New York State Testing Program
Grade 3 Common Core
English Language Arts Test

Annotated Passages

November 2014
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Annotated Passages

With the adoption of the New York P–12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics, the Board of Regents signaled a shift in both instruction and assessment. Starting in the Spring 2013, New York State (NYS) began administering tests designed to assess student performance in accordance with the instructional shifts and the rigor demanded by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To aid in the transition to new assessments, New York State has released a number of resources, including test blueprints and specifications, sample questions, and criteria for writing assessment questions. These resources can be found at [http://www.engageNY.org/common-core-assessments](http://www.engageNY.org/common-core-assessments).

New York State administered the ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Common Core tests in April 2014 and is now making a portion of the questions and passages from those ELA tests available for review and use. These released questions and passages will help students, families, educators, and the public better understand how tests have changed to assess the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core and to assess the rigor required to ensure that all students are on track to college and career readiness.

Annotated Passages Are Teaching Tools

The released annotated passages herein are intended to help educators, students, families, and the public understand how the Common Core is different. The annotated passages demonstrate the rich, authentic, and complex texts necessary to support instruction and measurement of the knowledge, skills, and proficiencies described in the Common Core Learning Standards. These annotated passages are intended to illustrate how NYS uses quantitative metrics and qualitative rubrics to select and place passages for inclusion on the tests. In addition, the annotation can help educators understand in depth the text complexity demands that are a key requirement for growing students’ reading abilities as articulated by the Common Core.

Passage selection for Common Core English Language Arts Assessments

Selecting high-quality, grade-appropriate passages requires both objective text complexity metrics and expert judgment. For NYS Common Core English Language Arts Tests, both quantitative metrics and qualitative rubrics are used to determine the complexity of the texts and their appropriate placement within a grade-level ELA exam.

Quantitative Measures of Text Complexity

Quantitative measures of text complexity are used to measure aspects of text complexity that are difficult for a human reader to evaluate when examining a text. These aspects include word frequency, word length (number of characters per word), sentence length, and text cohesion. These aspects are efficiently measured by computer programs, and all of the measures listed below can be accessed for
free online. (For more information about these metrics, including how to access these measures online, please see http://achievethecore.org/page/642/text-complexity-collection.)

Based on research and the guidance of nationally-recognized literacy experts, the following ranges for quantitative measures were used to guide initial passage selection to place a passage within a possible grade-level band for the Grades 3–8 exams. (Note: in instances where the quantitative measures do not place the text in the same grade level, the different grade bands resulting are noted and the selection process continues to the qualitative analysis.)

### Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core Band</th>
<th>Degrees of Reading Power®</th>
<th>Flesch-Kincaid</th>
<th>The Lexile Framework®</th>
<th>Reading Maturity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note in looking at all of these quantitative ranges, there are wide ranges within grade bands, and considerable degrees of overlap between the 3–8 grade bands. (See Appendix A of this document for tables visually representing this overlap for these readability metrics.) The overlap within and between grades reflects the range of developmental reading abilities in regards to various facets of literacy. Put simply, different types of texts, text structures, and language demands will challenge individual students within and between grades differently.

### Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity

While quantitative text complexity metrics are a helpful start, they are far from definitive. Many aspects of writing cause text complexity metrics to produce flawed results. For example, a canonical high school-level novel such as John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* has a lexile level of 680, which would place it in the Grade 2–3 band. To account for these known shortcomings, qualitative measures are a

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1. Nelson, Jessica; Perfetti, Charles; Liben, David; and Liben, Meredith, “Measures of Text Difficulty: Testing Their Predictive Value for Grade Levels and Student Performance,” 2012.
2. The band levels themselves have been expanded slightly over the original CCSS scale that appears in Appendix A at both the top and bottom of each band to provide for a more modulated climb toward college and career readiness and offer slightly more overlap between bands. The wider band width allows more flexibility in the younger grades where students enter school with widely varied preparation levels. This change was provided in response to feedback received since publication of the original scale (published in terms of the Lexile® metric) in Appendix A.
3. Since Flesch-Kincaid has no ‘caretaker’ that oversees or maintains the formula, the research leads worked to bring the measure in line with college and career readiness levels of text complexity based on the version of the formula used by Coh-Metrix.
crucial complement to quantitative measures. In the Steinbeck example, a qualitative review reveals that even though the author uses short sentences and common words, the level of meaning in his novel, as well as the knowledge demands and emotional maturity required for comprehension, would make it more appropriate for use in a high school classroom.

