

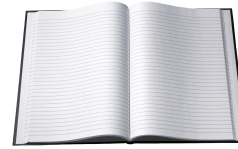
Going Beyond Text Complexity: Considering Text-Task Scenarios in Understanding Comprehension

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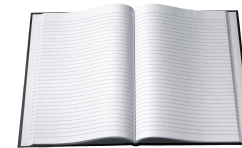
Based on a paper by Valencia, Wixson, & Pearson (forthcoming).
Putting text complexity in context: Refocusing on comprehension of
complex text. Elementary School Journal.



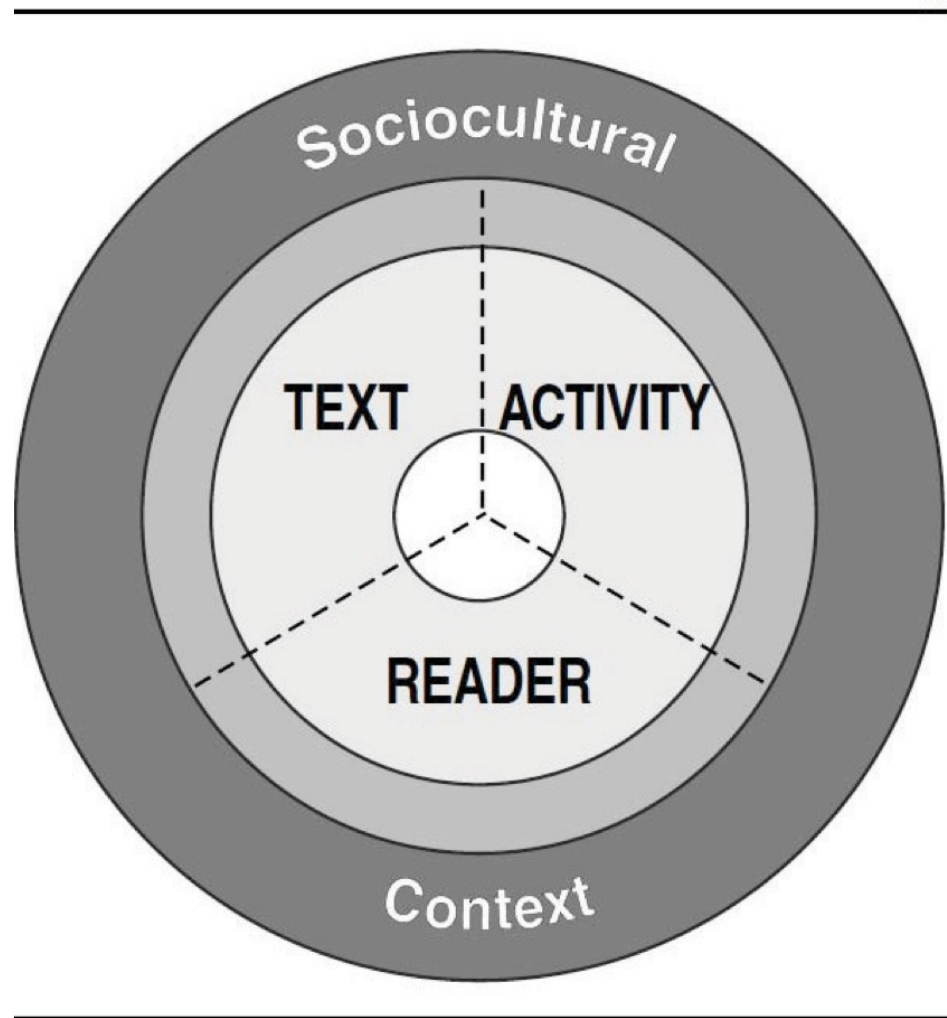
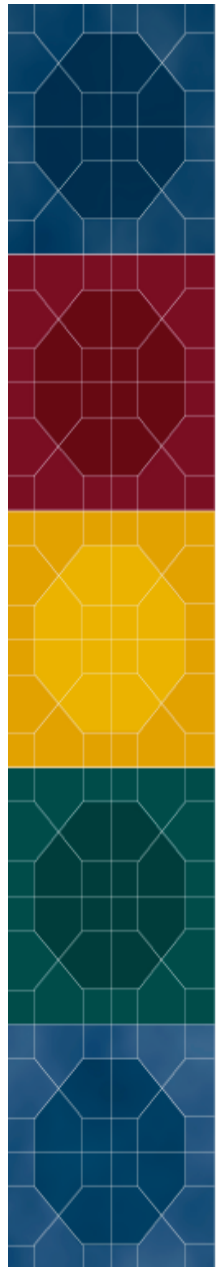
Text complexity -



Text level/ difficulty



Comprehension of complex text



Text Complexity—Appendix A

- **Qualitative evaluation of the text**
 - Levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands
- **Quantitative evaluation of the text**
 - Readability measures and other scores of text complexity
- **Matching reader to text and task**
 - Reader variables (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and task variables (such as purpose and the complexity generated by the task assigned and the questions posed)



A Three-Part Model for Measuring Text Complexity

As signaled by the graphic at right, the Standards' model of text complexity consists of three equally important parts.

