New York State Testing Program Common Core English Language Arts 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.

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\(^1\), 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\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core Band</th>
<th>Degrees of Reading Power(^*)</th>
<th>Flesch-Kincaid(^3)</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

---

\(^1\) 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

---

* 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](https://www.corestandards.org/assets/2013-11-27-supplemental情報-for-appendix-a-of-the-common-core-state-standards-for-english-language-arts-and-literacy-new-research-on-text-complexity.pdf) 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 2: Text Complexity Grade Ranges for Grades 3–8 as represented by Flesch-Kincaid® readability metric

---

1 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
I gasped when my friend dangled a meal worm between her thumb and index finger and offered it to me as a mid-morning snack.

I could never, I thought . . .

Even though Supphatra and I speak different languages, we find that we can talk in smiles. She showed up at my door this morning with two large cloth shopping bags and a timid grin. I grabbed a bag, nodded, and we walked to Chatuchak market. I was glad to have a friend in Thailand.

Since our family moved to Bangkok six months ago, I had learned many things. In Thailand, all parents give their children a nickname, a chue-len, and it is often cute or funny. Supphatra’s nickname is Kitty. My name is Anna, but Kitty calls me “Lek Lek,” which means ‘very small.’

We wove our way through the bustling Thai marketplace. Supphatra clutched a grocery list from her mother. Her other arm was locked around my elbow in a protective grasp. Canopies and awnings extended out from all the stalls, making me feel like I was being led around a maze of underground tunnels. It was so exciting! We dodged people, potholes and pools of murky water. Busy shoppers laughed and haggled over prices.

Every now and then, Supphatra would stop and buy something from a vendor. I only recognized a few of the foods: fruit like Rambutans and several herbs like sweet basil and mint. Rambutans look like small red and green apples covered with strange bristles. When Supphatra peeled off the shell, the fruit inside was white and sweet. We giggled as we ducked in and out of narrow aisles. She also picked up some meats, curry powder and some very unusual looking vegetables. I’ve never been very brave when it comes to trying new foods. I hoped that my mom was making spaghetti for dinner tonight.

All of a sudden, Supphatra picked up the pace and flashed me a playful smile. She led me to a small cart deep within the maze of vendors. I smelled something both sugary and smoked. It was different from the pungent smells of curries and the sweet aroma of steamed rice that had crossed our paths earlier. I cringed when my eyes came to rest on an assortment of roasted bugs atop the cart. I could see grasshoppers, crickets, meal worms, bumblebees and beetles. Supphatra giggled.
“Aloy Maa!” she exclaimed. My Thai teacher had taught me that this meant “delicious!” although I wasn’t too sure of that. I stepped back as Supphatra selected several insects which the vendor placed in a small paper bag. Then, I watched in shock as Supphatra lifted a small grasshopper to her mouth. The insect made a popping sound as she bit down. She closed her eyes and smiled contentedly. I felt queasy. I didn’t try the meal worm that she offered me either.

On our walk home, Supphatra turned to me. She motioned a spoon nearing her mouth, pointed at me, then at her house and asked, “Lek Lek, dinner?” Her eyes took on a pleading expression as she waited.

Images of all the unusual foods that we’d just bought came rushing at me—not to mention the bugs. I looked down at my feet. “I . . . I . . . have to ask my Mom, Kitty,” I stammered.

I raced home. Of course my Mom would say yes, but what would I possibly tell Kitty? I couldn’t speak Thai well enough to explain that the dinner menu terrified me. And I hated the idea of lying to her. I paced back and forth across my bedroom floor. I looked out my window at Supphatra and her brother kicking a soccer ball in their yard. I headed towards them.

“Kitty, my mom said ‘no’ . . . ” I lied. Supphatra’s shoulders sank. A pained expression came over her face, but she forced a smile.

I slowly walked back towards my house. I’m a terrible friend, I mumbled. I thought back to when Supphatra and I first met. We couldn’t speak to one another, but we spent hours riding our bikes together in the neighborhood. I loved being her friend.

