

# COMING TO TERMS WITH THE COMMON CORE IN K-12

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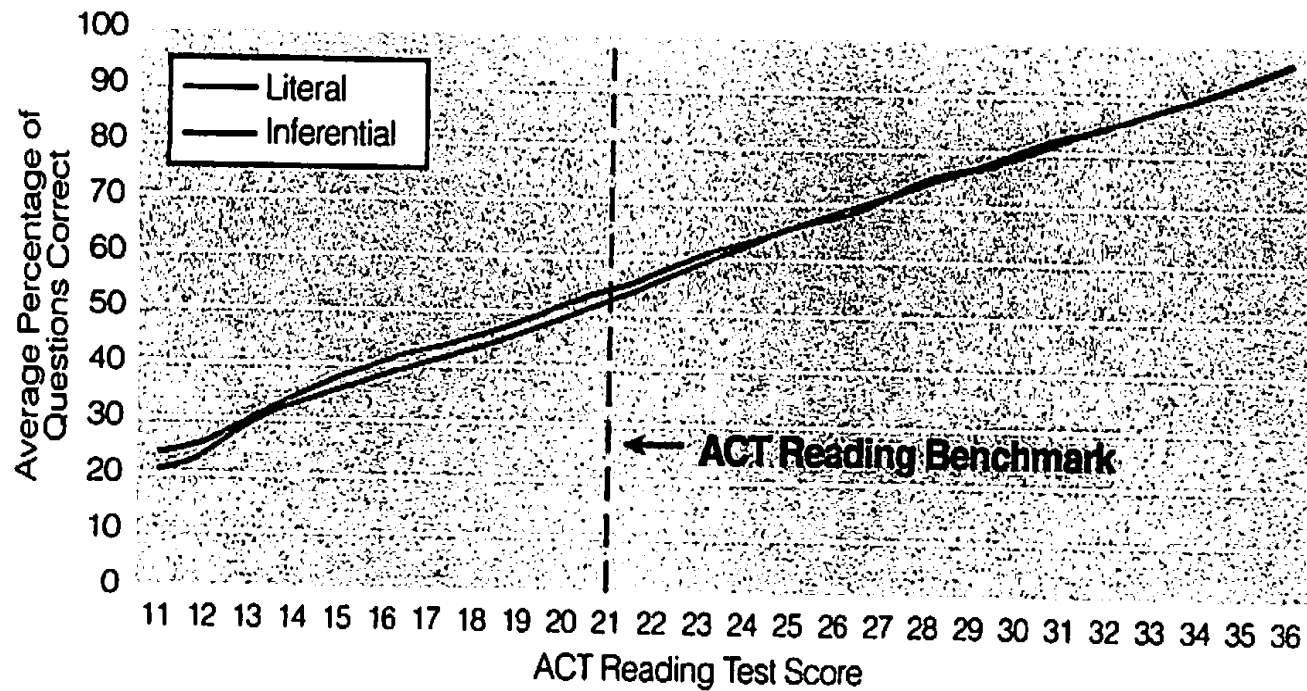
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# Common Core State Standards