Using qualitative measures of text complexity involves making an informed decision about the difficulty of a text in terms of one or more factors discernible to a human reader applying trained judgment to the task. The following passage annotations illustrate the application of a qualitative rubric based largely on the qualitative resources from PARCC and the SCASS rubrics from Student Achievement Partners. The qualitative criteria used in these rubrics and the qualitative rubric used for qualitative analysis by NYS uses four required qualitative factors and one optional qualitative factor. The rating on these criteria will result in an overall qualitative rating of the text along a continuum of readily accessible, moderately complex, and very complex.

These criteria are described below:

(1) **Meaning (literary texts) or Purpose (informational texts).** Literary texts with a single and obvious level of meaning tend to be easier to read than literary texts with multiple levels of meaning (such as satires, in which the author’s literal message is intentionally at odds with his or her underlying message). Similarly, informational texts with an explicitly stated purpose are generally easier to comprehend than informational texts with an implicit, hidden, or obscure purpose.

(2) **Text Structure.** Texts that are readily accessible within a grade-band tend to have simple, well-marked, and conventional structures, whereas very complex texts tend to have complex, implicit, and (particularly in literary texts) unconventional structures. Simple literary texts tend to relate events in chronological order, while complex literary texts make more frequent use of flashbacks, flash-forwards, and other manipulations of time and sequence. Simple informational texts are likely not to deviate from the conventions of common genres and subgenres, while complex informational texts are more likely to conform to the norms and conventions of a specific discipline.

(3) **Language Features.** Texts that rely on literal, clear, contemporary, and conversational language tend to be easier to read than texts that rely on figurative, ironic, ambiguous, purposefully misleading, archaic, or otherwise unfamiliar language or on general academic and domain-specific vocabulary. The relative complexity of sentence structures is also an aspect of this criterion, with the presence of mostly simple sentences being an indication of a readily accessible text and the presence of many complex sentences with subordinate phrases and clauses being a feature of a very complex text.

(4) **Knowledge Demands.** Texts that make few assumptions about the extent of readers’ life experiences and the depth of their cultural/literary and content/discipline knowledge are generally less complex than are texts that are written for a specific audience with a specific schema of knowledge on a topic.

(5) **Optional Graphics.** Graphics elements that accompany the passages that are indicators of a readily accessible text can be images or features that are simple and/or supplementary images to the meaning of texts, with a primary focus being to orient the reader to the topic. Complex and detailed graphics

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9 See IV, #3 of Key Considerations in Implementing Text Complexity recommendations from the Supplemental Information for Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy: New Research on Text Complexity for more information about exceptions to using quantitative measures to place texts within grade bands.
and/or graphics whose interpretation is essential to understanding the text, and graphics that provide an independent source of information within a text are graphic features common to moderately and very complex texts.

**Passages in the classroom vs. Passages on a test.**

Passages serve different purposes depending on the context in which they are used. As stated in Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards, in an instructional context (including a student’s independent reading for the purpose of this discussion) there are aspects of individual readers that will impact comprehension—emotional maturity/thematic concerns, background knowledge, and motivations are some considerations that may impact understanding. Good instruction supports these individual aspects of comprehension in an effort to grow learning. In a summative assessment context, however, the task is considerably more constrained; the task is to determine the degree to which students can independently make meaning of texts. As such, there are no scaffolds, no opportunities for collaboration with peers, and no framing by adults before the student is accessing the content. In the testing context, students work independently to read the texts and answer questions that measure their abilities to make meaning of the texts and topics they are reading about. Using texts that are grade-level complex according to the CCSS helps to determine where the student is in terms of his/her pathway to college and career-readiness, and as such fulfills a crucial purpose of the Grades 3–8 ELA testing program.
Appendix A: Text Complexity Grade Ranges for Quantitative Measures

Table 1: Text Complexity Grade Ranges for Grades 3–8 as represented by Degrees of Reading Power® Metric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 2-3</th>
<th>Grade 4-5</th>
<th>Grade 6-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>60-65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Text Complexity Grade Ranges for Grades 3–8 as represented by Flesch-Kincaid® readability metric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 2-3</th>
<th>Grade 4-5</th>
<th>Grade 6-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[5\] Since Flesch-Kincaid has no ‘caretaker’ that oversees or maintains the formula, the research leads worked to bring the measure in line with college and career readiness levels of text complexity based on the version of the formula used by Coh-Metrix.
Table 3: Text Complexity Grade Ranges for Grades 3–8 as represented by Lexile Framework®

