Complex Text, and Close Reading

Complex Text

Several studies that led to the development of the Common Core State Standards determined that textbooks in K–12 have been steadily declining in complexity over the past 50 years. In response, the CCSS for ELA require reading of more-complex texts. Many factors contribute to making a text demanding to read. The text may contain

- text structures that require analysis, such as compare-contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution, sequence, and enumeration
- sophisticated themes and ideas
- long sentences; multisyllabic words
- sentences that contain more than one and different types of clauses and phrases
- prior or background knowledge needed to understand the content
- unfamiliar words, which may include uncommon academic or domain-specific (content area) vocabulary
- cross-references between sentences, paragraphs, sections, and chapters

> "Being able to read complex text independently and proficiently is essential for high achievement in college and the workplace and important in numerous life tasks.
>
> —Appendix A: *Common Core State Standards*

Text Features,

Text Features

Text features, such as captions, maps, diagrams, charts, and sidebars—mostly found in informational texts—also influence the leveling of a book. The Guided Reading level is affected because text features are more complex and often more challenging to read and understand than the main body text.

Close Reading

Close reading focuses on text that the reader may find confusing or not interpret correctly. The focus may be on words or phrases, sentences, paragraphs, excerpts, or short passages that contain complex text. Close reading may also require an analysis of the patterns and the author's craft by returning to the text for a second and even a third reading. By purposely focusing on aspects of the text, you will be able to scaffold your students' reading and gradually release them into independent reading.

Text Features
- chapter titles
- headings & subheadings
- captions
- photos & illustrations
- bold print
- sidebars
- labels
- maps
- diagrams
- contents page
- glossary
- text boxes
- index

" The close analysis of selected segments lets students ponder significant information together, learning how to think beyond and about a text. It becomes a model for the kind of analysis students will be able to do on their own as readers. "

—Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency*, 2006