Day 3 ELA Sessions

Building Knowledge and Fluency Through a Volume of Text

Grades 6-8
Fluency Resources

UnboundED Building Fluency Guides
https://www.unbounded.org/enhance_instruction?subjects=ela

5 Reasons to Implement Fluency Practice
https://www.facebook.com/notes/unbounded/5-reasons-to-implement-fluency-practice-for-your-students-today/706183146195979

Hasbrouck-Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Chart
https://www.readnaturally.com/knowledgebase/how-to/9/59

Rasinski Multi-Dimensional Fluency Scale

NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale
https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/ors/scale.aspx

Achieve the Core Fluency Blog
http://achievethecore.org/aligned/what-is-reading-fluency/

FIVE MINUTES A DAY TO...

Improve Fluency for All Readers

Fluency is an important link between decoding and comprehension. Comprehension is hindered without fluency.

The good news is that fluency is an element of reading that can be improved relatively quickly with some attention and practice. And fluency practice can be conducted using texts from the curriculum.

Carve out 5 minutes a day for students to read aloud with these strategies to foster fluency!
Choral Reading

Directions:

1. **Identify someone at your table who has a phone that can be used as a recorder for the activity.**
2. **<Start the recorder.> As a table, read Anostraca on the following page (without practice). <Stop the recorder.>**
3. **As a table, re-read the passage 1-2 more times (not recording), clarifying pronunciation and pacing as needed.**
4. **<Start the recorder> As a table, re-read the passage. <stop the recorder>.**
5. **Listen to both recordings and discuss differences.**
Anostraca

Phylum Arthropoda
Subphylum Crustacea
Class Branchiopoda
Number of families 8

Thumbnail description: Lower crustaceans with elongated bodies and paired eyes on stalks; the body lacks a carapace (hard or bony shell)

On the basis of evidence from the fossil order Lipostraca, and the Upper Cambrian species Rehbachiella kinnekullensis, the anostracan line apparently split off at a very early stage from the rest of the Branchiopoda, about 500 million years ago. The organisms are widely considered the most primitive living crustaceans. Currently, scientists count eight families in two suborders within the Anostraca.

The organisms are medium-sized branchiopods, usually 0.39-1.18 in (1-3 cm) long; but a few raptorial species, such as Branchinecta gigas, may grow as long as 3.9 in (10 cm). The organism’s thoracic limbs are flattened and leaflike, without true joints; the body lacks a carapace. Typical anostracans have 11 pairs of limbs, but some atypical species may have as many as 10, 17, or 19 pairs. One peculiar feature of all anostracan species is that they swim upside down. Some are largely translucent and hard to spot in the water; others, however, may develop bands or zones of bright color. The ovisac of females is often deep orange, red, or blue, and the rays in the branches of the tail may also have a distinctive color. The entire animal may develop a bright red or orange color. The eggs or cysts of anostracans are noteworthy because they are surrounded by a thick wall that allows them to resist drought and high temperatures. They develop into a gastrula containing about 4,000 cells, and then stop developing in order to survive adverse conditions. This stage of latency may continue for long periods of time, possibly more than a century.

There are no extant marine organisms, but some species may occur in mountain lakes with almost pure water, while others—mainly Artemia—occur in saturated brine. In the Artemiina, the distribution of Artemia and Parartemia species used to be complementary. Artemia occurred in bodies of salt water on all continents except Australia, and Parartemia only in Australia. In the twentieth century, however, several species of Artemia were successfully introduced in various parts of Australia. Most families of anostracans are found on three or four continents, but their ranges are often restricted to parts of a continent at the subfamily or genus level. At the species (and sometimes genus) level, ranges may be extremely small, often restricted to the type locality. Such is the case with several species of Californian Branchinecta. Anostracan species with wide geographic ranges are usually under little or no threat. In densely inhabited areas, however, where there is intense competition between urban and agricultural development on the one hand and conservation efforts on the other, many habitats have either been are threatened by obliteration. Such Florida endemics as Dexteria floridana may already be extinct.
What are Ephemeral Ponds?

Ephemeral ponds are small, isolated wetlands that dry periodically. These ponds can be deep, sand-bottomed depressions with vegetation along the edge, tiny depressions covered with leaves that only fill during large rain events, or large, shallow ponds with cypress or tupelo trees growing throughout. Hydroperiod is the duration a pond holds water. Pond hydroperiod in Florida can vary from year to year and from pond to pond. Some ponds hold water only for a few weeks and some can hold water for a year or more.