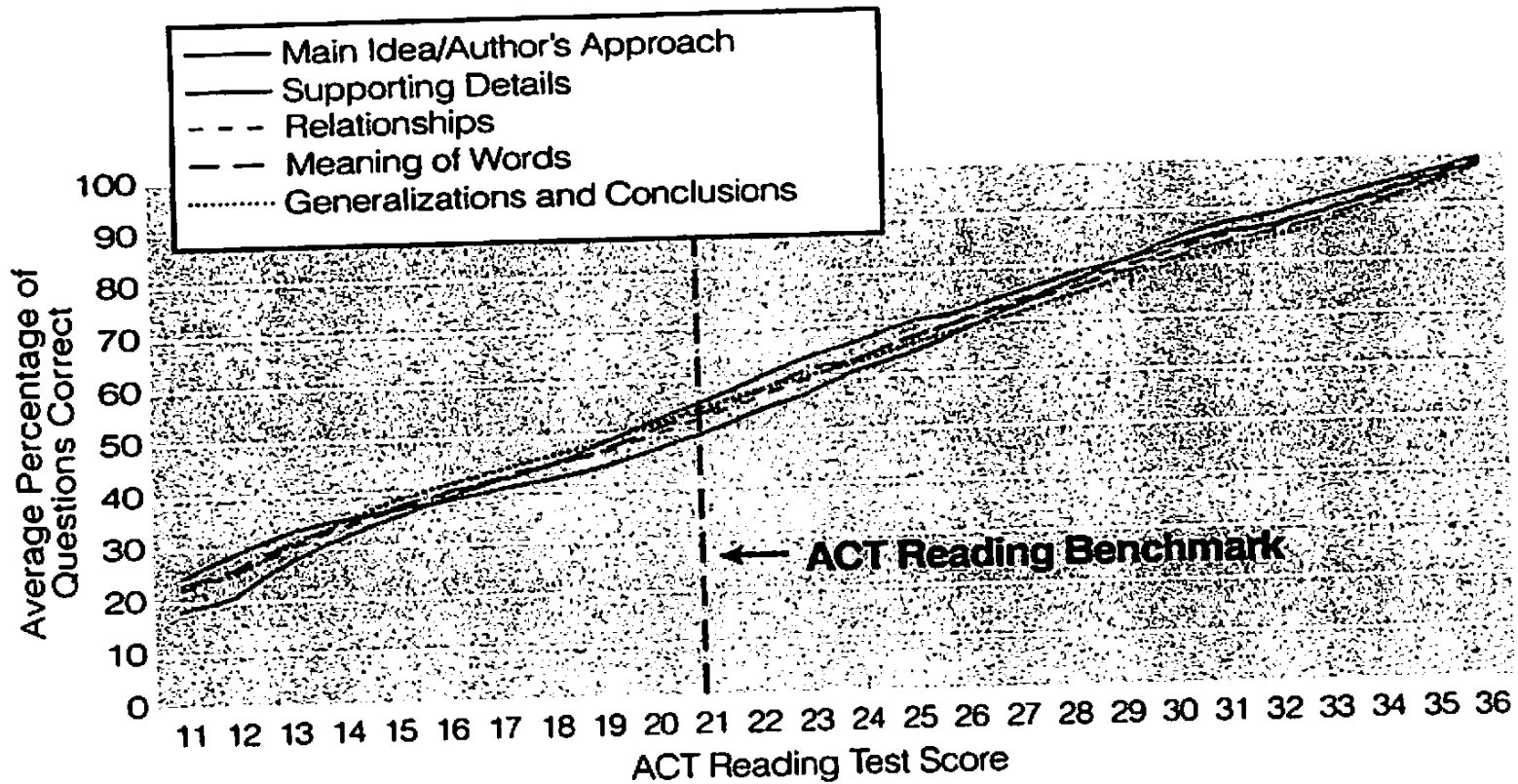
- 46 states and DC adopted common core state standards (almost 90% of teachers and students in the U.S.)
- CCSS covers English Language Arts and Math
- In 2014-2015, current state tests will be replaced by one of two exams that will be taken by students in about half the states
- Purpose of the standards:
  - (1) to foster higher achievement of U.S. kids;
  - (2) to make educational opportunity more equal.

