

READABILITY OF THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS 11-CCR TEXT EXEMPLARS:
A TEXT SEQUENCE REFERENCE GUIDE

by

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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled READABILITY OF THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS 11-CCR TEXT EXEMPLARS: A TEXT SEQUENCE REFERENCE GUIDE by Jenell A. Carapella, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Curriculum and Instruction in Inclusive Education, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the project.


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Abstract

For a smooth transition, secondary students must be equipped with the skills to navigate and comprehend texts associated with college and career readiness. Educators are concerned that a gap in text complexity may cause some students' lack in readiness. Although many factors play a part in students' comprehension of a text (e.g. readability, the purpose for reading, and motivation), readability statistics may predict comprehensibility. This research used the Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability formulas to evaluate the readability grade levels of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) 11-CCR text exemplars. Results indicate that CCSS texts were, on average, within the expected grade level band, informational texts are more complex than literary texts, and the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula evaluates the texts as less complex, on average, than the SMOG formula. The results informed the development of the Text Sequence Reference Guide that rank orders all 34 CCSS 11-CCR grade level texts according to their relative complexity. This reference guide may prove useful when developing an English Language Arts curriculum that aligns with the new standards.

Keywords: readability, Flesch-Kincaid, SMOG, Common Core State Standards

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Readability of the Common Core State Standards Grades 11-CCR Text Exemplars:

A Text Sequence Reference Guide

In order to effectively prepare the United States of America's next generation to be well equipped with the knowledge and skills to compete at the global level, the educational standards in every state must be equally rigorous. The education provided to our students must meet the evolving needs of each individual as well as prepare all students to be college and career-ready. Whether planning to attend post-secondary education, beginning a career in the United States Military, or entering the workforce, the education all students receive throughout their years in school must prepare them for the challenges they will inevitably face. In an effort to standardize the education in the United States as well as increase the level of rigor within public education curricula, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS) was developed and adopted by many states.

Prior to the Common Core State Standards, each state developed its own standards and assessments. Currently, the New York State Education Department utilizes the Board of Regents, a group of 17 professionals who work within of sub-committees and work groups to oversee all educational activities in the state including the New York State Learning Standards and Regents Examinations. The current chancellor of the Board of Regents is Merrill H. Tisch and the vice chancellor is Anthony S. Bottar. Because each state created and adopted its own set of standards as well as assessments, there is a wide variety in what students are expected to learn as well as little common ground for best practice development between state lines. The Common Core Standards provide teachers as well as parents a common understanding of what students need to learn in order to be college and career ready. Ideally, the standards may help to open a

dialogue about curricula and best practices as well as create opportunities for states to pool resources and collaborate on supporting materials and assessments.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has allowed teachers the opportunity to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards as well (“Common Core State,” 2012). Furthermore, the standards were developed with the help of teachers, school administrators, and other experts, to provide a consistent framework to prepare students for the demands associated with post-secondary education, the military, and the world of work (“NYLearns.org,” 2012).

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was established in 2007 in order to promote “content-rich liberal arts education in America’s K–12 schools” (“NYLearns.org,” 2012). Essentially, “the standards” were created with the goal that all students will be college or career ready by the end of grade 12. The group of educators and other professionals responsible for the standards seek to create curriculum tools and also “promote programs, policies, and initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels that provide students with challenging, rigorous instruction in the full range of liberal arts and sciences” (“NYLearns.org,” 2012). Ultimately, the standards represent another push to improve public education of the United States in order to create a workforce that is to complete in a global society.

Both the CCSSO and the NGA Center required that the standards possess the following four qualities: a) All standards must be research and evidence-based, b) they are aligned with the expectations found at the college and career levels, c) they are rigorous in nature, as well as d)

internationally benchmarked. It is important to mention that these standards are not static and are subject to change according to emerging research and other evidence-based practices. The CCSSO, NGA Center, as well as the active body of professionals who created the standards assert that achieving mastery of the standards will indicate that a student is college and career ready in a “twenty first century, globally competitive society” (“NYLearns.org,” 2012). This information was enough to convince the New York State officials as well as other states’ officials that the standards were the best option for meeting the educational needs of our students. In April 2009, New York State Governor David Paterson and former Education Commissioner Richard P. Mills signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) along with forty-nine states and territories to develop these standards (“History,” 2008). On September 21st, 2009, the NGA Center and CCSSO released the first official draft of the college- and career-readiness standards and asked for a period of public feedback ending on October 21st, 2009. The Board of Regents discussed New York’s involvement in the Common Core State Standards Initiative process and the impact on New York State at their October 13th, 2009 full board meeting (“History of,” 2008). By the 2012-2013 school year, it is expect that all English Language Arts and Mathematics instruction be aligned to the new Common Core State Standards (“Common Core,” 2012). At the present, this may be a major shift in instructional practices for some teachers while other teachers may already be teaching according to the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core™ Curriculum Mapping Project was developed by teacher and for teachers in order to effectively meet some newly emerging curriculum development needs. This proprietary curriculum mapping service can be found online at: www.commoncore.org/maps. It is operated by the Common Core, Inc. and is funded in part by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation.

Changes from Previous Framework

Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang (2011) inform that the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) was not directly involved in creating the standards; however, developing and adopting a common set of standards is included among the criteria in the scoring rubric used to grant awards in the Race to the Top competition. In addition, the USDE recently awarded three hundred and thirty million dollars in Race to the Top funds to two consortia, representing the majority of states, to help develop assessments aligned with the common standards. The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Coalition, representing 31 states, received one hundred and sixty million dollars, and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, representing 26 states, received one hundred and seventy million dollars (12 states are members of both consortia). These researchers set out the measure how much change will take place between the current framework and the Common Core standards as well as describing the nature of the changes. One conclusion drawn from this research indicates that "the new standards represent substantial change from what states are currently requiring in their standards as well as what they are testing. The standards are marginally more focused in mathematics but this pattern is not present in the English Language Arts-related materials. These researchers also indicated that "the Common Core standards are also different from the standards of countries with higher student achievement, and they are different from what U.S. teachers report they are currently teaching" (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011).

Common Core™ Curriculum Mapping Project

The Common Core™ Curriculum Mapping Project offers members "high-quality, low-cost curriculum tools based on the Common Core State Standards... and are designed to help K-12 educators create the kind of 'well-developed, content-rich curriculum' called for in the Common

Core State Standards” (“Map Description,” 2012). For an annual membership fee of twenty dollars, teachers can have access to digital copies of 76 comprehensive and CCSS-aligned English Language Arts units from Kindergarten to grade 12. Each unit is divided into eleven components. Those components include:

- *focus standards* that tell how the unit is meeting which Common Core State Standard;
- *essential questions* that draw attention to the area of inquiry of the unit;
- *student objectives* which identify exactly what students will be expected to learn and do;
- *suggested activities and assessments* that outline daily class work and evaluations;
- *sample lessons* that guide the teacher through the natural progression of the unit;
- *terminology lists* for indicates vocabulary that students must know to maximize success;
- *a pacing guide for K-2 reading instruction* to ensure that comprehension is maximized;
- *a 13-step process for a senior research paper* for research writing preparation;
- *a library of digital resources*;
- *CCSS-based art and music activities* to maximize cross-curricular experiences;
- *a glossary of more than 375 English Language Arts terms*

Each unit includes suggested literary texts and informational texts. The literary texts may be comprised of poems, prose, short stories, novels, folk tales, and plays. The informational texts may consist of government documents, essays, speeches, historical fiction, biographies, and autobiographies. These unit plans are said to be aligned with the Common Core State Standards as well as match the complexity of those indicated in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The Common Core™ Curriculum Mapping Project materials may be

utilized in its entirety as an instructional road map or may be used as exemplar for modifying previously developed unit maps.

CCSS Appendix B

This document associated with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects illustrates texts that exemplify the level of complexity that the standards require students of grades 11 and 12 to work with. The works listed serve as “useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality, and range for their own classrooms. Additionally, they are suggestive of the breadth of texts that students should encounter in the text types required by the standards”

(“Common Core Appendix B,” 2010). This document can be found online at:

http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf . Some of the literary texts include the following authors and titles:

- Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (late 14th century);
- Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605);
- Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813);
- Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846);
- Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1848);
- Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850);
- Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866);
- Sarah Orne Jewett’s “A White Heron” (1886);
- Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1886);
- Anton Chekhov’s “Home” (1887);
- F Scot Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925);

- Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929);
- William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930);
- Zora Heale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God" (1937);
- Jorge Luis Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1941);
- Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992);
- Lhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003);

Some of the informational texts include the following authors and titles:

- Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776);
- Thomas Jefferson's *The Declaration of Independence* (1776);
- The United States Bill of Rights (1791);
- Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835);
- "Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference" edited by Daniel J Boorstin (1848);
- Fredrick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852);
- Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854);
- Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Society and Solitude" (1857);
- Horace Porter's "Lee Surrenders to Grant, April 9th 1865" (1865);
- G. K. Chesterton's "The Fallacy of Success" (1909);
- H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* (1938);
- Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (1945);
- Richard Hofstadter's "Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth" (1948);
- Ellen Condliffe Lagemann's "Education" (1991);
- Rudolfo Anaya's "Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry" (1995);

- James M. McPherson's *What They Fought for 1861-1865* (1994);
- Akhail Reed Amar's *American's Constitution: A Biography*, David McCullough's *1776* (2005)

Theoretical Framework

To ensure that texts are presented to students in a pedagogically responsible manner, educators and parents must have an understanding of two types of information: a) what texts are considered highly complex and will provide students an opportunity to develop reading skills for success at the college and career level, and b) an investigation of the range of predictive level of difficulty that students will experience with these texts. Woods, Bruner, and Ross (1974) consider the theory of educational scaffolding as the “process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (p. 90). Scaffolding is only useful within a student's ‘zone of proximal development,’ the zone where students can't continue learning alone but are able to continue with guidance from an instructor (Rosenshine and Meister, 1992, p. 26). The text sequence identified in the present study may help to provide evidence-based information for curriculum developers interested in scaffolding texts from least complex to most complex.

Selecting appropriate texts according to students' ability, background knowledge, interests, and motivations is a difficult task for educators as well as parents. One method that can help to eliminate the ambiguity in this process is to evaluate a text for its readability level. Readability can be defined as the predicted ease in which a reader can comprehend a text or the degree to which a class of people finds certain reading material compelling and comprehensible (Fry, 2002; McLaughlin, 1969; Oakland & Lane, 2004). Most readability formulas present a numerical or grade-level score calculated by applying a mathematical formula to a few samples

from a written work. This grade-level predicts the probability that a typical student of the specified grade will be able to effectively comprehend the text. Moreover, comprehension is defined differently by a variety of esteemed researchers. Most require 50% to 75% comprehension to consider a text to be at a certain grade level (Flesch, 1948). Other formulas, specifically McLaughlin's SMOG readability formula, require a strict criterion of 100% comprehension to assume a text is comprehensible by an average student of a specific grade level (McLaughlin, 1969).

The aforementioned texts possess a high level of complexity and are certainly a component of any rigorous high school curriculum. It is also without question that students who are able to comprehend and work with these texts possess both college and career level literacy skills. Although the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects provides text exemplars and sample performance tasks, this document does not provide guidance for teachers, curriculum coordinators, administrators, and parents as to each text's individual level of complexity. Additionally, only a few of the literary and informational texts are provided with a Lexile® band at www.lexile.com. So what, exactly, is the readability grade level for the Common Core State Standards Initiative Appendix B texts? This researcher will identify the aforementioned text's readability grade level using the Flesch-Kincaid Readability formula and SMOG Grading formula for two reasons: a) to identify the grade level band, or range, that each text represents, and b) to identify an evidence-based text sequence that educators can help to inform themselves when developing grades 11-CCR English Language Arts curricula that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Three hypotheses are made: a) the Grades 11-CCR texts exemplars sampled from the CCSS Appendix B will, on average, be at or above grade, b)

the informational texts will have a higher range of readability grade level than the literary texts,
c) The Flesch-Kincaid readability grade levels will be, on average, lower than the SMOG readability grade levels.

Literature Review

This literature review represents a comprehensive overview of the relevant scholarship in a) the current *gap in text complexity* concerning secondary and post-secondary readings, b) the scholarship regarding *student learning in relation to text complexity*, and c) the established *readability formulas*. The gap in complexity between the texts assigned at the secondary and post-secondary levels is important to discuss because it indicates a need for change as well as supports the level of complex texts illustrated in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects document. The Flesch-Kincaid, Dale-Chall, Lorge, and SMOG readability formulas, as well as the Lexile Framework will be described so as to clarify the purpose for using two of these formulas as appropriate means of text evaluation. The research on text complexity and student learning is including in this literature review because it speaks directly to the consequences of assigning the highly complex texts illustrated in Appendix B. The present study seeks to evaluate the readability levels of the Common Core State Standards Initiative Appendix B texts. This evaluation will inform the development of a reference guide for educators that outlines a logical sequence of these texts from least to most textually complex (easy to difficult) according to their average readability grade level. This reference guide can be used by for teachers, curriculum coordinators, and administrators when developing a grades 11-CCR curriculum that aligns with the standards. This reference guide can also help students and parents

who are particularly interested in increasing exposure to texts considered to be at the college and career level.