I knew what I had to do. After getting permission, I ran towards her house and knocked on the door. Supphatra opened it, throwing her arms around me.

The rest of Kitty’s family was already seated at the table. I smiled weakly at my friend. A large bowl loaded with steamed rice was passed around first. Timidly, I scooped a little onto my plate, followed by some curried meats and vegetables. Next, a papaya salad and a clear noodle dish called Yam Woonsen came around. A trickle of nervous sweat made its way halfway down my forehead before I soaked it up with the back of my hand. My heart thumped wildly in my chest. When I looked at Supphatra, she smiled at me encouragingly. I took a deep breath and let the air out again very slowly.

I scooped up a giant spoonful of curried vegetables and rice and popped it in my mouth. The flavors made my taste buds jump! To my surprise, the meat curries were only a little spicy. The papaya salad was both peppery and sweet, with a hint of lime. It was my favorite.

“Aloy Maa!” I exclaimed out loud. Supphatra’s family laughed.
When Supphatra offered me a beetle after dinner, I politely shook my head ‘no,’ but grinned ear to ear as I watched her and her brother gobble down the insects.

“How about dinner at my house tomorrow, Kitty?” I asked her, making accompanying hand gestures. She suddenly stopped eating, and her eyes grew as wide as Rambutans.

I was sure that she had never tried spaghetti.
### Grade 5

**Title and Author:** *Bugs for Dinner?* by Ingrid Sweeney Bookhamer

Word count: 1,033

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Analysis</th>
<th>Summary of Grade 5 Assessment Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Reading Power (DRP):</td>
<td>Overall rating: Readily Accessible to Moderately Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexile:</td>
<td>This text is appropriate for 5th grade assessment. The text, as a whole, has clear themes and a largely chronological organizational structure, as well as, vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate for 5th grade. The text’s story and narration prove to be interesting and rich. The quantitative analyses also support this passage’s placement within this grade level, indicating that despite the use of some foreign words and infrequent proper nouns which can sometimes inflate these metrics, the passage is appropriately complex for 5th grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch-Kincaid:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Maturity Metric (RMM):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Qualitative Analysis LITERARY 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><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>✓</td>
<td>Multiple levels of meaning that are relatively easy to identify; theme is clear, but may be conveyed with some subtlety.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The themes of this text are clear from the beginning (trying new things in a different culture). The meaning is straightforward.</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>✓</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>✓</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>✓</td>
<td>The story structure is mainly chronological. The plot is linear and somewhat predictable.</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>✓</td>
<td>Language is often explicit and literal, with mostly contemporary and familiar vocabulary; text uses mostly simple sentences.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Language is explicit and literal, with mostly contemporary and familiar vocabulary; text uses mostly simple sentences.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The language is primarily explicit and literal. The proper nouns such as, Bangkok and Rambutans, as well as the use of Thai expressions, “Aloy Maa,” introduce some complexity; however, they are well explained in the text and do not inhibit the comprehension of the passage. The text uses a variety of sentence structures. The names and nicknames of the characters, used interchangeably and across languages (paragraph 4), add some additional complexity, but the focus on Supphatra/Kitty and Anna/Lek Lek makes this accessible to readers at this grade level.</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>✓</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>✓</td>
<td>The text explores a single theme; if there are any references or allusions, they are fully explained in the text.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The text explores a single theme, and while this story takes place in Thailand, outside knowledge of the culture is unnecessary for comprehension of the text.</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>✓</td>
<td>Graphics support interpretation of selected parts of the corresponding written text; they may introduce some new and relevant information.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Graphics support and assist in interpreting text by directly representing important concepts from the corresponding written text.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“You still frettin’ about moving out of state ‘cause of your mama’s job?” Grandma Talley asked, swiping again at the fly and missing.

“Yes, ma’am. California’s so far away. Going to a new school, making new friends—it’s scary. I can’t imagine not sitting here with you, listening to your stories.”

“I know, Kincaid, but things work out, most times better than we expect. You’ve got a lotta memories to take with you. Just remember to keep ’em tucked inside your heart.”