# 1. Challenging Text

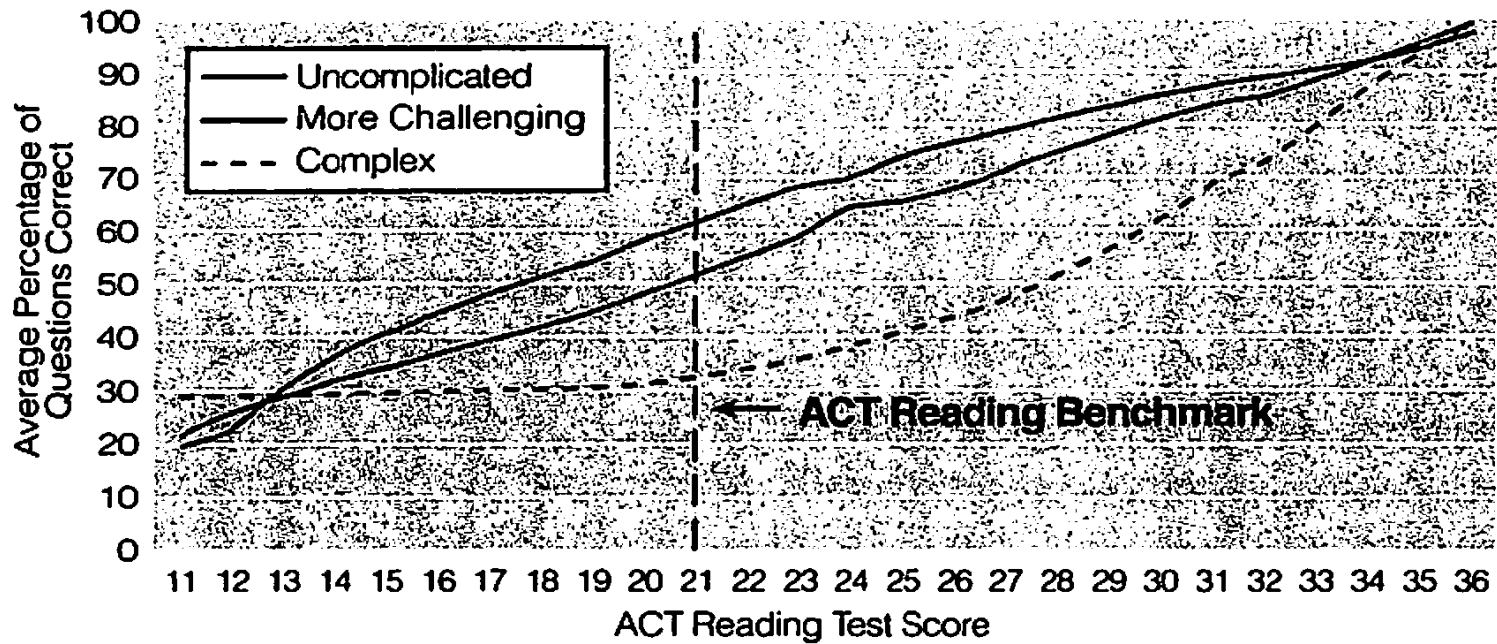
- Past standards focused on cognitive skills and ignored text difficulty
- Common core: Text difficulty is central to learning
- Specific cognitive skills have to be executed, but with texts that are sufficiently challenging (Item 10).



*Figure 10: Performance on the ACT Reading Test by Comprehension Level  
(Averaged across Seven Forms)<sup>9</sup>*



*Figure 11: Performance on the ACT Reading Test by Textual Element  
(Averaged across Seven Forms)*



*Figure 12: Performance on the ACT Reading Test by Degree of Text Complexity (Averaged across Seven Forms)*

# 1. Challenging Text (cont.)

- Quantitative factors: Readability formulas that predict comprehension from vocabulary and sentence complexity
- Includes ATOS, Degrees of Reading Power, Flesch-Kincaid, Lexiles, Reading Maturity, Source Reader
- Set higher than in the past”

	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework®
2nd – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.98 –5.34	420 – 820
4th – 5 <sup>th</sup>	4.51 –7.73	740 – 1010
6th – 8 <sup>th</sup>	6.51 –10.34	925 – 1185
9th – 10 <sup>th</sup>	8.32 –12.12	1050 – 1335
11th –CCR	10.34 –14.2	1185 – 1385

# Instructional Level

- Betts (1946) theory of instructional level (independent, instructional, frustration and a system for measuring them)
- Claimed research had shown that learning was optimized if students were placed in text with appropriate difficulty levels
- Independent (fluency 99-100%; comprehension 90-100%)
- Instructional (fluency 95-98%; comprehension 70-89%)
- Frustration (fluency 0-92%; comprehension 0-50%)



# Source of Betts' Criteria?

- Betts claimed instructional level was validated in Killgallon study
- But, Killgallon didn't do the study, nor did anyone else (Shanahan, 1983)
- Text difficulty's role in facilitating learning has been more a matter of lore than empirical research
- Readability measures predict reading comprehension, not learning

# Powell Criteria

- William Powell challenged Betts' criteria during the 1960s
- He put forth the idea of “mediated levels”
- PP-2: fluency 87-93%; comprehension 55-80%
- Grades 3-5: fluency 92-96%; comprehension 60-85%
- Grade 6: fluency 92-97%; comprehension 65-90%
- Students placed in harder texts 50% of time

# Betts' Instructional Level Theory

- Claims learning is facilitated by ensuring students can read the text with relatively good comprehension

