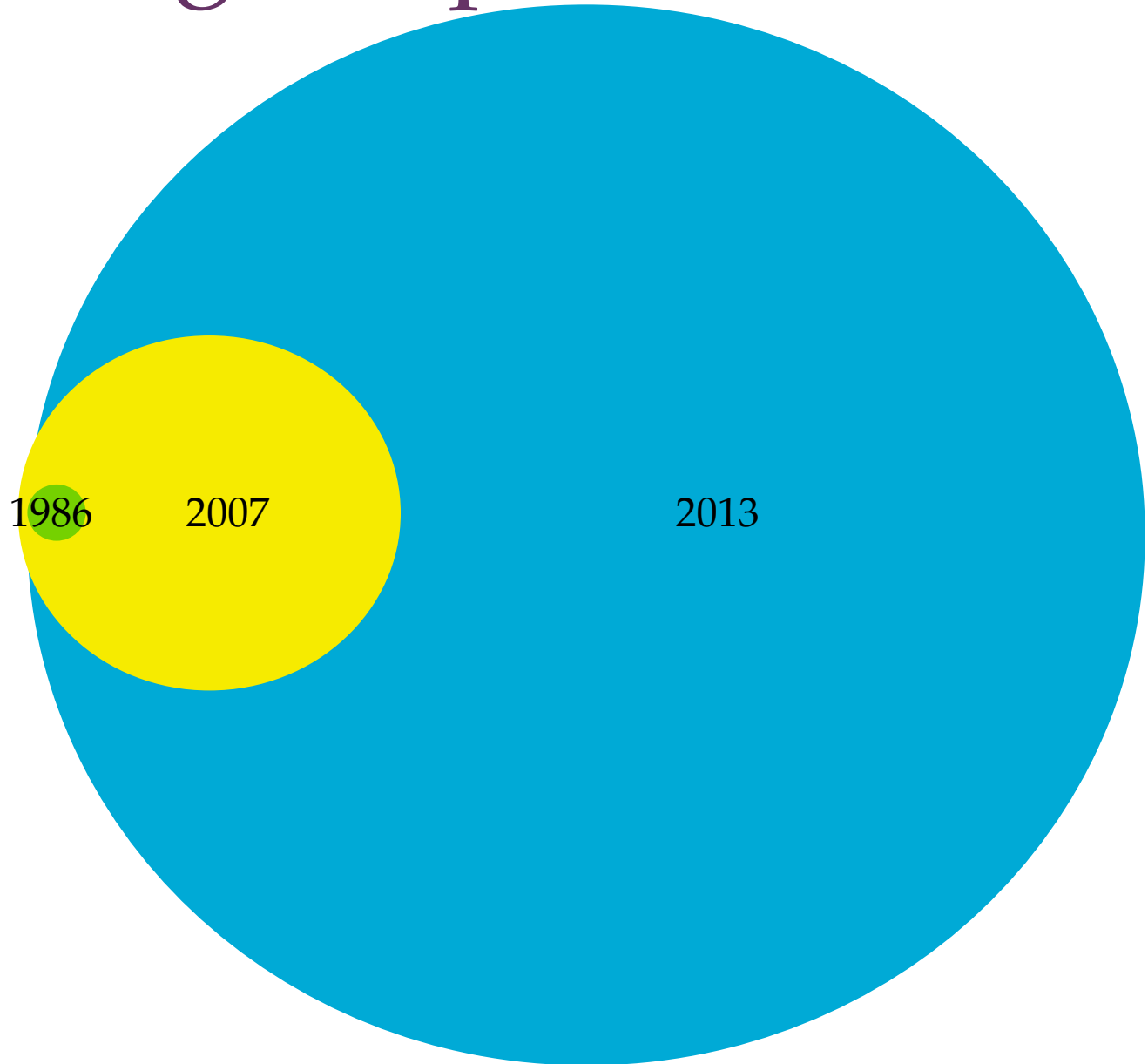


Assumptions About Complex Text Within the Common Core and Consequences for Struggling Readers

