Read Like a Detective, Write Like a Reporter: Close Reading of Informational Texts

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Red Mountain Writing Project
More than 120 videos (all about 2 minutes long) in English and Spanish that detail Common Core expectations for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The short videos are meant to help educators and parents better understand what children should know how to do and when. These are great for K-8 teachers to preview, and are useful for Back to School nights with families. [http://www.greatschools.org/gk/milestones/](http://www.greatschools.org/gk/milestones/)
http://www.greatschools.org/gk/milestones/does-your-1st-grader-read-to-learn-like-this/

http://www.greatschools.org/gk/milestones/puede-su-hijo-aprender-de-lo-que-lee-en-1er-grado/?lang=es
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Ask and answer such questions to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

By the end of 2nd

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

By the end of 1st

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

By the end of K
Reading Closely Progression 3-5

By the end of 5th:
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

By the end of 4th:
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

By the end of 3rd:
Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
Anchor Standard 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
By the end of 2nd grade:
Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of 1st grade:
With prompting and support, read informational texts of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

By the end of K:
Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
By the end of 5th
Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

By the end of 4th
Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of 3rd
Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
Read closely... complex texts.

1

ELA/Literacy Standards 2-9

10
It’s not enough to have complex text in the room.
Working in isolation won’t get you breakthrough results.
The Secret?
Text-based discussion through close reading.
Read complex texts.
Discuss complex texts.
Compose complex texts.
Writing floats on a sea of talk.

~James Britton
Improved discussions translate to improved writing.
Text

Quantitative
Qualitative

Reader

Cognitive capabilities
Motivation
Knowledge
Experience

Task

Teacher-led
Peer-led
Independent
### Comparison of Former and CCR-Aligned Lexile Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Band</th>
<th>Former Lexile Range</th>
<th>CCR Aligned Lexile Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>450-725</td>
<td>420-820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>645-845</td>
<td>740-1010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>860-1010</td>
<td>925-1185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>960-1115</td>
<td>1050-1335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-CCR</td>
<td>1010-1220</td>
<td>1185-1385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syntax matters. 
Insert the word “only” anywhere in the following sentence:

She only told him that she loved him.
She told only him that she loved him.
She told him only that she loved him.
She told him that only she loved him.
She told him that she only loved him.
She told him that she loved only him.
One part of the cloud develops a downdraft. Rain begins to fall.

One part of the cloud develops a downdraft, which causes rain to fall.

McNamara, et al., 2002
**Hardest:** After being dropped from the plane, the bomb hit the ground. The explosion was quickly reported to the commander.

**Harder:** After being dropped from the plane, the bomb hit the ground and blew up. The explosion was quickly reported to the commander.

**Easy:** After being dropped from the plane, the bomb hit the ground and exploded. The explosion was quickly reported to the commander.

Yang, Perfetti, & Schmalhofer, 2007)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUN6-YG807g
What makes it complex?

- Density
- Organization
- Text Features

- Register
- Background knowledge
- Vocabulary
Reader

Cognitive capabilities
Motivation
Knowledge
Experience

Task

Teacher-led
Peer-led
Independent

Text

Quantitative
Qualitative
Want to motivate students?

Build their sense of competence.
Close reading

Text
Quantitative
Qualitative

Reader
Cognitive capabilities
Motivation
Knowledge
Experience

Task
Teacher-led
Peer-led
Independent
Close reading gives students time to develop unconstrained skills through guided instruction with complex texts.
Constrained Skills

Phonemic Awareness
Alphabatics
Phonics
Fluency  (pp. 64-65)
Unconstrained Skills

Comprehension

Vocabulary
Sticht and James (1984)
Constrained and unconstrained skills instruction must be present from the very beginning of school.
Students restricted to leveled text only fail to learn unconstrained skills.
Differences Between K-2 and 3-8?

In K-2, teacher reads aloud initially, annotates wholly or guides student annotation. Students may or may not eventually read independently, depending on text difficulty (e.g., *Wizard of Oz* in Kindergarten.)

In 3-8, students read independently beginning with first reading, and annotate with increased independence. Readers who cannot initially read independently may be read to, or may encounter the text previously during scaffolded small group reading instruction.
“Every book has a skeleton hidden between its covers. Your job as an analytic reader is to find it.”

Adler and Van Doren, 1940/1972
“X-ray the book”
Not every reading is a close one!

“X-ray the book”
Use a short passage.

“Read with a pencil”
Annotation is a note of any form made while reading text.