“I wish I could stay with you forever,” I said, tears brimming in my eyes. I turned away to stare at a doodlebug digging in the dirt, so Grandma Talley wouldn’t see.

“Don’t you worry. You’ll make new friends just fine.”

She was right about one thing. I’ve got a lotta memories. Like climbing up the old chinaberry tree in our backyard. Baking teacakes and gingerbread in Grandma Talley’s old wood stove. Sitting on the railroad tracks over Woman Hollering Creek with my best friend Bennie Jewel, fishing with bamboo poles. I’ll cherish those memories forever.

I watched Grandma Talley squinting at the sun, making the large crow’s feet lining her face resemble a patchwork quilt. I loved her wrinkles. I’ll remember every crease line and fold in her face, for each one told of her life’s story.

A huge collie the color of peanut brittle appeared from the Johnson house next door, yipping and yapping, trying to jump over the picket fence into the yard. Miz Moonlight sprang from my arms and streaked up the trunk of Grandma Talley’s magnolia tree, fragrant with giant pearl blossoms.

“Scat, get away from here now, causing trouble,” Grandma Talley scolded the dog. He trotted off down the street, his tail between his legs, haunches low.

“Come on, let’s go inside. Got something to show you.” Grandma Talley rose from the chair, holding onto her straw hat with one hand and picking up her wood cane with the other. I followed her through the screen door, stopping for a moment to place the dirty glasses in the kitchen sink, the pitcher of tea in the icebox.

She limped toward the hall closet, her cane tapping along the floor, me close on her heels. She opened the closet door and placed her straw hat on the top shelf. She patted
down her spit-curled hair that had been mussed by her hat and began searching through stacks of clutter on the closet floor.

“Grandmama never wrote much down, except for birthdays and deaths noted in the old family Bible. No, Grandmama told her stories and gave me this.” Grandma Talley smiled warmly, dragging out an old trunk. “A trunk full of precious memories.”

Inside the trunk were old clothes, a glittering jewelry box, family pictures, a huge black Bible, handwritten letters scrawled on paper frayed and yellowed with age, and an ancient quilt.

I sifted through the pictures and spotted one of a young woman in a 1920s teal flapper’s dress, white leggings, button down shoes, and a spit-curl hairstyle.

“That’s you!” I squealed with delight.

“Yes, still wet behind the ears,” Grandma Talley chuckled.

“You look beautiful!” I gushed.

“Why, thank you. I think so too, I must say.” She grinned, opening the jewelry box. She held up a pair of rose-colored earrings with a matching necklace of rainbow crystal hearts.

“These were given to me by Aunt Elnora for my sixteenth birthday,” she said. “I’ve held on to ‘em long enough. Here, you take them. They’re your going-away gift.” She placed the jewelry into my hand, and her laughter floated through the house sweet as the taste of jellybeans.

I clipped the earrings to my ears and draped the necklace around my neck. My eyes surely sparkled as bright as my rose-colored earrings. “Thank you,” I mumbled. I wasn’t wearing royal robes, only a T-shirt and flowered shorts, but I felt like a beautiful African princess!

Grandma Talley gazed admiringly at me. “Our family’s made up of our ancestors—grandfathers, grandmothers, my mother, father, sisters and brothers. You have some of them inside you. Memories are a patchwork quilt of our lives, Kincaid, and it’s up to us to choose which patches we stitch into it. I’ve taught you the way my grandma taught me, like her grandmother before her, passing on our stories to those coming after us.”

Grandma Talley carefully lifted out a quilt and laid it on her bed. I sat on one of the oak chairs next to her.

“When we tell our stories, we pass them on to the next generation and honor those who came before us. Grandmama gave this to me when I was just about your age,” she said, unfolding the quilt.

She held up the quilt that seemed old as time itself. “This was taken from my wedding dress when I married your Grandpa Wilford,” she said touching a patch of satin the color of ecru.
“This is from the dress in your photo,” I said, pointing out a teal patch.

