

# Text Selection Guide for Grades K-12

## Introduction

At the center of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for English Language Arts instruction are the texts educators and students choose. Standards aligned instruction requires that texts be of high quality, rich, worthy of close reading and rereading, and lend themselves to rigorous questions that require students to cite specific textual evidence when answering. Texts selected should also build coherent knowledge within grades and across grades. Choosing appropriate texts is one of the most important roles of an educator. The purpose of this document is to guide educators in selecting texts that support the NCSCoS aligned instruction and provide resources on where to locate these texts.

This text selection guide offers information on text complexity, which provides teachers with tools that allow them to evaluate whether a text is an appropriate challenge for a particular student and falls within his/her grade level's text complexity band. This document includes criteria for choosing texts and guidelines for selecting authentic texts. Finally, notes about locating and using mentor texts for instruction, choosing appropriate texts for read aloud instruction, and creating text sets are included. The information in this guide is intended to help educators make the best decisions about texts used for instruction of the ELA standards.

Standards, not texts, should be the focus *of* instruction. Texts are the centers *to* instruction; the vehicle by which the standards are taught. The standard should influence the choice of text or the portion of the text that students will read and should match the learning outcomes for the lesson. For example, if the purpose of a lesson is to analyze the structure of a text, then the text chosen should have a clear, easily recognizable organizational pattern. The teacher considers, "what am I trying to teach and what text is going to facilitate that best?"

Both literary and informational texts should be used in aligned instruction. Literary texts such as stories, drama, and poetry, and informational texts that include literary nonfiction, historical, scientific, and technical texts should be integrated throughout instruction in classrooms from Kindergarten through twelfth grade. In order to prepare students for college and career readiness, where a majority of required reading is informational text, students need extensive exposure to informational texts. Including a balance of literary and informational texts for instruction will give all students multiple opportunities to build capacity for comprehending complex texts independently and proficiently.

## Evaluate Text Complexity

Educators should consider the three measures of text complexity when choosing texts. Quantitative measures are used to assign a text to a grade band based on computer-generated readability measures and the expected reading ranges for college and career readiness. Qualitative measures are used to locate a text within the specific grade band and are used to determine whether a text is appropriate for a specific group of students in relation to text structure, language conventions, knowledge demands, and layers of meaning within the text itself. Reader and task considerations involve the use of professional judgment by the teacher when determining if the text is appropriate for the instructional purpose with a particular set of students. All three measures should be taken into consideration when selecting texts for classroom use. See the NCDPI ELA team’s resources for more information on text complexity.

## Guidance for Text Selection

In the ELA classroom, there should be a balance of informational and literary text; 50% of the time should be spent on high quality literary texts and 50% should be spent on high quality informational texts.

*The information below is adapted from: [Engageny.org](http://Engageny.org)*

### Literary Texts

*The following charts show examples of texts and is not an exhaustive list.*

#### **K-5 literary texts include:**

<b>Stories:</b>	Children’s adventure stories, folktales, legends, fables, realistic fiction, fantasy, and myth
<b>Dramas:</b>	Staged dialogue and familiar stories
<b>Poetry:</b>	Nursery rhymes, subgenres of the narrative poem, limericks, and free verse

#### **Grades 6-12 literary texts include:**

<b>Stories:</b>	Subgenres of adventure stories, historical fiction, mysteries, science fiction, myths, realistic fiction, allegories, parodies, satire, and graphic novels
<b>Dramas:</b>	One-act and multi-act plays, in written form and on film
<b>Poetry:</b>	Subgenres of narrative poems, lyrical poems, free verse poems, odes, ballads, and epics

## Informational Texts

### **K-5 Informational texts include:**

<b>Literary Nonfiction:</b>	Biographies and autobiographies
<b>Historical, Scientific, and Technical texts:</b>	Texts about social studies, history, science, the arts; technical texts that include directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps, and digital sources on a range of topics