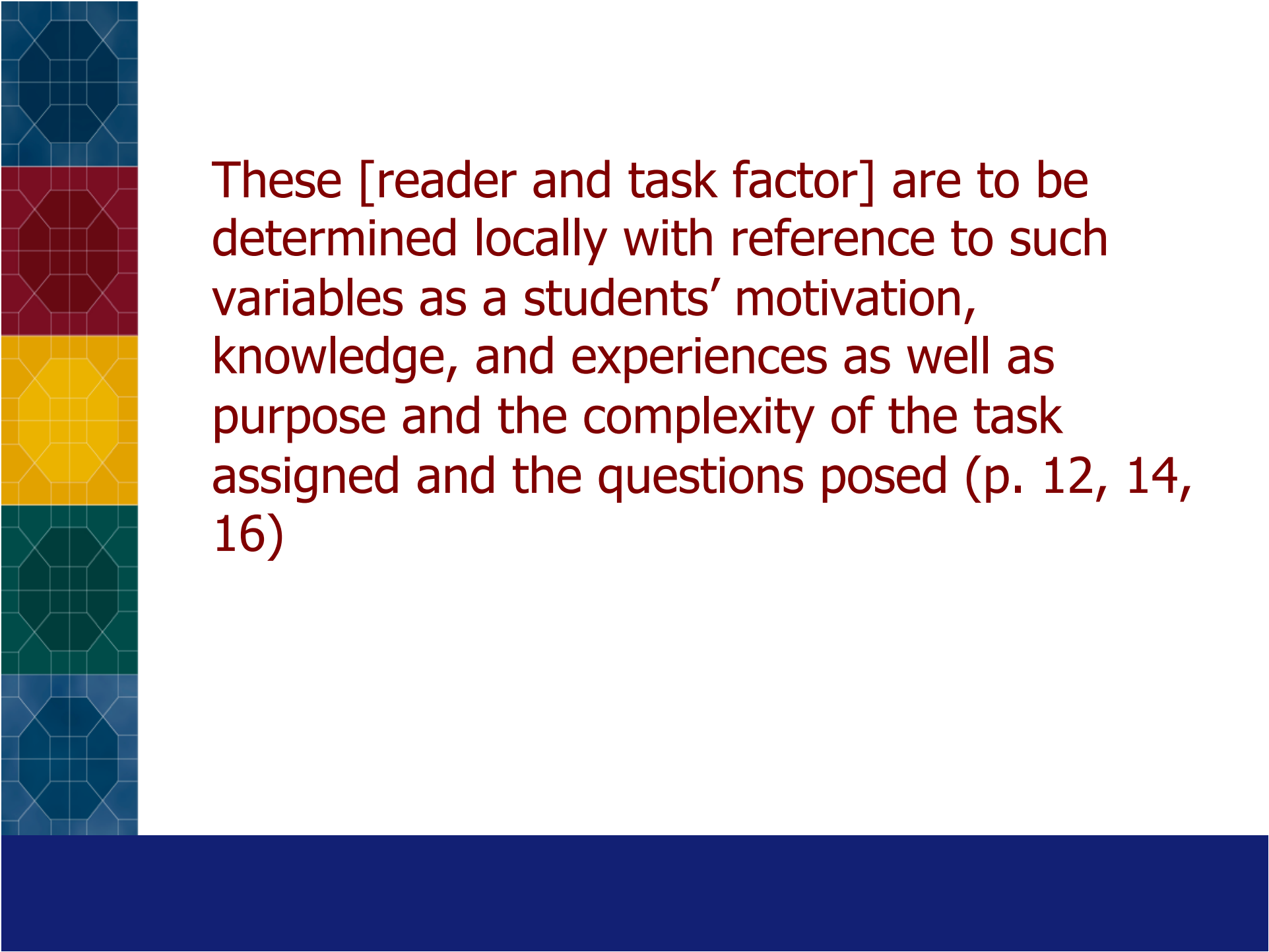
(1) *Qualitative dimensions of text complexity.* In the Standards, *qualitative dimensions* and *qualitative factors* refer to those aspects of text that are measured or only measurable by an attentive human reader, such as levels of meaning or purpose; structure; language conventionality and demands.

(2) *Quantitative dimensions of text complexity.* The terms *quantitative dimensions* and *quantitative factors* refer to those aspects of text complexity, such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion, that are difficult if not impossible for a human reader to evaluate efficiently, especially in long texts, and are thus today typically measured by computer software.

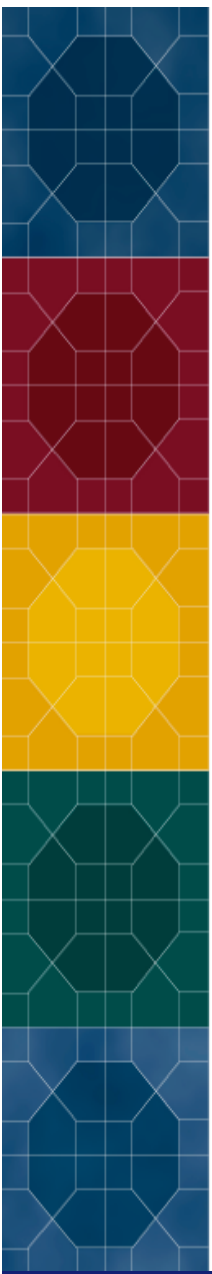
(3) *Reader and task considerations.* While the prior two elements of the model focus on the inherent complexity of text, variables specific to particular readers (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and to particular tasks (such as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed) must also be considered when determining whether a text is appropriate for a given student. Such assessments are best made by teachers employing their professional judgment, experience, and knowledge of their students and the subject.