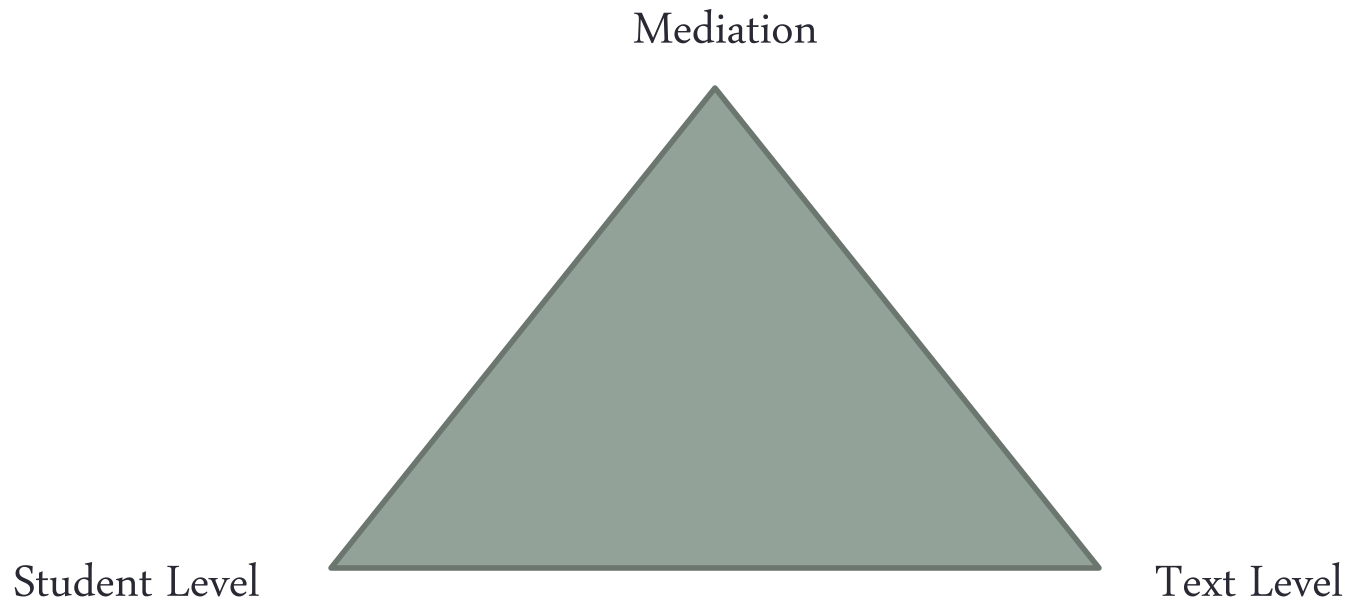
Reader Level

Text Level



# Powell's Mediated Text Theory

- Claims that learning is best from harder texts because teaching facilitates comprehension



# Evidence Text Should Be Harder

Morgan, Wilcox, & Eldredge (2000)

- Varied text difficulty for three groups
- Had groups study in the same way for the same amount of time
- Measured impact on growth in reading comprehension
- Traditionally frustration-level placement led to greatest gains
- Lack of descriptive data

# More Evidence for Harder Text

- Textbook publishers/school districts strove to reduce levels of texts since early 1940s
- Studies show that 3-12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks have gotten easier
- Decline in text levels has presaged the declines in student performance levels

Chall, Conrad, & Harris, 1977

Hayes, Wolfer, & Wolfe, 1996

## We've Been Here Before

- 1980s “whole language” debacle (unadapted text):  
Teacher response was to read *to* students
- Well documented in upper grades that teachers stop using text when the text is challenging
- Hard text led to an over-reliance on “guided reading”
- It is not enough to place students in challenging text
- Teachers (and publishers) need to select texts that include sufficiently challenging language (the CCSS bands), but they also need to consider the qualitative reasons why text is challenging and scaffold student interactions with a text

# Scaffolding Challenging Text

## Scaffolding Text Features

- Complexity of ideas/content
- Match of text and reader prior knowledge
- Complexity of vocabulary
- Complexity of syntax
- Complexity of coherence
- Familiarity of genre demands
- Complexity of text organization
- Subtlety of author's tone
- Sophistication of literary devices or data-presentation devices

## Other Approaches

- Provide sufficient fluency
- Use stair-steps or apprentice texts
- Teach comprehension strategies
- Motivation



# Resources

Shanahan, T., Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2012), March. The challenge of challenging text. *Educational Leadership*.