Gap in Text Complexity

Williamson (2008) explicitly acknowledged that most texts found at the secondary level are less difficult to read than those assigned at the post-secondary level or texts found in the world of work. High school students whose abilities were at the highly skilled end of the high school spectrum were able to work with post-secondary texts with ease, but average readers may be able to comprehend as little as five percent of those texts after high school graduation. In addition to this, the ACT (which originally stood for American College Testing) indicates that “students who can read complex texts are more likely to be ready for college. Those who cannot read complex texts are less likely to be ready for college” (“ACT,” 2006, p. 11). Williamson contends that high school students should be exposed to more demanding texts in high school, and they should be provided with support for learning the reading skills necessary for reading post-secondary materials (Williamson, 2008, p. 603).

The Lexile® Framework for Reading was utilized in Williamson’s study to determine the readability measures of four types of texts. These types included: a) secondary level texts that were identified in a digital library compiled by MetaMatrix, Inc, b) texts associated with the United States Army, c) texts necessary to read and understand to gain citizenship status, as well as d) texts found in undergraduate admissions tests and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). It is important to indicate that the Lexile® Framework for Reading measures both reader ability as well as text complexity on a common scale. A text can be measured through computer software that considers both syntactic and semantic features and the associated scale ranges from 200L-1700L. The typical reader at the grade 11-CCR level can comprehend a text with a lexile

range from 940L to 1210L. The texts required for many college and career-related texts fall within a lexile range of 1200L to 1400L (“MetaMatrix,” 2012). Table 1 below represents a grade level equivalent to a lexile score range or band. Students who fall in the 25th to 75th during the middle of grade 9 are predicted to comprehend a text with a lexile band of 855L to 1165L. The typical grade 10 readers are predicted to comprehend a text with a lexile band of 905L to 1195L, and grade 11 through CCR readers are predicted to comprehend a text with a lexile band of 940L to 1210L.

Table 1

Lexile® Framework Typical Reader Measures by Grade

Grade	Reader Measures, Mid-Year 25th percentile to 75th percentile (IQR)
1	Up to 300L
2	140L to 500L
3	330L to 700L
4	445L to 810L
5	565L to 910L
6	665L to 1000L
7	735L to 1065L
8	805L to 1100L
9	855L to 1165L
10	905L to 1195L
11 and 12	940L to 1210L

(“MetaMatrix,” 2012).

An analysis of variance of these text collections indicates a statistically significant gap in text complexity “in terms of their semantic familiarity and syntactic complexity” (Williamson, 2008, p. 620). This information is important but critics of the Lexile® Framework question the developer’s intentions. Heibert (2009) informs that "developers retained the processing of

readability as intellectual property, requiring educators and other clients to pay for their services to obtain readability levels" (p. 6). Heibert also made mention of the primary difference between previously published readability work and that of the Lexile® Framework, particularly, "the semantic component was no longer accessible to users of the readability formula. While clients are told that students' performances on a Lexile-developed assessment predict reading level, it is impossible to establish what students would need to be taught in terms of vocabulary to progress to the next grade level" (p. 14). In addition to the criticism by Heibert (2009), Stenner, Burdick, Sanford, and Burdick (2006) stated that text difficulty according to the Framework is established by theory rather than empiricism. The Lexile® Framework for Reading was excluded from the methodology of the present study for two reasons: a) the Lexile score could be identified for only a portion of the CCSS Appendix B texts, and b) a Lexile score cannot be calculated manually because its multifaceted formula is proprietary. Appendix A of the present study does not provide Lexile data, but some of the texts can be found using the "Quick Book Search" function on the Lexile® Framework website. This researcher suggests that an alignment between the texts associated with high school study and those found in the post-secondary world could help some students to make this transition with less difficulty. The texts illustrated in the CCSS Appendix B may help to bridge the gap concerning the issue of text complexity.

Contrary to Williamson's (2008) position that students must be presented with complex texts in order to prepare for those associated with the post-secondary world, Byrne's (2008) article titled "Writing Government policies and Procedures in Plain Language" considered that government documents should be "reader oriented instead of writer oriented" (p. 88). Byrne indicates that the push for plain language in government documents continued through the work of President Clinton's administration who called for bureaucratic writing reform in order to make

these documents more accessible to the general population. United States President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address has a Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of 10.3 and William Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech results in grade level 8.8. Meyer (2012) asserts that these speeches were given by "good communicators" because they were written at a level that most Americans can fully comprehend. Although the plain language movement regarding government documents is understandable, this seems like an unrealistic and perhaps detrimental method of providing more people with access to important text-based information.

Student Learning in relation to Text Complexity

The scholarship on student learning in relation to text complexity is both important and vast, and a few relevant studies are discussed here (Kotula, 2003; Oakland & Lane, 2004; O'Connor, Bell, Harty, Larkin, Sackor, & Zigmond, 2002; Wehby, Canale, Go, & Symons, 1998). Oakland and Lane (2004) examined issues pertaining to language and reading while developing and adapting tests. Their work identified both textual factors and reader factors that contribute to a text's difficulty. The four factors associated with the individual reader include: a) the reader's *fluency*, b) their *background knowledge* on the topic, c) the reader's syntactic and semantic *language* abilities, and d) the reader's *motivation and engagement* with the specific text. The four textual factors include: a) the *syntax* or the complexity and length of the sentences, b) the use of simple or challenging *vocabulary*, c) *idea density* or the abstract nature of the concepts in the text, and d) *cognitive load*, which refers to the amount of analysis, reasoning, and critique required to fully comprehend a text. Oakland and Lane (2004) indicated that a complete description of text difficulty should include both subjective and objective factors; essentially, both quantitative and qualitative data must be gathered in order to illustrate a more accurate measure of readability.

Student learning in relation to text complexity becomes more complicated when considering the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Wehby et al. (1998) studied the teaching practices in classrooms for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. These students are most likely to become frustrated and may engage in avoidance behaviors when presented with “information and materials beyond their current skill level” (p. 18). This information is important when considering the sequence that complex texts are presented to students as well as whether students have the skills necessary to unpack these difficult texts independently and proficiently. The research of Wehby et al. (1998) illustrated the need for all English Language Arts teachers to have a solid understanding of each student’s reading strengths and deficits in order minimize student frustration and avoidance behaviors when working with complex texts in the classroom.

Some previous research provides valuable intervention suggestions for practicing teachers. The experimental research of O’Connor et al. (2002) compared the influence of text difficulty on the growth of poor middle school readers’ abilities over 18 weeks of one-to-one tutoring. The results of this study indicated that the one-to-one tutoring experimental condition positively and significantly impacted oral reading fluency in poor readers; however, this occurred only when the students were read texts at their reading level. This increase in reading fluency did not occur in the condition where students received traditional reading interventions. Additionally, students in the tutoring condition who began with lower fluency made stronger gains when the texts matched their reading abilities compared to students who began with texts above their reading ability. Furthermore, these results indicate that matching reader ability with text difficult will positively impact oral fluency. Educators should be cautious when selecting complex texts, such as those illustrated in Appendix A, when designing oral fluency remediation

strategies for struggling readers. A replication study is necessary to conclude that similar gains in reading fluency can be predicted at the high school level. Similar results have been identified with adult basic education students (Winn, Skinner, Oliver, Hale, & Ziegler, 2006).

Having background knowledge of each student's reading strengths and deficits is essential for many reasons. Kotula (2003) discussed the importance of matching readers to instructional materials and indicated that readability measures can be utilized in doing so. This research focuses on the specific reading challenges of students with language learning disabilities as well as dyslexia. The Spache Readability Formula, New Dale-Chall Readability Formula, and the *Qualitative Assessment of Text Difficulty* were discussed along with their application in assisting students requiring "reading material at a third-grade level for accuracy, a fifth-grade level for fluency, and a sixth-grade level for accuracy, inferential thinking, word meanings, and conceptual knowledge" (p. 190). This research is relevant to the present study because it supports the idea that students with learning disabilities are at a disadvantage and it is imperative to provide these students with texts that match their abilities in order to maximize their independent and proficient reading. Similarly to the caveat regarding the work of O'Connor et al. (2002), educators should be careful when assigning complex texts, such as those illustrated in Appendix A, when considering the specific reading needs of students with language learning disorders including dyslexia. These students may need additional scaffolding to fully unpack the complex texts at or above their grade level.

Additional research was identified in support of using quantitative text features to evaluate a text's complexity when time and ease are important factors. Gunning (2003) provided additional support for the use of readability formulas to assess the complexity of texts as well as highlighted the importance of matching "students with materials on the appropriate level of

challenge” (p. 175). This study illustrated that educators should use a multifaceted method of text assessment and to consider both subjective and objective factors when matching student to text. Additionally, it provided insight and recommendations for using readability and leveling systems as a way of identifying textual difficulties where students might require additionally scaffolding strategies to read independently and proficiently.

Sperling (2006) presented a checklist that teachers can use for deciding which instructional materials to include in content area instruction. The “Evaluating a Text Source for Learners in the Content Areas” checklist addresses both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of text complexity as well as student-related measures. Sperling’s (2006) checklist is provided below.

Table 2

Evaluating a Text For Learners in the Content Area Checklist

<p>___ 1. Is the text source appropriate for your objectives?</p> <p>___ 2. Are objectives stated, or are students clearly told what they are to learn from the text?</p> <p>___ 3. Does students’ prior knowledge support comprehension of the content?</p> <p>___ 4. Is the readability of the text appropriate for the learners?</p> <p>___ 5. Is the vocabulary level appropriate for the students? Consider both domain-specific vocabulary and domain-general vocabulary.</p> <p>___ 6. Is information that is provided only from this text source something that the learners will need to independently comprehend?</p> <p>___ 7. Are there appropriate text-based activities?</p> <p>___ 8. Are text supplements redundant or independent of the text content?</p> <p>___ 9. Is this text source commensurate with other sources that might be provided to either more- or less-able learners?</p> <p>___ 10. Is this text source interesting or motivating for the learners?</p>
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(Sperling, 2006, p. 139)

It asked teacher to first identify learners' prior knowledge, vocabulary levels, and motivation levels. In addition to reader-based dimensions, text characteristics, such as the inclusion of supplemental instructional materials, readability, and the use of objectives, examples, and analogies, were also addressed.

Some studies (Gunning; 2003; Kotula; 2003; O'Connor et al., 2002; Wehby et al., 1998) represent research on the importance of matching student ability to text complexity, particularly when considering the needs of students with disabilities. By doing so, teachers may maximize comprehension and minimize behavior problems in the classroom. Secondly, one-on-one tutoring can help to improve oral fluency when students are provided with texts at their reading level. One study provided a checklist of teachers to use when evaluating if a text is appropriate for students (Sperling, 2006). Ideally, educators should use both quantitative and qualitative measures when selecting texts for students (Oakland & Lane, 2004).

Readability Formulas

During the 1920s in the United States, more students were continuing their education to the secondary level. Because these learners lacked a strong reading background, it became necessary to evaluate texts for their level of complexity to meet the varying needs of the new yet differentiated population of secondary students (Ulusoy, 2006). This trend can now be seen at the post-secondary level as more students are attending college than ever before. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2012), undergraduate enrollment increased by thirty nine percent between the years of 1999 and 2009. It is necessary for educators to adapt and prepare this new and differentiated population for success at the post-secondary level, particularly success at the college level.

Readability can be defined as the ease in which a reader can comprehend a text or the degree to which a class of people finds certain reading material compelling and comprehensible (Fry, 2002; McLaughlin, 1969; Oakland & Lane, 2004). These formulas evaluate a number of different components of text and for a number of different purposes. Researchers indicated that “the classic readability formulas predict comprehension. Most do so by providing a numerical score representing the educational level necessary to read a document with ranges of 50% to 75% comprehension” (Burke and Greenberg, 2010, p. 351; McLaughlin, 1974). Chall and Dale (1995) explained that the beginning of readability research has roots in two areas- studies of vocabulary control and studies of readability measurement” (p. 2). The literature can be divided into qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative approaches, including vocabulary control studies, where new words in texts as well as their repetition and level of difficulty were investigated. Essentially, vocabulary control and most readability studies have a similar purpose- they seek to evaluate texts for instructional purposes. Qualitative approaches take into account that average number polysyllabic words in a text sample, structure, coherence, cohesion, as well as the reader’s background knowledge, motivation level, and purpose for reading will all impact a text’s readability level (Ulosoy, 2006). Recently, United States presidential speeches and other historical documents were evaluated using the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula and found them to be considered at a low readability level. Meyer (2012) stated that these speeches were given by what he refers to as “good communicators” because they were written at a level the general population can comprehend.