Figure 1: The Standards' Model of Text Complexity



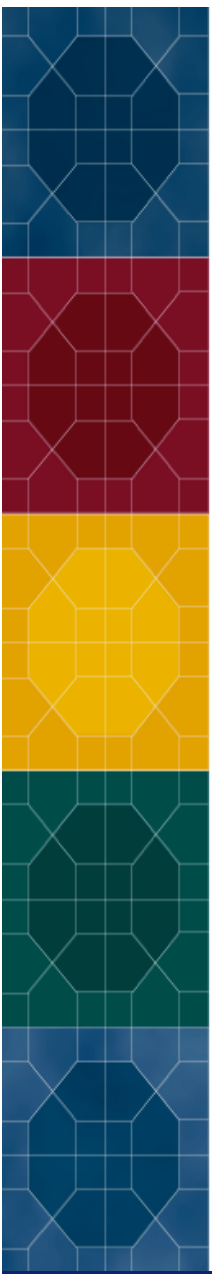


These [reader and task factor] are to be determined locally with reference to such variables as a students' motivation, knowledge, and experiences as well as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed (p. 12, 14, 16)



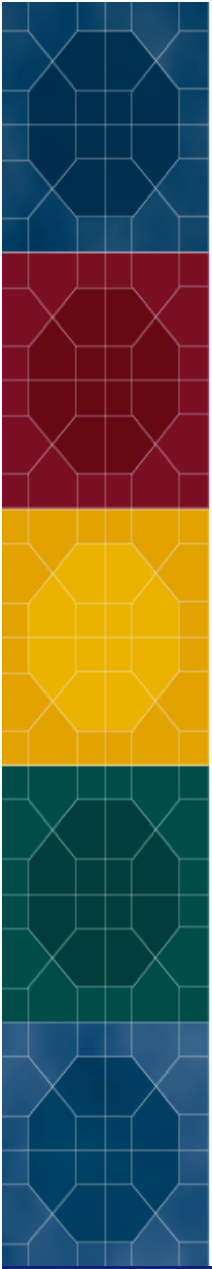
Grade band 4-5 - Literary

- Students make connections between the visual presentation of John Tenniel's illustration in Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland* and the text of the story to identify how the pictures of Alice reflect specific descriptions of her in the text [RL 4.7] (860L)
 - Students compare and contrast coming-of-age stories by Christopher Paul Curtis (*Bud, Not Buddy*) and Louise Erdrich (*The Birchbark House*) by identifying similar themes and examining the stories' approach to the topic of growing up [RL 5.9] (950L, 930L)
- 



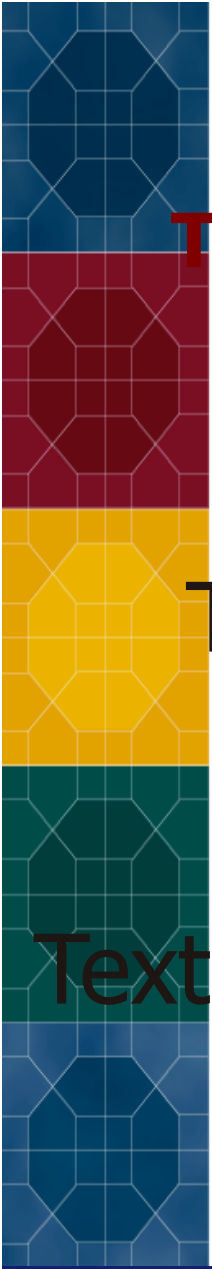
Grade band 6-8 Informational

- Students determine the point of view of John Adams in his Letter on Thomas Jefferson and analyze how he distinguishes his position from an alternative approach articulated by Thomas Jefferson [RI7.6] (1010L)
 - <http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/pickering.html>
- 



Particular tasks may also require students to read harder texts than they would normally be required to. Conversely, teachers who have had success using particular texts that are easier than those required for a given grade band should feel free to continue to use them so long as the general movement during a given school year is toward texts of higher levels of complexity.