Table 4: Text Complexity Grade Ranges for Grades 3–8 as represented by Reading Maturity Matrix
Snow Fun on the Run!

by Daniel Lee

1 Wintertime gym class means ball tag and jumping jacks, right?
2 SNOW WAY!
3 Teachers say snowshoes are improving their students’:
   • hearts and lungs,
   • muscles,
   • and spirits.
4 Kids just say it’s fun!
5 “It’s sort of like you’re walking on thin air,” said Troy Pierce, eight. “The
snowshoes sort of keep you up on the snow.”
6 And that’s pretty important where they live, said Alex Almquist.
7 Alex and Troy are students at Hancock Elementary School in the far
northern part of Michigan. “There’s lots and lots of snow,” laughed Alex.
8 That means snowshoes are perfect for gym class in the winter.
9 “The benefit of snowshoeing for kids is getting their heart rate up near
maximum,” says Julie Hamar, a PE teacher at Hancock Elementary School in
Hancock, Michigan. “It’s a good all around activity for kids.”
10 In other words, “It’s hard to walk and it gets your legs all strong,” said
Troy.
11 Nearly 400 students in Ms. Hamar’s PE classes get to use the snowshoes,
taking hikes, running relay races, and doing outside exercises.
12 The school’s PTO purchased the snowshoes for the kids recently. Not
only do PE classes use them, but regular classes strap them on for outside
nature hikes and wildlife study, too.
13 “I teach them the basic technique: how to put on the snowshoes and the
proper ways of walking in snowshoes,” Ms. Hamar says.
“You have to lift your feet up or you’re going to trip,” cautions Alex, eight. “Snowshoes are huge.”

The classes take a short hike around the school. Then they hit the slopes and trails nearby. It’s not unusual to see animal signs.

“We saw tracks and a den,” said Troy. The rabbit that made them had something in common with the kids.

“Their feet are really flat, like snowshoes,” Troy said. “They’re better for walking.”

“It’s good for the kids because it’s extra hard work walking on the snowshoes in deep snow,” says Ms. Hamar. “You can tell. They start to unzip their jackets; they’re starting to sweat underneath their hats.”

All that means the kids are getting good exercise and having fun instead of sitting around all winter.

Making tracks outside means getting strong inside.

**Snow Toes**

Sam Watson has been on the snowshoe crew longer than he can remember.

His father started making children’s snowshoes when Sam was only two or three.

But he recalls lots of snowshoeing from about age 5 or 6, as his father, Jim Watson, the founder of Little Bear Snowshoes, created new shoes.

“Of course, I was the logical one to test them,” says Sam, now 11.

But snowshoes are also a great way to reach the hidden skiing and ice fishing

**Snowshoe Smarts**

Snowshoeing is tough—unless you can already walk! Here are a couple of tips:

- In a group, follow the trail-breaker.
- Take turns being the trail-breaker.
- Going uphill, dig the ties in.
- Going across a hill, dig edges in.
- Dress in layers; you’ll get warm.
spots that Sam loves. “You’re strapped onto a big oval-shaped sort of platform and that allows more surface on the snow, so you don’t sink,” he says.

“Snowshoes spread your weight out over the snow,” says Sam, showing the wide working surface of snowshoes above.

“You can go out in the wintertime and not worry about getting snow in your pants and freezing your legs off.”
Title and Author: *Snow Fun on the Run!* by Daniel Lee

**Word count:** 517

### Quantitative Analysis

| Degrees of Reading Power (DRP): | 55 |
| Lexile: | 770 |
| Flesch-Kincaid: | 4.4 |
| Reading Maturity Matric (RMM): | 6.5 |

**Summary of Grade 3 Assessment Placement:**

Overall rating: Moderately Complex

This text’s topic and format support text comprehension. A descriptive picture of a central theme of the text supports student understanding of some of the more complex vocabulary. The text’s use of casual and contemporary language, including dialogue discussing the topic, alternate with more complex sentence structures to make this text accessible to the reader. While its scores are quantitatively high, this is likely a result of the use of some proper nouns and names which can inflate these metrics.