One purpose for using readability formulas concerned the evaluation of standardized test items for validity. Hewitt and Homan (2004) developed and applied the Homan Hewitt readability formula to items found in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade standardized tests. They found a

negative correlation between test item readability level and incorrect responses to the item. In essence, these researchers asserted that students may be missing questions not because of a lack of content knowledge but because of an underlying reading problem. This study highlights that individual test item validity is rarely assessed and these findings provide a new viewpoint of standardized test validity. These results may draw into question the financial decisions that are made on the basis of schools' standardized test scores but may lack reliability. Other researchers draw into question the methodology behind grouping several test items together to produce enough text to apply a readability formula (Oakland & Lane, 2004). This procedure does not yield accurate information about individual test items. The Homan Hewitt readability formula has been excluded from the present study's methodology because it was used to evaluate test items and has been seriously questioned by other researchers in this field.

Another purpose for using readability formulas is to evaluate the approximate difficulty the general public will experience when reading online health care-related information. Arnott Smith, Hetzel, Dalrymple, and Keselman (2011) used the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula built into Microsoft Word® to ensure that the grade level did not increase when they modified the coherence (connectedness of ideas) of online health care texts in one of the arms of their intervention. They found that improving text coherence had little impact on consumer's comprehension of the clinical text as measured by propositional analysis, an open-ended questionnaire, and analysis of the number of errors made. Readability formulas are used in many domains including the military, health care and insurance industries to regulate the complexity of texts. Readability grade level should be considered when creating reader-friendly texts for the general public, but additional factors will clearly impact the comprehension of these complex texts.

Edgar Dale and Jeanne S. Chall began their work in readability in the 1940s when this period of war made it necessary to disseminate important information to a large and diverse population of citizens. A practical and objective means of measuring a text's (newspaper, war bond, medical pamphlet, tax form) readability was needed. Dale and Chall considered both Irving Lorge's formula as well as Rodolf Flesch's work when developing an improved formula of their own (Dale & Chall, 1948). The Dale-Chall readability formula "has consistently been most reliable" and has a correlation coefficient of .92" (as stated in DuBay, 2007, p.61). However, this formula has a large stand error or prediction range of 3 grade levels (McLaughlin, 1969). Their work considered the different components of readability as well as the difficulty in assessing readability according to sentence length as well as familiar words. This two-factor formula uses vocabulary load (relative number of words outside the Dale-Chall list of 3,000 familiar words) and average sentence length to predict a text's readability. The Dale-Chall list of 3,000 familiar words is not provided in Table 1 or 2 the present study but can be located in in several published works including *The Classic Readability Studies* (DuBay, 2007, p. 85). These factors are used to calculate a raw score and convert that score to a grade-level equivalency range. The Dale-Chall Formula is represented as :

$$\text{Grade Level} = 0.1579D + 0.496 sl + 3.6365$$

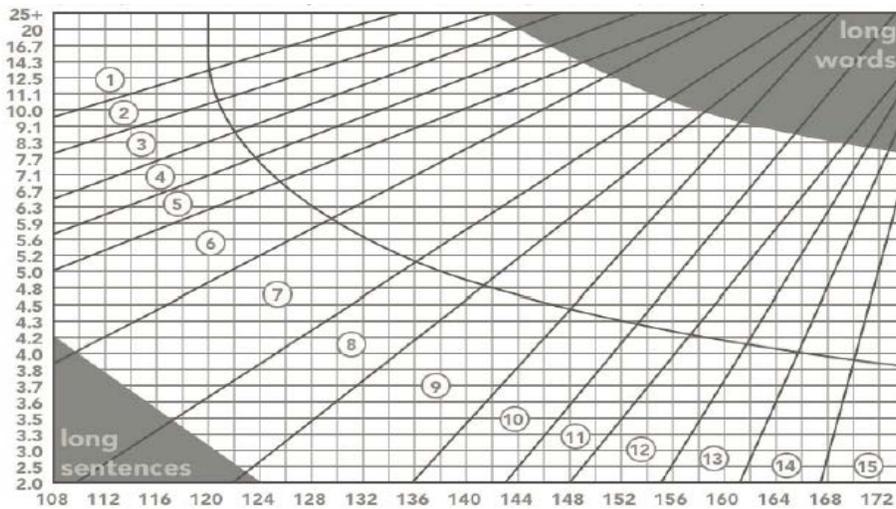
Where "D" equals the Percent of Words not in the Dale list of easy words; sl equals the average number of words in a sentence. A 100-word text sample can be pasted into a text box for evaluation at the Okapi!, www.interventioncentral.org, website (Burke, & Greenberg, 2010). Additionally, they questioned these factors as used independently because very short sentences can be as difficult to read as very long sentences, and familiar words may pose difficulty for a reader when they are used in a symbolic manner. These researchers also indicated that "the nature of the difficulty of a given piece of writing depends to

a great extent upon what we expect the reader to get out of the material” (as stated in DuBay, 2007, p. 73). Furthermore, Dale and Chall provided insight into the multifaceted nature of readability and used the work of Lorge and Flesch to create what they asserted to be an improved formula for assessing the readability of texts. Although this formula is both reliable and validated, Burke and Greenberg (2010) suggest that it be used at the upper elementary level. This researcher suggests that the Dale-Chall readability formula be utilized if the present study was replicated at the elementary level.

Similarly to Dale and Chall (1995), Fry (2002) developed a readability formula that uses both sentence and word length to determine semantic and syntactic difficulty. This formula can be performed without the use of computer software. One needs to identify the average number of words per sentence and average number of syllables per word in three 100-word text samples from the beginning, middle and end of a document. Two values must be calculated in order for the Fry graph to be used. First, calculate the average number of syllables per 100 words using the following formula: $100 \times syl/w$ where *syl* represents the total number of syllables and *w* represents the total number of words. Next, calculate the average number of sentences per 100 words. The formula is: $100 \times NS/W$. This information should be averaged across the three samples and graphed. Figure 1 represents the Fry Readability Graph. The average number of syllables can be found on the x-axis and the average number of sentences can be found on the y-axis. The intersection of these two data points will indicate a text’s readability grade level. For instance, a text with an average number of syllables of 150 and an average number of sentences of 3.7 is identified on the Fry Readability Graph as a grade 11 text. The Fry graph cannot be used to evaluate text samples with long words and long sentences as indicated by the gray areas of the graph.

Figure 1

Fry Readability Graph



(“Psychassessment.com.au”)

The California State University website provides online graphing software that uses the intersection of the two points to identify the grade level associated with the text. This formula’s function is most typically associated with regulatory purposes. Specifically, the regulation of healthcare documents restricts their readability in order for their comprehension by a large audience. Additionally, it is suggested that a different readability formula be used to assess a text’s complexity when the intersection falls in a shaded area of the graph (Burke, & Greenberg, 2010). These stipulations disqualified the Fry readability formula from the present study’s methodology.

Irving Lorge (1944) begins with the complex notion that “what a person understands of the material he reads depends upon his general reading ability and the readability of the text he is reading. His reading ability, moreover, depends upon his intelligence, education, environment, and upon his interest and purpose in reading” (as stated in DuBay, 2007, p. 46). He used this notion as the foundation for the development of the Lorge readability formula, which is based

upon the comprehension of passages by school children. The formula is derived from responses to five categories of questions: a) providing specific details in a text, b) general import, c) appreciation of the text, d) knowledge of vocabulary, and e) understanding of concepts. This research indicated that the formula overestimates the level of complexity when it is read for appreciation or general import whereas it underestimates the level of complexity when read for specific details or for following directions [concept]. This readability formula estimates the reading grade level of texts when an average student is able to correctly answer questions in the aforementioned categories 75% of the time. The purpose of this is to evaluate the grade level of texts but can be used to simplify texts. This takes place by substituting simple sentences for prepositional phrase as well as reducing the level of complex vocabulary. Lorge worked with Edward Thorndike to improve Thorndike's previously published *A Teacher's Word Book of the Twenty Thousand Words Found Most Frequently and Widely in General Reading for Children and Young People* (1932). Both believed that vocabulary is the most important factor in text difficulty and that this difficulty can be controlled by substituting words with an assumed lower level of difficulty (as stated in DuBay, 2007, p. 49).

Lorge (1944) provided the "Formula for Estimating Grade Placement of Reading Material" worksheet where educators can organize the components necessary for using the formula to evaluate a 100-word text sample. This requires the counting of the number of words, sentences, prepositional phrases, and hard words in the sample (those words not found on the Dale List of 769 Easy Words, a precursor to their list of 3,000 words). Simple computations are used to identify the text's readability index. Although this formula may prove valuable for an educator interested in identifying the grade level of a few tests, the present researcher has deemed it impractical to evaluate the breadth of texts identified for evaluation in this study. Additionally,

the constant identified in Lorge's (1944) computations operates using the initial, and outdated, Dale List of 769 Easy Words.

Two of the most common indexes for assessing text complexity are the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula and the Flesch Reading Ease formula. Burke and Greenberg (2010) assure that they are appropriate for evaluating text written in sentence and paragraph form and can be used for all grade levels. The Flesch-Kincaid readability formula was born out of the Flesch Reading Ease formula developed Rudolf Flesch in 1948 (Kamil et al., 2011). In 1975, J. Peter Kincaid tested the reading comprehension of more than 500 United States Navy employees using passages from military training manuals. These results helped to inform the development of the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, which provides reading grade-level scores. The resulting Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is used by the U.S. military, among other groups, for the regulating the texts of their technical manuals (Kamil et al., 2011).

The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula is based upon sentence length and word length. It evaluates running narrative texts and predicts the ease at which a text is read. The Flesch-Kincaid formula was designed for adult material, tested on adult readers, and can be used to evaluate material for all grade levels (Otto Stockmeyer, 2009). The criterion used in both the original formula as well as the revised formula was McCall-Crabbs' Standard test lessons in reading. The formula was developed so that it predicted the average grade level of a student who was able to correctly answer 75% of a passage's questions (Flesch, 1948). It should be noted that to make the prediction more accurate, 13 of the 376 McCall-Crabbs' passages that contained poetry, or mathematical problems were omitted from the revised Flesch analysis because the formula was developed to evaluate prose comprehension. The same omission was practiced in

the methodology of the present study as the drama and poetry subsections of the CCSS Appendix B were not considered for evaluation purposes.

Plucinski, Olsavsky, and Hall, (2009) provide a description of the formula and used it exclusively to assess the readability of college-level accounting textbooks. These researchers evaluated seven commonly assigned textbooks to identify the level of complexity at which each text was written in order to provide professors with information in which they can use when deciding on an accounting textbook to assign. The use of this formula is so ubiquitous that it is available in the Microsoft Word® spelling and grammar check function. These researchers accessed a sample of text from each of the seven textbooks and identified several psycholinguistic elements of each text using the computer software built into Microsoft Word®.

The Flesch-Kincaid readability formula is represented as in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Flesch-Kincaid Readability Formula

$$0.39 \left(\frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) + 11.8 \left(\frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right) - 15.59$$

(Kamil et al., 2011; Plucinski, Olsavsky, & Hall, 2009)

Evaluators may choose to identify the Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of a text by using Microsoft Word® (Arnott et al., 2011; Fitzsimmons, Michael, Hulley, & Scott, 2010; Heydari & Riazi, 2012; Meyer 2012, Plucinski, 2010; Plucinski, Olsavsky, & Hall, 2009). The directions require three steps. Select three samples of one hundred consecutive words from the beginning, one hundred from the middle and one hundred from the end of a text and type or paste them into a Microsoft Word® document. The evaluator must manually remove any hard returns or abbreviations with periods (Burke & Greenberg, 2010). Lastly, running a spelling and

grammar check on the document will provide information on: number of words, characters, paragraphs, sentences, sentences per paragraph, words per sentence, characters per word, percentage of passive sentences, Flesch Reading Ease, and Flesch-Kincaid grade level. The Flesch-Kincaid readability formula is included in the methodology of the present study for three reasons: a) it is widely used and validated, b) it is built into commonly used computer software, and c) it represents a readability formula that tends to underestimate the difficulty of texts (Burke & Greenberg, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2010).