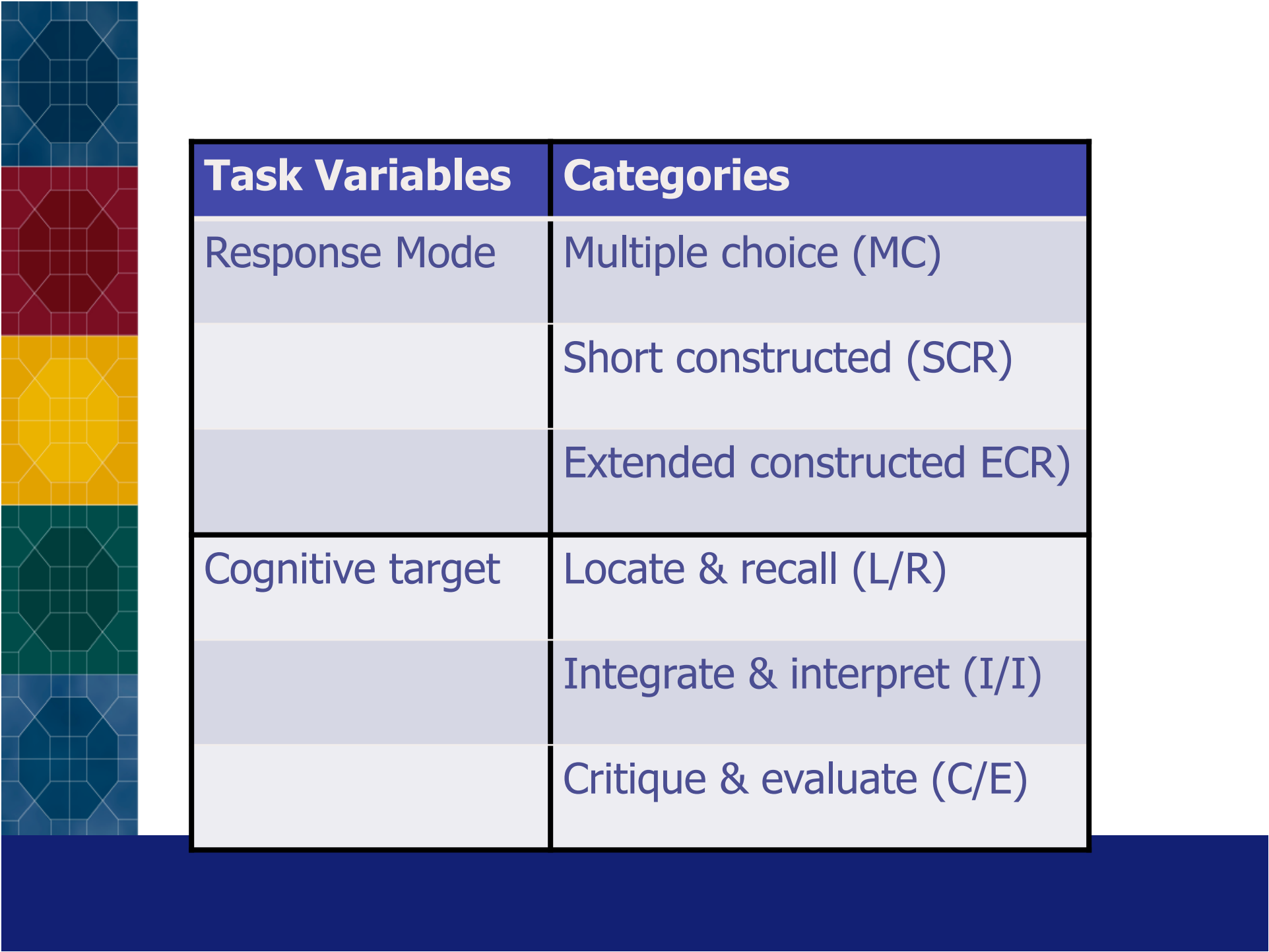
**Text complexity x task complexity x reader →
comprehension of complex text**

Text complexity x task complexity x reader →
comprehension of complex text

Text complexity x task complexity x reader →
comprehension of complex text



Text-Task Scenario



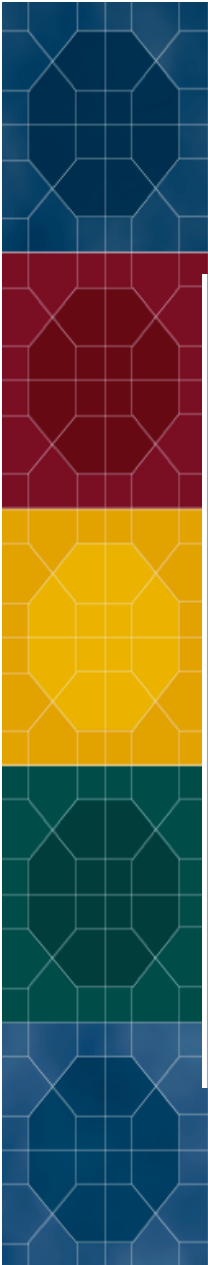
Task Variables	Categories
Response Mode	Multiple choice (MC)
	Short constructed (SCR)
	Extended constructed ECR)
Cognitive target	Locate & recall (L/R)
	Integrate & interpret (I/I)
	Critique & evaluate (C/E)