Elfrieda H. Hiebert
TextProject &
University of California, Santa Cruz

THE PROBLEM

1. Knowledge Explosion



2.
Comprehen-
sion of
Complex Text
= College
success

COLLEGE
READINESS



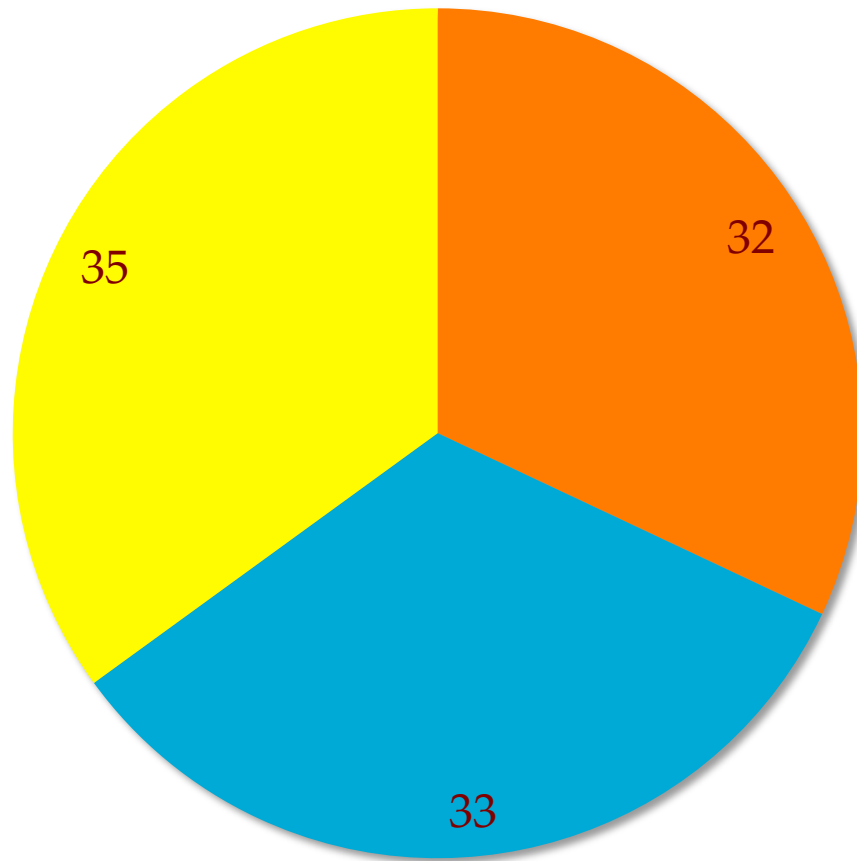
Reading Between the Lines

What the ACT Reveals
About College Readiness
in Reading



ACT[®]

3. Many Struggling Readers



■ Below Basic ■ Basic ■ Advanced/Proficient

When other animals head north in March to avoid the **Antarctic** winter, **emperor** penguins head south. **Antarctica** is surrounded by a huge mass of sea ice in the winter. This ice floats on the ocean in the southernmost part of the Earth. **Harsh** and **frigid**, it is here where **emperor** penguins choose to mate and lay their eggs.

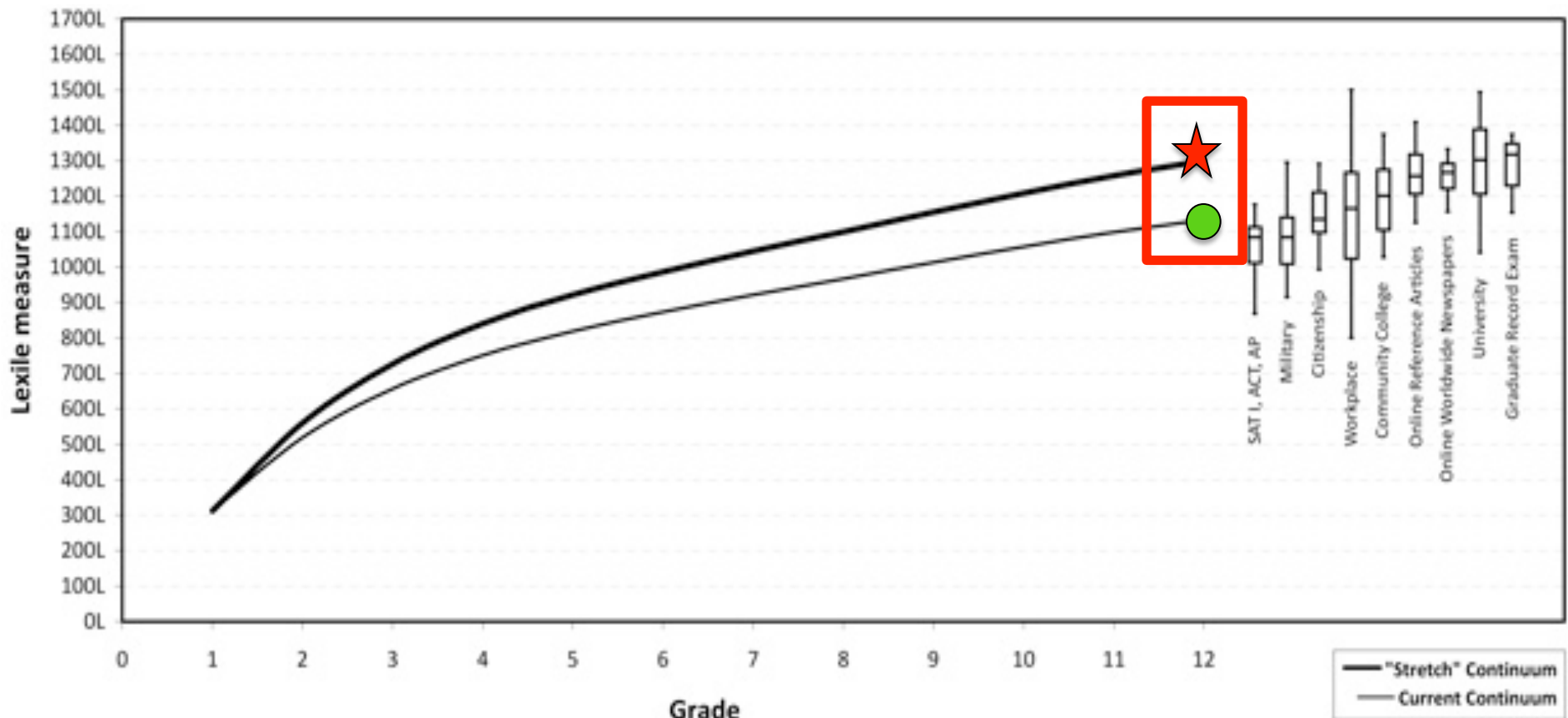
THE SOLUTION

Assumption 1: Dumbing-down of texts

- *K–12 reading texts have actually trended downward in difficulty in the last half century.*