Flesch's formula is not the only highly recognized and utilized method of evaluated text readability. G. Harry McLaughlin developed and published the SMOG readability formula in 1969. He claimed that "the linguistic measures which have been found to have greatest predictive power are word and sentence length... [these measures are] indicators of semantic and syntactic sources of reading difficulty" (McLaughlin, 1969, p. 640). Additionally, the formula "best expresses the relationship between two variables...difficulty experienced by people reading a given text, and a measure of the linguistic characteristics of that text" (p. 640). Similarly to the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, SMOG estimates the years of education needed to comprehend a text, and this is provided in reading grade-level form. However, the McLaughlin found a law relating the number of syllables in a passage to the percentage of polysyllabic words, defined as words of three or more syllables. For practical purposes, the total number of syllables per one hundred words may be calculated by this rule of thumb: multiply the number of polysyllabic word by 3 and add 112 (1969, p. 641). SMOG Grades 13-16 predict the need of college education in order to completely comprehend the text. The SMOG formula yields a 0.985 correlation with a standard error of 1.52 grades with the grades of readers who had 100% comprehension of test materials (McLaughlin, 1969). In this article, he stated that complete

comprehension is “a more meaningful standard than that used by previous investigators—namely the ability to answer 50 or 75 percent of the questions” (p. 642). The complete comprehension that readers must demonstrate makes the SMOG readability formula unique as most other formulas require readers to comprehend 50% to 75% of the text (Burke & Greenberg, 2010). Because SMOG has a strict criterion for comprehension, it is used in the present study’s methodology.

The predictive power of polysyllable counts was revealed in a study of sixty four university students who were asked to read eight 1000-word passages from a variety of periodicals. Literacy experts identified the important ideas inherent in the texts and the readers were asked to verbally recall as much of the text as possible. A comprehension score was assigned on a scale of 0-10, where 10 equated to complete comprehension. The researcher controlled for the amount of care (time) the students took in reading the texts by dividing the average comprehension score by the number of minutes it took to read the text. A negative correlation was identified among polysyllable count and the number of minutes the student took to read the text (McLaughlin, 1969). Moreover, the SMOG readability formula is relatively simple to calculate manually, but online computer software is available by McLaughlin that can be downloaded as well (McLaughlin, 2008). The formula is represented as Figure 3.

Figure 3

SMOG Readability Formula

$$\text{grade} = 1.043 \sqrt{\text{number of polysyllables} \times \frac{30}{\text{number of sentences}}} + 3.1291$$

(McLaughlin, 2008)

The directions for manually calculating the SMOG readability grade level require four steps. Count ten consecutive sentences near the beginning, middle, and end of the text- 30 sentences in total. Next, count every word of three or more syllables. The evaluator must then estimate the square root of the number of polysyllabic words that were counted. This can be achieved by taking the nearest perfect square. Lastly, add three to the approximate square root to identify the SMOG grade level (McLaughlin, 1969).

Appendix C illustrates the SMOG reading grade level in numeric and word form as well as examples of texts that people of the different levels of education may be able to comprehend. Individuals who have up to a grade 6 reading level will be able to comprehend Soap Opera Weekly, a television magazine that is no longer published. The *Reader’s Digest* is considered comprehensible at the grade 9 level whereas *Time* magazine requires a grade 12 reading level. Publications that require a postsecondary reading level (13-19+) include: the *New York Times*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harvard Business Review*, and Internal Revenue Service) code documents.

Table 3

SMOG Grade Level Information and Grade Level Appropriate Text Examples

SMOG Grade	Educational Level	Example
0 - 6	low-literate	Soap Opera Weekly
7	junior high school	True Confessions
8	junior high school	Ladies Home Journal
9	some high school	Reader's Digest
10	some high school	Newsweek
11	some high school	Sports Illustrated
12	high school graduate	Time Magazine
13 - 15	some college	New York Times
16	university degree	Atlantic Monthly
17 - 18	post-graduate studies	Harvard Business Review
19+	post-graduate degree	IRS Code

(McLaughlin, 1969)

The SMOG readability formula is included in the methodology of the present study for four reasons: a) it is widely used and validated, b) it is provided in a commonly used computer software, c) it operates under a strict, 100% comprehension criterion and d) it represents a readability formula that tends to overestimate the difficulty of texts (Burke & Greenberg, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2010). Research also indicates that for best results, evaluators should use two or more formulas and average those results (Burk & Greenberg, 2010).

This literature review represents both past and contemporary scholarship in three areas. The concerns regarding a current gap in text complexity between high school texts and those associated with college and career readiness has been discussed. This gap, along with an increase in college attendance, has sparked a need for change in how our students are being prepared for post-secondary endeavors. In reaction, the Common Core State Standards Initiative has been developed, and English Language Arts and Mathematics teachers must have their instruction aligned with the standards by the 2012-2013 school year. Scholarship regarding student learning in relation to text complexity was also discussed. Several studies are in support of matching students' reading abilities to the text they read. Researchers assert that students with disabilities may increase their oral reading fluency and decrease avoidance behaviors in the classroom when texts match their reading level. These studies suggest that students with disabilities may need additional educational and behavioral interventions when presented with the complex texts found in the CCSS Appendix B.

The final portion of this review concerns the classic readability formulas. The Homan Hewitt, Dale-Chall, Fry, Lorge, Flesch-Kincaid, and SMOG readability formulas were discussed in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the history behind this field of study. Each

formula has its value and can provide insight into the complexity of various texts. Some research indicates a need for evaluators to use both quantitative and qualitative measures when evaluating a text's readability. Ultimately, Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG were identified as two readability formulas that respectively underestimate and overestimate a text's difficulty. Flesch-Kincaid tends to underestimate the complexity of nonfiction possibly because these texts contain specialized vocabulary, which is not properly evaluated when only considering word length. The areas regarding a gap in text complexity, text complexity in relation to student learning, and readability formulas provide insight into the need for an evidence-based sequencing of the CCSS Appendix B texts. An analysis of the CCSS Appendix B texts for 11-CCR (College and Career Readiness) grades will provide valuable information for educators seeking to align English Language Arts curriculum with the standards through pedagogically responsible methods.

Methodology

The Methodology section of the present study will provide detailed information on the following items: a) operational definition for *readability*, *readability grade level*, and *text complexity*, b) a detailed account of this study's procedures including text modifications prior to evaluation, c) a description of the Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability formulas including psychometric properties, d) a description of the research design as well as e) validity considerations.

Operational Definitions

This researcher must make clear the definitions of: a) *readability*, b) *readability grade level*, c) *grades 11-CCR*, d) *CCSS Appendix B*, and e) *text complexity* for purposes of replication.

Readability was defined as the predicted ease in which a reader can comprehend a text or the degree to which a class of people finds certain reading material compelling and comprehensible (Fry, 2002; McLaughlin, 1969; Oakland & Lane, 2004). Readability is used in the present study to identify the specific level of complexity of the texts illustrated in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability formulas are presented in the form of a grade level.

Readability grade level was defined using the American grade level system. A text with a readability grade level of 11 to 11.9 predicts that a student, on average, must have a grade 11 education in order to comprehend a text. A text with a readability grade level of 12-12.9 predicts that a student, on average, must have a grade 12 level education in order to comprehend a text. Furthermore, texts with a readability grade level of 13 and above predict the need of college education in order to comprehend the text. As the readability grade level increases, the text complexity increases.

Grades 11-CCR is a term used in the CCSS Appendix B, and “CCR” is an acronym that stands for College and Career Readiness. The CCSS acknowledges texts for grade level bands at the high school level. Grades 9 and 10 are aligned and grades 11 and 12 are aligned. According to the aforementioned document, a text that is identified as appropriate for grades 11-CCR will be a part of a rigorous grade 11 or grade 12 English Language Arts curriculum. CCSS does not refer to grade 12 but identifies this year of school as the College and Career Readiness grade. Whenever “grades 11-CCR” is used in the present study, the reader should understand that this researcher is referring to an English Language Arts curriculum, text, or skill necessary or

appropriate within the grade 11 to grade 12 band. The readability grade level for the 11-CCR band in numeric form is 11.0 to 12.9.

CCSS Appendix B is defined as the document developed by the Common Core State Standards that illustrates text exemplars for areas of English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. For the purposes of the present study, “CCSS Appendix B” will represent only those texts chosen for evaluation. Appendix J illustrates a complete list of literary and informational texts that were investigated here.

Text complexity is defined in many ways and the most comprehensive method is to consider a text’s quantitative and qualitative features as well as students’ motivation, knowledge, and background interests (“ACT,” 2006). Due to the scope of this study, text complexity will be limited to a text’s measurable, quantitative features including number of words and number of sentences as well as the proportion of polysyllabic words and lengthy sentences in a given sample of text. A text’s complexity and readability grade level are distinctly related. A text that is evaluated as having a readability grade level of 12 is more complex in nature compared to a text with a readability grade level of 10. In essence, text complexity has a converse relationship to readability grade level. A student will experience increased difficulty in text comprehension as the text’s grade level increases.

Procedures

The Grades 11-CCR texts in the present study were identified using the Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. These texts are of importance to evaluate as they

represent the quality and the complexity of texts that public school educated students from across the county are being asked to comprehend. This document can be found on the Common Core State Standards Initiative website at corestandards.org by selecting “The Standards” tab and scrolling to the portable document format (pdf) file titled “English Language Arts Appendix B”. This 183 page document will provide text exemplars for Kindergarten through grade 12 and the Grades 11-CCR Text Exemplars associated with this study can be found beginning on page 140. All poetry and plays were excluded from the present study because the Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability formulas were developed to evaluate running narratives including most short stories, novels, folk tales, government documents, essays, speeches, biographies, and autobiographies. Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* literary text was modified to look like a running narrative in the present study. Appendix J provides the text samples of the 17 literary and 17 informational texts that were evaluated in the present study. Three separate samples were identified from each text, which can be seen in Appendix J, but the hard returns were removed during analysis. The following portion of text represents three separate samples from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1848). All of the hard returns have been removed as well as the periods after abbreviations. The end of each sample has been identified as well as each modified abbreviation.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. "My dear **Mr** Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?" **Mr** Bennet replied that he had not.[**END OF FIRST SAMPLE**] Colonel Fitzwilliam seemed really glad to see them; anything was a welcome relief to him at Rosings; and **Mrs** Collins's pretty friend had moreover caught his fancy very much. He now seated himself by her, and talked so agreeably of Kent and Hertfordshire, of travelling and staying at home, of new books and music, that Elizabeth had never been half so well entertained in that room before; and they conversed with so

much spirit and flow, as to draw the attention of Lady Catherine herself, as well as of **Mr Darcy**. What is that you are saying, Fitzwilliam? **[END OF SECOND SAMPLE]** Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew; and as she gave way to all the genuine frankness of her character in her reply to the letter which announced its arrangement, she sent him language so very abusive, especially of Elizabeth, that for some time all intercourse was at an end. But at length, by Elizabeth's persuasion, he was prevailed on to overlook the offence, and seek a reconciliation; and, after a little further resistance on the part of his aunt, her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself. **[END OF THRID SAMPLE]**

A digital file of each text was obtained. In the few instances when a work was not available digitally, the text exemplar provided in the CCSS Appendix B was used for evaluation purposes. These texts are identified with an asterisk (*) after the title in Appendix A of the present study. Short texts, particularly the United States Bill of Rights, was evaluated in their entirety. All evaluated text samples can be found in Appendix B of the present study.

In order to evaluate the validity of both computer software used in this study, it was necessary to test the readability of a sample manually and compare those results to the same text's computer software-generated results. The Flesch-Kincaid readability formula was applied to two separate samples of text (one literary text and one informational text) and those results were compared to the software results. No difference was found between the manually calculated and computer generated results. This same procedure was used when applying the SMOG readability formula. Again, no difference was found between the manually calculated and computer generated readability grade level results.

A Microsoft Word® document was used to type or paste the 100 word samples of text from the beginning, 100 from the middle and 100 from the end of each document. Whenever possible, the first 100 words and last 100 words were used. The middle of the document was identified by locating the approximate average of the first and last page of text. All

introductions, acknowledgements, prefaces, or other preliminary pages were excluded from analysis. No samples were less than 100 words and all three samples combined were more than a total of 300 words to avoid sampling error. Once the three samples were identified and typed or pasted into the document, a spell and grammar check was performed using the program's software. On the *Tools* menu, click *Options*, and click the *Spelling & Grammar* tab. The next step is to select the *Check grammar with spelling* check box. Next, select the *Show readability statistics* check box, and then click *OK*. Click *Spelling and Grammar* on the *Standard* toolbar. (This same function can be done by clicking F7 on the keyboard.) It is only when Microsoft Word® finishes checking spelling and grammar that it will display information about the reading level of the document. Whenever a word was identified as misspelled through a visual inspection as well as through the spelling and grammar check, the correct spelling was replaced. For example, in some of the works by English authors, there were additional letters that the American version of the word does not require (e.g., labouring versus laboring). The word "laboring" was identified as a misspelled word by the software. The additional vowel of "u" was removed so the software would acknowledge "laboring" as a polysyllabic word. The procedure of modifying texts was used sparingly to maintain the integrity of the initial text sample. It is important to acknowledge that some proper nouns and other words were identified as misspelled yet were properly spelled; thus, the software did not recognize them as English words. For example, Zephyrus, the Greek god of the west winds, is alluded to in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and the spelling and grammar check failed to acknowledge this proper noun as a correctly spelled word. Additionally, there was no simple word removal or replacement available. In these cases, no removal or replaced took place.