Other common names for ephemeral ponds include: ephemeral wetlands, isolated wetlands, Carolina bays, seasonal ponds, cypress domes, sinkhole wetlands, seasonal marshes, intermittent ponds, pineland depressions, depressional wetlands, and vernal pools.

What are Pond-Breeding Amphibians?

Pond-breeding amphibians are frogs and salamanders that breed in temporary wetlands. In Florida, 28 amphibian species breed in ephemeral ponds either exclusively or opportunistically. Both common (southern leopard frog, oak toad) and rare (striped newt, tiger salamander) species utilize these wetlands.

These animals spend most of their lives in the uplands and use ponds only for short periods to breed. The terrestrial habitat surrounding ephemeral ponds is as important for their survival as the wetland habitat. Pond-breeding amphibians frequently are found over 200 m (approx. 0.1 miles) from the nearest breeding pond and some individuals have been documented as far as 2 km (1.2 miles).

How uplands are utilized by amphibians depends on the species, habitat quality, and other factors. Most are fossorial and bury themselves in friable soils, down logs, leaf litter, and stumpholes. Many also utilize the burrows of gopher tortoises, pocket gophers, and other species.
Why are Ephemeral Ponds Important?

Ephemeral ponds are essential to the survival of many amphibians any other species. Because the ponds dry periodically, predacious fish usually are not present. Some amphibian species lack the defenses to co-exist with predatory fish and require fishless ponds for breeding habitat. Therefore, ephemeral ponds support different species than do lakes and rivers.

These ponds are a source of high diversity and biomass and support far more species and individuals than their size would suggest. It is common to find 15-20 amphibian species utilizing a single wetland and even a small wetland can produce 1000s of juvenile individuals in a single year, as shown in the above photo. These individuals travel widely into the surrounding uplands, transferring biomass from the nutrient-rich ponds into the uplands.

Ephemeral ponds are important to many other species as well. The ponds, and the plants that grow in and around them, provide important habitat to many invertebrates, reptiles, mammals, and birds.

Landscape Management

From a management perspective, ephemeral wetlands must be viewed within the context of the surrounding uplands. Amphibians spend the majority of their life cycle in the uplands; therefore, these uplands are as vital to the survival of pond-breeding amphibian populations as the aquatic breeding habitat. As a starting point, land managers should incorporate 500 m (0.3 miles) of uplands surrounding an ephemeral pond into their management plans as core terrestrial habitat. Once this radius is delineated, other factors should be considered to determine the size and shape of this core terrestrial habitat.

If a limited number of ponds can be incorporated into a management plan, prioritize:

- Pond clusters
- Ponds with known populations of specialized or target species
- Ponds with varying hydroperiods
- Ponds within 1 km (approx. 0.6 miles) of other ponds
- Ponds surrounded by native or restorable habitat
Shrimpy Shrimp

You might think shrimp just live in the ocean, but tiny, mysterious fairy shrimp can only live in vernal pools and other temporary wetlands formed from rain or melted snow. You will be very lucky if you see fairy shrimp, because they don’t live in all vernal pools, they only live about six weeks, and they are very small. The biggest fairy shrimp are only about one to one-and-one-half inches long.

Fairy shrimp usually hatch in very early spring and sometimes again later in the summer. They tend to gather in sunny patches in vernal pools. Fairy shrimp eat microscopic animals called zooplankton, which can affect the color of their bodies.

Fairy shrimp lay their tiny eggs on the bottom of vernal pools. These eggs must dry out completely and freeze in order to hatch the following spring. Some fairy shrimp eggs can last fifteen years before hatching!
Dexteria floridana, Florida Fairy Shrimp

Assessment by: Inland Water Crustacean Specialist Group

View on www.iucnredlist.org
Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animalia</td>
<td>Arthropoda</td>
<td>Brachiopoda</td>
<td>Anostraca</td>
<td>Chirocephalidae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taxon Name: *Dexteria floridana* (Dexter, 1953)

Synonym(s):
- *Eubranchipus floridana*

Common Name(s):
- English: Florida Fairy Shrimp

Assessment Information

Red List Category & Criteria: Critically Endangered B1+2c ver 2.3

Year Published: 1996

Date Assessed: August 1, 1996

Annotations: Needs Updating

Geographic Range

Range Description:
known only from a single pool near Gainesville, Florida, USA; not recollected for more than 50 years; (K. Crandall. pers comm. 1995)