Grade 4E 890L
4th-5th gr

Type	Mode	Score
L/R	MC	E
L/R	MC	M
I/I	MC	E
I/I	MC	E
I/I	MC	E
I/I	MC	H
I/I	SCR	H
C/E	SCR	H
C/E	SCR	M
I/I	ECR	M

Grade 8E 1040L
11th -CCR

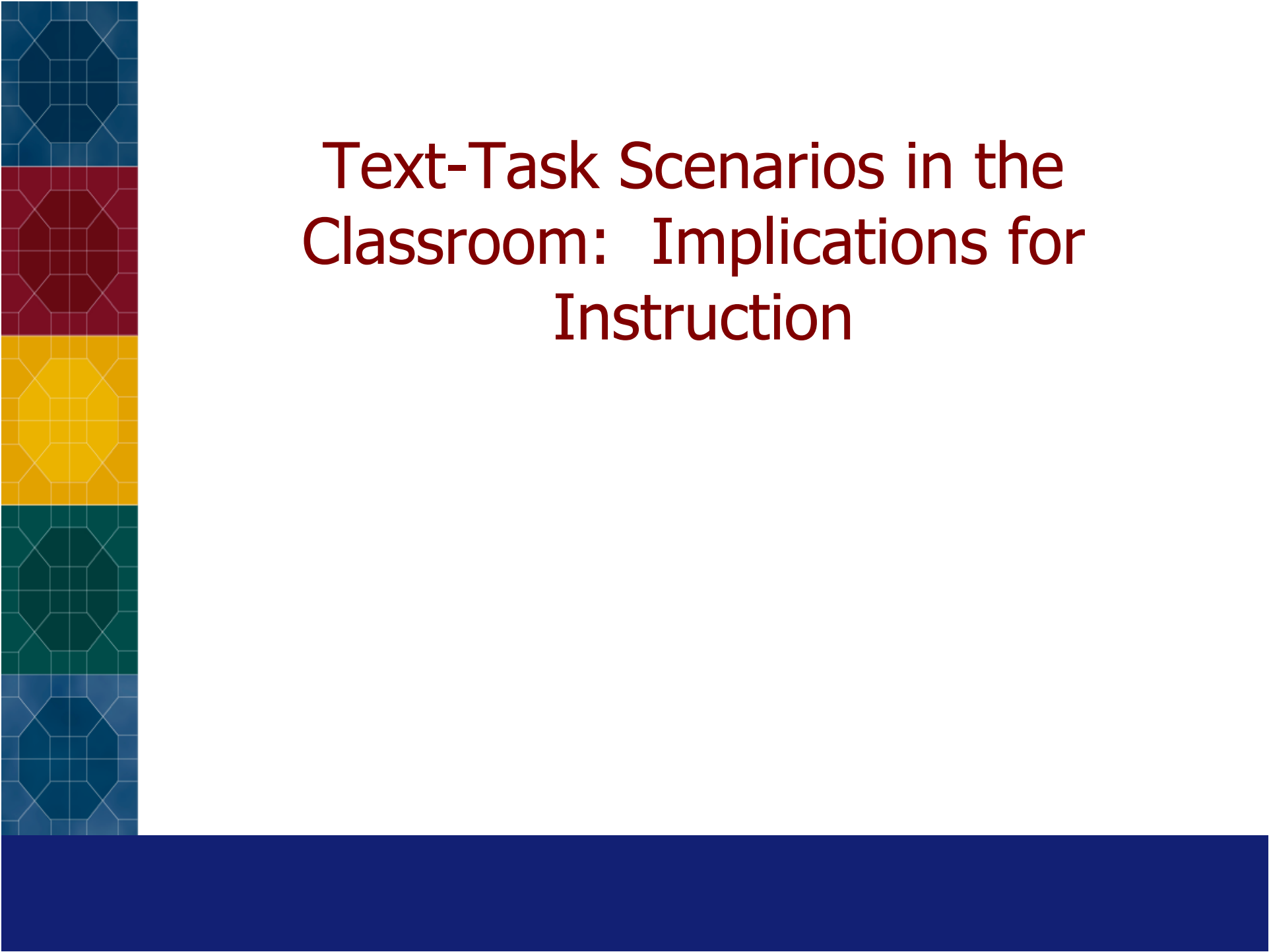
Type	Mode	Score
L/R	MC	E
L/R	MC	M
L/R/	MC	E
I/I	MC	E
I/I	MC	E
I/I	MC	M
L/R	SCR	E
I/I	SCR	M
C/E	SCR	M
C/E	ECR	H



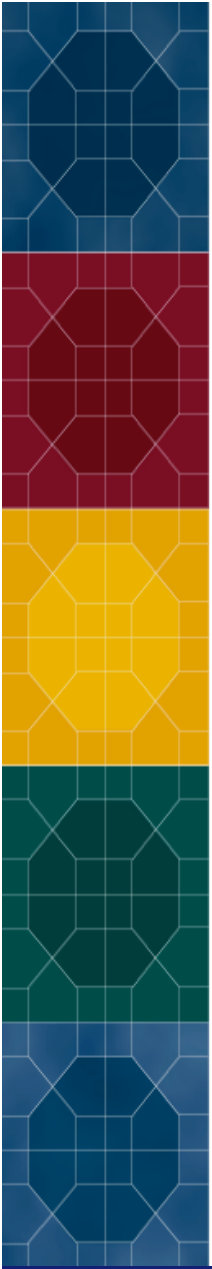
		Item Difficulty		
	Lexile Grade Band	Easy	Medium	Hard
Tough as a Daisy	360L (below grade 2-3)	5	5	1
Marion Anderson	890L (grade 4-5)	4	3	3
Daddy Day Care	1080L (grade 6-8)	6	4	0

NAEP, 2010 release passages





Text-Task Scenarios in the Classroom: Implications for Instruction



Examples of Qualities of Text x Task that Influence Comprehension of Complex Text

- Amount, quality, structure, & location of text needed to respond
 - Inferential “leaps” – distance and number
 - Text search- organization, text features, genre
 - Purpose
 - Specificity
 - Alignment of text and task
- 