The present researcher manually removed any hard returns or abbreviations with periods in order to maintain consistency with the readability calculation procedures outlined by Burke and Greenberg (2010). The abbreviations with periods do not impact the number of sentences calculated by the computer generated Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, but the computer generated SMOG readability formula will consider an abbreviation followed by a period to be a sentence of its own. For example, the following sentence from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is considered to be two sentences with the period after "Mrs." and one sentence when it is removed: "Colonel Fitzwilliam seemed really glad to see them; anything was a welcome relief to him at Rosings; and Mrs. Collins's pretty friend had moreover caught his fancy very much". The removal of hard returns does not seem to impact the calculated grade level using either of the formulas but this procedure was included to maintain consistency with Burke and Greenberg's (2010) instructions.

Once any typing or spelling issues were corrected within the text samples, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade-level was identified first by running the Microsoft Word® spelling and grammar check a second time. This grade level, represented to the tenth place was recorded, and the same portion of text was then evaluated using the McLaughlin's SMOG readability formula.

McLaughlin provided a link to his online SMOG readability calculator on the electronically published article titled "SMOG Grading-a New Readability Formula (1969). The formulas name is a tribute to Gunning's Fog readability index and also refers to McLaughlin's birthplace of London, England (McLaughlin, 1969). This calculator can be accessed by clicking the "Go to SMOG Calculator" option on the article. This redirected to the website titled "SMOG simple measures of gobbledegook" that was copyrighted by the author in 2008. The second

paragraph read, “to use a free online tool which instantly calculates SMOG and four other readability formulas click [here](#)” (McLaughlin, 2008). The results of this online SMOG readability tool were compared to the same text sample’s results using a SMOG calculator found at <http://www.wordscount.info> (“Psychassessments.com.au”). The results were similar to the one hundredth place for three text samples evaluated. The SMOG calculator suggested by McLaughlin’s website was used because the results were presented in an easy to identify fashion and the site provided the missing variables (number of polysyllabic words and the number of sentences) so the computer generated results could be compared to the manually derived results with ease.

The exact text sample that was evaluated using the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula was pasted into the SMOG readability calculator text box provided on the Words Count website. After clicking the “Submit” button located below the text box, information on the SMOG grade level, number of sentences, and number of polysyllabic words was presented. The SMOG grade level to the one hundredth place was recorded.

The averages, standard deviations, ranges, and confidence intervals were all calculated using the validated software provided in Microsoft Excel®. These calculations can be made by clicking on the “Formulas” tab in the tool bar, selecting “More Functions,” and lastly, clicking on the “Statistical” option. This provides the user with several options for statistical testing. By selecting “AVERAGE,” the user can copy and paste the spreadsheet cells in which the average is desired. By selecting “STDEVA,” the user can copy and paste the cells in which the standard deviation is desired. The “CONFIDENCE.NORM” option will provide the confidence interval

assuming a normal distribution. The range of scores was manually calculated by subtracting the confidence interval from the average.

The p-values were calculated using the same validated software provided in Microsoft Excel®. P-values can be identified by following the aforementioned instructions to the “Statistical” option. Scroll down to the “T.TEST” option and select it. Array 1 and Array 2 represent each data set and these cells can be selected and pasted into each box. A two-tailed, two-sampled unequal variance test was selected for each of the three statistical tests completed. This is done by entering “2” into the “TAILS” box and “3” into the “TYPE” box. The results of a t-test will be presented by clicking the “OK” box below the data entry boxes.

Instruments

The instruments used to evaluate the text’s readability were the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula and the SMOG readability formula. Flesch-Kincaid is: a) one of the most common indexes for assessing text complexity, b) is appropriate for evaluating text written in sentence and paragraph form, and 3) can be used for all grade levels including materials geared toward adults. This formula is used by the U.S. military for evaluating the readability of their technical manuals and many states require that insurance-related documents are written at or below a Flesch-Kincaid grade 9 level (Kamil et al., 2011).

The formula is based upon sentence length and word length. It evaluates running narrative texts and predicts the ease at which a text is read. The Flesch-Kincaid readability formula is represented as: $(0.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$. ASL is the average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences) ASW is the average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words). The criterion used

in the formula was McCall-Crabb's Standard test lessons in reading. The formula was applied to predict the average grade level of a student who was able to correctly answer 75% of a passage's questions (Flesch, 1948). The formula results are represented in United States grade level form. A readability grade level of 10.0 indicates that a student with a minimum education of grade 10 will be able to comprehend the text.

The psychometric properties for the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula are identified in Table 4 and Table 5. Table 4 illustrates the correlations, means, standard deviations, and regression weights of word and sentence length using the formula. Word Length (syllables per 100 words) is represented as *wl*. Sentence Length is represented as *sl*. *C50* represents the average grade of children who could answer 50% of the questions correctly, \bar{X} presents the mean, *s* represents the standard deviation, and β represents the regression weight. Word length had a positive correlation of .46 with sentence length. The correlation between *wl* and the criterion was .66. The average syllables per 100 words (*wl*) was 134.22. The standard deviation is 13.68, and the regression weight is .54. The sentence length (*sl*) have a correlation of .52 with the criterion. The average sentence length was 16.5 words. The standard deviation was 5.55, and the regression weight was .263. These visual representations were initially published in 1948 by Flesch in an article titled "A New Readability Yardstick". This, and many other papers on readability, can be found in DuBay's *The Classic Readability Study* handbook (2007).

Table 4

Flesch-Kincaid Psychometric Properties for Word and Sentence Length

	<i>sl</i>	C_{50}	\bar{X}	<i>s</i>	β
<i>wl</i>	.4644	.6648	134.2208	13.6845	.5422
<i>sl</i>	—	.5157*	16.5213	5.5509	.2639

* A revised correlation coefficient

(as cited in DuBay, 2007, p. 102)

Table 5 illustrates the means and standard deviations of the two criteria. C_{50} represents the average grade of children who could answer 50% of the questions correctly, and C_{75} represents the average grade of children who could answer 75% of the questions correctly. When the criterion was C_{50} , the mean was 5.50 and the standard deviation was 1.39. When the criterion was C_{75} , the mean was 7.35 and the standard deviation was 2.13.

Table 5

Flesch-Kincaid Means and Standards Deviations of Two Criteria

	\bar{X}	<i>s</i>
C_{50}	5.4973	1.3877
C_{75}	7.3484	2.1345

(as cited in DuBay, 2007, p. 103)

The Flesch-Kincaid grade level is included in the methodology of the present study for three reasons: a) it is widely used and validated, b) it is provided in commonly used computer software for ease of replication, and c) it represents a readability formula that tends to

underestimate the difficulty of texts (Fitzsimmons et al., 2010; Burke & Greenberg, 2010). The last consideration is important because each text's Flesch-Kincaid grade level score was averaged with the SMOG readability scores, which operates using a strict criterion of 100% comprehension to measure readability.

The SMOG readability formula is: a) the “golden standard readability measure” (Fitzsimmons et al., 2010), b) uses 100% comprehension as the criteria for readability, 3) frequently overestimates reading grade level due to its strict criterion, and 4) is assessable through online software for ease of replication. Similarly to the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, SMOG estimates the years of education needed to comprehend a text, and this is provided in reading grade-level form. SMOG Grades 13-16 predict the need of college education in order to completely comprehend the text. The SMOG readability formula is relatively simple to calculate manually, but online computer software is available by McLaughlin that can be downloaded as well (McLaughlin, 2008). The complete formula can be found on page 23 of the present study's Literature Review. A more practical formula was provided by McLaughlin as: $\text{SMOG grade level} = 3 + \sqrt{\text{polysyllable count in a 600 word sample}}$. Polysyllabic words were defined as those with three or more syllables. The SMOG formula yields a 0.985 correlation with a standard error of 1.5159 grades with the grades of readers who had 100% comprehension of test materials. Essentially, the formula will predict the readability grade level by 1.5 grades in sixty eight percent of text samples evaluated.

Table 6 illustrates the regression equations relating the number of polysyllabic words in samples of 30 sentences to the grade level that students will experience 100% comprehension of the text. The number of polysyllabic words in a sample of 30 sentences is represented as “*p*”.

The reading grade of students able to answer correctly all questions on the material sampled is represented as “g”. Four powerful regression equations were derived. The equation yields predictions that correlate with the criterion by 0.71. This is the highest correlation ever using the McCall-Crabb’s Standard test lessons as a criterion. McLaughlin’s indicated that “the real indicator of the validity of (d) is that its standard error of the estimate is only trivially higher than that of the other formulas” (1969, p. 643).

Table 6

SMOG Regression Equations Relating p to g

<i>Regression Equation</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
(a) $g = 6.2380 + 0.0785 p$	0.713	1.4661
(b) $g = 4.1952 + 0.8475 \sqrt{p}$	0.709	1.4751
(c) $g = 2.8795 + 0.9986 \sqrt{p} + 5$	0.729	1.4446
(d) $g = 1.0430 (3 + \sqrt{p})$ $= 3.1291 + 1.0430 \sqrt{p}$	0.985	1.5159

(McLaughlin, 1969)

The directions for manually calculating the SMOG readability grade level require four steps. The evaluator must count ten consecutive sentences near the beginning, ten near the approximate middle, and another ten near the end of the text. Essentially, thirty sentences in total is a desirable number for readability evaluation using this formula. Next, count every word of three or more syllables. The evaluator must then estimate the square root of the number of polysyllabic words that were counted. This can be achieved by taking the nearest perfect square. Lastly, add three to the approximate square root to identify the SMOG grade level (McLaughlin, 1969).

Design

A correlational design was used in the present study where the relationship between CCSS Appendix B text exemplars and readability grade levels (Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG) was evaluated. Due to the nature of the design, the present study provides no insight into a causal relationship between text exemplar, genre, and readability grade level. It was the intent of this researcher to identify an averaged readability grade level so as to develop a text sequence that educators can use to help inform their grades 11-CCR English Language Arts curriculum sequence.

The texts were identified within the CCSS Appendix B using a stratified sampling technique. It was this researcher's intent to identify and evaluate an equal number of literary and informational texts for comparison purposes. In this case, 17 literary texts and 17 informational texts were sampled from the CCSS Appendix B. Of the 17 informational texts, 5 titles were identified in the "Informational Texts: History/Social Studies" section of the CCSS Appendix B that begins on page 172 of the document. Those titles include: *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, "Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference" edited by Daniel J. Boostin, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" by Fredrick Douglass, *What They Fought for 1861-1865* by James M. McPherson, and *American's Constitution: A Biography* by Akhail Reed Amar. A single asterisk (*) next to a text's title in the present study's Appendix A indicates that the sample was derived from the CCSS Appendix B exemplar. These titles were identified as texts that may be taught in a Social Studies class or in an English Language Arts class due to the author or content material. These texts were identified in the present study's Appendix A with a double asterisk after the title (**).

Validity and Reliability

In order to maximize the validity in the present study, all of the CCSS Appendix B literary and informational texts would be evaluated. As this was not possible, the next best option was to sample from the literary and information text subsections of the CCSS Appendix B. Seventeen out of a possible 19 literary texts were evaluated, and 11 out of a possible 13 informational texts were evaluated. Six informational texts were identified and evaluated from the History/Social Studies Informational texts subsection of the document. The inclusion of these six History/Social Studies informational texts was necessary for two reasons: a) the total number of texts sampled would then be the same, and b) to increase the estimated strength of the relationship between text type and readability grade level.

The validity and reliability of the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula has been evaluated by many researchers (Flesch, 1948; Hayes, Jenkins, & Walker, 1950). Research by Hayes, et al., (1950) identified that for “practical purposes the Flesch formulas and the directions for their use are sufficiently objective to be used even by inexperienced analysts to obtain estimates of the [a text’s] reading ease... Analyst-to-analyst reliability on word length, sentence length, and reading ease is quite high” (p. 26). This indicates that the Flesch-Kincaid formula (and Flesch Reading Ease formula) possess a high level of interrater reliability for evaluating word length, sentence length, and reading ease even when the evaluator is a novice. However, other research indicated that despite the formula’s widespread use, validation studies have suggested it may be of limited accuracy when grading low-level literacy materials (Fitzsimmons et al., 2010). This question of validity should not impact the present study because only moderate to highly complex texts were evaluated.

Considering English as a second language learners (L2), Crossley, Allen, and McNamara (2011), indicated that traditional readability measures, particularly Flesch-Kincaid grade Level, are not highly predictive of L2 reading difficulty. Currently, there is a need for more accurate and valid readability formulas for text complexity analysis with respect to L2 reading difficulty. Educators of L2 students should be cautioned when using the present study's text sequence to tailor their English Language Arts instruction.