“Reading with a pencil.”
Foundational Annotation Skills

- **Underline** the major points.
- **Circle** keywords or phrases that are confusing or unknown to you.
- Write *margin notes* restating the author’s ideas.
Use a short passage
“Read with a pencil”
Repeated reading and discussion

Creating a Close Reading
Use a short passage
“Read with a pencil”
Repeated reading and discussion
Give your students the chance to struggle a bit
Use a short passage
“Read with a pencil”
Repeated reading and discussion
Give your students the chance to struggle a bit
Foster critical thinking with text-dependent questions
Creating a Close Reading
Progression of Text-dependent Questions

1. Key Details
2. General Understandings
3. Vocab & Text Structure
4. Author’s Craft and Purpose
5. Inferences
6. Opinions/Arguments, Intertextual Connections
Progression of Text-dependent Questions

- General Understandings
- Key Details
- Vocab & Text Structure
- Author’s Craft and Purpose
- Inferences
- Opinions/Arguments, Intertextual Connections

- Literal
- Structural
- Inferential
- Interpretive
Progression of Text-dependent Questions

- What does the text inspire you to do? (Interpretive)
- What does the text mean? (Inferential)
- How does the text work? (Structural)
- What does the text say? (Literal)

- Opinions/Arguments, Intertextual Connections
- Inferences
- Author’s Craft and Purpose
- Vocab & Text Structure
- Key Details
- General Understandings
Close Reading in Fifth Grade

Video available at www.engageny.org
What makes it complex?

Refer to the passage from *On Top of the World*. 

http://www.readingmaturity.com
The Top of the World: Climbing Mount Everest (Jenkins, 2002)

AD 890L
The Top of the World: Climbing Mount Everest

Mount Everest
Its summit is the highest point on Earth, 5 ½ miles above sea level. For thousands of years, the mountain has been a sacred place for those who live in its shadow. The rest of the world, however, wasn’t really aware of the mountain until about 180 years ago. Ever since that time, this peak has fascinated climbers, scientists, and adventurers. Many have tried to climb it. Some have succeeded, but many more have failed. Some have died trying.

Mount Everest is a place of great beauty, adventure, and danger. If you ever want to climb it, here are a few things to think about.

The Sherpas
Since the first British adventurers came to Nepal, a group of native people known as Sherpas has worked with climbers as guides and partners. They are famous for their strength, climbing skill, and honesty. Sherpas are born and raised in the mountains, so they are accustomed to the altitude and can work well high on the mountain.

Home Away from Home
Mount Everest’s cold, high winds, and heavy snowfall make the climb possible only during a few weeks in the late spring and summer. During those times, as many as several hundred climbers, guides, doctors, Sherpas, cooks, and others live in base camp, a tent city at the foot of the mountain. Waiting here for your chance to climb the mountain helps your body to acclimate, or get used to the lack of oxygen in the air.

Up and Down
At 29,000 feet, there is only one third as much oxygen as at sea level. In fact, if someone at sea level were suddenly transported to the top of Everest, he or she would die in a few minutes from the lack of oxygen. To prepare for the extremely thin air, you must make several round trips from base camp to higher and higher points on the mountain, sometimes spending the night before starting back down. Staying for increased periods of time high on the mountain helps keep you from getting altitude sickness on summit day.

The Summit
When you stand on top of Mount Everest, you are the highest thing on Earth. For most people, reaching this point is the reward of years of hard work and planning. You can’t stay long, though. Your body needs oxygen, which means getting back to a lower altitude quickly. Because you’re so exhausted, the descent is one of the most dangerous parts of the climb, so you’ll have to be very careful on the way down.


Top Maturity Words: sherpa, increased, accustomed, adventurers, native, succeeded, descent, transported
## Qualitative Analysis: The Top of the World

### What Makes It Accessible
- Vocabulary is concrete (e.g., easily visualized).
- Lots of connecting words and phrases (e.g., *however*, *Ever since that time*, *Since*, *In fact.*) These connecting terms link ideas.
- This deep cohesion facilitates comprehension.

### What Makes It Complex
- Less story-like (low narrativity)
- Little overlap in words and ideas between sentences.
- Little overlap means the reader has to do lots of inferences.
- Therefore, students need sufficient prior knowledge.
What extremes are encountered on and near Mount Everest?
Who are the Sherpas?
How do you know?
How do climbers get used to low oxygen levels?
How does the writer help you to understand what the terms *acclimate* and *summit* mean?
How does the heading “Home Away from Home” link to the information about base camps, even though the writer never repeats the phrase?
What is it about the Sherpas’s life that makes it possible for them to be on the mountain, when we’ve already been told that thin air can be fatal?
What kind of preparation would a climber need to ascend the mountain?
In this excerpt, the author doesn’t explain why the journey down the mountain can be the most dangerous part of the trip. How can you investigate this statement further?
What does the text inspire you to do? Interpretive

How do Sherpas live when they when it is not climbing season?
How do the other highest mountains on Earth compare to Everest in terms of climate and how people live?

What factors contribute to unsuccessful climbs?
Exit Slips

1. I'm Just learning (I need more help)
2. I'm Almost there! (I need more practice)
3. I OWN it! (I can work independently)
4. I'm a Pro! (I can teach others)
Our Work This Morning
Show them how to read like detectives, write like reporters.
Thank you!

www.fisherandfrey.com