### Qualitative Analysis for Informational Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Very Complex</th>
<th>☒</th>
<th>Moderately Complex</th>
<th>☑</th>
<th>Readily Accessible</th>
<th>☑</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>The text contains multiple purposes and the primary purpose is subtle, intricate, and/or abstract.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The primary purpose of the text is not stated explicitly, but is easy to infer based on the content or source. The text may include multiple perspectives.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The primary purpose of the text is clear, concrete, narrowly focused, and explicitly stated. The text has a singular perspective.</td>
<td>The text boxes introduce multiple perspectives on a subject with an otherwise clear and explicit focus on snow-shoeing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Structure</td>
<td>Connections among an expanded range of ideas, processes, or events are often implicit, subtle, or ambiguous. Organization exhibits some discipline-specific traits. The text features are essential to comprehension of content.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Connections between some ideas, processes, or events are implicit or subtle; organization is generally evident and sequential; any text features help facilitate comprehension of content.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Connections between ideas, processes, and events are explicit and clear; organization is chronological, sequential, or easy to predict because it is linear; any text features help readers navigate content, but are not critical to understanding content.</td>
<td>While the connections between the ideas in the individual texts are clear, the connections between the ideas across the texts are slightly more implicit. The text boxes do facilitate a comprehension of content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Features</td>
<td>Language is generally complex, with abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language, as well as, archaic and academic vocabulary and domain-specific words that are not otherwise defined; text uses many complex sentences with subordinate phrases and clauses.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Language is often explicit and literal, but includes some academic, archaic, or other words with complex meaning; text uses some complex sentences with subordinate phrases or clauses.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Language is explicit and literal, with mostly contemporary and familiar vocabulary; text uses mostly simple sentences.</td>
<td>The language is generally complex, with abstract and figurative language (“SNOW WAY!” as a play on “No Way,” which is assessed). The text uses some complex academic vocabulary (technique, logical) and complex sentence structures (said Troy Pierce, eight).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Demands</td>
<td>The subject matter of the text relies on specialized, discipline-specific knowledge; the text makes many references or allusions to other texts or outside areas; allusions or references have no context and require inference.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The subject matter of the text involves some discipline-specific knowledge; the text makes some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas; the meaning of references or allusions may be partially explained in context.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The subject matter of the text relies on little or no discipline-specific knowledge; if there are any references or allusions, they are fully explained in the text.</td>
<td>The subject matter in the text and text boxes involves some discipline-specific knowledge not otherwise supported (trail-breaker, dig the ties in, and PE teacher). The subject matter of the central text requires little domain-specific knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Graphics</td>
<td>Graphics are essential to understanding the text; they may clarify or expand information in the text and may require close reading and thoughtful analysis in relation to the text.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Graphics are mainly supplementary to understanding the text; they generally contain or reinforce information found in the text.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Graphics are simple and may be unnecessary to understanding the text.</td>
<td>The graphics aid the understanding of what snow shoes look like and how the function.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Excerpt from**

*David and the Phoenix*

*by Edward Ormondroyd*

1. All the way there David had saved this moment for himself, struggling not to peek until the proper time came. When the car finally stopped, the rest of them got out stiffly and went into the new house. But David walked slowly into the back yard with his eyes fixed on the ground. For a whole minute he stood there, not daring to look up. Then he took a deep breath, clenched his hands tightly, and lifted his head.

2. There it was!—as Dad had described it, but infinitely more grand. It swept upward from the valley floor, beautifully shaped and soaring, so tall that its misty blue peak could surely talk face to face with the stars. To David, who had never seen a mountain before, the sight was almost too much to bear. He felt so tight and shivery inside that he didn’t know whether he wanted to laugh, or cry, or both. And the really wonderful thing about the mountain was the way it looked at him. He was certain that it was smiling at him, like an old friend who had been waiting for years to see him again. And when he closed his eyes, he seemed to hear a voice which whispered, “Come along, then, and climb.”

3. It would be so easy to go! The back yard was hedged in (with part of the hedge growing right across the toes of the mountain), but there was a hole in the privet large enough to crawl through. And just beyond the hedge the mountainside awaited him, going up and up in one smooth sweep until the green and tawny faded into hazy heights of rock. It was waiting for him. “Come and climb,” it whispered, “come and climb.”