The SMOG formula yields a 0.985 correlation with a standard error of 1.52 grades with the grades when readers had 100% comprehension of the test materials (McLaughlin, 1969). In this article, he stated that to get a more reliable prediction, several samples within a text must be evaluated- from the beginning, middle and end (p. 641). Additionally, a law was identified that related the number of syllables in a passage to the percentage of polysyllabic words, defined as words of three or more syllables. This law provides the same level of validity in polysyllabic word count as Flesch-Kincaid's manual count requirement. According to McLaughlin (1969), who proposed a procedure for obtaining a more valid criterion, the McCall-Crabbs' Standard Test Lessons still provide the best criterion.

The computer generated readability grade levels were independently tested by this researcher. Reliability was investigated using the Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level in Microsoft Word® and the SMOG readability grade level online calculator suggested by McLaughlin. Three randomly sampled CCSS Appendix B texts were evaluated during three separate occurrences on three separate days. There was no difference in the grade level among the trials using Microsoft Word®, and there was no difference in grade level among the trials using the online SMOG readability grade level calculator. This indicated that the computer software used in the present study have an acceptable level of reliability.

Free online readability calculators are vast but not alike. This researcher independently tested the reliability of several free online Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability calculators using the same sample of text, and the results were inconsistent. In order to obtain an accurate Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level, the Microsoft Word® grammar and spelling check function should be used exclusively, and the computer generated results should be independently tested against a manually calculated score. This researcher suggests using the SMOG readability calculator proposed by McLaughlin at [www. online-utility.org](http://www.online-utility.org) as the preferred online method of evaluation using this index. Research suggested that an average of two or more readability formulas results would provide the best results (Burke & Greenburg, 2010).

Readability formulas provide one method of approximating a text's complexity, thus, its comprehensibility. Many critics question their ability to illustrate the true nature of a text's complexity because these formulas do not take into consideration other factors that impact comprehension including: a) the reader's *fluency*, b) their *background knowledge* on the topic, c) the reader's syntactic and semantic *language* abilities, d) the reader's *motivation and engagement* with the specific text e) *idea density* or the abstract nature of the concepts in the text, and f) *cognitive load*, which refers to the amount of analysis, reasoning, and critique required to fully comprehend a text (Oakland & Lane, 2004). Dale and Chall (1948) indicated that "the nature of the difficulty of a given piece of writing depends to a great extent upon what we expect a reader to get out of the material" (as stated in DuBay, 2007, p.73). This cannot be measured with a readability formula. Lorge (1944) stated that "what a person understands of the material he reads depends upon his general reading ability, the readability of the text he is reading. His reading ability, moreover, depends upon his intelligence, education, environment, and upon his interest and purpose in reading" (stated in Dubay, 2007, p. 46). Lorge's perspective, again,

indicates that readability is more complex than syllables and sentence length. There is an interconnection between qualitative and quantitative features textual features as well as reader features that all play a part in a text's comprehensibility. Other research indicated that human evaluation by produce better results regarding text difficulty when compared to computer software (Heydari & Riazi, 2012). With the limitations of readability formulas in mind, educators should consider qualitative measures (Meyer, 2003) along with the readability grade level text sequence provided here when developing an English Language Arts curriculum that is aligned with the standards.

Results

Three hypotheses were made in this study. The first hypothesis is that the grades 11-CCR texts exemplars sampled from the CCSS Appendix B were, on average, at or above grade level. The second hypothesis is that the informational texts had a higher readability grade level, on average, than the literary texts. The third and final hypothesis is that the Flesch-Kincaid readability grade levels were, on average, lower than the SMOG readability grade levels. The first hypothesis was supported in that the average Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability grade levels was in the grade level band (11-CCR) suggested by the CCSS for both the literary and informational texts sampled. The second hypothesis was supported as the informational texts were, on average, of higher grade level when compared to the literary texts sampled. The third hypothesis was support because the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula consistently evaluated both the literary and informational texts as having a lower readability grade level. To reiterate, this formula evaluated all the sampled texts as being less difficult to comprehend than the SMOG formula.

Literary Texts and Grade Level

The first hypothesis was supported because it was found that the average Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability grade levels were within the grade level band (11-CCR) for both the literary and informational texts sampled. The cumulative readability average was 11.82. The literary and informational text results will be discussed separately. The average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level for the literary texts was initially 8.79. When three outliers (*As I Lay Dying*, “*Their Eyes were Watching God*,” and *A Farewell to Arms*) were removed from the analysis, the Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level average increased to 9.32. The average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level increases to 9.8 when *Crime and Punishment* and “The Cask of Amontillado” were added to the list of outliers. The Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level average did not produce a score that would support the first hypothesis independently. Although the 8.79 to 9.8 grade level is well below the 11-CCR grade level band, it is not enough to produce an average score less than 11.0.

According to Flesch-Kincaid, two of the 17 literary texts were considered to be at or above readability grade level. Those texts included F. Scot Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (11.5) and Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd, Sailor* (12.2). Some texts that resulted in Flesch-Kincaid readability grade levels of less than 7 included: “*Their Eyes were Watching God*” (4.3), *A Farewell to Arms* (6.7), and “The Cask of Amontillado” (6.2), and *Crime and Punishment* (6.7). Some texts that resulted in a Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of more than 9 included: *Pride and Prejudice* (10.3), *The Scarlet Letter* (10.4), “Home” (10.4), *Jane Eyre* (10.5), *The Great Gatsby* (11.5), and *Billy Budd, Sailor* (12.2).

The average SMOG readability grade level for the literary texts was initially 11.38. When the same three outliers (*As I Lay Dying*, “*Their Eyes were Watching God*,” and *A*

Farewell to Arms) were removed from the analysis, the SMOG readability grade level average increased to 12.10. When *Crime and Punishment* and “The Cask of Amontillado” were added to the list of outliers, the SMOG readability grade level increased to 12.40. This score is well above the 11.0 minimum criterion but not above the maximum criterion of 12.9. To clarify, 12.9 was the highest readability grade level score to be considered within the 11-CCR grade level band.

Nine of the 17 literary texts were considered to be at or above the SMOG readability grade level. Those texts included: *Don Quixote* (11.49), *Dreaming in Cuban* (12.08), *The Scarlet Letter* (12.26), *The Great Gatsby* (12.64), *Jane Eyre* (12.67), *Pride and Prejudice* (13.08), “The Garden of Forking Paths” (13.41), *Billy Budd, Sailor* (14.83), and “Home” (15.85). No texts resulted in SMOG readability grade levels of less than 7. However, *Farewell to Arms* received a low SMOG grade level of 7.83 and “Their Eyes were Watching God” scored a 7.98.

The total average readability grade level (Flesch-Kincaid grade levels averaged with SMOG grade levels) for the literary texts was 10.8. Although this average is marginally lower than the 11-CCR grade level band, the informational texts produced above average readability grade level scores. This resulted in the cumulative readability grade level average that was within the 11-CCR band. The “Description of Appendices” subsection will provide a comprehensive explanation of the descriptive statistics associated with the literary texts.

Informational Texts and Grade Level

The average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level for the informational texts was initially 11.46. When one outlier (*The Declaration of Independence*) was removed from the analysis, the Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level average decreased to 10.9. Eight of the 17

informational texts were considered to be at or above grade level and four of these were considered postsecondary texts (13+) according to the Flesch-Kincaid formula. Those texts included: *Democracy in America* (11.1), *Common Sense* (11.2), *American's Constitution: A Biography* (11.2), *What They Fought for 1861-1865* (12.0), "Education" (13.5), The United States Bill of Rights (13.8), *The American Language* (16.4), and *The Declaration of Independence* (21.1). One text resulted in a Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of less than 7. That text was "Take the Tortillas out of your Poetry" (6.9). All but three texts ("Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry" "The Fallacy of Success," and *Black Boy*) were at or above the grade 10 level.

The average SMOG readability grade level for the informational texts was initially 15.64. When the three outliers ("Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry" "The Fallacy of Success," and *Black Boy*) were removed from the analysis, the SMOG readability grade level average increased to 16.8.

Fifteen of the 17 informational texts were considered to be at or above the SMOG readability grade level and 11 of those texts are considered postsecondary texts according to that formula. The informational texts that score a SMOG grade level of at or above 18 included: The United States Bill of Rights (18.3), *Democracy in America*** (19.02), *The Declaration of Independence* (21.3), *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (21.71), "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"*** (21.71), and "Society and Solitude" (21.75). No texts resulted in SMOG readability grade levels of less than 7; however, *Black Boy* received an 8.8, and "Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry" scored at the 9.64 grade level. The total average readability grade level (Flesch-Kincaid grade levels averaged with SMOG grade levels) for the informational texts was 13.55. When the six History/Social Studies informational texts that were removed from the analysis, the

results were of little variance. Specifically, Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level was identified as 11.46, the SMOG grade level was 15.37, and the average readability grade level was 13.42. The six History/Social Studies informational texts had an average readability grade level of 13.81. The “Description of Appendices” subsection will provide a comprehensive explanation of the descriptive statistics associated with the informational texts.

The first hypothesis that Grades 11-CCR texts exemplars sampled from the CCSS Appendix B were, on average, at or above grade level was supported by the findings because the total average readability grade level considering both formulas and both literary and informational texts was identified as 11.82. If the individual averages for the literary and informational texts were considered, the literary text readability grade level average of 10.08 would not have provided support for the hypothesis. It was the considerable average readability grade level of the informational texts (13.55) that impacted the overall average enough to support the first hypothesis.

Informational Texts Possess Higher Readability Results

The second hypothesis was supported because it was found that the informational texts had a higher readability grade level, on average, than the literary texts. The literary texts were found to have an average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of 8.78 and an average SMOG readability grade level of 11.38. The average of these indicated that the literary terms have an average readability grade level of 10.08, below the 11-CCR grade level band indicated in the CCSS Appendix B.

The informational texts were found to have an average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of 11.46 and an average SMOG readability grade level of 15.64. This resulted in the informational texts’ average readability grade level of 13.55. On average, there were 7 out of 17

literary texts found to be within the 11-CCR grade level band. Those literary texts included: “The Garden of Forking Paths” (11.11), *The Scarlet Letter* (11.33), *Jane Eyre* (11.59), *Pride and Prejudice* (11.69), *The Great Gatsby* (12.07), *Billy Budd, Sailor* (13.52), and “Home” (13.13). The informational texts sampled in this study featured twice as many texts at the 11-CCR grade level band. Those informational texts included: “Lee Surrenders to Grant, April 9th 1865” (11.73), “Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth” (11.90), *American’s Constitution: A Biography*** (12.06), *What They Fought for 1861-1865*** (12.32), Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference** (13.47), “Education”** (14.03), *Common Sense* (14.17), *The American Language* (14.72), *Democracy in America* ** (15.06), “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” ** (15.91), “Society and Solitude” (15.93), The United States Bill of Rights (16.05), *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (16.21), and *The Declaration of Independence* (21.2).

The second hypothesis that the informational texts had a higher readability grade level, on average, than the literary texts was supported. The findings indicated that the total average readability grade level for literary texts was 10.08 and the average for the informational texts was 13.55. This is a difference of almost three and a half grade levels (3.47). Not only did these results illustrate clear support for the second hypothesis, but the informational texts were, on average, identified as more than three readability grade levels higher (10.08 versus 13.55). The second hypothesis continued to be supported even when the History/Social Studies informational texts were removed from the analysis. That is, the average literary text readability grade level remained as 10.08 and the informational texts without the History/Social Studies texts scored a 13.42 average grade level.

SMOG Identifies Texts as More Difficult

The third hypothesis was support because the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula consistently evaluated both the literary and informational texts as having a lower readability grade level when compared to the SMOG results. The overall average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level was 10.12 when both the literary and informational texts were considered. The overall average SMOG readability grade level was identified as 13.51.

The Flesch-Kincaid formula resulted in a lower grade level placement for all 17 literary texts. The smallest discrepancies in grade level were identified. *As I Lay Dying* had a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 7.8 and a SMOG grade level of 8.2- a marginal difference of .04 grade levels; and, “The White Heron” resulted in a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 8.1 and a SMOG grade level of 8.8- a difference of 0.7 grade levels. The texts that possessed the largest discrepancies in grade level were identified as “Home,” which resulted in a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 10.4 and a SMOG grade level of 15.85- a substantial difference of 5.81 grades. Additionally, “The Garden of Forking Paths” scored a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 8.8 and a SMOG grade level of 13.41. This equated to a difference in grade level of 4.61 grades. The average difference between readability formulas for the literary texts was 2.59 grades.