# The physical fitness metaphor

- If reading and physical exercise are similar, then text complexity is akin to weight or distance
- Students need to practice reading with multiple levels of difficulty and for varied amounts (these variations can even occur within a single exercise session)
- Guiding students to read text with support is like spotting for someone during weight lifting (you have to be careful not to do the exercise for them and you have to avoid dependence)
- Do not always head off the challenges, but always be ready to respond and support

## 16-Week Marathon Training Schedule

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
1	3	Rest	4	3	Rest	5	Rest	15
2	3	Rest	4	3	Rest	6	Rest	16
3	3	Rest	4	3	Rest	7	Rest	17
4	3	Rest	5	3	Rest	8	Rest	19
5	3	Rest	5	3	Rest	10	Rest	21
6	4	Rest	5	4	Rest	11	Rest	24
7	4	Rest	6	4	Rest	12	Rest	26
8	4	Rest	6	4	Rest	14	Rest	28
9	4	Rest	7	4	Rest	16	Rest	31
10	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	16	Rest	34
11	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	17	Rest	35
12	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	18	Rest	36
13	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	20	Rest	38
14	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	9	Rest	27
15	3	Rest	5	3	Rest	8	Rest	19
16	3	Rest	3	Walk 2	Rest	26.2	Rest	34.2

## 2. Close Reading

- Past standards based on theories of reading comprehension drawn from cognitive science (reader, text, context)
- CCSS depend heavily upon literary theory, specifically “New Criticism”
- In New Criticism all of the reading emphasis is on the text

# So what is close reading?

- It starts with the Protestant Reformation  
(no, really)
- Martin Luther dueled with the Church about whether priests had to interpret the Bible or whether people could read it themselves
- In the 1920s and 30s English Departments were dominated by Scholasticism; that is professors/teachers taught the meanings of the texts
- New Criticism (Brooks & Warren, etc.): The meaning is in the text and text must be read closely to get it to give up its meaning

## 2. Close reading

- Great books (challenging books) need to be read and reread
- Each reading should accomplish a separate purpose
- The first reading of a text should allow the reader to determine what a text says
- The second reading should allow the reader to determine how a text works
- The third reading should allow the reader to evaluate the quality and value of the text (and to connect the text to other texts)

## 2. Close Reading

- All focus on text meaning
- Minimize background preparation/explanation (and text apparatus)
- Students must do the reading/interpretation
- Teacher's major role is to ask text dependent questions
- Multi-day commitment to texts
- Purposeful rereading (not practice, but separate journeys)
- Short reads

# Text dependent questions

- Close reading requires close attention to the ideas expressed and implied by the author and to the author's craft
- Often comprehension questions allow students to talk about other things besides the text (How do you think people felt about the Emancipation Proclamation? If you were a slave how would you feel about it?)
- Questions are text dependent if they can only be answered by reading the text (the evidence must come largely or entirely from the text and not from elsewhere)



## 2. Close Reading (cont.)

### Implications”

- Students will need to engage to a greater extent in deep analysis of the text and its meaning and implications
- Less emphasis on background information, comprehension strategies, picture walks, etc. (though these still can be brought in by teachers)
- Greater emphasis on careful reading of a text, weighing of author’s diction, grammar, and organization to make sense of the text
- Rereading will play a greater role in teaching reading

# 3. Disciplinary literacy

- Past standards have not made a big deal out of reading in history/social studies or science
- Emphasis was on learning how to read and applying these skills to content area textbooks
- However, there are unique reading demands within the various disciplines (reading history is not the same thing as reading literature, etc.)
- The common core state standards requires specialized reading emphasis for literature, history/social studies and science/technical subjects

## 3. Disciplinary Literacy (cont.)

- Not the hip new name for content area reading
- Disciplines possess their own language, purposes, ways of using text
- There are special skills and strategies needed for students to make complete sense of texts from the disciplines
- As students begin to confront these kinds of texts (especially in middle school and high school), instruction must facilitate their understanding of what it means to read disciplinary texts

### 3. Disciplinary Literacy (cont.)

- Thus, science students learn to follow and record multistep lab procedures, and to account for exceptions or special cases while history students are learning to analyze a series of events to determine the causal relations among the events
- Or, history students learn to make sense of discrepancies between primary accounts while science students learn to analyze the relationship between the graphical and prose information in a text
- Or, science and history both require summaries, but summaries of what?