Country Occurrence:
Native: United States (Florida)
Two Florida Species Declared Extinct

Endangered Species Review Too Late to Save South Florida Rainbow Snake, Florida Fairy Shrimp

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that two Florida species, the South Florida rainbow snake and the Florida fairy shrimp, have been determined to be extinct. The finding came in response to a petition filed by the Center for Biological Diversity in 2010 seeking Endangered Species Act protection for the rainbow snake, fairy shrimp and more than 400 aquatic species in the southeastern United States. Last week the Service announced that 374 other freshwater species in the petition, including 114 in Florida, may warrant protection under Act. All of those species will now get an in-depth review.

“It’s heart-wrenching to learn that these two unique Florida species have been lost forever. Like most species that go extinct, these two were not protected under the Endangered Species Act, which is the most powerful tool we have for saving our nation’s plants and animals from disappearing,” said Tierra Curry, a conservation biologist with the Center.

“The government has to determine quickly whether the 114 other Florida species it’s reviewing will get protection so that more of Florida’s heritage isn’t erased by extinction,” said Curry. “The wellbeing of human society is deeply linked to the health of the natural systems we need to sustain life. In the end, saving species will help save us.”

The southeastern United States is home to more unique species of freshwater animals than anywhere else in the world, including mussels, snails and crayfish. Tragically, many of the region’s animals have already been lost to extinction.

Earlier this year the Center reached a landmark legal settlement with the Fish and Wildlife Service to expedite protection decisions for 757 imperiled species across the country.

Alaska • Arizona • California • Florida • Minnesota • Nevada • New Mexico • New York • Oregon • Vermont • Washington, DC
P.O. Box 710 • Tucson, AZ 85702-0710 • tel: (520) 623.5252 • fax: (520) 623.9797 • www.BiologicalDiversity.org
Based on what you’ve learned so far, write a paragraph in which you describe two reasons why it’s important to protect fresh water. Include details from the texts you’ve read this morning as appropriate.
## What Do Reading Comprehension Tests Measure?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards Institute</th>
<th>Significant Sentences</th>
<th>Significant Phrases</th>
<th>Significant Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 3 Grades 6-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Do Reading Comprehension Tests Mainly Measure? Knowledge

By E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

I want to outline some facts about reading comprehension tests that are not widely known, yet need to be familiar to any parent, teacher, or citizen who is interested in educational improvement. Let's begin by considering the fourth-grade guidelines for teaching and testing reading comprehension, as published by two representative states (all states issue these kinds of guidelines).

**New York**

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

- interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books for young adults, as well as reference materials, audio and
media presentations, oral interviews, graphs, charts, diagrams, and electronic databases intended for a general audience;

• compare and synthesize information from different sources;

• use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information;

• distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion;

• relate new information to prior knowledge and experience; and

• understand and use the text features that make information accessible and usable, such as format, sequence, level of diction, and relevance of details.

**Florida**

The student constructs meaning from a wide range of texts.

• reads text and determines the main idea or essential message, identifies relevant supporting details and facts, and arranges events in chronological order;

• identifies the author's purpose in a simple text;

• recognizes when a text is primarily intended to persuade;

• identifies specific personal preferences relative to fiction and nonfiction reading;

• reads and organizes information for a variety of purposes, including making a report, conducting interviews, taking a test, and performing an authentic task; and
• recognizes the difference between fact and opinion presented in a text.

Given such vague guidelines, consider the predicament of schools and students under the current accountability arrangements. What are educators to do? It becomes logical to think like this: *The tests are coming. We don’t know what topics the children will be asked to read about (because they are not identified in states’ reading guidelines—or, for the most part, in states’ content standards). The tests will probe reading comprehension skills, so we must teach those skills.*

How does one prepare students to take this kind of test? Logic has led schools, districts, states, and companies that provide test-prep materials to believe that they must train students in the kinds of procedures elicited by the test: Clarify what the passage means, question the author, find the main idea, make inferences about the passage, study the meanings of words, consider which event in the narrative comes first, and which next.

But in fact, this preparation is not mainly what students need. Let’s look at a characteristic bit of prose and a typical question from one of these reading tests.

There is a path that starts in Maine and ends in Georgia, 2,167 miles later. This path is called the Appalachian Trail. If you want, you can walk the whole way, although only some people who try to do this actually make it because it is so far, and they get tired. The idea for the trail came from a man named Benton MacKaye. In 1921, he wrote an article about how people needed a nearby place where they could enjoy nature and take a break from work. He thought the Appalachian Mountains would be perfect for this.