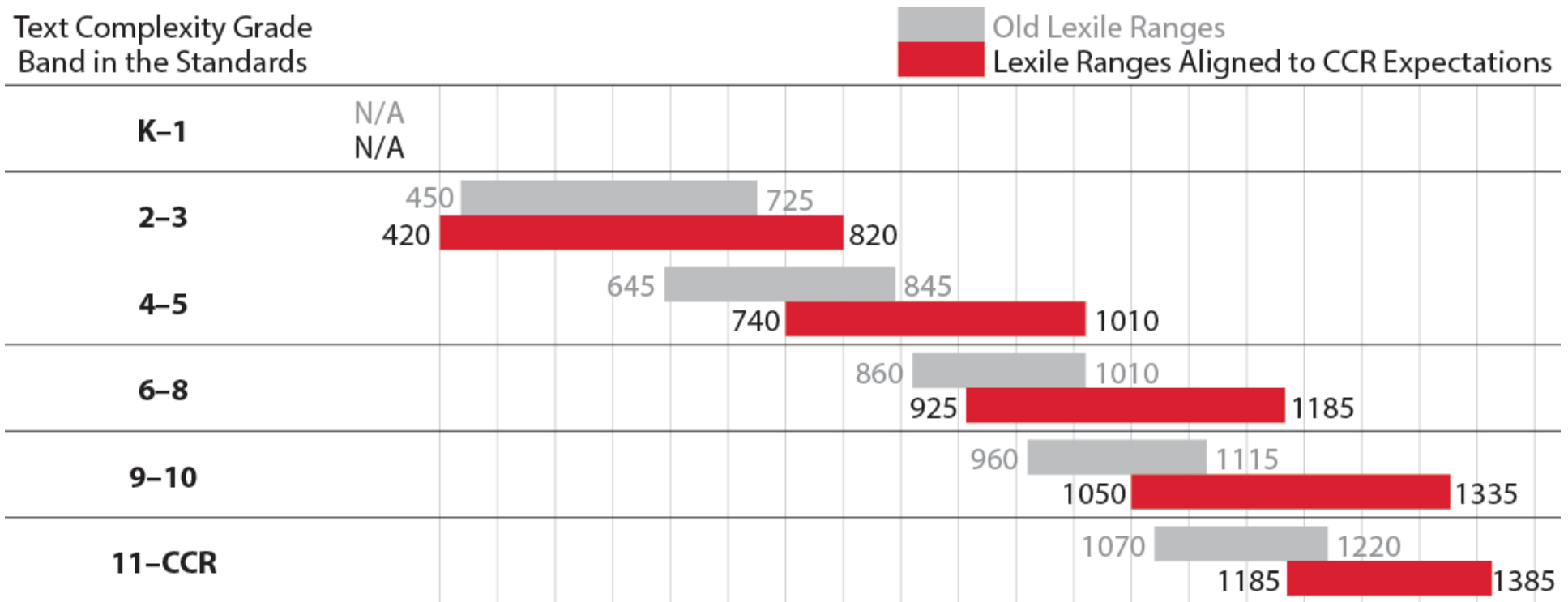
- Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, page 3

