *Sarah: Plain and Tall* to beginning second graders and the other two books to slightly more able readers. Consequently, we turn to the next step: the comparison of these texts to the benchmark books. *Fire Cat* looks very similar to a prototypical beginning second grade book—*Frog and Toad*. In fact, when I look at the cover of the *Fire Cat*, I see that it comes from a commercial reading program with a similar designation as *Frog and Toad*. *Henry and Mudge* is even easier to classify in that, through a series of analyses with teachers (and of existing reading programs), *Henry and Mudge* is a clear choice for a mid-second grade book. In evaluation *Sarah: Plain and Tall*, its Newbery award and its similarity to the *Little House*[25] series leads me to classify it as a third grade book.

At this point, I'm thinking that *Henry and Mudge* and *Fire Cat* may be appropriate for a second-grade class and that *Sarah: Plain and Tall* is appropriate for third graders (or very advanced readers in a second-grade class at the end of the school year). I verify these evaluations by looking at the qualitative dimensions. Indeed, I see that *Henry and Mudge* and *Fire Cat* both have straightforward plots that are similar to those of many of the cartoons and/or sitcoms on television that second graders might watch. *Sarah,* however, is much more than a simple recitation of facts about pioneer times or a sitcom. It requires students to use background knowledge on geographic differences (Maine and the prairie) as well as understanding of the need for acceptance of a motherless family. I decide to stay with my evaluations to this point.

But now I need to decide exactly with whom and how I'm going to use these texts—the final step of the TCMI process. The analysis of vocabulary/word frequency in step 1 alerted me to the presence of vocabulary that would be good to pre-teach in both *Henry and Mudge* (e.g., *Mudge*, *pointy, curly, milky*) and *Fire Cat (*e.g., *Pickles, Goodkind, fireman/firemen).* Since the books are so straightforward in their content, I decide that these are good books for students to do some independent and partner reading. I'll follow up with a chance for students to read aloud a favorite page from a book in a small-group session.

For *Sarah: Plain and Tall*, the choices would be quite different. If I were a third-grade teacher, I would choose to have students read particular chapters on their own, followed by small- or whole-class discussions. This book has many layers of meaning, but also has language that is accessible enough to give students the chance to read chapters on their own, allowing them to develop their stamina in independent reading.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Selecting appropriate text for students to read is of crucial importance. By guiding students to read text that "fits" them, which stretches their reading capabilities while not frustrating them, teachers can promote high expectations and gratifying reading experiences for students. The Common Core State Standards have prompted a renewed examination of how teachers select text and a critical awareness of the methods we employ. The Text Complexity Multi-Index gives you the foundation for ensuring that students have the right texts to read now and, in the process, grow their capacity.

Table 1.

Excerpts from Focus Texts

Title of Text (& Grade Band on CCSS)	Excerpt
Sarah: Plain & Tall (2-3)	"Every-single-day," I told him for the second time this week. For the twentieth time this month. The hundredth time this year? And the past few years?
The Fire Cat (2-3)	Joe took Pickles to the Chief, who was sitting at his desk. "Oh!" said the Chief. "I know this young cat. He is the one who chases little cats." "How do you know?" asked Joe. The Chief answered, "A Fire Chief knows many things." Just then the telephone began to ring.
Henry & Mudge (2-3)	Every day when Henry woke up, he saw Mudge's big head. And every day when Mudge woke up, he saw Henry's small face. They ate breakfast at the same time; they ate supper at the same time. And when Henry was at school, Mudge just lay around and waited. Mudge never went for a walk without Henry again.
M.C. Higgins the Great (4-5)[26]	M.C. was barefoot, wearing carefully ironed blue jeans and a brown, faded T-shirt. The shirt was the color and fit of a second skin over his broad shoulders. Already he was perspiring. But his motions remained lithe and natural, as he moved easily among trees and shade. Pushing through pine boughs, he continued on his errand.
The Birchbark House (4-5)	Startled, Omakayas slipped and spun her arms in wheels. She teetered, but somehow kept her balance. Two big, skipping hops, another leap, and she was on dry land. She stepped over spongy leaves and moss, into the woods where the sparrows sang nesting songs in delicate relays. "Where are you?" Nokomis yelled again.
Tuck Everlasting (4-5)[27]	Here and there the still surface of the water dimpled, and bright rings spread noiselessly and vanished. "Feeding time," said Tuck softly. And Winnie, looking down, saw hosts of tiny insects skittering and skating on the surface. "Best time of all for fishing," he said, "when they come up to feed."

Table 2.