1994 NAEP Grade 8 Selection

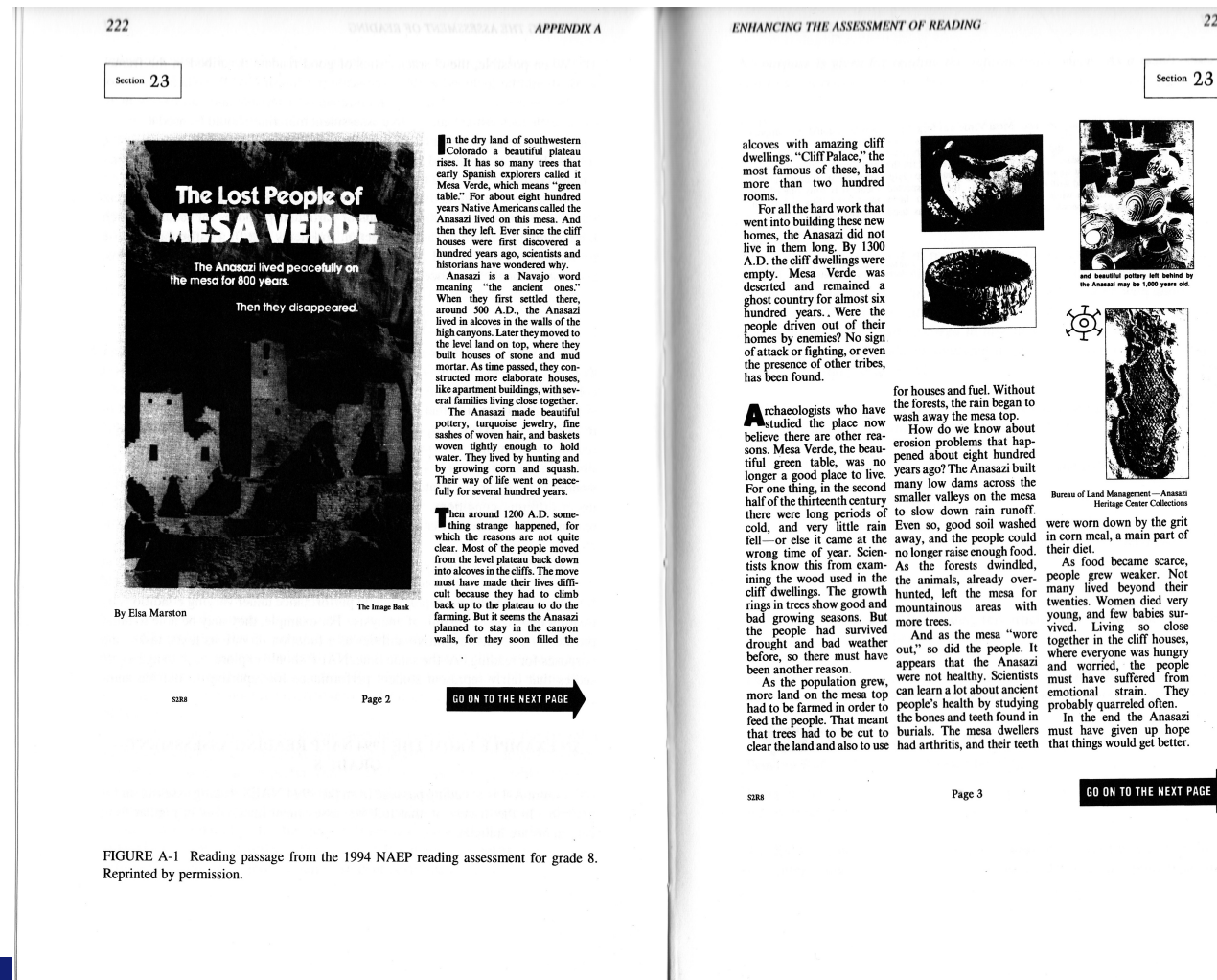
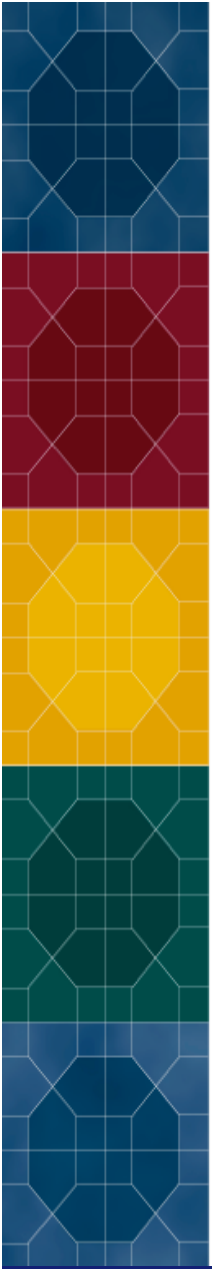
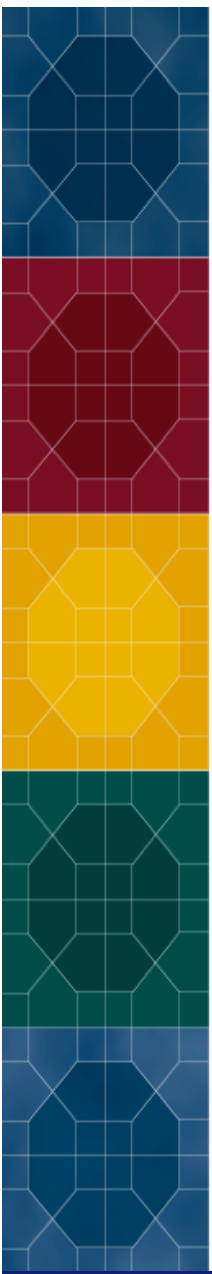


FIGURE A-1 Reading passage from the 1994 NAEP reading assessment for grade 8. Reprinted by permission.