“Yes. And one day you’ll give this quilt to your daughter, who’ll pass it on to her daughter. Remember, Kincaid, we take our loved ones in our hearts wherever we go. I won’t be more than a heartbeat away.” She smiled, hugging me tightly.
Grade 5
Title and Author: Excerpt from *My Grandma Talley* by Nadine Oduor.  
Word count: 860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Analysis</th>
<th>Summary of Grade 5 Assessment Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Reading Power (DRP): 54</td>
<td>Overall rating: Moderately Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexile: 860</td>
<td>The passage is a fairly straightforward story told mostly through dialog about Grandma Talley’s trunk and the connection between a family quilt and family memories. The passage’s complexity lies in the author’s use of figurative meaning (the quilt, the trunk) that is conveyed with some subtlety, and the use of some figurative and colloquial language, but there is enough direct meaning that can be discerned through the dialog to make the text appropriate for 5th grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch-Kincaid: 5.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Maturity Metric (RMM): 6.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Analysis LITERARY TEXT 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>This text has multiple levels of meaning and themes which are revealed throughout the course of the text. One clear theme—the connection of the patchwork quilt to honoring and cherishing memories—is conveyed with some subtlety, but this theme is also exemplified through dialog in addition, there is the more obvious theme of leaving a place one loves and coping with transitions.</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>The story is organized clearly and chronologically, involving a conversation between a girl and her grandmother. The dialog is readily accessible and arranged so that the speaker is always clear.</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 text contains language that is literal and figurative, as well as, colloquial. The use of dialog helps to frame the meaning of the language.</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>The text explores several themes, but references are generally explained in context.</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>
How to be a Smart Risk-Taker

by Steven R. Wills

1 If the key to becoming a pioneer or a trendsetter is to be a smart risk-taker, then how can we learn to become smarter risk-takers? Some people figure this out by accident, or stumble on the secret of success—but most of us have to take charge and make these things happen for ourselves. If you want to be a smart risk-taker, you need a plan. Here's one:

**STEP 1: Learn how to evaluate yourself.**

2 How do you feel about the word “risk”? Does it make you think of danger, of anxiety, or of losing something? Or does it make you think of possibilities, of excitement, and of adventure? We aren’t all the same, and we need to be honest about it.

3 How do you feel about yourself? Sure, we all feel lousy about ourselves sometimes (although usually more than we have reason to). But when you think you have done well, what traits do you think made you succeed? Stanford University professor Dr. Carol S. Dweck discovered something interesting about the praise we receive when we do something well. She found that, if students were praised for being “smart,” they were less likely to take risks than students who were praised for “working hard.” Why? It seems that, if we think we do well just because we are smart, then we are less willing to try things where we might fail. However, if we think we are hard workers, then we are more willing to try things where we have to work hard—after all, that is what we are good at, right? Next time you succeed at something, recognize the work you put into it and the risks you took—don’t just figure it came to you because you were “smart” or “talented.”

4 Do you need to have things “all set” before you do something? Are you afraid of being rejected, and need the approval of others? Do you have to always be right? Are you unwilling to take the consequences for your actions? Do you look to others to solve a problem because you don’t believe you can do it? Do you need to play it safe? These are all ways of thinking that will get in your way if you want to be a smart risk-taker. If they describe you, then you know what you have to work on first. Remember, the way you think now can be changed—so get started.

5 On the other hand, are you willing to be vulnerable? Can you accept the consequences when things don’t work out? (Keep in mind that we are not talking about dumb risks.) Are you able to do things even though you aren’t likely to get the approval of your friends? Can you confront a problem and not blame it on someone else? These are the traits of a smart risk-taker. On to **STEP 2.**
STEP 2: Learn how to evaluate risks.

Evaluating a risk isn’t really difficult—although it can take some effort to do well. Think of it this way: A smart risk is one where the potential upside outweighs the potential downside. For example: Should you ask ____ to hang out with you? Best potential upside? He/She says “yes,” you have a great time, and maybe you get together again. Worst potential downside? He/She says “no,” and you are embarrassed for maybe a whole day. If that’s the worst that can happen, you would be crazy not to ask, right?