Benchmark Books (Narrative)

Grade Level	Benchmark Books	Description
1	Green Eggs and Ham* *End of 1stG/beginning of 2ndG:* The Fire Cat# Frog and Toad	Structure of text is simple. Illustrations play a central role in enhancing story content.
2	*Middle:* The Treasure# Henry & Mudge *End:* The Bears on Hemlock Mountain* Tops & Bottoms#	Straightforward development of a theme
3	*Middle:* The Stories Julian Tells# Grandfather's Story *End:* The Magic Finger* The Lighthouse Family# Beezus & Ramona	Themes can deal with challenging concepts (e.g., decimation of rain forest) but story structure and development of characters are straightforward
4	Soup and Me* The Black Stallion# Because of Winn-Dixie	Feelings and motivations of characters are a focus of text and are multi-faceted; characters face personal, family, school-related challenges
5	The Light in the Forest* Higgins the Great# Island of the Blue Dolphins	As with prior level, feelings/motivations are central but the challenges encountered by characters include societal/environmentally complex circumstances/issues

*Chall et al.
#Common Core State Standards

Table 3:

Qualitative Dimensions of Text Complexity

Dimension	Stage 1	Stage 3	Stage 5
Levels of Meaning/Purpose	Single level of meaning (often supported by illustrations)	More than one level of meaning (e.g., *Great Kapok Tree* where an individual's choices relate to the choices of many)	Multiple levels require drawing extensively on reading/experiences from other sources
	Aims/themes explicitly stated	Inferencing of characters' motives and/or how features of context may influence plot	Implicit purpose may be hidden or obscure
Structure	Texts follow structure of common genres (e.g., simple narrative, enumerative expository)	Texts include less common genres (e.g., autobiography, cause-effect expository)	Traits specific to a content-area discipline or use of unique chronologies/ perspectives (literary)
Language Conventions & Clarity	literal	Figurative; some irony (e.g., Dahl)	Literary: high level of figurative, metaphorical language (e.g., Hemingway)
Knowledge Demands	Simple theme	Complex ideas interwoven	Interconnected theme

Table 4.

Chall's (1983) Reading Stages

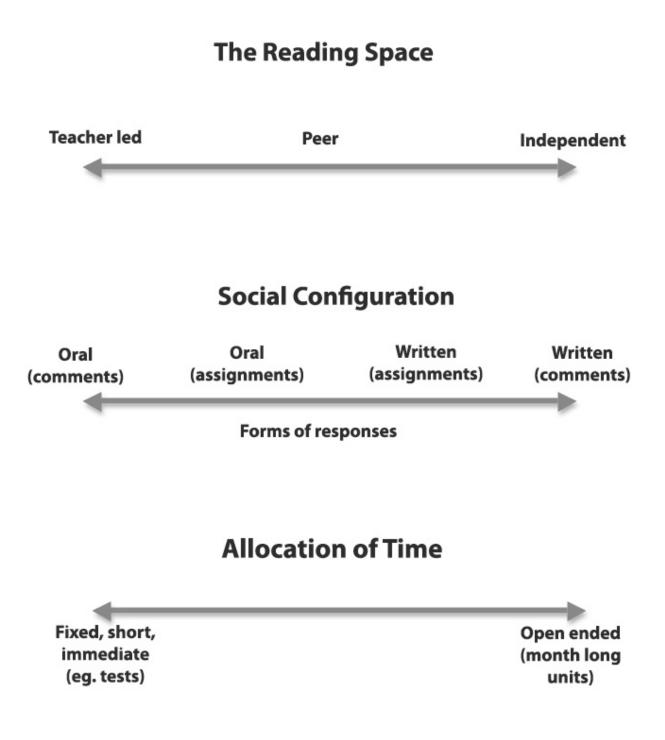| Stage	Primary Task	Grade Span
0	Prereading	Through kindergarten
1	Initial reading or decoding	Grades 1-2
2	Confirmation, fluency, ungluing from print	Grades 2-3
3	Reading for learning new content and developing basic background knowledge	Grades 4-6
4	Reading for increasing content knowledge	Grades 7-8
5	Reading for multiple viewpoints	High school
6	Construction and reconstruction: A world view	College