4. But there was a great deal to do first. They were going to move into the new house. The moving van was standing out in front, the car must be unloaded. David would be needed to carry things. Regretfully, he waved his hand at the peak and whispered, “It shouldn’t take long—I’ll be back as soon
as I can.” Then he went around to the front door to see what could be done about speeding things up.

Inside, everything was in confusion. Dad was pushing chairs and tables around in an aimless way. Mother was saying, “They’ll all have to go out again; we forgot to put down the rug first.” Aunt Amy was making short dashes between the kitchen and the dining room, muttering to herself. And Beckie was roaring in her crib because it was time for her bottle. David asked, “Can I do anything?”—hoping that the answer would be no.

“C’mere,” Aunt Amy said, grabbing him by the arm. “Help me look for that ironing board.”

When the ironing board was finally located, Mother had something for him to do. And when he was finished with that, Dad called for his help. So the afternoon wore on without letup—and also without any signs of progress in their moving. When David finally got a chance to sneak out for a breathing spell, he felt his heart sink. Somehow, in all the rush and confusion, the afternoon had disappeared. Already the evening sun was throwing shadows across the side of the mountain and touching its peak with a ruddy blaze. It was too late now. He would have to wait until morning before he could climb.
Excerpt from *David and the Phoenix* by Edward Ormondroyd

### Quantitative Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)</th>
<th>Lexile:</th>
<th>Flesch-Kincaid:</th>
<th>Reading Maturity Matric (RMM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Grade 3 Assessment Placement:**

Overall rating: Moderately Complex

While some of the quantitative metrics place the text above the 2nd-3rd grade band, the text is clearly organized, short in length, and presents an interesting plot development. The text uses a mixture of dialogue and narration, and draws most of its complexity from its language features, which include some complex sentences, unfamiliar vocabulary, and use of figurative language.

### Qualitative Analysis

**LITERARY TEXT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Very Complex</th>
<th>Moderately Complex</th>
<th>Readily Accessible</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit, subtle, or ambiguous and may be revealed over the entirety of the text.</td>
<td>Multiple levels of meaning that are relatively easy to identify; theme is clear, but may be conveyed with some subtlety.</td>
<td>One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text.</td>
<td>The meaning of this passage is accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Structure</td>
<td>Prose or poetry contains more intricate elements such as subplots, shifts in point-of-view, shifts in time, or non-standard text structures.</td>
<td>Prose includes two or more storylines or has a plot that is somewhat difficult to predict (e.g., in the case of a non-linear plot); poetry has some implicit or unpredictable structural elements.</td>
<td>Prose or poetry is organized clearly and/or chronologically; the events in a prose work are easy to predict because the plot is linear; poetry has explicit and predictable structural elements.</td>
<td>Although two things are going on (i.e., David is moving to a new home and David is thinking about climbing the mountain), this text is organized clearly and chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Features</td>
<td>Language is generally complex with abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language, and regularly includes archaic, unfamiliar, and academic words; text uses a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences with subordinate phrases and clauses.</td>
<td>Language is often explicit and literal, but includes academic, archaic, or other words with complex meaning (e.g., figurative language); text uses a variety of sentence structures.</td>
<td>Language is explicit and literal, with mostly contemporary and familiar vocabulary; text uses mostly simple sentences.</td>
<td>The language in this passage is complex, containing unfamiliar words such as tawny, ruddy, privet, and shivery. The sentence lengths vary considerably, with a significant number of complex sentences that contain subordinate phrases or clauses. The personification of the mountain may add difficulty to comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Demands</td>
<td>The text explores complex, sophisticated, or abstract themes; text is dependent on allusions to other texts or cultural elements; allusions or references have no context and require inference and evaluation.</td>
<td>The text explores several themes; text makes few references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements; the meaning of references or allusions may be partially explained in context.</td>
<td>The text explores a single theme; if there are any references or allusions, they are fully explained in the text.</td>
<td>While many students may not be familiar with climbing mountains, no prior knowledge is necessary to understand this text or the references to mountain climbing and moving to a new home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Graphics</td>
<td>When graphics are present, the connection between the text and graphics is subtle and requires interpretation.</td>
<td>Graphics support interpretation of selected parts of the corresponding written text; they may introduce some new and relevant information.</td>
<td>Graphics support and assist in interpreting text by directly representing important concepts from the corresponding written text.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sea Turtles

by Kathy Kranking

SHELL STORY

1 The first thing you notice about a sea turtle is its big, beautiful shell. And that brings up one of the main differences between sea turtles and most other kinds of turtles. Most turtles have shells like houses that they can pull their heads and limbs into. But a sea turtle can’t pull into its shell at all.