Of course, sometimes it’s more complicated than that. However, you can always write down the risk and make a list of upsides and downsides. Be thorough—you don’t want to miss anything—and then examine your list. Which side carries more weight? (Remember, it’s not the length of the list that matters, it’s the importance of the items on the list.)

As you become more practiced at evaluating risks, you will be surprised to find that many risks have very limited downsides, but potentially awesome upsides. Clearly, those are the risks you should go for. This seems so obvious, yet we don’t usually take these risks. Why not? One reason might be that, in your list, the downsides are all immediate and the upsides are all long term. Keeping long-term goals in mind will also help when your work doesn’t seem to be paying off. Sometimes you just have to slug along. It’s the old “no pain, no gain” thing.

STEP 3: Learn how to “make the move.”

Remember the slogan for Nike® shoes, “Just do it”? Well, there you go. You can only stand on the end of the diving board for so long. Sooner or later you are either going to have to climb back down (feeling lousy every step of the way) or you are going to have to dive. There is no third choice.

If you seem stuck on this step, don’t give up. There is a reason, and you need to find out what it is. Brainstorm for a bit. Are you stuck because you don’t really want this? Are you stuck because you think there is a better way to reach your goal? Pull out some scrap paper and make some lists. List alternative solutions. List reasons for not taking a risk in this case. List ways your life would be different if you didn’t take a risk. The answer to your dilemma is in there somewhere.

STEP 4: Try it out.

Try some small risks first. Try joining a club in school (the drama club?). Try learning a new skill (Piano? Lacrosse? Cooking?).

Once you get the idea, the only thing left is to be on the lookout. Smart risks (also called “opportunities”) come up all the time. Be ready to be a smart risk-taker.

---

Nike® is the registered trademark of Nike, Inc.
## 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>The text contains multiple purposes, and the primary purpose is subtle, intricate, and/or abstract.</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>The primary purpose of the text is clear, concrete, narrowly focused, and explicitly stated. The text has a singular perspective.</td>
<td>The author clearly presents his purpose for the text in the opening paragraph, and follows through with consistency.</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. Text features are essential to comprehension of content.</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>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>This passage is clearly structured, highlighting the steps necessary to become a “smart risk taker.” These steps are clearly marked as headings for each section, guiding the reader through the process. In each step, the author uses questions pointed at the reader. The number of questions (above 30) and the nature of the questions (self-reflective) introduce an implicit connection between the ideas discussed and introduce some complexity to the passage's structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Features</td>
<td>Language is generally complex, with abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language, and 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>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>Language is explicit and literal, with mostly contemporary and familiar vocabulary; text uses mostly simple sentences.</td>
<td>The use of student-friendly language (awesome, hang out) and the lack of discipline-specific vocabulary make this a readily accessible text for fifth grade students.</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>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>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>There are few outside references and ideas that are not explained in the text, therefore making this an accessible text to the reader.</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>Graphics are mainly supplementary to understanding the text; they generally contain or reinforce information found in the text.</td>
<td>Graphics are simple and may be unnecessary to understanding the text.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary of Grade 5 Assessment Placement

- Overall rating: Readily Accessible to Moderately Complex
- The text’s purpose is clear and its language directly engages the reader, making it an interesting read at this grade level. The text draws some complexity from the use of questions that prompt self-reflection on the part of the reader, but the purpose, language features, and knowledge demands are all readily accessible for this grade level, as suggested by most of the quantitative analyses.
The Young Man and the Sea

by Zac Sunderland

I sailed around the world. Alone. At age 16. Here’s the amazing tale of my 13-month adventure.

Inspiration Leads to Action

Extreme sleep deprivation was just one of the challenges I faced on my journey that took 13 months and 28,000 miles to complete.

I got the idea for my trip after reading “Dove” by Robin Lee Graham, a teen who sailed the world alone in the 1960s. I started sailing when I was 4 and loved it. Sailing is such an extreme sport. It’s such an adrenaline rush. I bought my boat for $6,500 and my dad (a shipwright), my friends and I worked on it for four months to get it ready for the trip.