Claims for Dumbing Down



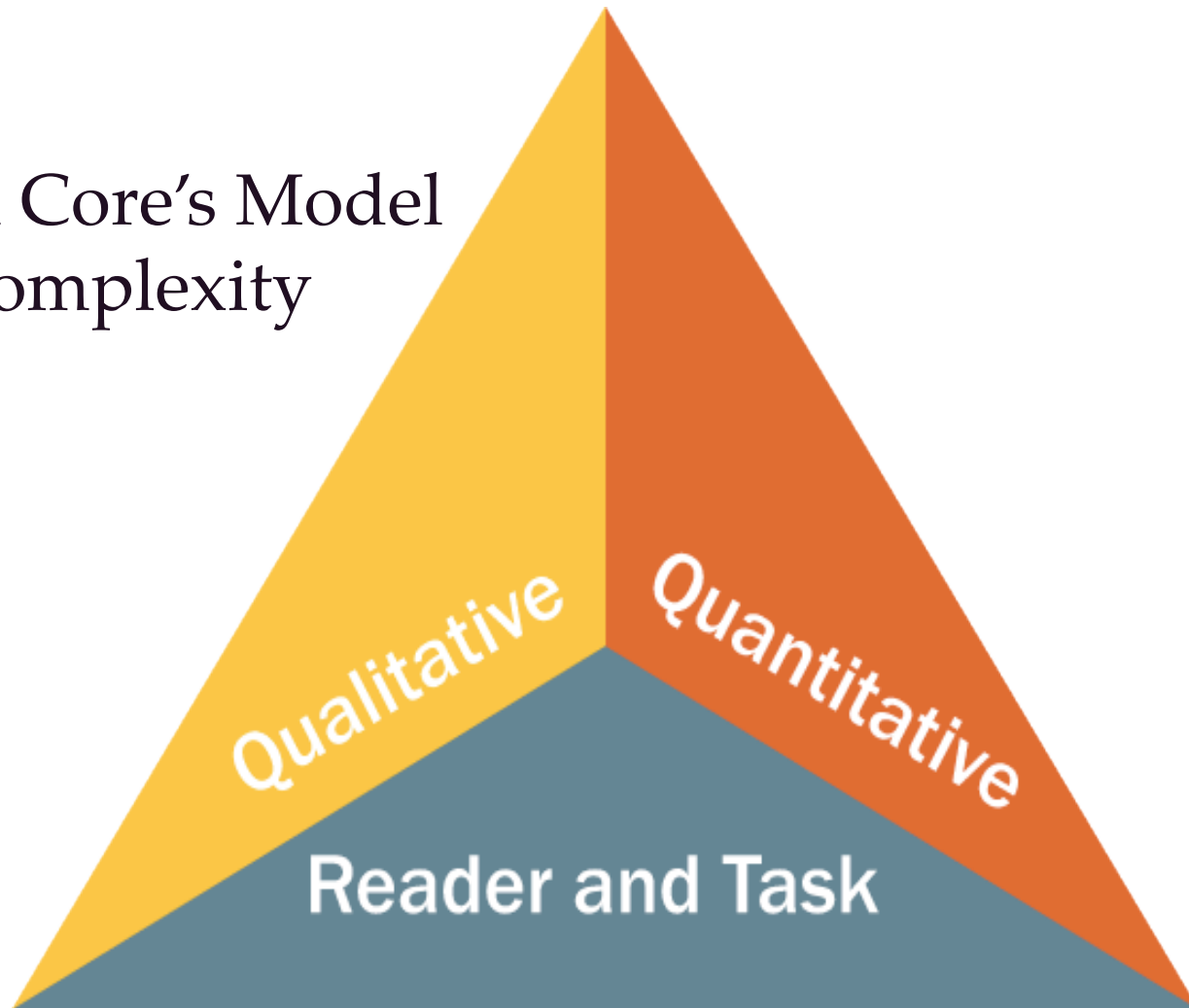
Stenner, A. J., Koons, H., & Swartz, C. W. (2010). *Text complexity and developing expertise in reading*. Chapel Hill, NC: MetaMetrics, Inc.

Assumption 2: Raising text levels by end of elementary school ensures HS proficiency with complex text



Assumption 3:
Quantitative text analysis systems that rely on syntax and vocabulary can be a primary criterion for establishing curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Common Core's Model
of Text Complexity



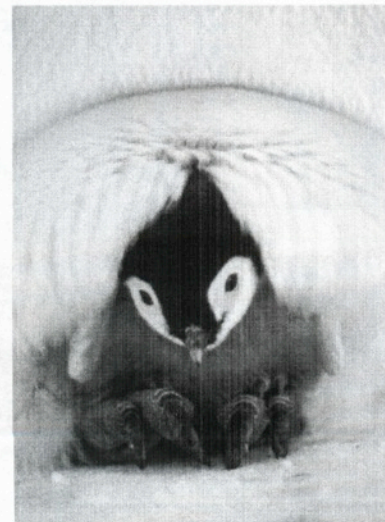
Qualitative Measurement

- Guided Reading Levels:
 - Two experienced judges:
 - O/P (Grade 3) or Q/R (Grade 4)
- CCSS Rubric:
 - Levels of Meaning:
Explicitly stated purpose
 - Structure: Explicit; Traits of a common genre
 - Language conventionality & clarity: literal
 - knowledge demands:
some specialized knowledge; low intertextuality
 - FAIRLY SIMPLE

One scientist who spent an entire winter observing these amazing birds says it is staggering to see 10,000 penguins in a single quiet huddle. The temperature inside can be 77°F. Standing nearby when a huddle breaks up, observers can feel, smell, even see the heat. It's like a wall of steam. The penguins are packed in so tightly that when one comes out, the bird is square-shaped for a few moments from the pressure of the other birds.

All for One

Not only is it unbelievably cold while the emperor dad stands holding his egg all winter, it's also dark. Nevertheless, he keeps the egg warm, without stopping for anything, even food. He loses up to a half of his body weight before his mate comes back from feeding at sea in July. She takes over the egg, which then hatches. The male finally gets to go eat. When he gets back, the parents take turns holding the chick on their feet to keep it warm for the next eight weeks. At that point it's old enough to safely stand on the ice by itself.



A newly hatched chick stays warm by standing on top of a parent's feet.

1st Generation: Paper & Pencil
computation--Dale-Chall

When other animals head
north in March to avoid
the **Antarctic** winter,
emperor penguins head south.
Antarctica is surrounded
by a huge mass of
sea ice in the winter.
This ice floats on the
ocean in the
southernmost part of
the earth. **Harsh** and
frigid, it is here
where emperor penguins
choose to mate¹⁵ and lay
their eggs.