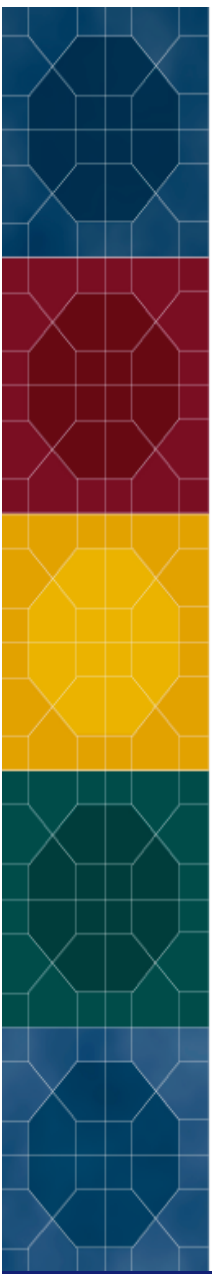
Revising Existing Tasks: Building Text-Task Scenarios

- Existing task: No purpose for reading is given so students don't know how to focus their reading.
 - Possible revision/s
 - Global Purpose: This informational article is like one that you might read when doing a research report
 - Specific Purpose: Read this informational article to understand the theories about what happened to one ancient civilization—the Anasazi
- 



Sample Task & Revisions

- Existing task: The three moves made by the Anasazi are listed below. Explain the possible reasons that were suggested in the article for each move. (Extended Response)
 - Possible Revision: The article suggests several theories about why the Anasazi left the mesa. List the theories and provide evidence from the article to support each theory.
- 



Sample Task & Revisions

- Existing task—The title and photograph on the first page of the article are probably meant to make the disappearance of the Anasazi seem to be:
 - A. A personal tragedy
 - B. A terrible mistake
 - C. An unsolved mystery
 - D. An important political event
 - Possible Revision—The task should reflect the fact that the best use of the title and photo is to help students anticipate the content of the piece and set purpose
- 

PARCC Evidence-Based Selected-Response – Gr 3

Part A

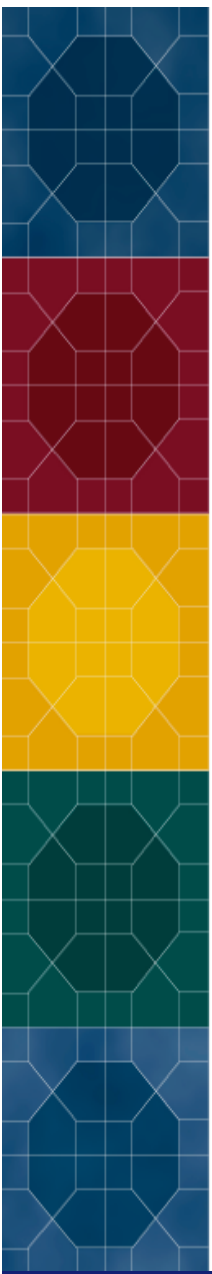
What is one main idea of “How Animals Live?”

- a. There are many types of animals on the planet.
- b. Animals need water to live.
- c. There are many ways to sort different animals.*
- d. Animals begin their life cycles in different forms.

Part B

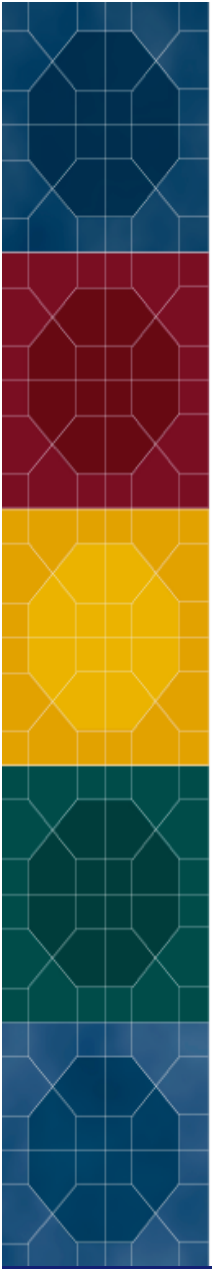
Which sentence from the article best supports the answer to Part A?

- a. “Animals get oxygen from air or water.”
- b. “Animals can be grouped by their traits.”*
- c. “Worms are invertebrates.”
- d. “All animals grow and change over time.”
- e. “Almost all animals need water, food, oxygen, and shelter to live.”



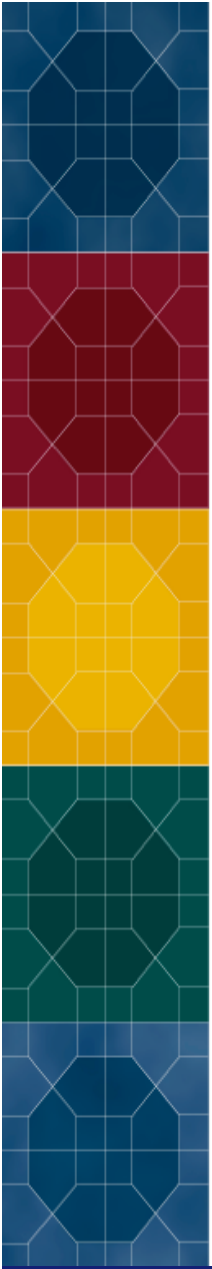
SBAC PERFORMANCE TASK: STIMULI & RESEARCH QUESTIONS (Grade 4)

- Students have 35 minutes to:
 - read an article and watch a video about what animals themselves from danger (stimuli)
 - take notes (note-taking “grid” provided)



SBAC PERFORMANCE TASK: STIMULI & RESEARCH QUESTIONS (Grade 4)

- answer 3 CR questions about the sources
 - What does the article “Animal Roll-Ups” tell you about why some animals curl up? Use details from article to support your answer.
 - Think about the armadillo and the hedgehog described in the article. In what way are their defenses similar or different. Explain your answer using details from the article.
 - In the video “Animal Defenses” the puffer fish and the crab were both successful in protecting themselves from sea otters. Do they have the same type of defense? Explain your answer using details from the video.