This article is mostly about:

• how the Appalachian Trail came to exist;

• when people can visit the Appalachian Trail;
• who hikes the most on the Appalachian Trail; and

• why people work together on the Appalachian Trail.

A student's actual ability to find the main idea of a passage is not a formal ability to follow procedures that will elicit the main idea, but rather the ability to understand what the text says. No repetitions of classroom exercises will help the test-taker who does not know what hiking is, or what low, tree-covered mountains are like (they are not like the snow-covered Himalayan mountains most often pictured in books), or where Maine and Georgia are. Classroom practice in strategies cannot make up for the student's lack of the background knowledge needed to understand this passage, and no instruction in strategies is required in order to answer the questions quickly and accurately if the student knows about hiking in the Appalachians, Maine, and Georgia.¹ The inferences that we make when we hear or read speech are derived from our relevant knowledge about the domain of the passage. The comprehension skills that students are supposed to learn by practicing "comprehension skills" cannot lead to high test performance because they do not lead to actual comprehension.

Conscious strategizing is also slow and cumbersome. Speed is slower and scores are lower for unfamiliar topics than for familiar ones. This is true for all readers.² Tests are time-sensitive, as reading comprehension itself is, because slowness implies mental overload and mental overload impairs understanding. The mental speed that is bestowed by topic familiarity is important not just for completing the test on time, but also for getting the answers right. In sum, a child who already knows about the Appalachian Trail, who has heard or read about it or seen or walked it or read about similar trails, will process the passage much faster and more accurately than a child to whom such things are unfamiliar, even though the two children have identical decoding and strategizing skills. They have learned equally well the lessons that the classroom has taught. Yet these two students make vastly different scores on the reading test because one student possesses more general knowledge than the other.
Every highly valid and reliable reading test contains several different passages sampling several knowledge areas and kinds of writing. That fact in itself gives away the knowledge-based character of reading, since if reading comprehension were a set of all-purpose formal strategies, a single passage would test reading skill perfectly well. But because general reading skill requires broad general knowledge, a valid test must sample several genres and areas of knowledge. Take, for example, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). It contains nine short passages of different genres: fiction about a bird, a biography, some lyric poetry, fiction about sports, exposition about another country, fiction about a TV program, exposition about the habits of an animal, exposition about the lives of Native Americans, and exposition about a religious sect. The prose passages are short—150 to 290 words—and each is followed by roughly four multiple choice questions.

The multiple domains on any valid reading test are chosen not because they directly reflect what is taught in school, but because they reflect an ability to read passages from an unpredictable diversity of domains. In order to read a wide array of passages in different domains, a person must have a wide array of knowledge.

Reading Tests Are Useful ... but Not for Measuring Yearly Progress in Comprehension

Like all tests, a reading comprehension test is a sampling device. It doesn't test the whole range of possible knowledge domains or kinds of text. That would make it far too long. It offers a few typical samples from a few typical domains, and students' performance on these samples is taken to estimate their reading comprehension over the whole universe of reading tasks that confront the general reader. (The best of the tests do a very good job of making that estimation. For example, scores in early grades predict scores in later years, school grades, and even job performance and income.)

But these tests have severe shortcomings when used to measure yearly student progress in the early grades. Although imparting the background knowledge needed for general reading ability is a
multiyear project (covering at least the first six years of schooling and beyond), real progress in building the background knowledge and vocabulary that underlie reading comprehension can occur in the early grades without that progress being registered on a reading comprehension test. Especially in the early grades, when children are making irregular, desultory progress in knowledge and vocabulary that cannot be sensitively measured by such tests, general reading tests can be quite inadequate gauges.

For example, if a student has just learned about the Civil War, he may not make a noticeably better grade on a short reading test that samples domains far removed from that subject. But in reality, his ability to read passages about Grant and Lee and Lincoln with comprehension has grown, even if the test does not measure that progress. He will also be able to read about events related to war and history with greater comprehension. He will know what a regiment is and what the word *bloodshed* means, though these are not on the test. He may have learned more about some of the words on the test and still not be able to answer correctly, because some of his gradual gains in word understanding, a slow, subliminal process requiring many exposures to a word, do not reach the measurement threshold of the test.