- 12% of words not found on Dale-Chall Readability list
- Grades 7-8

2nd Generation: Digitally
generated--Lexiles

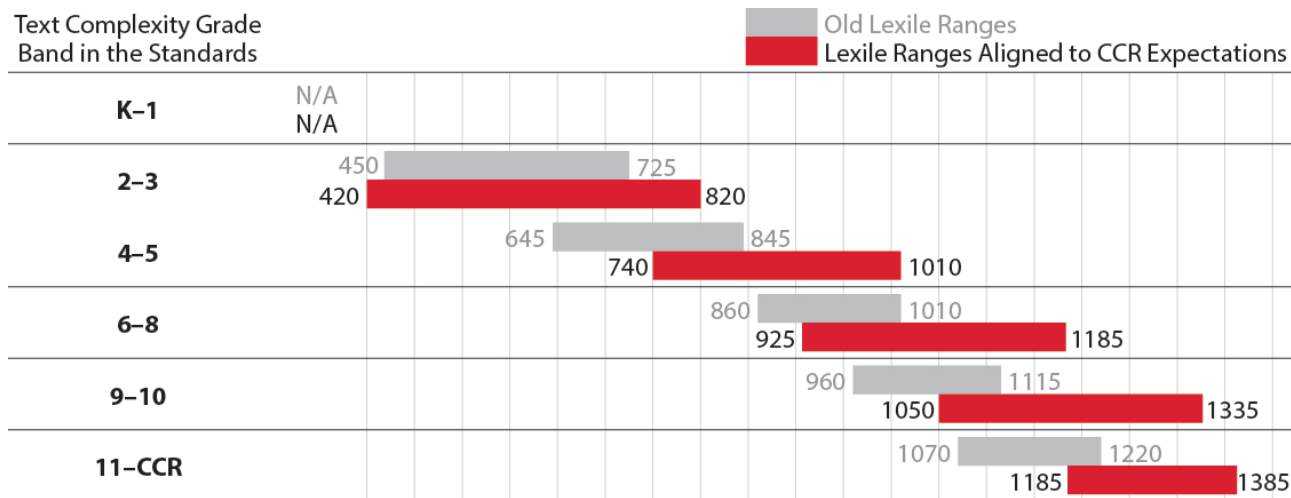
When³¹³⁷ other²²⁰⁵ animals³⁵⁷ head⁴³⁷
north²⁷⁵ in¹⁹⁰⁰⁴ March⁴⁷ to²⁵⁵⁸⁰ avoid⁵⁸
the⁶⁸⁰⁰⁶ Antarctic² winter,¹⁵¹
emperor³³ penguins² head⁴³⁷ south.
²⁵⁵ Antarctica⁴ is¹⁰²⁵⁷ surrounded³⁷
by⁴⁰⁸³ a²⁴⁰⁷⁰ huge¹³⁰ mass¹⁰³ of²⁸⁵²⁶
sea²⁷⁶ ice¹³⁸ in¹⁹⁰⁰⁴ the⁶⁸⁰⁰⁶ winter.¹⁵¹
This⁴²⁴³ ice¹³⁸ floats²⁴ on⁶⁶⁷⁴ the⁶⁸⁰⁰⁶
ocean¹⁴⁵ in¹⁹⁰⁰⁴ the⁶⁸⁰⁰⁶
southernmost^{0.8283} part⁶⁹⁴ of²⁸⁵²⁶
the⁶⁸⁰⁰⁶ earth.³⁶⁶ Harsh¹⁴ and²⁷⁵⁹⁴
frigid,^{0.9983} it⁹³⁸⁶ is¹⁰²⁵⁷ here⁶⁵⁵
where¹⁰⁷³ emperor³³ penguins²
choose⁹¹ to²⁵⁵⁸⁰ mate¹⁵ and²⁷⁵⁹⁴ lay¹⁵³
their³⁰³⁷ eggs.⁵²

- Lexile: 1030
- Mean Sentence Length: 15.0
- Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.38
- Common Core Staircase: Grades 7-8

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF SOLUTION

1. Pushing down beginning
reading instruction:
(1985 to 2008)

2. Harder text at all levels, especially in the elementary grades



End of Grade 5:

- Equivalent to End of Grade 8 in past
- 73% of reading proficiency is to have been gained by end of Grade 5

3. The word-level curriculum is left undefined—in both quantitative and qualitative systems

What this means in Tier 1 instruction: Mid-Grade 1 Core Reading Program

Text	Guided Reading Level	Lexile
Ruby In Her Own Time	G	510
The Class Pet	H	530
Frog & Toad Together	K	420
I'm a Caterpillar	G	200

Ruby In Her Own Time

Then, one bright morning, the **eggs** began to **hatch**. One, two, three, four little **beaks poked** out into the **sunlight**. One, two, three, four little **ducklings** shook their **feathers** in the **breeze**.

“We'll call them **Rufus, Rory, Rosie,** and **Rebecca**”, said Father **Duck**. And Mother **Duck** **agreed**. But the **fifth egg** did nothing.

The Class Pet

Pet stores may sell **seed mixes** or hard **pellets**.

But **mice** will eat all **sorts** of things, such as **corn** and **nuts**.

Mice like to run and **jump** late at night. It is time for them to sleep when the sun **rises**.

Mice use **torn cloth** and **cotton** to make **nests**.

NOTE: Words in gray in first-grade texts are within 1,000 most frequent words; words in purple (bold) are not.

