COMPLEXITY

READER AND TASK
CONSIDERATIONS

DIVERSITY AND
REPRESENTATION

CRITICAL
LITERACY

Reading Diversity
A TOOL FOR SELECTING DIVERSE TEXTS

Extended Edition

TEACHING
TOLERANCE
A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Text selection is critical to both literacy instruction and student engagement. Traditionally, tools that support text selection have focused on quantitative and qualitative measures only. *Reading Diversity (Extended Edition)* is different. It supports a multi-dimensional approach to text selection, and includes considerations that help educators prioritize text complexity, critical literacy and cultural responsiveness.

Reading Diversity (Extended Edition) considers four distinct—but interconnected—dimensions of text selection: complexity, diversity and representation, critical literacy, and reader and task.

CONSIDERATION I COMPLEXITY

This section quantitatively and qualitatively evaluates the inherent elements of a text. Quantitative factors refer to word length or frequency, sentence length and text cohesion; these dimensions are measured by computer software. Qualitative factors are measured by an attentive reader, reflect a teacher's professional judgment, and refer to levels of meaning, purpose, structure, language features (such as conventionality and clarity) and knowledge demands.

CONSIDERATION II DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

This section considers the ways in which the author and characters in a text contribute to the inclusion of diverse voices in the curriculum. Similar to text complexity, diversity and representation are inherent elements of a text.
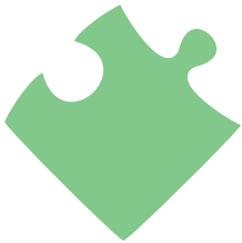
CONSIDERATION III CRITICAL LITERACY

Critical literacy teaches readers to actively and reflectively engage with texts. Readers use critical literacy skills to interpret messages and challenge the power relationships found within those messages. They are encouraged to question social norms and institutions like family, poverty, education, equity and equality. This section of the tool asks users to determine if a text is a good candidate for critical literacy instruction.
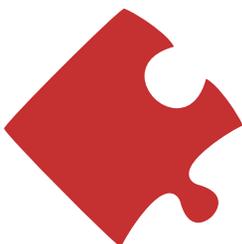
CONSIDERATION IV READER AND TASK CONSIDERATIONS

Culturally responsive text selection includes finding texts that both reflect your students' identities, experiences and motivations (mirrors) and provide insight into the identities, experiences and motivations of others (windows). This section asks users to consider whether texts act as windows or mirrors and to explicitly name how the text will help meet established learning goals.

Finally, educators decide whether or not to select the text and have a chance to reflect on their rationale.

Title: _____

Author: _____ Illustrator: _____

Text type: ◯ Informational _____ ◯ Literature _____
 (DESCRIPTION) (DESCRIPTION)

CONSIDERATION I COMPLEXITY

Quantitative: Go to http://www.lexile.com. Use the Quick Book Search box in the upper right to see if your text already has a Lexile Measure. If not, copy and paste a portion of the text into the Lexile Analyzer. There are certain types of text that cannot be assigned a Lexile measure because they are not prose. These include poems, plays and song lyrics or texts with extensive dialogue. Check "NA" when working with these types of text.

Lexile Measure	CCSS Grade Band
◯ 420–820L	◯ Grades 2–3
◯ 740–1010L	◯ Grades 4–5
◯ 925–1185L	◯ Grades 6–8
◯ 1050–1335L	◯ Grades 9–10
◯ 1185–1385L	◯ Grade 11–CCR
◯ NA	

Qualitative: Consider the four qualitative measures of text complexity—meaning/purpose, structure, language features and knowledge demands—and how they make the text more or less complex. Mark an X on each line to place the text within its grade band for that qualitative measure.

Qualitative Measure	Notes and Comments on Text	Placement Within Band				
		Not suited to band	Beginning of lower grade	End of lower grade	Beginning of higher grade	End of higher grade
Meaning /Purpose		◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Structure		◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Language Features		◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Knowledge Demands		◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Use both the Lexile Measure and the qualitative analysis to adjust the overall placement of the text within its grade band. Summarize your analysis and reasoning.