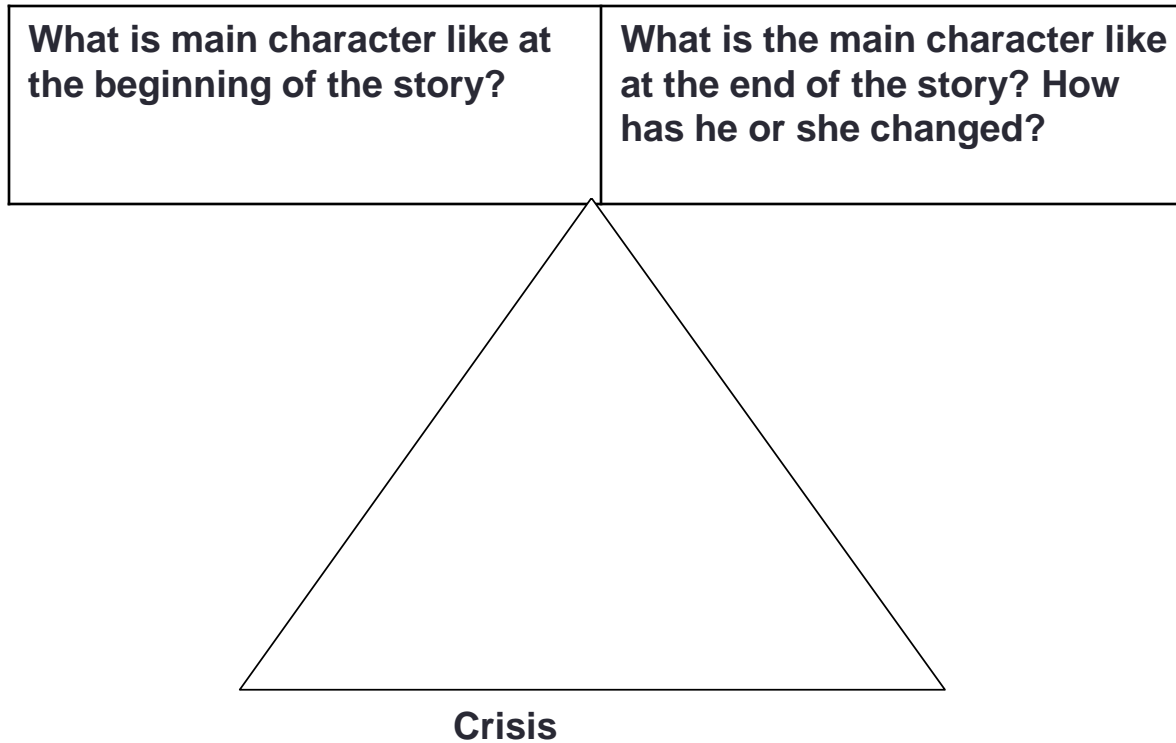
# 3. Disciplinary literacy (cont.)

- Implications
- The ELA standards should be shared by the science and history departments
- It is essential that science and history include texts in their instructional routines
- Content teachers will need to emphasize aspects of literacy that they have not in the past (these are disciplinary standards, not content area reading standards—the idea is not how to apply reading skills and strategies to content subjects but how to teach the unique uses of literacy required by the disciplines)

# Chemistry Note-taking

<b>Substances</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Interactions</b>	<b>Atomic Expression</b>

# Character Change Chart



Given this character change, what do you think the author wanted you to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

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## 4. Informational text

- Past standards emphasized literary and informational texts, but distribution was left to teachers
- Reading textbooks emphasized informational texts only about 20% of the time, but this has been changing
- The common core standards requires the teaching of comprehension within both informational and literary texts
- These new standards emphasize informational texts equally with literary texts (in Grades K-5) – more complex for middle school and high school



## 4. Informational text (cont.)

- Informational text is text the primary purpose of which is to convey information about the natural and social world.
- Informational text typically addresses whole classes of things in a timeless way (they are not typically about specific instances).
- Informational text requires the interpretation of structures, graphics, features, etc. that are not available in literary text
- Text that comes in many different formats (books, magazines, handouts, brochures, CD-ROMs, Internet)