### **Grades 6-12 Informational texts include:**

<b>Literary Nonfiction:</b>	Includes the subgenres of exposition, argument, and functional text in the form of personal essays, speeches, opinion pieces, essays about art or literature, biographies, memoirs, journalism, and historical, scientific, technical, or economic accounts (including digital sources) written for a broad audience
<b>Historical, Scientific, and Technical texts:</b>	Texts about social studies, history, science, the arts; technical texts that include directions, forms and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps, and digital sources on a range of topics

## Criteria for all texts

Consider the following when evaluating all texts for use in instruction:

- **Craft:** Did the author use noteworthy or recognizable organizational structures and literary devices within the construction of the text?
- **Significance:** Is the text innovative or influential within its genre?
- **Content:** Are the ideas or themes contained within the text interesting, engaging, and/or significant enough to explore? Are they suitable for a wide range of students?

*Note: Selected texts do not need to have all three of the criteria listed, however, the standards call for some of them to be present in selected texts. Selected texts should include a balance of both literary and informational texts.*

## Criteria for selecting literary texts:

- Are there significant themes that can support analysis of the text?
- Is there a clear and well-developed structure?
- Is there a clearly distinguishable point of view?

## Criteria for selecting informational texts:

- Is the content relevant and correct?

- Is there a clear point of view/perspective and/or purpose?
- Is there a main or central idea that is identifiable and a well-developed organizational structure?
- Does argumentation in the text include claims supported by evidence from the text?

### **A Word about Independent Sustained Reading (ISR)**

The relationship between strong instruction, guided practice, and independent practice calls for students to be reading books that provide opportunities for them to practice the skills that are introduced in whole-class or small group settings. Making the connection for students to transfer those skills that are being learned to their own independent reading practices is essential.

ISR practices are integrated into regular, daily classroom instruction and require teachers to model and explicitly teach students how to read with a purpose and/or strategy, how to create meaning from texts, and how to talk about texts. Students apply what the teacher models or teaches while reading on their own in class, participating in text-based discussions, monitoring their own comprehension, and/or taking time to reflect on what was read.

Teachers begin by selecting rich texts and/or text sets that are appropriate for teaching the reading skill and standard and also fall within the Lexile band for the grade level they teach. Teachers can also allow for student choice during ISR by providing students an opportunity to self-select a text from a text set. Teachers can help students locate the most appropriately complex texts by considering the following:

- Is the student interested in the book? Does the student have background knowledge related to the content?
- Can the student read the book?
- Will the book allow the student to practice the reading skills he/she is learning?
  - If the student needs to increase fluency, then a book that is easy to read may be appropriate.
  - If the student is building comprehension skills, then a book with challenging content may be appropriate, even if the words are easy for the student.

Students may be motivated to read more challenging books due to a high level of interest or if they have significant background knowledge on the topic. Students may also be able to access more challenging texts when the text

- supports curricula currently being taught
- contains a theme similar to the one(s) discussed from a recent classroom read
- is written by the same author or an author with a similar style to a recent classroom read
- is of a genre or organizational structure with which the student is familiar

See the ISR Guide for more information on Independent Sustained Reading.

## Choosing Mentor Texts

Students often learn best through examples. Texts that are rich examples of good writing provide inspiration as well as guidance to support strong writing. Often referred to as mentor texts, they are used as models for students. When students are asked to write a specific type of text, especially one that they have never written before, an invaluable approach is to find an effective model, analyze it, imitate it, then reflect on it. As students study mentor texts, the teachers can direct attention to language, tone, structure, and syntax. When modeling how to read and analyze mentor texts, teachers should demonstrate for students how to read like writers, noticing the techniques and choices authors make.

Teachers may use a mentor text in its entirety, may use an excerpt from the mentor text, or may simply use a sentence from a mentor text.