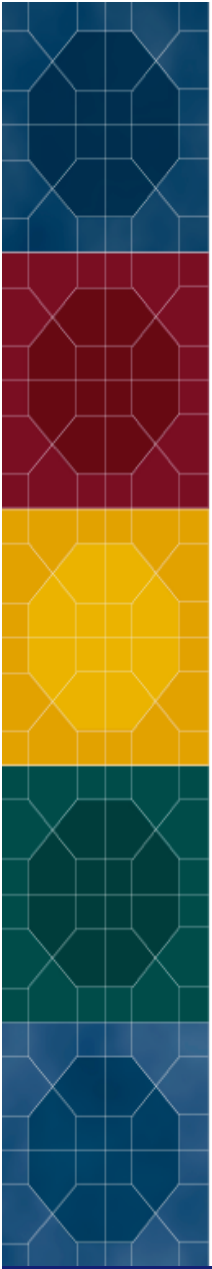


PARCC NARRATIVE TASK: Gr 6

Following EBSR and TECR questions about *Julie of the Wolves*:

In the passage, the author developed a strong character named Miyax. Think about Miyax and the details the author used to create that character. The passage ends with Miyax waiting for the black wolf to look at her.

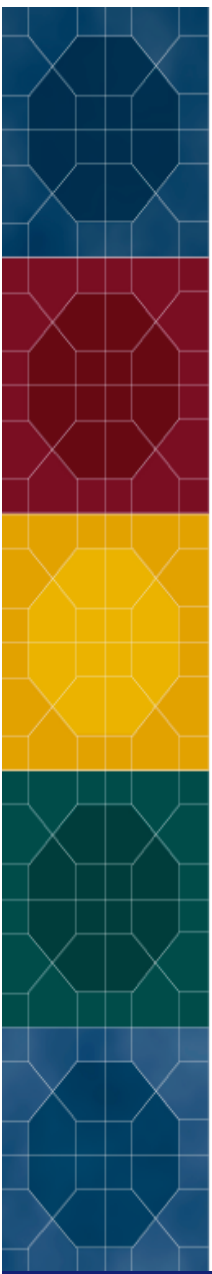
Write an original story to continue where the passage ended. In your story, be sure to use what you have learned about the character Miyax as you tell what happens to her next.



PARCC RESEARCH SIMULATION TASK (Grade 7)

Texts:

- “Biography of Amelia Earhart”
- “Earhart's Final Resting Place Believed Found”
- “Amelia Earhart’s Life and Disappearance”

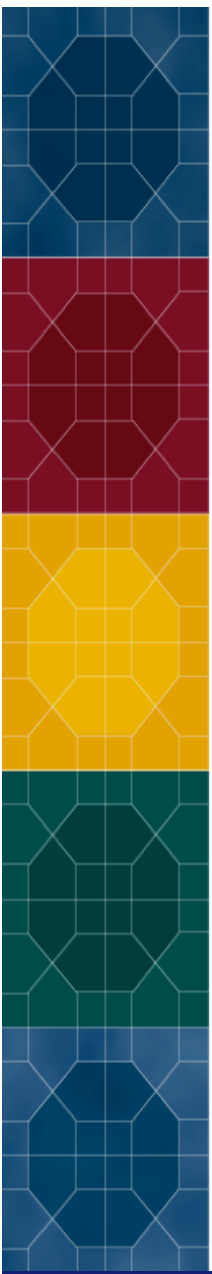


PARCC RESEARCH SIMULATION TASK: (Grade 7)

You have read three texts describing Amelia Earhart. All three include the claim that Earhart was a brave, courageous person.

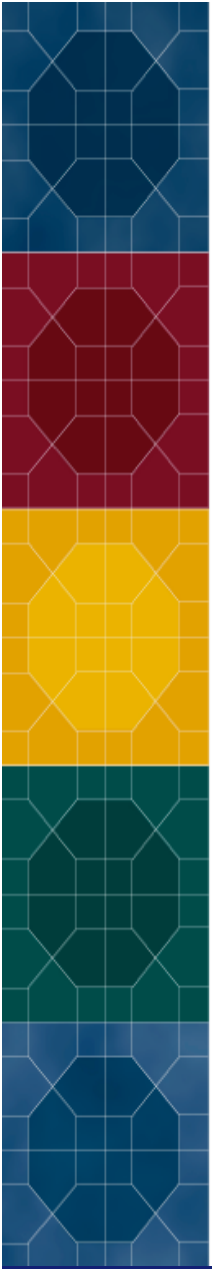
Consider the argument each author uses to demonstrate Earhart's bravery.

Write an essay that analyzes the strength of the arguments about Earhart's bravery in at least two of the texts. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.



A Different Way to Think About Strategies

- How does the reader adapt to meet a range of text x task scenarios?
 - Under what conditions (what types of texts tied to what types of tasks) is the reader able to read with depth and to learn from the text?
 - How can instruction help students to become thoughtfully-adaptive readers?
- 



FINAL THOUGHT

We must never think about text complexity in isolation from the reading task, the reader, and the context. Exhorting students to try harder or to read more closely as they encounter the new, more challenging texts is unlikely to improve comprehension.

Instruction must take into account the various ways in which the text, the task, and the reader come together. Teachers can address all of these factors during instruction and they can facilitate learning by manipulating text-task scenarios to accommodate students' needs.





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Time for questions!