

Qualitative Dimensions of Text Complexity

Less Complex

More Complex

Levels of Meaning

Single
Explicitly stated



Multiple
Often implicit and may be hidden or obscure

Structure

Simple
Explicit
Conventional
Simple graphics
Graphics unnecessary or supplementary
to understanding the text



Complex
Implicit
Unconventional (chiefly complex literary texts)
Sophisticated graphics
Graphics essential to understanding the text

Language Conventuality and Clarity

Literal
Clear
Everyday



Figurative or ironic
Ambiguous or purposefully misleading
Archaic or otherwise unfamiliar

Knowledge Demands: Life Experiences (literary texts)

Simple themes
Single themes
Common, everyday experiences
and fantastical elements
Single perspective
Perspective(s) like one's own



Complex or sophisticated themes
Multiple themes
Experiences distinctly different from one's own

Multiple perspectives
Unusual perspective(s)

Knowledge Demands: Cultural/Literary Knowledge (chiefly for literary texts)

General background knowledge and
familiarity with genre conventions required
Low intertextuality
(few references and/or allusions to other texts)



Cultural and literary knowledge useful
High intertextuality
(many references and/or allusions to other texts)

Knowledge Demands: Content/Discipline Knowledge (chiefly for informational texts)

Some everyday and general
content knowledge



Extensive, perhaps specialized discipline-specific
content knowledge