



## Informational Text Comprehension and the Common Core Standards

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## Common Core State Standards

There are standards for

1. English Language Arts
2. Literacy in History/Social Studies,  
Science, and Technical Subjects

Numbers 1 and 2 are combined for grades  
K – 5.



## Common Core State Standards

“Part of the motivation behind the interdisciplinary approach to literacy promulgated by the Standards is extensive research establishing the need for college and career ready students to be proficient in reading complex informational text independently in a variety of content areas” (CCSS, p. 5).



## Informational Text in the CCSS

- There are 10 anchor standards for each area:
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Speaking and Listening
  - Language



## Informational Text in the CCSS

Grade-level standards involving informational text are found in all four major strands of the English Language Arts standards:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Language



## “Informational Text” in the CCSS

- Reading standards are divided into literature and informational text. The informational text reading standards for K – 5 are on pages 13 – 14.
- At K – 5 “informational text” is considered to include:
  - “Biographies” and “autobiographies”
  - “Books about history, social studies, science, and the arts” (expository informational text?)
  - “Technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps”
  - “Digital sources on a range of topics”

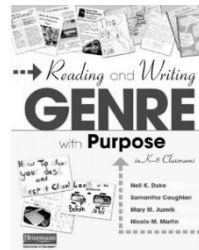


### “Informational Text” in the CCSS

- I **strongly** urge you to approach the CCSS not in terms of the broad category “informational text” but in terms of the specific types of text named within that.
- Why?
  - Some of these texts have very different purposes.
  - Some have very different features.
  - They require different strategies and processes.
  - It is not clear that proficiency with one will lead to proficiency with another.

(See Duke & Roberts, 2010, for a discussion of the genre-specific nature of reading comprehension.)

In this book, we focus on  
**narrative genres**  
**expository genres**  
**procedural genres**  
**persuasive genres**  
**dramatic genres**



Duke, N. K., Caughlan, S., Juzwik, M. M., & Martin, N. M. (2012). *Reading and writing genre with purpose in K–8 classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

### First Things First: Compelling Reasons to Comprehend Informational Text

- Second and third graders in classrooms in which informational text and procedural text reading involved more real-world texts for real-world purposes showed higher growth on several measures (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007).
- Contexts like these may have benefits for motivation and engagement (e.g., Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007).
- Although largely a ‘missing piece’ in the CCSS, developing students into lifelong readers and writers, inclined to read and write, should be a top priority.



### Real-world reasons for comprehending informational text

Students Comprehending (and Writing) NOT because	But rather, because
You told them to	They want to
You said it’s important for them to learn this	They see it as important or interesting
That way they can get a grade or pass a class	That way they can accomplish their purpose(s)
If they do, they’ll get a sticker on a chart	If they do, they will have succeeded with communicating with a real author or audience

### The Zoo Guide Project



Credit to Kathryn Roberts for curriculum development

### The Books of Hope Project

Kathleen Jayaraman, Teacher  
 (See Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012)





## From the CCSS

“To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students . . . learn to appreciate that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly to an external, sometimes unfamiliar audience, and they begin to adapt the form and content of their writing to accomplish a particular task and purpose” (p. 18).



## From the CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

- #4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



## Informational Text in the CCSS

Grade 2 standard under **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**:

By the end of year, 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.

Note: The CCSS asks for a 50/50 split of literature and informational text in grades K – 5 (p. 5).



## Literacy in Content Areas

- Content areas provide valuable opportunities to provide informational text experience and instruction.
- Content area learning benefits from inclusion of text. For example:
  - In Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading (see [seedsofscience.org](http://seedsofscience.org) for research and references), “little books” of a variety of types, including a number of information books, were added to GEMs inquiry-based science kits.
  - GEMs plus books outperformed GEMs alone in science learning and reading comprehension.



## Key Ideas and Details

Grade two children:

- Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.
- Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.



## Key Ideas and Details

Instructional Strategy: Book Reviews

- Create a real purpose and audience for the reviews (e.g., teacher down the hall is finding that too many children are not liking the information books they choose)
- Show book reviews for and by adults
- Show book reviews for and by children (e.g., <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/swyar/>)



### Key Ideas and Details

- Teach a common template, such as:
    - Title and Author of the Book
    - Name of the Reviewer
    - Engaging opening (e.g., Did you know that. . .?) about interesting facts from the book
    - Summary of the Book
    - Evaluation of the Book (e.g., “I liked this book because. . .”)
- (Notice that the template involves focusing on key ideas and details.)