2 The shells of most kinds of sea turtles are made of bone and cartilage (the same bendable stuff your ears are made of). These are covered with thin plates called scutes. But the leatherback’s shell is different. Its shell is made up of cartilage and tiny bones, but covering these is a layer of leathery skin.

SUITED FOR THE SEA

3 Sea turtles breathe air with lungs, just as you can do. But they can hold their breath a lot longer than you ever could. The green sea turtle is the champ. It can stay underwater for as long as five hours!

4 To swim, sea turtles use their strong, paddle-shaped front flippers. Their hind flippers help with steering.

5 But sea turtles are more than just great swimmers. Some of them are great divers. The leatherback can dive more than a thousand feet deep, looking for food. That’s the length of three football fields. And its deepest dives can be three times deeper than that!
CHOW TIME

Did someone mention food? Depending on the species, sea turtles can be animal-eaters, plant-eaters, or both. They don't even have teeth, but their beaks can give clues as to what they eat.

The sharp, strong beak of the loggerhead turtle, for example, is great for crushing the shells of crabs and shrimp. A hawksbill's narrow, pointed beak helps it pull prey such as sponges from tight spaces in a coral reef.

A leatherback has a soft, delicate beak—just the thing for eating squishy foods such as jellyfish. And the green sea turtle's jagged-edged beak is great for snipping sea grasses and scraping algae off coral and rocks.

NESTING TIME

Sea turtles spend almost their entire lives in the water. But when it's nesting time, the females come ashore to lay their eggs. They often return to the same beaches where they themselves hatched.

In most species, a female sea turtle comes ashore at night. She crawls clumsily along the sand. Next, she uses her flippers to dig a nest. Depending on the species, she lays from 50 to 200 round, white eggs. Then she covers them up with sand and lumbers back into the sea.

Later, the baby turtles hatch from the eggs and dig their way out of the nest. They crawl down to the shoreline and then disappear into the waves.

TURTLE TROUBLES

Sea turtles have been around for millions of years. But these days they face their share of troubles. Many get caught in fishing nets or tangled in fishing lines. Turtles are also harmed by pollution, litter, and oil spills. Lights along the streets and on buildings near the beach can cause problems, too. Newly hatched babies can become lost and crawl toward the artificial light instead of the ocean where they belong.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The good news is that lots of people are trying hard to help sea turtles. Many laws have been passed to protect them. In some places, for example, beach communities are required to turn off outside lights at night during nesting season. And to keep eggs safe from predators, pollution, and other
dangers, people sometimes carefully dig them up and move them to “nurseries” protected by high fences.

Thanks to conservation efforts like these, sea turtle numbers are actually going up in some places. With a little luck, these ancient reptiles will be flapping through the sea for another hundred million years!
### Title and Author: *Sea Turtles* by Kathy Kranking

**Word count:** 626

#### Quantitative Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Degree of Reading Power (DRP)</th>
<th>Lexile</th>
<th>Flesch-Kincaid:</th>
<th>Reading Maturity Matric (RMM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Grade 3 Assessment Placement:**

Overall rating: Readily Accessible to Moderately Complex

While its quantitative measures are above the 2nd-3rd grade band, the context and definition aids the reader to understand any vocabulary that is above grade level and specific to the subject of sea turtles. The supporting structures such as text-embedded definitions, a visual image, and section headings support a range of accessibility to this informational text on sea turtles and aid reader understanding of domain-specific vocabulary that may otherwise be above grade level. The text’s clear structure also supports accessibility. Most likely, the high-quantitative scores are the result of proper nouns and names which can make these metrics less reliable.