### **Elementary**

At the elementary school level, students are learning language conventions, figurative language, use of graphics, and the components of plot and text structure. For literary text, this means that students recognize character development and the influence that events and characters have on the story's plot. Students are beginning to build an understanding of language, both at the convention level and in word choice. For informational text, students are learning that text structure can lend itself to reader understanding and that information can be conveyed through more than just words.

Choose mentor texts that provide vivid details, rich vocabulary, and solid plot structures. Often repetition provides a pattern that students can follow and imitate. Rhythm and rhyme is also a great way for students to notice and mimic language patterns.

### **Middle**

At the middle school level, as students move from analyzing the components of text structure to synthesizing information, it is important for students to read texts that show a variety and complexity of characters, themes, plots, and structures. For literary text, this means that students recognize the influence of one story element on another as the narrative unfolds. Students also begin to build upon their understanding of point of view to now consider perspective by evaluating events based on the different lenses through which different characters experience the events. For informational text, students trace how the author's elaboration extends understanding as they continue to read the text. The students also recognize that an author's perspective influences the author's message and writing.

Choose rich texts or portions of text that show the complexity of the writer's craft. Find examples of characterization that provide more than a single view of a character (through thoughts, actions, and words) and structures that examine multiple perspectives.

## **High**

In high school, students continue to analyze more complex literary texts. They begin to pay close attention to how an author structures the story by using elements such as flashbacks or parallel plots. Students notice that characters may have multiple or conflicting motivations. When reading informational text, students evaluate the author's claims by examining and critically evaluating the evidence provided. Students provide a complete analysis of the author's exposition or argument, and they evaluate whether each text's structure is effective in fulfilling the author's purpose for writing that particular text.

Choose texts with multiple plot structures, characters that are complex and evolving, rich texts with various levels of meaning and depth. Use texts that leave conflicts open-ended, ones that inspire students to make connections across texts, and those that provide a particular point of view or cultural experience.

### **Choosing Texts for Read Alouds**

Incorporating read alouds allows exposure to higher level text, as well as complex processing of these texts. When choosing a text to read aloud, consider the following:

Read alouds should be:

- Purposeful: they help meet the expectations of Standard 10 before students are asked to read on their own. Additionally, allowing for discussion and processing of ideas enables students to access the world in a rich way.
- Worth re-reading: texts should be complex and offer more with every reading. Returning to texts again and again allows students to more deeply explore their nuances.
- Connected and integrated across disciplines: careful selection of informational texts allows integration of social studies, the arts, and science. These connections enable students to anchor new learning to existing knowledge.
- A balance of informational and literary texts.
- Coherent: texts that are connected to other parts of a student's day allows for deeper understanding and learning. Including a number of texts within a topic grows knowledge and vocabulary faster than any other approach.
- Two-three grade levels above what students are able to read on their own: this allows them to become familiar with more complex syntax (words and phrases that form sentences).

### **Creating Text Sets**

The NCSCoS for ELA emphasizes close engagement with text and students building knowledge about the world. Utilizing text sets allows students to build a well-rounded perspective on topics of study, as well as build knowledge and vocabulary. Text sets are collections of texts organized around a topic of study or line of inquiry. A text set consists of a rich, complex anchor text that falls within the grade level complexity band. It is the most complex text in the set and is the focus for close reading with instructional supports. Additional texts in the set should be meaningfully connected to each other, build and support the understanding of the anchor text, consist of a range of text complexity, genres and formats, and allow for a deeper understanding of the topic.

For more information, please visit the Student Achievement Partners site at:

<https://achievethecore.org/>

In closing, instruction in the ELA classroom should be standards-focused and text-centered. Choosing the best text to use when teaching each standard demands careful consideration of several factors: the craft, significance, content, and complexity of the text as well as the readiness of the students to read, comprehend, connect with, and analyze the text. Purposeful, well-chosen texts allow educators to interweave the multiple strands of the ELA standards using rich texts as the basis of instruction or models for students to imitate.

## Resources

Resources can be found on the [ELA Wiki](#).