### Key Ideas and Details

- Teach lessons on summarizing, with a particular focus on including the main topic, key ideas, and interesting details of the text.
- Coach children as they write their own reviews.
- Really follow through on the getting the reviews to their audience.



### Craft and Structure

(There are three standards under this. I will focus on one.)

Grade two children:

- Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in text efficiently.



### Craft and Structure

Instructional Strategy: Improve-a-text

- During read aloud or guided reading, engage children in noticing a feature missing from a published text that would make that text better, for example:
  - Add explanation of a word likely to be unfamiliar to readers
  - Add a entire glossary
  - Add a navigational feature (e.g., index, headings)
  - Add captions to photos or illustrations

Duke, N. K., Halladay, J. L., & Roberts, K. L. (invited, submitted). Reading informational text. In L. M. Morrow, T. Shanahan, & K. K. Wixson (Eds.), *Teaching with the Common Core Standards for English language Arts: What educators need to know* (Book 1: Grades PreK-2). New York: Guilford Press.



### Craft and Structure

Instructional Strategy: Improve-a-text

- With students, identify a feature missing from a published text that would make that text better, for example:
  - Add explanation of a word likely to be unfamiliar to readers
  - Add a entire glossary
  - Add a navigational feature (e.g., index, headings)
  - Add captions to photos or illustrations
- Be sure that the ‘improved’ texts are available to children in the classroom library or elsewhere in the room so that they can admire and use their handiwork at a later date.



### Craft and Structure

- Be sure that the ‘improved’ texts are available to children in the classroom library or elsewhere in the room so that they can admire and use their handiwork at a later date (and so that there is a real purpose and audience for their work).

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### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade two children:

- Explain how specific images (e.g., diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.
- Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.
- Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.



### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Instructional Strategy: Discussion

- ⊕ Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, and Alexander, (2009) analyzed 42 studies of discussion with comprehension outcomes.
- ⊕ Many approaches resulted in improved comprehension.
- ⊕ The nature of the impacts varied.
- ⊕ Some approaches that showed improved comprehension were:
  - ⊕ Instructional Conversations
  - ⊕ Philosophy for Children
  - ⊕ Questioning the Author.



### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Many effective approaches involve higher-order questions and follow-up questions as in: Higher-order questions
  - What do you think about . . . ?
  - Why do you think . . . ?
  - What does . . . . remind you of?
  - Have you ever . . . ?
  - What is the author. . . ?
  - If you were the author. . . ?



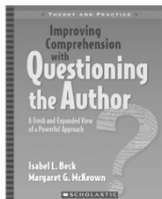
### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Follow-up questions
  - What makes you say that?
  - What did the author say about that?
  - Say more. . .
  - Do you agree with \_\_\_\_\_?
  - How does that connect with what \_\_\_\_\_ said?



### A Discussion-based Approach: QtA

- Questioning the Author (QtA) is one approach to fostering high quality discussion:
- See the following slides for examples of queries (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996, p. 389; reprinted in Duke, Bennett-Armistead, & Moses, 2003).



- For additional information, see
  - Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., Hamilton, R. L., & Kucan, L. (1997). *Questioning the author: An approach to enhancing student engagement with text*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
  - Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (2006). *Improving comprehension with Questioning the Author: A fresh and expanded view of a powerful approach*. New York: Scholastic.

### Queries to Guide Questioning-the-Author Discussions

Goal	Queries
Initiate the discussion	What is the author trying to say? What is the author's message? What is the author talking about?
Help students focus on the author's message	That is what the author says, but what does it mean?
Help students link information	How does that connect with what the author already told us? How does that fit in with what the author already told us? What information has the author added here that connects to or fits in with ___?

Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996

Queries to Guide Questioning-the-Author Discussions	
Goal	Queries
Identify difficulties with the way the author has presented information or ideas	Does that make sense? Is that said in a clear way? Did the author explain that clearly? Why or why not? What's missing? What do we need to figure out or find out?
Encourage students to refer to the text either because they've misinterpreted a text statement or to help them recognize that they've made an inference	Did the author tell us that? Did the author give us the answer to that?

Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996



See also. . .

## College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

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. [emphasis added]



## College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. [emphasis added]



## In Sum

- Informational text plays an enormous role in the CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.
- K – 5 students should be engaged in comprehending and informational text and for real-world purposes.
- There are many research-tested and research-based instructional strategies you can use to meet the CCSS related to comprehending informational text.

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