The Flesch-Kincaid formula resulted in a lower grade level placement for 16 out of the 17 informational texts. The only occurrence of Flesch-Kincaid finding a text more difficult to comprehend was with *The American Language*, where the SMOG formula rated it as grade level 13.03 and Flesch-Kincaid at 16.4. The smallest discrepancies in grade level were identified as the *Declaration of Independence*, which held nearly identical readability results. When this text’s sample was evaluated, the Flesch-Kincaid grade level was 21.1 and a SMOG grade level was 21.3- a marginal difference of 0.2 grade levels. The second smallest discrepancy in grade

levels was *What They Fought For 1861-1865*. This informational text received a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 12.0 and a SMOG grade level of 12.63. This is a difference of less than one grade (0.63). The texts that possessed the largest discrepancies in grade level were identified as “Society and Solitude,” *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, and “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”. “Society and Solitude” was rated as a grade level 10.1 by the Flesch-Kincaid formula and a 21.75 by the SMOG formula- a difference of 11.65 grades. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* received a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 10.7 and a SMOG grade level of 21.71. This was a grade level difference of 11.01. Lastly, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” received a grade level of 10.1 by Flesch-Kincaid and 21.71 by SMOG. This was a difference of 11.61 grade levels.

When the six History/Social Studies texts were removed from the evaluation, the informational texts received a SMOG grade level of 15.37, and a total SMOG average of 13.37. Although the average SMOG grade level decreases from 13.51 to 13.37, the omission of the History/Social Studies texts in the analysis had little impact on the results. Furthermore, all analyses resulted in the SMOG formula, on average, grading literary and informational texts as more difficult to comprehend.

The final hypothesis was supported because the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula consistently, and almost entirely, evaluated all of the sampled texts as having a lower readability grade level when compared to the SMOG results. To reiterate, the SMOG formula evaluated almost all of the sampled texts as being more difficult to comprehend. The average Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level was 10.12 when both the literary and informational texts were considered. The average SMOG readability grade level was 13.51 for both literary and

informational texts. Not only did these results illustrate clear support for the last hypothesis, but the Flesch-Kincaid formula rated texts at 3.39 grade levels lower than the SMOG formula.

Averages, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Confidence Intervals

Table 7 illustrates the averages, measures of variability (standard deviation and range), and confidence intervals for the literary text sample that was evaluated. The standard deviation of the literary texts when the Flesch-Kincaid formula was used for analysis was 2.053. This produced a range of 7.806 to 9.758 grade levels. In order to generalize the results from this study sample to the population of literary summaries as a whole, 95 percent confidence intervals were calculated. With a ninety five percent confidence interval, the Flesch-Kincaid formula produced a result of 0.976.

The standard deviation of the literary texts when the SMOG formula was used for analysis was 2.336. This produced a range of 10.266 to 12.486 grade level. With a ninety five percent confidence interval, the SMOG formula produced a result of 1.11.

The standard deviation of the average readability grade levels for the literary texts was 2.543. This produced an average range of 9.227-10.931 grade level. The data suggest that the average of additional literary texts evaluated will result in a score between approximately grades 9 to 11 about ninety five percent of the time. With a ninety five percent confidence interval, the average readability produced a result of 0.852.

Table 7			
<i>Averages, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Confidence Intervals for Literary Texts</i>			
	Flesch-Kincaid	SMOG	Average
Average	8.782	11.376	10.079
Standard Deviation	2.053	2.336	2.534
Range	7.806-9.758	10.266-12.486	9.227-10.931
95% Confidence Interval	0.976	1.11	0.852

Table 8 illustrates the averages, standard deviations, ranges, and confidence intervals for the informational texts that were evaluated. The standard deviation of the informational texts when the Flesch-Kincaid formula results were used for analysis was 3.436. This produced a range of 9.832 to 13.098 grade level. The data suggest that the average of additional informational texts evaluated will result in a score between grades 10 to 13 about ninety five percent of the time. In order to generalize the results from this study sample to the population of summaries as a whole, 95 percent confidence intervals were calculated. With a ninety five percent confidence interval, the Flesch-Kincaid formula produced a result of 1.633.

The standard deviation of the informational texts when the SMOG formula results were used for analysis was 4.359. This produced a range of 13.57-17.714 grade level. With a ninety five percent confidence interval, the SMOG formula produced a result of 2.072.

The standard deviation of the average readability grade levels was 4.408. This produced a range of 12.071-15.035 grade level. With a ninety five percent confidence interval, the average produced a result of 1.482.

Table 8			
<i>Averages, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Confidence Intervals for Informational Texts</i>			
	Flesch-Kincaid	SMOG	Average
Average	11.465	15.642	13.553
Standard Deviation	3.436	4.359	4.408
Range	9.832-13.098	13.57-17.714	12.071-15.035
95% Confidence Interval	1.633	2.072	1.482

Significance

The following tables represent the significant findings of three probabilities: a) Table 9 illustrates the p-values when literary texts’ were evaluated against the minimum 11-CCR grade level band of 11.0. b) Table 10 illustrates the p-values when the informational texts’ readability was evaluated against the 11.0, and c) Table 11 illustrates the p-values when the average literary readability scores and average informational readability scores were evaluated.

Table 9 illustrates a probability that the literary texts’ average readability is significantly different than the 11-CCR minimum grade level (e.g., $p=0.04375$).

Table 9 <i>Comparison of Literary Texts to 11-CCR Criterion</i>			
	Flesch-Kincaid	SMOG	Average
11-CCR	$p=0.0002^{**}$	$p=0.25825$	$p=0.04375^*$
* $p < 0.05$ level, one-tailed ** $p < 0.01$, one-tailed			

Table 10 illustrates a probability that the informational texts’ average readability is significantly different that the 11-CCR minimum grade level (e.g., $p=0.0027$).

Table 10 <i>Comparison of Informational Texts to 11-CCR Criterion</i>			
	Flesch-Kincaid	SMOG	Average
11-CCR	$p=0.2924$	$p=0.0002^{**}$	$p=0.0027^{**}$
** $p < 0.01$ level, one tailed			

Table 11 illustrates a probability that the literary texts’ average readability and the cumulative average are significantly different (e.g., $p=0.0008$). It also illustrates a probability that the informational texts’ average readability and the cumulative average are significantly different (e.g., $p=0.0021$).

Table 11			
<i>Comparison of Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG Averages to the Cumulative Average</i>			
Flesch-Kincaid-SMOG Average			
Literary		$p=0.0008^{**}$	
Informational		$p=0.0021^{**}$	
** $p < 0.01$ level, one-tailed			

Text Sequence Reference Guide

Table 12 represents the desired product of the present study, the Text Sequence Reference Guide. It illustrates: the titles of 34 CCSS Appendix B texts, the year they were written, the genre of the text (e.g., literary or informational) as well as their individual average readability grade level. They are presented as a text sequence according to average readability grade level. This text sequence identified ten literary texts and three informational texts as below the minimum grade level band of 11.0. They are presented in the first 13 rows. The literary texts below the grade level band included: *"Their Eyes were Watching God"* (6.14), *A Farewell to Arms* (7.27), *As I Lay Dying* (8.0), *Crime and Punishment* (8.29), *"The Cask of Amontillado"* (8.48), *"A White Heron"* * (8.49), *The Namesake* (9.51), *The Canterbury Tales* (9.73), *Don Quixote* (10.2), and *Dreaming in Cuban* (10.84). The three informational texts that were below the grade level band included: *Black Boy* (8.12), *"Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry"** (8.16), and *"The Fallacy of Success"* (9.41).

Nine texts were identified as being within the 11-CCR grade level band, and they can be identified in the middle, bolded rows. The five literary texts within the grade level band included: "The Garden of Forking Paths" (11.11), *The Scarlet Letter* (11.33), *Jane Eyre* (11.59), *Pride and Prejudice* (11.69), and *The Great Gatsby* (12.07). The four informational texts within the grade level band included: "Lee Surrenders to Grant, April 9th 1865" (11.73), "Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth" (11.09), *American's Constitution: A Biography* (12.06), and *What They Fought for 1861-1865* (12.31).

This sequence also helped to identify two literary and ten informational texts as above the maximum grade level band of 12.9. These texts are illustrated in the last 12 rows in the table. The two literary texts that were identified as having a readability that was above the grade level band included: "Home" (13.13), and *Billy Budd, Sailor* (13.52). The ten informational texts identified as above the grade level band included: Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference (13.47), "Education" (14.03), *Common Sense* (14.17), *The American Language* (14.18), *Democracy in America* (15.06), "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (15.06), "Society and Solitude" (15.93), The United States Bill of Rights (16.05), *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (16.05), and *The Declaration of Independence* (21.2).

In summation, nine out of the 34 texts have an average grade level of between 11.0 to 12.9. The least difficult text was identified as "*Their Eyes were Watching God*" (1937) which an average readability grade level of 6.14. This is five grade levels below the minimum grade level band of 11.0. The most difficulty text was identified as *The Declaration of Independence* (1776) with an average readability grade level of 21.1. This is approximately eight grade levels above the maximum grade level of 12.9. There were more texts identified as having a readability grade level of outside the 11.0 to 12.9 band then there were texts identified as being within the band.

Table 12 <i>Text Sequence According to Readability Grade Level</i>		
Title	Literary / Informational	Grade level
<i>"Their Eyes were Watching God"</i> (1937)	Literary	6.14
<i>A Farewell to Arms</i> (1929)	Literary	7.27
<i>As I Lay Dying</i> (1930)	Literary	8
<i>Black Boy</i> (1945)	Informational	8.12
"Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry"* (1995)	Informational	8.16
<i>Crime and Punishment</i> (1866)	Literary	8.29
"The Cask of Amontillado" (1846)	Literary	8.48
"A White Heron" * (1886)	Literary	8.49
"The Fallacy of Success" (1909)	Informational	9.41
<i>The Namesake</i> (2003)	Literary	9.51
<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> (late 14 th Century)	Literary	9.73
<i>Don Quixote</i> (1605)	Literary	10.2
<i>Dreaming in Cuban</i> (1992)	Literary	10.84
<i>"The Garden of Forking Paths"</i> (1941)	Literary	11.11
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (1850)	Literary	11.33
<i>Jane Eyre</i> (1848)	Literary	11.59
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)	Literary	11.69
"Lee Surrenders to Grant, April 9th 1865" * (1865)	Informational	11.73
"Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth (1948)	Informational	11.9
<i>American's Constitution: A Biography</i>** (2005)	Informational	12.06
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> (1925)	Literary	12.07
<i>What They Fought for 1861-1865</i>* ** (1994)	Informational	12.32
"Home"* (1887)	Literary	13.13
Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference* ** (1848)	Informational	13.47
<i>Billy Budd, Sailor</i> * (1886)	Literary	13.52
"Education" ** (1991)	Informational	14.03
<i>Common Sense</i> (1776)	Informational	14.17
<i>The American Language</i> (1938)	Informational	14.18
<i>Democracy in America</i> ** (1835)	Informational	15.06
"What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" ** (1852)	Informational	15.91
"Society and Solitude" (1857)	Informational	15.93
The United States Bill of Rights (1791)	Informational	16.05
<i>Walden; or, Life in the Woods</i> (1854)	Informational	16.21
<i>The Declaration of Independence</i> (1776)	Informational	21.2

Missing Data

There were some CCSS Appendix B texts excluded from the present study. Those literary texts included: *The Adventures of Augie March*, written by Saul Bellow (1949), Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri (2003). The works of drama that were excluded from this study were: *The Tragedy of Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (1599), Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière's *The Project Gutenberg eBook of Tartuffe* (1664), Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1895), *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder (1938), *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller (1949), Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horesman: A Play* (1976), Li Po's "A Poem of Changgan" (circa 700), John Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" (1633), Phyllis Wheatley's "On Being Brought From Africa to America" (1773), "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats (1820), Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" (c1860), Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" (1890), Rabindranath Tagore's "Song VII" (1913), T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1917), "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter" by Ezra Pound (1917), Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" (1914), Pablo Neruda's "Ode to My Suit" (1954), Elizabeth Bishop's "Sestina" (1965), Judith Ortiz Cofer's "The Latin Dell: An Ars Poetica"(1988), "Demeter's Prayer to Hades" by Rita Dove (1995), and Billy Collins' "Man Listening to Disc". The two informational texts excluded from this study were: George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" (1946), and "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan (1990). All drama and poetry outlined in the CCSS Appendix B were excluded from the readability grade level evaluation because the Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability formulas used in this study are not meant to evaluate texts these forms of text. They are meant to predict the text difficulty of running narrative forms of text.

Discussion

There are several objectives within the following discussion. Those five objectives include: a) drawing appropriate conclusions about the results, b) explaining how the present study's results relate to previous research, c) reiterating support for the theory of scaffolding in appropriate text selection, d) making suggestions for future research in this area, e) explaining how the Text Sequence Reference Guide, located in Table 12, can be utilized by teachers, curriculum coordinators, and administrators to make informed decision regarding the development of a student-centered CCSS-aligned English Language Arts curriculum for the grade level 11-CCR band, and f) a section that highlights the key points of the present study including how these findings may positively impact English Language Arts curriculum that is aligned with the CCSS.

