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# C15 Text Complexity and How to Select the Best Literature (Grades 2-5)

Katie McKnight, Ph.D.

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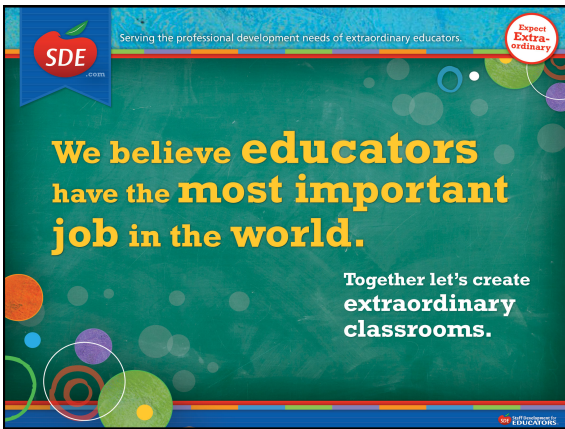
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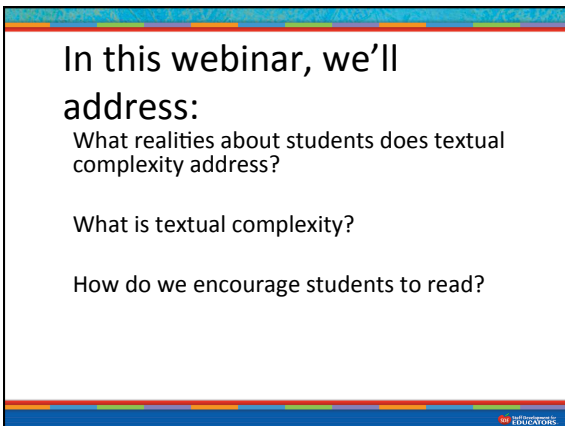
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In this webinar, we'll address:

- What realities about students does textual complexity address?
- What is textual complexity?
- How do we encourage students to read?

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**Textual Complexity**

What makes a text complex?  
 What are factors that can make a text challenging for students?




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Kindergartners:	Grade 1 students:	Grade 2 students:
<p><b>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</b></p> <p>10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.</p> <p>10. With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.</p> <p>10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p>		




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Determining Textual Complexity is focused on these three areas:

**QUANTITATIVE MEASURES:**

**QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS:**

**READER and TASK CONSIDERATIONS:**




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## QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

and factors are those aspects that are difficult or impossible for a person to evaluate efficiently.

Examples include word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion. These are typically measured by computer software.

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## Qualitative Measures

- Levels of Meaning (literary texts) or Purpose (informational texts)
- Structure
- Language Conventinality and Clarity
- Knowledge Demands

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## READER AND TASK CONSIDERATIONS

Include motivation, knowledge, and experiences, while tasks to be considered take into account purpose, complexity, and questions.

Assessments made on reader and task considerations are best done by the teacher who understands the student's knowledge and experiences.

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### LEVELS OF MEANING

(LITERARY TEXTS) OR PURPOSE (INFORMATIONAL TEXTS)

Informational	Literary
Single level of meaning	Multiple levels
Explicitly stated purpose	Implicit purpose; may be hidden or obscure

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### STRUCTURE

Informational	Literary
Simple	Complex
Explicit	Implicit
Conventional	Unconventional
Events related in chronological order	Events unrelated in chronological order
Traits of a common genre	Traits specific to a particular discipline
Simple graphics	Sophisticated graphics
Graphics unnecessary for understanding	Graphics essential to understanding

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### LANGUAGE CONVENTIONALITY AND CLARITY

Informational	Literary
Literal	Figurative or iconic
Clear	Ambiguous or purposely misleading
Contemporary, Familiar	Archaic or otherwise unfamiliar
Conversational	General academic and domain-specific

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**KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS:  
LIFE EXPERIENCES (Literary Texts)**

Informational	Literary
Simple theme	Complex or sophisticated theme
Single themes	Multiple themes
Common, everyday experiences	Experiences distinctly different from own
Single perspective	Multiple perspectives
Perspective(s) like one's own	Perspective(s) unlike or in opposition to one's own

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**KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS:  
CULTURAL/LITERARY KNOWLEDGE**

Informational	Literary
Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required	Cultural and literary knowledge useful
Low intertextuality	High intertextuality

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**KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS:  
CONTENT/DISCIPLINE KNOWLEDGE**

Informational	Literary
Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required	Extensive, perhaps specialized discipline-specific content knowledge required
Low intertextuality	High intertextuality

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**LET'S PRACTICE**

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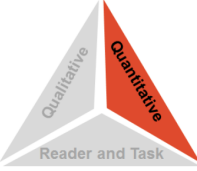
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**Step 1: Quantitative Measures**

Measures such as:

- Word length
- Word frequency
- Word difficulty
- Sentence length
- Text length
- Text cohesion

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Text Complexity Grade Bands	Suggested Lexile Range	Suggested ATOS Book Level Range**
K-1	100L – 500L*	1.0 – 2.5
2-3	450L – 790L	2.0 – 4.0
4-5	770L – 980L	3.0 – 5.7
6-8	955L – 1155L	4.0 – 8.0
9-10	1080L – 1305L	4.6 – 10.0
11-CCR	1215L – 1355L	4.8 – 12.0

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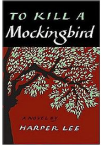
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Lexile Text Measure: **870L**



ATOS Book Level: **5.6**



In which of the text complexity bands would this novel fall?

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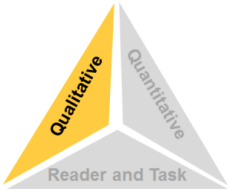
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**Step 2: Qualitative Measures**

Measures such as:

- Levels of meaning
- Levels of purpose
- Structure
- Organization
- Language conventionality
- Language clarity
- Prior knowledge demands

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From examining the quantitative measures, we knew:

**Lexile Text Measure: 870L**

**ATOS Book Level: 5.6**

But after reflecting upon the qualitative measures, we believed:

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Our initial placement of *To Kill a Mockingbird* into a text complexity band changed when we examined the qualitative measures.

Remember, however, that we have completed only the first two legs of the text complexity triangle.

The **reader and task considerations** still remain.

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**Step 3: Reader and Task**

Considerations such as:

- Motivation
- Knowledge and experience
- Purpose for reading
- Complexity of task assigned regarding text
- Complexity of questions asked regarding text

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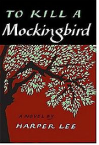
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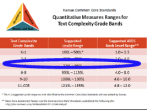
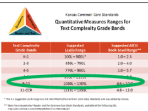

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Lexile Text Measure: **870L**

ATOS Book Level: **5.6**


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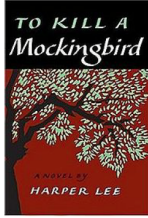
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Based upon all the information—all three legs of the model—the final recommendation for *To Kill a Mockingbird* is....

Text Complexity Grade Bands
K-1
2-3
4-5
6-8
<b>9-10</b>
11-CCR

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- Multi-Topic Workshops
- Customized Conferences
- In-Depth Institutes
- Train-the-Trainer Institutes
- Co-Teaching
- Professional Learning Communities
- Modeling/Observation




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**How to Reach Me:**

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See my blog at [www.KatherineMcKnight.com](http://www.KatherineMcKnight.com)



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