Frog and Toad Together

Toad read a long story to his **seeds**.

All the next day **Toad sang** songs to his **seeds**. And all the next day **Toad** read **poems** to his **seeds**. And all the next day **Toad** played **music** for his seeds.

Toad looked at the ground. The **seeds** still did not start to grow.

I'm a Caterpillar

I'm a **caterpillar**. **Munch. Crunch.** I'm getting bigger. **Munch. Crunch. Munch. Crunch.** That's it. No more food. I'm done. It's time to **hang** from a **stem**. I wait, and wait, and wait. I **shiver**. I **twist**. I **split** my skin. My old skin falls away. I am soft inside.

What this means in Tier 2 & 3 instruction: Grade 1 Intervention Program

Text	Guided Reading Level	Lexile
• Kate's Truck • Pets	C	150
• The Big Storm • Pictures of Hugs	F	210
• Stone Soup • All About Honeybees	I	270

Level C

(End of K)

Katie's Truck

Kate got her **truck**.

I can **ride** in my **truck**, she said.

I want my bear, said **Kate**.

She put the bear in her **truck**.

I want my **dolls**, said **Kate**.

She put her **dolls** in the truck.

Kate said, I want books.

She put the books in her **truck**.

Pets

This is my **pet**. It is a **mouse**.

I like my **pet mouse**.

This is my **pet**. It is a bird.

I like my **pet** bird.

This is my **pet**. It is a fish.

I like my **pet** fish.

This is our **pet**. It is a **rabbit**.

We like our **pet rabbit**.

We love our **pets**!

Level F

(mid Gr. 1)

Pictures of Hugs

It was **Pet** Week at school.

Meg had to take a picture of **Hugs** to **share**.

She got her **crayons** and some paper.

"This picture doesn't look like **Hugs**," she said.

Meg got more paper. But she could not make a good picture of her **cat**.

"Do you want my **camera**?" **Gram** said.

The Big Storm

A **storm** was coming.

Orson did not like **storms**.

He ran under the table.

The **storm** was getting close.

The sky got very dark.

Orson hid behind a **chair**.

It started to rain.

Big, **fat raindrops** hit the window.

Orson went behind the **sofa**.

It rained harder.

Orson **squeezed** behind the plant, but he did not **fit**.

Level I

(late Gr. 1)

Stone Soup

Long ago, a young man came into a poor little town. All he had was a **soup pot** and a **spoon**.

The man was very **hungry**. The young **man stopped** at a house.

He **knocked** at the door.

“I am cold and **hungry**,” he said. “May I have a bit of food?”

All About Honeybees

The flowers **bloom** on a warm summer day. You can hear the sound of **bees** in the **garden**.

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Little **honeybees fly** around the flowers. These **bees** are working!

Something **sweet** is inside the flowers. It is called **nectar**.

The worker **bees sip** the **nectar** from the flowers.

ACTIONS TO COUNTERACT THESE POLICIES

Frequent Early Instruction with Struggling Readers

Floppy Mop

Mop was a big dog.

Mop was a floppy dog.

Mop was **Tom's pal**.

"Come, **Mop**," said **Tom**.

Tom sat on **Mop**.

Jack was a **cat**.

Zack was a **rat**.

Zack ran. **Jack** ran after **Zack**.

Mop ran after **Jack** and **Zack**.

"Stop **Mop**," begged **Tom**.

Mop stopped.

Mop and **Tom** sat.

Tom and **Mop** had a **nap**.

1. Begin with concrete words-- & phonetically regular & highly frequent)

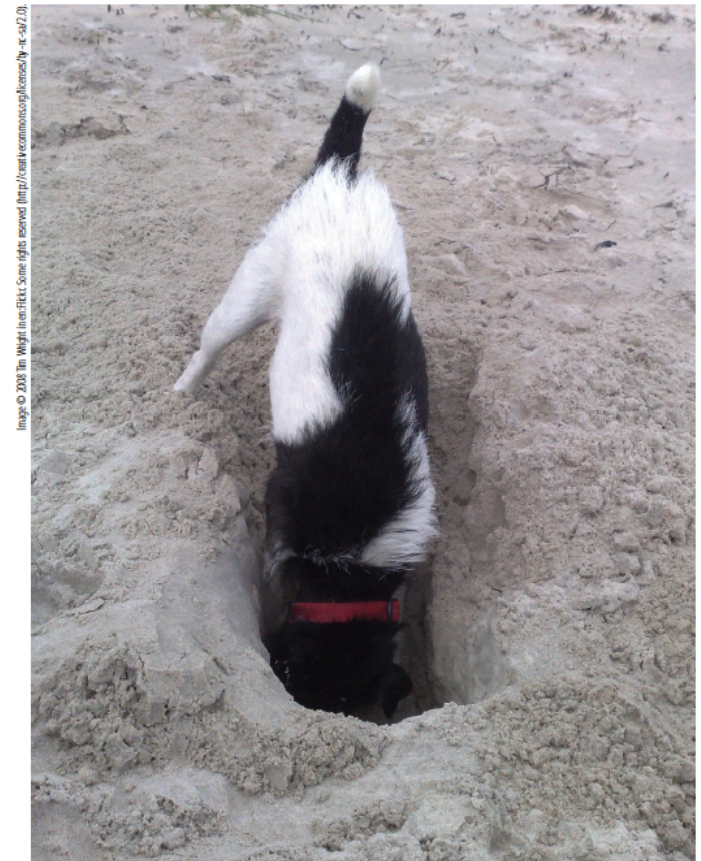


Level 2
Set 3
Book 1

Dogs



Dogs can run.
They run and run.