I was 16 when I left Marina del Rey, Calif., on June 14, 2008. Reaching Hawaii, the first stop, took longer than expected—23 days—because the winds were mostly light. When I passed the continental shelf, Pacific rollers—tall swells like super-long mountains in deep water—jostled my boat. Seeing the Hawaiian Islands for the first time, I felt elated because I had just crossed an ocean alone.

It was so amazing that I just started laughing.

Challenge After Challenge

In the early days of my trip, I slowly got used to the loneliness and lack of sleep. It was not unusual for me to stay up for 48 hours. It is weird how you can fall asleep standing up.

As I continued across the Indian Ocean, the Intrepid was accosted by strong winds. I was rocking and rolling on turbulent seas one morning when I found about 200 flying fish swept onto the deck. I hoped they would wash away so I wouldn’t have to pick them off.

Then I found the lighters on my stove had all died and my matches were damp. I counted 32 left and rationed them so I could keep heating my food.

Keeping my matches dry, it turned out, was the least of my problems. I was still on the Indian Ocean one night when I was awakened by a loud, crashing sound and felt the boat being slammed around. I ran on deck and saw the tiller, used in turning the rudder to steer, had broken. The boom, which holds down the sail, had crashed to the other side of the boat and cracked in two pieces.
My main sail was sagging, but I managed to secure the boom. I was lucky the winds and current were in my favor as I maneuvered between two reefs to reach Home Island, a tiny island where I found a carpenter who made me a new boom from a chunk of teak.

One blistering hot day, I was working on deck and thinking about taking a swim. Then I saw a white shape moving under the water. Looking closer, I saw it was a shark. Not just one shark, but a school of them. These dangerous creatures were not like the dolphins in the Pacific that play around the boat. I was glad I hadn’t taken that swim.

Every day I got closer to home. Approaching Grenada, an island in the Caribbean Sea, I was trounced by a 20-foot high rogue wave at 2 a.m. When I saw the massive wave, I grabbed the mast and held on. It knocked the boat sideways, swamping it with water. I lost my electronics for four days. My parents were very relieved when I was finally able to call and let them know I was O.K.

For the Adventure

On July 16, 2009, I returned to Marina del Rey. I had celebrated my 17th birthday (eating a microwave cake) at sea. At the time, I was the youngest person to sail solo around the world and the first to do it before age 18.

I could not have made this voyage without my parents, who let me do it. When I started my trip, I was doing it more for the adventure and experience of it than for the record. I am glad to have the record because it shows that young people can accomplish much more than what is expected of them and what they expect of themselves.
**Grade 5**  
**Title and Author:** *Young Man and the Sea* by Zac Sunderland  
**Word count:** 654

### 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>
<th>✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The text contains multiple purposes, and the primary purpose is subtle, intricate, and/or abstract.</td>
<td></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>✓</td>
<td>The author clearly presents his purpose for the text in the opening paragraph, and follows through with consistency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections among an expanded range of ideas, processes, or events are often implicit, subtle, or ambiguous. Organization exhibits some discipline-specific traits. Text features are essential to comprehension of content.</td>
<td></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>✓</td>
<td>The organization of the text is clear and chronological with headings that introduce or summarize the sections of the passage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language is generally complex, with abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language, and 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></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></td>
<td>The language is mostly literal, with domain-specific and academic vocabulary (deprivation, accosted) making the language demands moderately complex. Although the text includes several proper names (e.g., Grenada, Marina del Rey, Hawaii), comprehension of the text does not hinge on these words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Demands</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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></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>✓</td>
<td>Although a student would benefit having from general knowledge of sailing and geography, the text provides context and the information necessary to aid comprehension of the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optional Graphics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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></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></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary of Grade 5 Assessment Placement

| Degrees of Reading Power (DRP): | 52 | Overall rating: Readily Accessible to Moderately Complex |
| Lexile: | 920 |
| Flesch-Kincaid: | 6 |
| Reading Maturity Matric RMM: | 8.6 |