If schools wish to meet "adequate yearly progress" as required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), they should systematically teach and then test for the knowledge that leads to proficient reading comprehension. This means that schools must have a specific, grade-by-grade curriculum designed to systematically build the knowledge that an educated reader needs—and a test that has been carefully aligned with that curriculum. The curriculum must be clearly laid out in literature, science, history, and the arts, for these are the large domains that constitute the background knowledge required for reading comprehension. The monitors of NCLB compliance should recognize that adequate yearly progress in early reading is in fact occurring if students show that they are not only decoding well, but also gaining knowledge, as demonstrated on these curriculum-based tests.

**What Kinds of Test Preparation Will Enhance Education?**
What can calm the frantic and ineffectual test preparation that has overtaken many schools as they labor to meet NCLB's adequate yearly progress requirement? Students and teachers cannot directly prepare for a reading test. (A one-time gain can typically be achieved by devoting a small amount of time to assuring that children are familiar with the testing format and test-taking strategies.) No one should be able to predict the subject matter of the passages on such a test and specifically learn about it. That would be cheating. It would defeat the test's purpose, which is to discover how well the test-taker can be expected to read an unpredictable array of texts in and out of school. The essence of such a test is its unpredictability. But if you cannot predict the subject matter on a valid reading test, how can you prepare students for it? You can't, and, therefore, you shouldn't try. The only useful way to prepare for a reading test is indirectly—by becoming a good reader of a broad range of texts, an ability that requires broad general knowledge.

E. D. Hirsch, Jr. is the author of many books and articles, including the bestselling Cultural Literacy and The Schools We Need. He is a fellow of the Academy of Arts and Sciences and founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

References


New York: Academic.


Related Articles

**Knowledge: The Next Frontier in Reading Comprehension**
(//www.aft.org/newspubs/periodicals/ae/spring2006/editors.cfm)

**Building Knowledge**
(//www.aft.org/newspubs/periodicals/ae/spring2006/hirsch.cfm)

*The Case for Bringing Content into the Language Arts Block and for a Knowledge-Rich Curriculum Core for All Children*

By E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

What What Do Reading Comprehension Tests Mainly Measure? Knowledge

**Engaging Kids with Content: "The Kids Love It"**
(//www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/TeacherIntrv.pdf) (PDF)

**How We Neglect Knowledge—and Why**
(//www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Neuman.pdf) (PDF)

By Susan B. Neuman

**Why the Absence of a Content-Rich Curriculum Core Hurts Poor Children Most**
(//www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/PoorChildren.pdf) (PDF)

**How Knowledge Helps**
(//www.aft.org/newspubs/periodicals/ae/spring2006/willingham.cfm)

It Speeds and Strengthens Reading Comprehension, Learning—and Thinking
Step Back (Journal)

What’s important to remember about strategically sequenced (some use the term “gradated”) sets of texts?

To what extent does your current ELA curriculum help students intentionally build knowledge as a scaffold toward comprehension and fluency?

In what ways does (or doesn’t) your current curriculum incorporate strategically sequenced sets of texts?
# Quantitative Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core Band</th>
<th>ATOS</th>
<th>Flesch-Kincaid</th>
<th>The Lexile Framework</th>
<th>Reading Power</th>
<th>SourceRater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd-3rd</td>
<td>2.75–5.14</td>
<td>42 – 54</td>
<td>1.98 – 5.34</td>
<td>420 – 820</td>
<td>3.53 – 6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th-5th</td>
<td>4.97–7.03</td>
<td>52 – 60</td>
<td>4.51 – 7.73</td>
<td>740 – 1010</td>
<td>5.42 – 7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-10th</td>
<td>9.67–12.01</td>
<td>62 – 72</td>
<td>8.32 – 12.10</td>
<td>12358.41 – 13358.50</td>
<td>10.819.02 – 13.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Word Difficulty**
  - Frequency
  - Length
- **Sentence Length**
- **Other Features of Words**
- **Sentence Syntax**
- **Text Cohesion**
## Text Complexity Analysis Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Analysis</th>
<th>Quantitative Analysis</th>
<th>Use computer based quantitative tools to analyze text complexity and grade band placement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Name &amp; Author:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Description:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Qualitative Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Demands</th>
<th>Meaning / Purpose</th>
<th>Text Structure</th>
<th>Language Features</th>
<th>Visual Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>One level of meaning or purpose distinguished from each other with a concrete theme or point implied in language that is implied and more abstract than concrete.</td>
<td>Organization of main ideas, events, or plotlines is explicit and literal; the text employs primarily simple sentences.</td>
<td>In literary text there are extensive graphics that support the text, whereas in informational text there are minimal graphics that are unnecessary for understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Multiple levels of meaning or purpose that are difficult to identify or separate with an implicit or subtle, and complex theme or point revealed over the entirety of the text in language that is implied and more abstract than concrete.</td>
<td>Organization of an expanded range of ideas, events, and plotlines is often implicit or subtle, and may include narrative complexities or discipline-specific material that renders text features essential to understanding content.</td>
<td>In literary text there are extensive graphics that support the text, whereas in informational text there are minimal graphics that are unnecessary for understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>Multiple competing levels of meaning or purpose that are difficult to separate and interpret with an ambiguous, sophisticated, complex theme or point revealed over the entirety of the text in language that is subtle, intricate, and abstract.</td>
<td>Organization of an extensive range of ideas, events, and plotlines is intricate and ambiguous, and include narrative complexities or discipline-specific material that renders text features essential to understanding content.</td>
<td>In literary text there are some graphics that support the text, whereas in informational text there are minimal graphics that support understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes

