

Figure 3.1 Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric

Score	3 points (Stretch) <i>Texts That Would Stretch a Reader and/or Require Instruction</i>	2 points (Grade Level) <i>Texts That Require Grade-appropriate Skills</i>	1 point (Comfortable) <i>Texts That Are Comfortable and/or Build Background, Fluency, and Skills</i>
Levels of Meaning and Purpose			
Density and complexity	Significant density and complexity, with multiple levels of meaning; meanings may be more ambiguous	Single, but more complex or abstract level of meaning; some meanings are stated, while others are left to the reader to identify	Single and literal levels of meaning; meaning is explicitly stated
Figurative Language	Figurative language plays a significant role in identifying the meaning of the text; more sophisticated figurative language is used (irony and satire, allusions, archaic or less familiar symbolism); the reader is left to interpret these meanings	Figurative language such as imagery, metaphors, symbolism, and personification are used to make connections within the text to more explicit information, and readers are supported in understanding these language devices through examples and explanations	Limited use of symbolism, metaphors, and poetic language that allude to other unstated concepts; language is explicit and relies on literal interpretations
Purpose	Purpose is deliberately withheld from the reader, who must use other interpretative skills to identify it	Purpose is implied but is easily identified based on title or context	Purpose or main idea is directly and explicitly stated at the beginning of the reading
Structure			
Genre	Genre is unfamiliar or bends and expands the rules for the genre	Genre is either unfamiliar but is a reasonable example of it OR it is a familiar genre that bends and expands the rules for the genre	Genre is familiar and the text is consistent with the elements of that genre
Organization	Organization distorts time or sequence in a deliberate effort to delay the reader's full understanding of the plot, process, or set of concepts; may include significant flashbacks, foreshadowing, or shifting perspectives	Organization adheres to most conventions, but digresses on occasion to temporarily shift the reader's focus to another point of view, event, time, or place, before returning to the main idea or topic	Organization is conventional, sequential, or chronological, with clear signals and transitions to lead the reader through a story, process, or set of concepts
Narration	Unreliable narrator provides a distorted or limited view to the reader; the reader must use other clues to deduce the truth; multiple narrators provide conflicting information; shifting points of view keep the reader guessing	Third-person limited or first-person narration provides accurate, but limited perspectives or viewpoints	Third-person omniscient narration or an authoritative and credible voice provides an appropriate level of detail and keeps little hidden from the view of the reader
Text Features and Graphics	Limited use of text features to organize information and guide the reader; Information in the graphics are not repeated in the main part of the text, but are essential for understanding the text	Wider array of text features includes margin notes, diagrams, graphs, font changes, and other devices that compete for the reader's attention; graphics and visuals are used to augment and illustrate information in the main part of the text	Text features (e.g., bold and italicized words, headings and subheadings) organize information explicitly and guide the reader; graphics or illustrations may be present but are not necessary to understand the main part of the text

Figure 3.1 Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric (continued)

Score	3 points (Stretch) <i>Texts That Would Stretch a Reader and/or Require Instruction</i>	2 points (Grade Level) <i>Texts That Require Grade-appropriate Skills</i>	1 point (Comfortable) <i>Texts That Are Comfortable and/or Build Background, Fluency, and Skills</i>
Language Conventuality and Clarity			
Standard English and Variations	The text includes significant and multiple styles of English and its variations, and these are unfamiliar to the reader	Some distance exists between the reader's linguistic base and the language conventions used in the text; the vernacular used is unfamiliar to the reader	Language closely adheres to the reader's linguistic base
Register	Archaic, formal, domain-specific, or scholarly register	Register is consultative or formal, and may be academic but acknowledges the developmental level of the reader	Register is casual and familiar
Knowledge Demands			
Background Knowledge	The text places demands on the reader that extend far beyond one's experiences, and provides little in the way of explanation of these divergent experiences	There is distance between the reader's experiences and those in the text, but there is acknowledgement of these divergent experiences, and sufficient explanation to bridge these gaps	The text contains content that closely matches the reader's life experiences
Prior Knowledge	Specialized or technical content knowledge is presumed and little in the way of review or explanation of these concepts is present in the text	Subject-specific knowledge is required, but the text augments this with review or summary of this information	Prior knowledge needed to understand the text is familiar, and draws on a solid foundation of practical, general and academic learning
Cultural Knowledge	Text relies on extensive or unfamiliar intertextuality, and uses artifacts and symbols that reference archaic or historical cultures	Text primarily references contemporary and popular culture to anchor explanations for new knowledge; intertextuality is used more extensively but is mostly familiar to the reader	The reader uses familiar cultural templates to understand the text; limited or familiar intertextuality
Vocabulary Knowledge	Vocabulary demand is extensive, domain-specific, and representative of complex ideas; the text offers little in the way of context clues to support the reader	Vocabulary draws on domain-specific, general academic, and multiple meaning words, with text supports to guide the reader's correct interpretations of their meanings; the vocabulary used represents familiar concepts and ideas	Vocabulary is controlled and uses the most commonly held meanings; multiple meaning words are used in a limited fashion

Source: Fisher, D., Frey, N., Lapp, D. (2012). *Text complexity: Raising rigor in reading*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association