Table 5

The Text Complexity Multi-Index Process

Step	*Sarah: Plain & Tall*	*Henry & Mudge*	*The Fire Cat*
1: Quantitative Indices	Lexile: 430 MLWF[1]: 3.84 MSL[2]: 8.44	Lexile: 460 MLWF: 3.65 MSL: 7.98	Lexile: 480 MLWF: 3.76 MSL: 8.68
2: Qualitative Benchmarks	Middle Grade 3 (*Grandfather's Story*)	Middle of Grade 2 (*The Treasure*)	End of Grade 1 (*Frog & Toad*)
3: Qualitative Dimensions			
Levels of meaning/ purpose	Numerous levels of meaning: pioneer story but also story of a motherless family	Single level of meaning that is easy for children to grasp (similar to television sitcoms)	Characters are straightforward and follow the pattern of many simply written books
Structure	Follows a fairly conventional narrative sequence	Follows a fairly conventional narrative sequence	Follows a fairly conventional narrative sequence
Language conventions & clarity	Use of language is simple but elegant. Some archaic words (e.g., *hearthstones*).	Very straightforward	Very straightforward
Knowledge demands	High: Knowledge of pioneer life & effects on life of geography	Little, if any	Little, if any
4: Reader and Tasks	Appropriate for teacher – led discussions with third graders (i.e., early Stage 2readers)	Appropriate for repeated & independent reading for most readers in Stage 2	Appropriate for repeated & independent reading for most readers at end of Stage 1

[1]Mean Log Word Frequency

[2]Mean Sentence Length

Figure 1:

The Reading Space

Teacher led   **Peer**   **Independent**

⟵————————————————⟶

Social Configuration

Oral	**Oral**	**Written**	**Written**
(comments)	**(assignments)**	**(assignments)**	**(comments)**

⟵————————————————⟶

Forms of responses

Allocation of Time

⟵————————————————⟶

Fixed, short, immediate (eg. tests)   **Open ended (month long units)**

[1] Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2010). Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Washington, DC: CCSSO & National Governors Association.

[2] Gray, W.S., & Leary, B. (1935). *What makes a book readable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[3] Flesch, R. (1948). A new readability yardstick. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *32*, 221-233. Kincaid, J.P., Fishburne, R.P., Jr., Rogers, R.L., & Chissom, B.S. (1975). Derivation of new readability formulas (Automated Readability Index, Fog Count and Flesch Reading Ease Formula) for Navy enlisted personnel, Research Branch Report 8-75, Millington, TN: Naval Technical Training, U. S. Naval Air Station, Memphis, TN.

[4] Lee, H. (1960). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Harper.

[5] Grisham, J. (2010). *The confession*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

[6] Hillenbrand, L. (2010). *Unbroken. A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*. New York, NY: Random House.

[7] Smith, D., Stenner, A.J., Horabin, I., & Smith, M. (1989). The Lexile scale in theory and practice: Final report. Washington, DC: MetaMetrics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 307 577)

[8] Klare, G. (1984). Readability. In P.D. Pearson, R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), Handbook of reading research (pp. 681-744). New York: Longman.

[9] Dale, E., & Chall, J.S. (1948). A formula for predicting readability and instructions. *Educational Research Bulletin*, *27*, January 21 & February 18, 1948, pp. 11-20, 28, & 37-54.

[10] Fry, E. (1968). A Readability Formula That Saves Time. *Journal of Reading, 11 (7),* 513-516, 575-578

[11] Leech, G., Rayson, P., & Wilson, A. (2001). *Word frequencies in written and spoken English based on The British National Corpus*. London: Longman.

[12] MacLachlan, P. (1985). *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

[13] Geisel, T. S. (1960). *Green eggs and ham*. New York, NY: Random House.

[14] Austen, J. (1813). Pride and prejudice. [downloaded on October 20, 2008 at http://www.authorama.com/pride-and-prejudicel]

[15] Rowling, J. (1998). *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

[16] Hemingway, E. (1952). *Old man and the sea*. New York, NY: Scribner.

[17] Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Champaign, IL: The Center for the Study of Reading, National Institute of Education, National Academy of Education.

[18] Rylant, C. (1987). *Henry and Mudge: The First Book of Their Adventures*. New York, NY: Atheneum.

[19] Chall, J.S., Bissex, G.L., Conard, S.S., & Harris-Sharples, S. (1996). *Qualitative assessment of text difficulty*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

[20] Erdrich, L. (1999). *The Birchbark House*. New York, NY: Hyperion.

[21] O'Dell, S. (1960). *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. New York, NY: Sandpiper.

[22] Chall, J.S. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

[23] Hiebert, E.H., & Martin, L.A. (2009). Opportunity to read: A critical but neglected construct in reading instruction. E.H. Hiebert (Ed.), *Reading more, reading better: Solving Problems in the Teaching of Literacy* (pp. 3-29). NY: Guilford.

---

[24] Averill, E. (1960). *The fire cat*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

[25] Wilder, L.I. (1935). *Little House on the Prairie*. New York, NY: Harper.

[26] Hamilton, V. (1999). *M. C. Higgins, the Great*. New York, NY Simon & Schuster.

[27] Babbitt, N. (1975). *Tuck everlasting*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.