#### Qualitative Analysis for Informational Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Very Complex</th>
<th>Moderately Complex</th>
<th>Readily Accessible</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The primary purpose of this text is to inform about sea turtles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The section headings provide clear organization for this text and help readers navigate the content. The organization is discipline-specific, but the subheadings and linear nature make the text accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Features</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The language demands of this text are moderately complex, with some discipline-specific words that are defined (cartilage) and some that are not (algae, artificial, suited). The text also uses contemporary vocabulary and phrases (Did someone mention food?). The text uses some complex sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Demands</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>The subject matter of the text involves some discipline-specific knowledge which can be inferred in context, such as the names of specific turtles (hawksbill), habitats, and feeding (...pull prey such as sponges from tight spaces in a coral reef).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Graphics</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphics are helpful to the understanding of the text by providing a visual image of a sea turtle and supporting understanding of flippers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The text contains multiple purposes and the primary purpose is subtle, intricate, and/or abstract. The primary purpose of the text is not stated explicitly, but is easy to infer based on the context or source. The text may include multiple perspectives. The primary purpose of the text is clear, concrete, narrowly focused, and explicitly stated. The text has a singular perspective.

Connections among an expanded range of ideas, processes, or events are often implicit, subtle, or ambiguous. Organization exhibits some discipline-specific traits. The text features are essential to comprehension of content. Connections between ideas, processes, or events are explicit and clear; organization is chronological, sequential, or easy to predict because it is linear; any text features help readers navigate content, but are not critical to understanding content. The section headings provide clear organization for this text and help readers navigate the content. The organization is discipline-specific, but the subheadings and linear nature make the text accessible.

Language is generally complex, with abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language, as well as, archaic and academic vocabulary and domain-specific words that are not otherwise defined; text uses many complex sentences with subordinate phrases and clauses. Language is often explicit and literal, but includes some academic, archaic, or other words with complex meaning; text uses some complex sentences with subordinate phrases or clauses. Language is explicit and literal, with mostly contemporary and familiar vocabulary; text uses mostly simple sentences. The language demands of this text are moderately complex, with some discipline-specific words that are defined (cartilage) and some that are not (algae, artificial, suited). The text also uses contemporary vocabulary and phrases (Did someone mention food?). The text uses some complex sentences.

The subject matter of the text relies on specialized, discipline-specific knowledge; the text makes many references or allusions to other texts or outside areas; allusions or references have no context and require inference. The subject matter of the text involves some discipline-specific knowledge; the text makes some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas; the meaning of references or allusions may be partially explained in context. The subject matter of the text relies on little or no discipline-specific knowledge; if there are any references or allusions, they are fully explained in the text. The subject matter of the text involves some discipline-specific knowledge which can be inferred in context, such as the names of specific turtles (hawksbill), habitats, and feeding (...pull prey such as sponges from tight spaces in a coral reef).

Graphics are essential to understanding the text; they may clarify or expand information in the text and may require close reading and thoughtful analysis in relation to the text. Graphics are mainly supplementary to understanding the text; they generally contain or reinforce information found in the text. Graphics are simple and may be unnecessary to understanding the text. Graphics are helpful to the understanding of the text by providing a visual image of a sea turtle and supporting understanding of flippers.
Amanda, Ellen, Benji, and George have been assigned to work together on a science project. The project is due next week, and they still have not decided on a topic. They are meeting for the sixth week in a row in Amanda’s very messy room. Her mother has just made a discovery that might help their science project. Ellen, who doesn’t eat bread, has been hiding pieces of bread in Amanda’s room each week for the six weeks they have been meeting.

Science Friction

by David Lubar

She went to various clothes heaps in my room and revealed the slices of bread, which ranged from slightly moldy to totally overgrown.

Benji picked up the pieces and laid them out on my desk. If the bread hadn’t been buried in my wardrobe like some sort of ancient Egyptian funeral offering, I probably would have found it pretty fascinating.

“I’m sorry,” Ellen said again. “I’ll explain to your mom that this was my fault. And I’ll help you clean your room. Okay? If there’s one thing I’m really good at, it’s straightening up.” She looked at me like she expected me to turn her down.

She seemed really sorry. “Sure. You can help. That would be wonderful.”

“I’ll help too,” Benji said.

George nodded.

“Thanks,” I said as we tackled the top layer. “This is great. But we still don’t have a project.”

“Sure we do.”

I was so shocked by the voice, I just stared at George.

“We do?” Benji asked.

George nodded and pointed at the bread.