Dogs can dig.
They dig and dig.

Cats and Dogs



For more information about BeginningReads, visit www.textproject.org/beginningreads
x 1.0 © 2011 TextProject, Inc. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>).



Image © 2009 by C&K in artfile. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>).

Cats are big.
Dogs are big.



Image © 2008 by I yong. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>).

Cats are little.
Dogs are little.

Get the Ball



For more information about BeginningReads, visit www.textproject.org/beginningreads
© 2011 TextProject, Inc. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>)



Image © 2010 Dave Rinder. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)

I play ball with my cat
and dog.

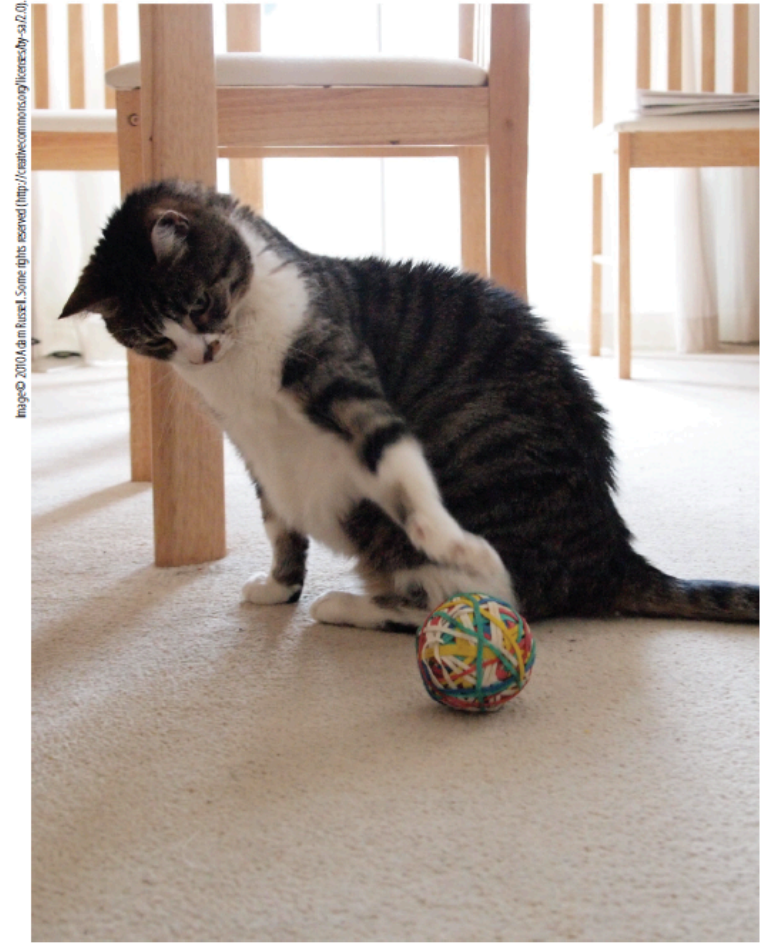


Image © 2004 Dan Ruster. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>)

Get the ball, cat.
No, cat, no.

2. Texts where sequences attend to patterns and repetitions of words

- Not a phoneme-based curriculum that measures whether phonemes have been taught (i.e., Lesson to Text Match (LTTM)): The assumption here has been that students will develop automaticity with many different exemplars of phonemes and with a single lesson on a phoneme.



Example of an Appropriate Sequence: Level 2



Dogs can run.
They run and run.



Dogs can dig.
They dig and dig.

Trucks

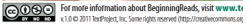
Level 4



There are green trucks. There are red trucks.



Some trucks are big. Some trucks are little.



A snail can smell leaves to eat. Here is one eating the leaves on a plant.

Level 6



A snail can smell a safe place to hide.
Here it is hiding.

3. Ensure extensive opportunities to read texts with consistent data

Too Hot!



Dan sat on the sand.
It was too hot.



He got up. He got a mat.

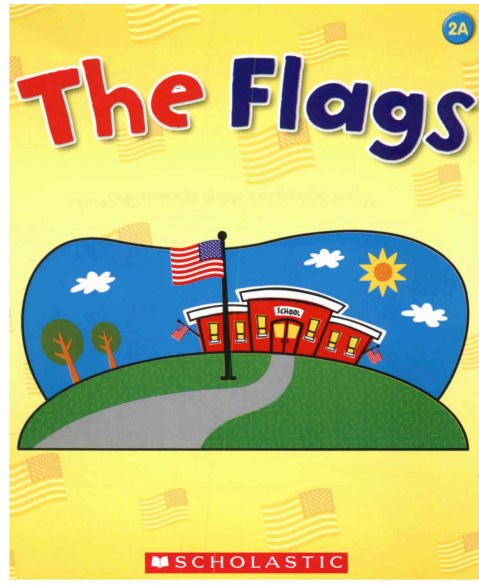
In the Sun



Ben had a **nap** in the sun.
He got hot and red.