- Use professional judgment in determining the level of complexity present in the text with regards to knowledge demands, meaning / purpose, text structure, language features, and visual supports.
### Reader and Task

**Content Complexity**
Note any “outside factors” that teachers should consider with regard to this particular text. Is it a good “match” to the student based on content, ability, interest, and understanding? Are the tasks associated with the text aligned with the purpose behind reading it? What skills should be particularly reinforced when reading this text to help readers when encountering similar texts in the future?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What challenges are posed to readers when the content or theme is considered?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students approach the content or theme respectfully and in a mature manner?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Cognitive Capabilities**
What challenges are posed to readers who lack the ability to focus their attention? How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students make the necessary connections among the various details?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What challenges are posed to readers who lack the ability to focus their attention?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students make the necessary connections among the various details?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Reading Skills**
What challenges are posed to readers who lack visualization or inferential skills? How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students ask the right questions to improve comprehension?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What challenges are posed to readers who lack visualization or inferential skills?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students ask the right questions to improve comprehension?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Motivation & Engagement**
What challenges are posed to readers who lack motivation as readers? How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students become interested in the content?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What challenges are posed to readers who lack motivation as readers?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students become interested in the content?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Prior Knowledge**
What challenges are posed to readers with regards to assumed background knowledge? How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students address them without front-loading the reading experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What challenges are posed to readers with regards to assumed background knowledge?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students address them without front-loading the reading experience?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Tasks & Assessment**
What challenges are posed to readers when the tasks planned for assessment are considered? How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students complete the tasks successfully?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What challenges are posed to readers when the tasks planned for assessment are considered?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How can teachers anticipate these challenges and help students complete the tasks successfully?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Final Placement Recommendation

**Using the Quantitative Analysis results as a starting point, use professional judgment to factor in the results of the Qualitative and Reader and Task Analyses to determine what grade band to place the text in as well as where in the grade band. Briefly explain the recommended placement below.**

**Grade Band Range:**

**Placement within Range:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Text Title</th>
<th>Critical Information</th>
<th>Rationale for order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guide to Creating Text Sets for Grades 2-12

Rationale
The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects focus on building student ability to read and understand grade-level complex text and express that understanding clearly through writing and speaking. The Standards emphasize the role of close engagement with text in students building knowledge about the world. A coherent sequence of texts around a clear topic or line of inquiry will support students in building vocabulary and background knowledge. Text sets are one tool for educators in planning units of instruction to help students meet the demands of the Standards.

What is a text set?
A text set is a collection of related texts organized around a topic or line of inquiry. The line of inquiry of a given set is determined by an anchor text—a rich, complex grade-level text. The anchor text is the focus of a close reading with instructional supports in the classroom. The number of texts in a set can vary depending on purpose and resource availability around a given topic. What is important is that the texts in the set are connected meaningfully to each other to deepen student understanding of the anchor text. In a sense, the texts “talk to one another” so that in reading the set, students build a coherent body of knowledge around a topic.

There are many ways of organizing text sets. Often, strong sets will be organized around the topic of the anchor text, so that students have the opportunity to build additional knowledge about that topic. For example, with an anchor text like “When Mr. Jefferson Came to Philadelphia,” a piece of historical fiction for the 4-5 grade band, an accompanying set would likely include texts on the topic of the American Revolution. Building vocabulary and content knowledge about that period of history will help students make rich meaning out of the anchor text. However, the line of inquiry of a text set may also ask students to engage in a genre or author study. We encourage you to consider a range of approaches to organizing sets, constantly returning to the question: “What would this set help my students build knowledge about in the world?”

