

**Common Core Standards**  
**Qualitative Features of Text Complexity Explained**  
**Companion to the Qualitative Dimensions Scale**

(To be consulted in filling out the rubric and in conjunction with anchor texts)

**Structure (could be story structure and/or form of piece)**

- Simple → Complex
- Explicit → Implicit
- Conventional → Unconventional
- Events related in chronological order → Events related out of chronological order (chiefly literary texts)
- Traits of a common genre or subgenre → Traits specific to a particular discipline (chiefly informational texts)
- Simple graphics → sophisticated graphics
- Graphics unnecessary or merely supplemental to understanding the text → Graphics essential to understanding the text and may provide information not elsewhere provided

**Language Demands: Conventuality and Clarity**

- Literal → Figurative or ironic
- Clear → Ambiguous or purposefully misleading
- Contemporary, familiar → Archaic or otherwise unfamiliar
- Conversational → General Academic and domain specific
- Light vocabulary load<sup>1</sup>: few unfamiliar or academic words → Many words unfamiliar and high academic vocabulary present
- Sentence structure <sup>2</sup>straightforward → Complex and varied sentence structures

**Knowledge Demands: Life Experience (literary texts)**

- Simple theme → Complex or sophisticated themes
- Single theme → Multiple themes
- Common everyday experiences or clearly fantastical situations → Experiences distinctly different from one's own
- Single perspective → Multiple perspectives
- Perspective(s) like one's own → Perspective(s) unlike or in opposition to one's own

**Knowledge Demands: Cultural/Literary Knowledge (chiefly literary texts)**

- Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required → Cultural and literary knowledge useful
- Low intertextuality (few if any references/allusions to other texts) → High intertextuality (many references/allusions to other texts)

**Knowledge Demands: Content/Discipline Knowledge (chiefly informational texts)**

- Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required → Extensive, perhaps specialized discipline-specific content knowledge required
- Low intertextuality (few if any references to/citations of other texts) → High intertextuality (many references to/citations of other texts)

**Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary texts) or Purpose (chiefly informational texts)**

- Single level of meaning → Multiple levels of meaning
- Explicitly stated purpose → Implicit purpose, may be hidden or obscure

---

<sup>1</sup> Though vocabulary can be measured by quantifiable means, it is still a feature for careful consideration when selecting texts

<sup>2</sup> Though sentence length is measured by quantifiable means, sentence complexity is still a feature for careful consideration when selecting texts