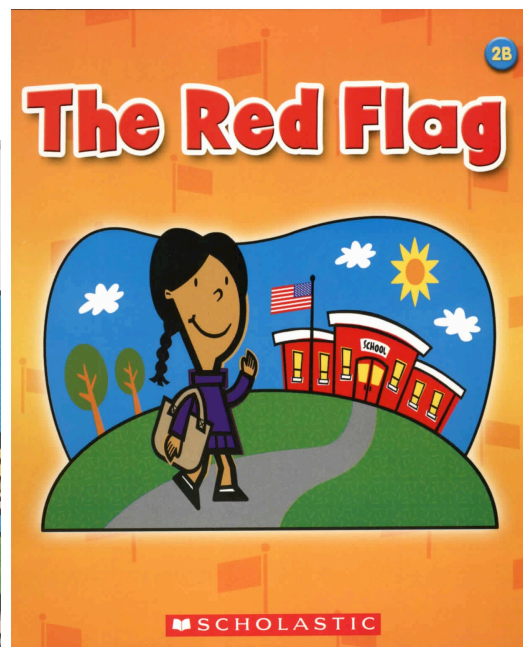
He had a swim.
Then Ben was not hot.



"Here is the flag," says Dan.

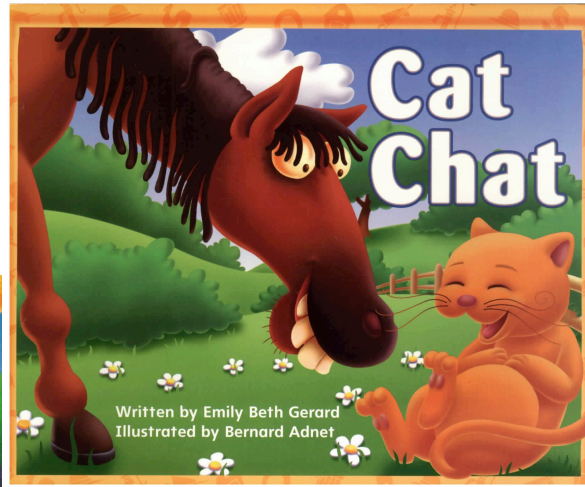


"I am here by this flag to meet Pat.
Where is she?" he asks.



"I have a red flag in this bag,"
Pat says to Dan. "I like flags"

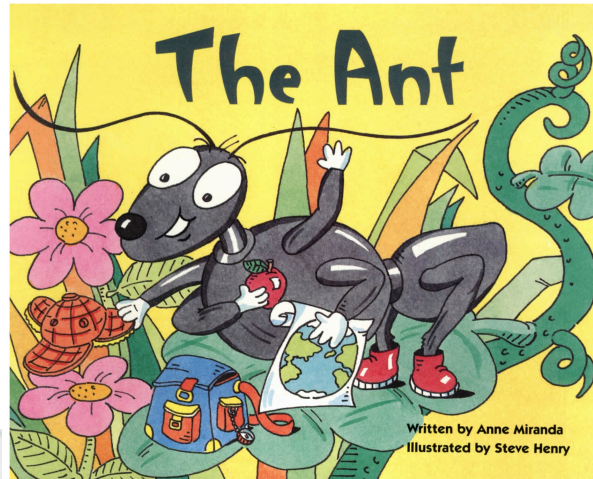
"I like flags, too! What is this on
the flag?" he asks.



"Do you want to chat?" asked the cat.



"Not now," said the cow.
"I'm too busy chewing."



I am an ant
on a plant
wearing pants.



I am an ant
on a plant
wearing pants
and a cap.





www.textproject.org



TextProject

Search

Go

TextProject aims to bring beginning and struggling readers to high levels of literacy through a variety of strategies and tools, particularly the texts used for reading instruction.

TextShelf



TextProject Topics



Common Core State Standards



Text Complexity

[More topics](#)

77 Seconds on Text Complexity: What is the Difference Between Accessible and Dumbed-down Texts?

When Freddy suggests in presentations that challenged readers require large amounts of accessible text, she's often asked: But what's accessible? And are accessible texts complex enough for Common Core classrooms? Here's the answer! Watch a short video on what Freddy describes as the key difference between accessible and dumbed-down texts.

Student Resources

Free sets of texts



Stop the summer slump

"Read to learn" while learning to read



Increase text-based discussions



A magazine-based reading program

Teacher Resources

Free evidence-based lessons and lists



Use everyday words to teach new words



Use pictures to teach complex words

WORD LISTS

Be informed about vocabulary

Read-Aloud Favorites

Increase student knowledge through read-alouds

Professional Development Resources

Free resources for teacher learning

Keep up with the latest research



Learn about complex text

View the latest presentations



Answers to frequently asked questions

Home

[Student Resources](#)

[Teacher Resources](#)

[Professional Development Resources](#)

[Research](#)

[Frankly Freddy](#)

[Library](#)

[Events](#)

[Topics](#)

[Press](#)

[About](#)



[Subscribe now](#)
[View latest issue](#)



Recent Frankly Freddy Posts

3 March 2014

What's New

14 March 2014