On the following page, we have generated a list of the general features of strong and weak text sets to serve as guideposts in developing your own sets. To further explore approaches to organizing a set, we invite you to examine the model text sets offered on this site.
Features of Strong Text Sets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong text sets</th>
<th>Weak text sets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Build student knowledge about a topic;</strong></td>
<td><strong>Texts are not related or connected across sets or</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>meaningful connection to the anchor text</strong></td>
<td><strong>they are only superficially connected</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texts are authentic, rich, and worthy of study</strong></td>
<td><strong>Only commissioned texts or textbook passages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Range of text types (literary and informational) **</td>
<td><strong>Focused exclusively on one genre or format (unless</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and formats</td>
<td><strong>the set is a genre study)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text complexity levels support student</strong></td>
<td><strong>Text complexity levels are erratic and do not</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>achievement of the grade-level complexity</strong></td>
<td><strong>support the staircase of text complexity in the CCSS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **demands of the CCSS**                               | **                                     | *One strategy for supporting weak readers is to use a gradated text set, a set in which the complexity demands steadily increase to build towards instruction around a grade-level text. In this case, some texts in a set may start below the quantitative demands of the grade band in an effort to build towards the anchor text. Similarly, some texts may place above the band to provide an opportunity for advanced engagement with the content after students have built vocabulary and background knowledge through the anchor text.**

The following are examples of text sets, both strong and weak.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Text Set</th>
<th>Weak Text Set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anchor Text:</strong> Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury</td>
<td><strong>Anchor Text:</strong> Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related Texts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Related Texts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You Have Insulted Me: A Letter,&quot; Kurt Vonnegut (Informational)</td>
<td>&quot;‘Chaos:’ Gunman Ambushes, Kills Two Firefighters at New York Blaze,&quot; Catherine Shoichet and Greg Botelho (CNN) (Informational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Burning a Book&quot; by William Stafford (Poem)</td>
<td>&quot;Johannes Gutenberg and the Printing Press,&quot; Mary Bellis (About.com) (Informational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Book Burnings,&quot; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Informational)</td>
<td>&quot;Fahrenheit 451, Francois Truffaut (Film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excerpts from The Book Thief, Marcus Zusak (Appendix B Exemplar)</td>
<td>&quot;About Ray Bradbury: Biography&quot; (Informational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Learning to Read and Write,&quot; Frederick Douglass (Informational)</td>
<td>&quot;The Pedestrian,&quot; Ray Bradbury ( Literary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Learning to Read,&quot; Malcolm X (Informational)</td>
<td>The Children's Story, James Clavell (Literary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Unto My Books So Good to Turn,&quot; Emily Dickinson (Poem)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Portable Phonograph,&quot; Walter Van Tilburg Clark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there are some merits to the weaker set, the connections between some of the texts are superficial or tangential, and it is not clear how a teacher would use these texts to support student knowledge building. The stronger set is more focused. The anchor text and related texts are connected concretely by the topic of censorship. Thematically, these texts provide a comment on the social and political effects of gaining knowledge through reading and writing. Strong sets often present opportunities for both topical connections and thematic connections that students are able to discern through rereading and deep analysis. They provide a rich context for close, analytic reading, comparison, and synthesis of texts through which students are more likely to meet the expectations of the CCSS for ELA/Literacy.
Steps to Creating a Text Set:

Selecting texts for teaching is a complex and nuanced process. There is no single process for creating a text set; educators may take a variety of different approaches given their aims and available resources. The following can be used as a basic guide to creating your own text sets:

Step One: Identify the Anchor Text and Formulate a Line of Inquiry for the Set

The first step is to identify an anchor text and formulate an overall line of inquiry for the set. This can happen in either order. An educator may first identify an anchor text, from which they formulate a line of inquiry for the set OR an educator may choose to first identify a topic for a unit of study and then seek out an anchor text around which to build the set.

In the case of Wonders of Nature, for example, the text set author started with the anchor text. The topic of the anchor text is animals with special abilities that affect how they live in the world. From this, the author of the set determined that the overall line of inquiry would be animals with special abilities. Determining the overall line of inquiry in a set with an informational anchor text is often straightforward; you can use the topic of the anchor text as the central organizer of the set. With a literary anchor text, it may be more challenging to settle on an overarching line of inquiry prior to exploring available resources. In some cases, you may need to adapt your line of inquiry as you select the richest available resources that connect with the anchor text.