OVERALL GRADE LEVEL	SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS AND REASONING

CONSIDERATION II DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

1. Does the identity or experience of this text's author support the inclusion of diverse voices in the curriculum? Which voices?

○ Race   ○ Language   ○ LGBT

○ Immigration   ○ Ability   ○ Place

○ Ethnicity   ○ Gender   ○ Class

○ Religion   ○ Age   ○ Other: _____

Explain.

[   ]

2. Do the identity or experiences of this text's characters and/or speakers support the inclusion of diverse voices in the curriculum? Which voices?

○ Race   ○ Language   ○ LGBT

○ Immigration   ○ Ability   ○ Place

○ Ethnicity   ○ Gender   ○ Class

○ Religion   ○ Age   ○ Other: _____

Explain.

[   ]

3. Which elements of this text, if any, provide an authentic account or reflection of peoples' lived experiences?

○ Setting   ○ Events   ○ Illustrations

○ Characters/Speakers ○ Language

Explain.

[   ]

4. Do you have any concerns about generalizations, stereotypes or misrepresentations in the text?

Explain.

[   ]

CONSIDERATION III CRITICAL LITERACY

Gaps and Silences: *Authors intentionally and unintentionally include and exclude information. A gap exists where something is left out of the text for the reader to fill in. A silence occurs when a voice or viewpoint is left out or suppressed.*

1. Are certain people or groups left out or given roles that don't enable them to be heard? Are certain questions or topics not raised?

2. What strengths and weaknesses does this text pose in terms of gaps and silences?

Intertextuality: *Students are exposed to multiple texts at school, at home, in the media and through cultural transmission. Intertextuality refers to the way a text's meaning is shaped by other texts.*

1. What are some examples of similar texts or of other texts that would pair well with this one?

2. What strengths or weaknesses does this text pose in terms of intertextuality?

Positioning: *The content and characters in a text are framed by the author's attitudes, beliefs and point of view. This is referred to as positioning. Positioning also impacts the way a reader absorbs and interprets a text.*

1. What do I know about the author's attitudes, beliefs or point of view in relation to the topic? How might this affect author and reader positioning?

2. What strengths or weaknesses does this text pose in terms of positioning?

Context: *The time period in which a text is read shapes reader response. A reading in 1850 will differ from a reading in 2014. The history of a text, as well as contemporary attitudes and practices, shapes the context.*

1. What is the historical, social or cultural context in which this text was written? How can it be made relevant to a contemporary context?

2. What strengths or weaknesses does this text pose in terms of context?

CONSIDERATION IV **READER AND TASK CONSIDERATIONS**

Reader considerations: *Culturally responsive text selection relies on a teacher who knows the reader(s) and considers their experiences, motivations and knowledge. These considerations relate to the discursive background of your readers.*

1. Experience: For whom could this text be a mirror, a reflection of identity and experience? For whom could this text be a window into the identities and experiences of others?

2. Motivation: How could this text motivate and connect with the interests and concerns of my students?

3. Knowledge: To what extent does this text access and build upon the knowledge my students bring with them?

Task considerations: *Perhaps the most important question when selecting a text is "How will it help students learn?" Keep your standards and learning objectives in mind as you select texts.*

1. What are the learning objectives? How does this text help me meet those objectives?

2. What task might I match with this text in order for students to demonstrate mastery of the instructional goals?

3. What supports or differentiation will my students need to succeed in that task using this text?

DECISION WILL I SELECT THIS TEXT?

Yes	No
Why and how will I use this text in instruction?	Why am I choosing not to use this text in instruction?

CITATION INFORMATION

Title 1 (of this specific text)

Title 2 (of the larger work within which this text is included)

Author(s)

Editor(s)

City of publication

Publisher

Publication date

Access date (if website only)

URL (if website only)

TEXT SELECTOR INFORMATION

Name

Title/Position

School/Organization

Contact Information

Additional Notes