## Text Structure

Help readers understand author's message

Structure	Helps the Reader....
Enumerative structure	Understand details about concepts and phenomena
Compare-contrast structure	Understand the similarities and differences of concepts and phenomena
Sequential structure	Understand the progression or time sequence of events
Cause-effect structure	Understand the connections between antecedents and consequents
Problem-solution structures	Understand the relationship between problems and potential solutions

## Print Features

Guide readers through text

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Helps the Reader...</b>
Table of contents	Identify key topics in a book and their order of presentation
Index	See everything in a text listed alphabetically, with page numbers
Glossary	Define words contained in the text
Preface	Set a purpose for reading, get an overview of the content
Pronunciation guide	Say the words
Appendix	By offering additional information

## Illustrations

### Alternative forms of information

Feature	Helps the Reader...
Photos/Drawings	Understand what something looks like
Drawings	Understand what something looks like, might look like, or looked like
Technical drawings	Understand accurate dimensions and proportions (proximity, scale)
3-Dimensional projections	Understand shapes, proportions, etc.
Magnification	See details in something small

## Organizational Aids

Help readers find important information

Feature	Helps the Reader....
Bold Print	By signaling the word is important and/or found in the glossary
Colored print	Understand the word is important
Italics	Understand the word is important
Bullets	Emphasize key points/ concepts
Titles	Locate different categories in the text
Headings	Identify topics throughout the book as they skim and scan
Subheadings	Navigate through sections of Text
Captions	Understand a picture or photograph
Labels	Identify a picture or photograph and/or its parts
Sidebars	Gather additional or explanatory information.

## Graphic Aids

Represent information in some specific way

Feature	Helps the reader...
Diagram	Understand interactions among variables or relations among parts, how something is constructed, or how it works
Flow diagram	Understand a complex sequence of movements or actions
Sketches	Visualize an important concept
Comparisons	Understand the size of one thing by comparing it to the size of something familiar
Graphs	Understand relativity between elements
Figures	Combine text information with graphical aids
Maps	Understand placement and relationships among objects in a space
Tables	Understand how data are organized into categorical parts and the relations among these parts across multiple observations, values, or states

## Graphic Aids

Represent information in some specific way

Feature	Helps the reader...
Charts	Understand relations among multiple variables symbolically (e.g., bar chart, line chart, pie chart, flow chart).
Cross-sections	Understand something by looking at it from the inside
Overlays	Understand additional information
Time-lines	Understand the sequence of time

# Resources on informational text

- <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=14>
- Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Schatschneider, C., & Torgesen, J. (2010). Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3rd grade: A practice guide (NCEE 2010-4038). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from [whatworks.ed.gov/publications/practiceguides](http://whatworks.ed.gov/publications/practiceguides).
- Doing what works  
[http://dww.ed.gov/Reading-Comprehension/topic/index.cfm?T\\_ID=36](http://dww.ed.gov/Reading-Comprehension/topic/index.cfm?T_ID=36)



## 4. Informational text (Cont.)

- Implications
- Text selections need to need to shift (textbooks and leveled books)
- Primary grade teachers and English teachers will need to raise their comfort level for working with informational text (informational text will get a great emphasis in upper grades, too, but this is not as big a change for these grades)
- Need to guard against informational text being taken over by literary treatments of factual information (such as biography)

# 5. Writing about Text

- Past standards have emphasized writing as a free-standing subject or skill
- Students have been expected to be able to write texts requiring low information (or only the use of widely available background knowledge)
- The common core puts greater emphasis on the use of evidence in writing
- Thus, the major emphasis shifts from writing stories or opinion pieces to writing about the ideas in text

## 5. Writing about Text (cont.)

- Summarizing text
- Writing texts based on text models
- Analyzing and critiquing texts
- Synthesizing texts

# 5. Writing about Text (cont.)

## Implications

- Writing will need to be more closely integrated with reading comprehension instruction
- The amount of writing about what students read will need to increase
- Greater emphasis on synthesis of information and critical essays than in the past

# Conclusion

- The common core state standards are based upon very different theories and conceptions of teaching than our current standards are
- Teacher preparation and textbook design are largely based upon theories and approaches that are (somewhat) inconsistent with those supporting the common core standards
- Changing instructional practices to better support the standards will require a major professional development and materials transformation