The most important part of this step is that the anchor text be a grade-level complex text that meets the complexity demands of the Standards and is worthy of the time and attention of students. Without a rich anchor text, it is impossible to create a worthwhile text set.

Step Two: Use Databases to Research Texts around the Topic

Once you have identified the anchor text and line of inquiry for your set, you can use a variety of databases to search for texts. Sometimes you will need to adjust your search terms to find a range of texts on a topic. For example, in building the Wonders of Nature text set around animals with special abilities, the text set author searched animals with special abilities, animals, animal adaptation, moles, beavers, praying mantis, chameleon, trap-door spider, spiders, archerfish, etc. You want to protect the coherence of the set, but also be creative with search terms that might bring you a range of resources.

Several databases allow you to organize texts according to quantitative measure. These databases are exceptionally helpful in building a text set, as otherwise you need to run the quantitative analysis for each text you consider. Running a quantitative analysis for a text is a simple task, but given the number of texts you might search to find a high quality selection for a set, using a database that provides a quantitative measure will save time. Here are just a few resources we’d recommend exploring:

Lexile “Find a Book” (http://www.lexile.com/fab/) allows you to search for books by Lexile, grade, and topic. Another free tool is Scholastic Book Wizard (http://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard/), which allows you to search by topic and filter by quantitative measure.

For articles and informational texts, many databases allow you to filter by quantitative measure. We recommend exploring SIRS Discoverer (http://ars.sirs.com/discoverer.html) and EBSCO Primary Search (http://www.ebscohost.com/public/primary-search), but many more databases are available freely at your public library.
You may also want to look at the text resources available through Read Works (http://www.readworks.org/spotlight-on-science) and Reading A-Z (http://www.readinga-z.com/).

School librarians have a wealth of experience in using these databases to locate texts at given levels of complexity, so contact your school librarian (or a local librarian) for additional assistance.

**Step Three: Evaluate Texts for Inclusion in the Set**

In choosing your texts for the set, you will want to consider the **features of strong text sets**. Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether a text is worthy of inclusion in the set:

1) **Does the text contribute to the students building a body of knowledge connected meaningfully to the anchor text?**

2) **Is the text worthy of student time and attention?**

3) **Does the text contribute to a range and balance of text types and formats in the overall set?**

As much as makes sense given the purpose of your text set, aim for multiple formats (e.g., prose, poetry, drama, media), a variety of lengths, and balance in text types (informational and literary). Students should experience a 50/50 balance of literary and informational texts in elementary and a 30/70 balance of literary and informational texts in secondary across the school day (including reading in ELA, science, social studies, the arts, and technical subjects).

*Note: Range of text types/formats would not, however, be a concern if your set is organized as a genre study.*

4) **Does the quantitative measure of the text place it in the grade band of the anchor text? A range of texts spanning the band will support student-knowledge-building over the course of the unit.**

The majority of texts in the set should sit in the grade band of the anchor text. This is important in supporting students to meet the complexity demands of the CCSS. However, this does depend on the purpose of the set you are creating. In some cases, you may want to create a text set to support struggling readers in building knowledge around a topic prior to engagement with the anchor text. In this case, you may consider including a few texts below the band that build student knowledge and vocabulary around the topic. In other cases, you may want to provide an opportunity for students to build on the knowledge they have gained from engagement with the anchor text. Consider including a few titles above the grade band in complexity.

**Step Three: Refine, Finalize, and Produce Text Set**

Continue to refine your selections until you are satisfied that you have a range and balance of texts that support student engagement with the line of inquiry. Then, finalize your selections and document the text set for use in your instructional unit and to share with other educators. In documenting your set, we recommend including the title, author, quantitative measure, source, text type, and brief summary/justification for including the text in the set.
Step Back (Journal)

What are you discovering about ELA curriculum design by doing this work?

What are the implications of what you are learning for the use of your current curriculum or the design or selection of future curriculum?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Name</th>
<th>Knowledge Growth</th>
<th>Key Vocabulary</th>
<th>Potential Questions (hold off)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standards Institute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3 Grades 6-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Building Knowledge and Vocabulary In a Text Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Name</th>
<th>Knowledge Growth</th>
<th>Key Vocabulary</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>