“Mold!” Ellen said. “We have a whole display of the stages of mold growth.”
“Yeah,” I said. George was right. We had pieces of bread for each week. “But is that enough?” It was hard to imagine a whole project from some slices of moldy bread. Then I realized it wasn’t just about mold growth.

“Look,” I said, flipping a piece over.
Ellen nodded. “Mayonnaise. It’s acidic.”
“Yup. We have an example of mold inhibition too. We just have to figure out a way to display it so you can see both sides.”
“Great,” Ellen said. “But what if it’s still not enough?”
“Oh, there might be some more . . .” Benji said.
“What do you mean?” I asked.
“Promise you won’t kill me?”
“No.”
“Promise you won’t make it slow and painful?”
“No.”
He shrugged. “I sorta don’t like turkey a whole lot.”
“Oh, please don’t tell me you’ve been stashing meat in my room.”
He nodded.
“Where?” I sniffed and looked around.
Benji pointed at the top of my bookcase.
“You slimeball,” I said as I climbed a chair to take a look. Oh, yuck. There were five piles of turkey in various stages of decomposition, neatly laid out from left to right. It was absolutely disgusting. It was also pretty fascinating. And I guess I was relieved to know the smell wasn’t coming from my clothes.
I looked over at George. “What about you? Is there anything you don’t like?”
He lifted a stack of books to reveal baby carrots.
We got back to work. At five, I asked Ellen, “Don’t you have a piano lesson?”
“It won’t hurt me to miss one.” She flipped open her cell phone and made a call.

Right after that, George left. I figured he had some sort of appointment he couldn’t cancel. But I was grateful he’d helped for as long as he could.

There was still plenty to do. The rest of us kept working.

Just as we were finishing, George returned, holding a beautiful display case with sections for the bread, turkey, and carrots. It even had mirrors in it to show both sides of the specimens.

“Wow,” I said, “that’s perfect. Did you build it?”

He nodded.

“You’re a genius with your hands,” I said.

He smiled.

Ellen patted him on the shoulder. “And you don’t waste time talking unless you have something to say.”

“I’ll do the captions,” Benji said. He started coming up with these awful puns that made everyone groan, like, “Spore score and seven weeks ago,” “Rot and roll,” and “Bacterial Girl.” But we laughed too. And I knew Ms. Adler had a great sense of humor, so I figured it wouldn’t hurt to use Benji’s titles.

Ellen, who had beautiful handwriting, lettered the signs. I typed a report to go along with the display. As we all finished up the project together, I realized I’d discovered an important scientific principle. It had nothing to do with mold, but everything to do with chemistry. Some elements combined quickly. Others combined slowly. And some didn’t combine at all unless you mixed them together under high heat and intense pressure.
### Grade 3

**Title and Author:** Science Friction by David Lubar

**Word count:** 869

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Analysis</th>
<th>Summary of Grade 3 Assessment Placement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lexile:</td>
<td>650</td>
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<td>Flesch-Kincaid:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Maturity Matric (RMM)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Analysis Literary Text</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria</strong></td>
<td><strong>Very Complex</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderately Complex</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>Multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit, subtle, or ambiguous and may be revealed over the entirety of the text.</td>
<td>Multiple levels of meaning that are relatively easy to identify; theme is clear, but may be conveyed with some subtlety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Structure</strong></td>
<td>Prose or poetry contains more intricate elements such as subplots, shifts in point-of-view, shifts in time, or non-standard text structures.</td>
<td>Prose includes two or more storylines or has a plot that is somewhat difficult to predict (e.g., in the case of a non-linear plot); poetry has some implicit or unpredictable structural elements,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Features</strong></td>
<td>Language is generally complex, with abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language, and regularly includes archaic, unfamiliar, and academic words; text uses a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences with subordinate phrases and clauses.</td>
<td>Language is often explicit and literal, but includes academic, archaic, or other words with complex meaning (e.g., figurative language); text uses a variety of sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Demands</strong></td>
<td>The text explores complex, sophisticated, or abstract themes; text is dependent on allusions to other texts or cultural elements; allusions or references have no context and require inference and evaluation.</td>
<td>The text explores several themes; text makes few references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements; the meaning of references or allusions may be partially explained in context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optional Graphics</strong></td>
<td>When graphics are present, the connection between the text and graphics is subtle and requires interpretation.</td>
<td>Graphics support interpretation of selected parts of the corresponding written text; they may introduce some new and relevant information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>