



# Tennessee Text Complexity Framework

Teachers, working collaboratively through their PLCs, might use this document as guidance for making decisions about how to select appropriate texts for their classroom instruction. Specific text selections are curriculum decisions, which are made at the local level.

# Tennessee Text Complexity Quantitative Measures

Metric	Measure
The Lexile Framework® (Metamatrix)	Word frequency, Sentence Length
ATOS	Word Length, Word Grade Level, Sentence Length, Book Length
Degrees of Reading Power® (Qeater)	Word Length, Word Difficulty, Sentence Length, Within-Sentence Punctuation
SourceRater (ETS)	Word Frequency, Word Length Word Meaning features (concreteness, imageability, etc...), word syntactic features (tense, part of speech, proper names, negations, nominalizations, etc...), word types (academic verbs, academic downtoners, academic word list), sentence length, paragraph length, within-sentence and between-sentence cohesion measures, number of clauses (including type and depth), text genre: informational, literary, or mixed
Reading Maturity (Pearson)	Pearson Word Maturity Metric, Word Length (e.g. syllables per word), Sentence-length, Within-sentence Punctuation, Within and between-sentence coherence metrics, Sentence and paragraph complexity (e.g., perplexity), order of information
Flesch-Kincaid <sup>8</sup>	Reading ease based on the number of words in a sentence and the number of syllables in the words

Tennessee Grade Band	The Lexile Framework®	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power®	SourceRater	Reading Maturity	Flesch-Kincaid <sup>8</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	420 – 820	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	0.05 – 2.48	3.53 – 6.13	1.98 – 5.34
4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	740 – 1010	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	0.84 – 5.75	5.42 – 7.92	4.51 – 7.73
6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup>	925 - 1185	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	4.11 – 10.66	7.04 – 9.57	6.51 – 10.34
9 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup>	1050 – 1335	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	9.02 – 13.93	8.41 – 10.81	8.32 – 12.12
11 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	1185 – 1385	11.20 – 14.10	67 - 74	12.30 – 14.50	9.57 – 12.00	10.34 – 14.2

## Additional Resources to Match Reader to Text

<b>REAP (Carnegie-Mellon)</b>	Word Frequency, Word Length, Sentence Length Sentence Count, Parse Tree of Sentences and Paragraphs, Frequency of Node Elements	REAP does not analyze text, but it will analyze student skills and interests and match them to texts on the Web.
<b>Coh-Metrix: University of Memphis</b>	Word frequency, word length, word meaning features (concreteness, imageability, number of senses, etc...), word syntactic features (part of speech, negations, etc...), sentence length, sentence complexity, paragraph length, within-sentence and between-sentence cohesion measures	Coh-Metrix does not provide a single number for measurement, but its text analyzer can generate helpful information about the challenges of a text. It will generate a Flesch-Kincaid grade level.

## Caveat to Selecting Grade-Appropriate Texts

The Standards call for students to read within the range throughout the grade-band. The quantitative measures are only one-third of the decision-making process when selecting texts, and careful consideration needs to be given to the other qualitative measures, which include the text itself, inter-textual complexity, task complexity, and reader considerations (see below). As students move through the grade-band, they should experience supportive texts in the lower ends of the range to prepare them for the more challenging texts in the upper ends of the range. Some texts, such as poems or drama, are not suitable for quantitative measures, yet they are central genres to developing student awareness of word power and syntax.

At the K-1 grade band, complex text is accessed primarily through read-aloud because students are not generally able to read with sufficient fluency to allow them to read complex texts independently. Independent reading is developed with students below the 2-3<sup>rd</sup> grade band through decodable and leveled texts.

# Tennessee Text Complexity Qualitative Measures

Measure	Definition/Guiding Questions
<b>Text Complexity</b>	One measure to consider when judging the complexity of a text is the text itself—what is the genre of the text? What genre conventions or text features has the author employed (or not employed) in writing the text? What is the text's structure (e.g., nonlinear plot structure, multiple narrators, etc.)? How is the text organized? The text's purpose? How does the form of the text fit its function? What ideas are presented in the text? Are there multiple levels of meaning in the text? Is the theme of a literary work implicit or explicit? Is the theme complex? What language is used in the text (e.g., vernacular, Standard English, etc.) and to what purpose? What is the tone/mood of the text? Is the language sophisticated (e.g., use of figurative language, purposeful word choice, sophisticated syntax, etc.)? Are there graphics or images in the text? If so, how do the graphics/images work in conjunction with print/words to shape meaning? Is the text authentic—in other words, is the literature in the language, form, and length as originally published? Is the text one that people would encounter in daily life (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers)?
<b>Inter-textual Complexity</b>	Inter-textuality can be defined as the shaping of a text's meaning by another text. Examples of inter-textuality are allusion and parody. Inter-textuality is expressed by considering the relationship that exists between multiple works of literature. For example, James Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i> shares an inter-textual relationship with Homer's epic poem, <i>The Odyssey</i> , just as <i>Frankenstein</i> shares an inter-textual relationship with the Greek myth of Prometheus. When considering this measure in text selection, consider how texts build on each other and connect to one another. When texts have inter-textual relationships, how does the relationship deepen understanding? When considering text selection, think about what texts have already been taught, and what texts will be taught in the future--what relationship does the text have with other texts? What inter-textual knowledge can be created and built upon?
<b>Task/Interpretive Complexity</b>	Another important measure to consider when making text selection decisions is what interpretive work readers will be expected to do with the text. Text complexity not only includes the number of words or sophisticated themes in a text—it also includes what students are asked to do with the text. As example, a political cartoon is a complex text if students are engaged with the text and reading it closely, negotiating the images and words to construct meanings, and using text-based evidence to support interpretations.

# Tennessee Text Complexity Reader and Task Considerations

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<b>Reader Considerations</b>	Readers of the text must also be considered when making text selection decisions. Are readers likely to be interested in the situation, theme, topic, issue, or subject matter of the text? What prior background knowledge or experience will readers need to successfully access and comprehend the text? Do readers already have this background knowledge and experience? What cultural details will students need to know to access/engage with/comprehend the text? What vocabulary will readers need to know to access and comprehend the text? Will readers need to know domain-specific (specific to a discipline) vocabulary? Do readers have vocabulary and inferential skills necessary to comprehend the text? How much support will readers need to access/comprehend the text? Does the text have potential to stimulate thought and good discussion among readers? Does the text raise issues or questions likely to inspire readers to further reading, writing, and research? Are readers mature enough to deal with the subject matter?
<b>Task Considerations</b>	Before selecting a text, teachers need to know the culminating task and make sure that the text lends itself to the complexity of the task. What learning experiences must students have to lead them toward successful completion of the culminating task? With what kind of grouping structure will the students engage when analyzing this text? What do the annotations look like? Will they be done with guidance or independently? How many models have students seen with the type of task they are going to be asked to do? What kinds of thinking and problem solving will students have to use to fully access the text?