

Thinking about Text Complexity

Read the chart below, which summarizes the characteristics of low, medium, and high-complexity text.

Characteristics of Low-Complexity Text	Characteristics of Medium-Complexity Text	Characteristics of High-Complexity Text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single level of meaning • Clearly stated purpose • Simple, direct, conventional structure that makes the information more cohesive (such as chronological order in a narrative text) • Literal language • Experiences, events, and/or information is common or “everyday” to the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one level of meaning • Inferred or implied purpose • Mostly conventional structure that is more explicit than implicit • Some implied and/or inferred meanings and figurative language • Some experiences, events, and/or information is uncommon or unfamiliar to the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple levels of meaning • Unstated and/or obscure purpose • Unconventional or discipline-specific structure (for example, Toni Morrison’s <i>Beloved</i>, a narrative text, or an article in a professional journal such as <i>American Political Science Review</i>) • Figurative, ironic, and/or specialized vocabulary • Experiences, events, and/or information is complex, sophisticated, or highly unfamiliar to the reader