Conclusions about Readability Formulas

The first hypothesis was supported in that the average Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability grade levels was in the grade level band (11-CCR) suggested by the CCSS for both the literary and informational texts sampled. These results are consistent with previous research (Fitzsimmons et al., 2010; Flesch, 1948; Kamil et al., 2011; McLaughlin, 1969; McLaughlin, 2008) on these formulas for two reasons: a) the Flesch-Kincaid formula requires a lenient 75% comprehension whereas the SMOG formula requires a strict 100% comprehension for a text to be consider at grade level, and b) these particulars should provide an average grade level that is both valid and within the proposed 11-CCR grade level band.

The support of this prediction provides backing for readability formulas in general. Specifically, these results support some practical applications for the classroom. The present study identified that, on average, the CCSS grades 11-CCR English Language Arts texts are of a

readability grade level within that band. Classroom teachers may be interested in the average readability grade level of those required texts of any given semester or year. The straightforward procedures identified in the Methods section of the present study can be utilized as a template for exacting the average readability results of the texts associated with any given course. This information can help teachers to make important decisions about the order in which texts should logically be presented or whether the material is too complex or lacking complexity on average. Moreover, decisions about additional scaffolding can be made when a text is deemed to be above grade level or when the text must be presented prior to most students being able to unpack it independently and proficiently.

The support of this prediction also provides backing for the method used to identify those literary and informational texts found in the 11-CCR grade band. The cumulative average readability grade level across both genres and for both formulas was 11.85. This is just under the median grade level of 11.95, the mid-point between the minimum grade level of the band (11.0) and the maximum grade level of the band (12.9). It is unclear if these results are by chance or if the CCSS developers were truly interested in providing a wide array of texts that when averaged, represent the average skill set of a student studying at the mid-way point of the 11-CCR grade level band.

The second hypothesis was supported as the informational texts were, on average, of higher grade level when compared to the literary texts sampled. Three factors may help to explain these results: a) the CCSS developers may have intentionally identified informational texts that are more complex in nature when compared to the literary texts from this grade band, b) the CCSS developers unintentionally identified more complex informational texts, or c) informational texts are simply more complex on average when compared to literary texts.

If the third explanation is truly the case, an investigation into these informational texts' specific psycholinguistic features is in need. Do informational texts contain more domain specific vocabulary or other features when compared to literary texts? A brief investigation into this claim found that *The Great Gatsby* (12.07) had an average of 1.44 syllables per word and an average of 30.60 words per sentence whereas *American's Constitution: A Biography* (12.06) had an average of 1.77 syllables per word and an average of 17.61 words per sentence. Although these texts resulted in comparable readability grade levels, they are comprised of differing elements. The informational text contained more syllables per words whereas the literary text contained nearly twice the average number of words per sentence. This information, albeit trivial, supports the work of Dale-Chall (2007) in that very short sentences can be as difficult to read as very long sentences, and familiar words may pose difficulty for a reader when they are used in a symbolic or manner.

Although this study finds that the informational texts are, on average, more complex than the literary texts, their place in a rigorous grades 11-CCR English Language Arts curriculum is with little question. These informational texts better represent those texts that students will encounter at the college and career level ("ACT," 2006; "Common Core Appendix A," 2010; Williamson, 2008). Educators must provide all students with a supported opportunity to unpack complex texts in order for students to develop the skills necessary to comprehend these texts independently and proficiently. Additionally, the inclusion of these informational texts in a 11-CCR English Language Arts curriculum will provide students an opportunity to unpack expository texts that is lacking in the current educational trends. Several studies have found that the reading of expository texts is essential for students to develop the necessary reading strategies and to be successful at the postsecondary level. Researchers support this claim because

“expository texts make up the vast majority of the required reading in college and the workplace” (“Common Core Appendix A,” 2010, p. 3).

Research indicates that there is, on average, a gap between the complexity of typical high school textbooks and college textbooks (“Common Core Appendix A,” 2010). The CCSS suggested informational texts may supplement existing textbook reading so as to provide students in all courses an opportunity to unpack domain-specific informational texts. An increased exposure to complex expository texts at the secondary level may more students to test into credit bearing courses at the college level.

A lack of exposure to complex texts does not end with an increased trend for remedial reading classes at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Students who do not develop the skills to read complex texts, including language skills, concentration, and stamina, are less likely to read in general. These students are more likely to gather information from minimal text sources, which cannot capture to depth, breadth, or intricacies in the same way that a complex text is able (“Common Core Appendix A,” 2010). Although podcasts, educational videos, social networking sites, and other multimedia methods of learning are of value, many would agree that they are no substitute for the written word of a complex informational or literary text. The CCSS acknowledges the worth of digital literacy but seeks to increase curricula rigor across the board, and they assert that more independent reading of complex texts is the most effective means of doing so. If more English Language Arts teachers assigned more complex texts and students were held accountable for what they read independently, the nation might see an increase in the quality of student ending the college classroom in a few years in terms.

One obvious goal of the CCSS is to improve K-12 literacy skills in order to equip more students with college and career readiness skills. As English Language Arts teachers from across

the nation increase the rigor of their curriculum and provide opportunities to read more complex informational texts, the literacy skills of all students may naturally shift in a positive direction. While instructional practices must align with a rigorous set of standards to see an improvement in college and career readiness skills, these large range consequences of the new standards will not be immediately observed.

The third hypothesis was support because the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula consistently evaluated both the literary and informational texts as having a lower readability grade level than the SMOG readability formula. As mentioned previously, this is in part due to the lenient 75% comprehension criterion associated with this formula. Many would disagree that understanding three quarters of an insurance policy, airplane flight manual, medical procedure risk pamphlet, or mortgage agreement is a tolerable standard. Additionally, many domains use the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula to regulate their texts including the United States Military and Florida insurance law (Kamil et al., 2011; Onecle, 2010). If 75% comprehension is, indeed, an acceptable standard, then the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula and Flesch Reading Ease formula should be used to evaluate these types of texts. This researcher suggests that an increased criterion for comprehensibility be considered in these highly important domains involving extremely important texts. The range of readability grade level using the Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG formulas may illustrate a more accurate picture of the complexity at which these texts are written. Furthermore, if law makers and governing officials are interested in producing texts that may result in reaching more people, then investigating the range of two or more readability grade level results may help to meet this goal.

The Microsoft® Word Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, when used independently, may not present the most accurate information about the grade level of written communications

with parents (e.g., IEPs, class newsletters, progress monitoring updates, letters, or emails), When educators are interested in producing reader-friendly communications with parents and the community, similarly to the plain language goals of insurance, health care, and other organizations, educators must ensure that written communications are entirely comprehensible to the those who receive them. Districts, teachers, parents, and students will all benefit from open communication about progress as well as areas of concern. Written communications with parents and community members should be written at an 8th or 9th grade reading level so it is comprehensible to the average adult (Winslow & Jacobson, 2000). After checking for spelling and grammar issues in that newsletter or email, educators should then check the document's readability grade level. This researcher suggests investigating the range of the two formulas utilized here to ensure than as many parents and community members as possible will be able to comprehend the text. One might even assume that as more parents and community members read and understand the written communications send from school faculty, they might be more inclined to actively participate in school sponsored events and programs.

Readability for Responsible Pedagogy and Other Uses

Information on the readability of a text can help educators and parents make informed decisions about which texts are best suited for each individual reader's needs. Additionally, this insight may help teachers, curriculum coordinators, administrators, and parents identify if the texts associated with a specific curriculum are a) truly preparing students for the complex texts that they will be required to understand in the realms of college and careers, and b) less difficult or more difficult for an average student to comprehend of a specific grade level. This information may help to tailor English Language Arts education to the specific needs of each student. Additionally, readability statistics can, in part, answer some difficult questions about how

educators are preparing students for postsecondary endeavors. To reiterate, are high school students being asked to unpack highly complex texts that will prepare them for the types of college and career-related texts they must comprehend independently and proficiently (Williamson, 2008)?

Decisions about special education services and AIS (Academic Intervention Services) may be better informed through the use of readability information. Reading specialists and other educational professions may be able to make evaluations of students' reading needs by measuring and comparing the level of difficulty students experience with a text to its readability grade level. This information may help to inform interventions for some students in need of additional support or students who need to be presented with texts of a more complex nature to ensure they are effectively challenged.

To ensure that texts are presented to students in a pedagogically responsible manner and for effective scaffolding purposes, educators must understand which texts are more difficult to comprehend. In essence, readability can help making text selections and grade level appropriate curriculum development less ambiguous. Interdepartmental curriculum mapping may be less arduous if text readability grade levels were considered. By identifying this information for each grade's texts, a curricula can be developed that provides students with the critical reading opportunities that they will need for success in the following year. The text sequence identified in the present study may help to provide evidence-based information for curriculum developers interested in scaffolding texts from least complex to most complex. Selecting appropriate texts according to students' ability is a difficult task for educators, and readability grade level information can be of assistance in this area.

The utility of text readability information is not limited to the evaluation of secondary texts for a general education classroom. Kotula (2003), Meyer (2003), and Wehby et al. (1998) inferred that using this information to match students to reading level appropriate texts to maximize the fluency of struggling readers and minimize frustration and avoidance behaviors of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. They have also been used in many other domains and for numerous other purposes. Some researchers used these formulas to evaluate the complexity of college financial and accounting textbooks (Plucinski, 2010; Plucinski, Olsavsky, & Hall, 2009), while others put them to use to derive information about elementary school standardized test items (Hewitt & Homan, 2004). Still, others (Arnott et al, 2011) evaluated the complexity of online health care information provided to the general public using these formulas. Readability statistics helped Meyer (2012) to evaluate United States presidential speeches for their ease of comprehension. Although readability statistics provide insight into textual complexity, they can only determine complexity according to a text's psycholinguistic features.

While the ease and convenience of their use is attractive, some researchers express caution regarding their limitations. Fitzsimmons et al. (2010) asserted that the Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG readability formulas underestimated and overestimated the difficulty of texts respectively. This limitation was taken into account in the present study as an averaging of these scores was a logical response to the findings of Fitzsimmons et al. (2010). They also called into question their validity regarding the evaluation of elementary school texts. Although these findings can be questioned by Otto Stockmeyer (2009) who assured that the Flesch-Kincaid formula was designed for adult material, tested on adult readers, and can be used to evaluate material for all grade levels, including elementary grades. Future research in this area should take this question of validity into account if the intent is to replicate the present study using CCSS

elementary level texts. Additionally, Oakland and Lane (2004) provided evidence against using these formulas to evaluate brief statements including standardized test items. Although readability formulas may not be able to illustrate the difficulty of standardized test questions, examinations with reading passages of 300-600 words, including the New York State Comprehensive English examination, may be an important area to evaluate. For instance, Passage A of the June 2012 examination, a 543-word account of Alaska's Mount McKinley (Denali), has a Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of 7.8 and a SMOG grade level of 10.65. Although the present researcher does not generalize the results of this brief investigation to all other reading passages of the exam, these outcome may represent a gap in the research that requires a thorough inquiry.

The work of some researchers did provide beneficial suggestions for how and when to use these formulas effectively as well as alternative methods of text complexity evaluation. As mentioned previously, Burke and Greenberg (2010) suggested that evaluators should average the scores of two or more formulas for the best results. This recommendation informed the present study's methodology. With that being said, Crossley et al. (2011) identified readability information as being helpful in identifying reading difficulties in L1 students, but they suggested that these formulas be improved to increase their abilities to predict L2 reading difficulty. It was research by Sperling (2006) that presented a helpful checklist for deciding which instructional materials were appropriate for inclusion in content area instruction. The checklist addresses several learner and textual dimensions including: learners' prior knowledge, vocabulary levels, and motivation. In addition to reader-based dimensions, text characteristics, such as the inclusion of supplemental instructional materials, readability, and the use of objectives, examples, and analogies, were also addressed.

Supporting the Theory of Scaffolding

The Text Sequence Reference Guide, illustrated in Table 12, was developed with the theory of scaffolding in mind. Woods, Bruner, and Ross (1974) explain that the theory of educational scaffolding is the “process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (p. 90). In principle, the reference guide presents a sequenced list of texts that teachers can use to teach the reading skills necessary to tackle these complex works independently. Although the new standards represent a push for the teaching of more complex texts with less scaffolding, a pedagogically responsible response to the new standards is to increase the level of text complexity while gradually decreasing the amount of scaffolding that takes place.

Although the theory of educational scaffolding is grounded in responsible pedagogy, it becomes an issue when too few students are provided with too few opportunities to independently read complex texts. Texts representative of secondary school are often scaffolding with class discussions, summaries, glossaries, and other textual features. Although scaffolding is only useful within a student's ‘zone of proximal development,’ the zone where students can't continue learning alone but are able to continue with guidance from an instructor (Rosenshine and Meister, 1992, p. 26), teachers must teach the skills associated with independent reading if this proximal zone is to develop. While an extensive discussion regarding the effective pedagogy behind the teaching of reading is beyond the scope of the present study, it is important to discuss secondary-postsecondary skill gaps as well as some general ways that the reference guide can be of use to bridge these specific gaps.

There is a gap in text complexity as well as a gap in expectations regarding independent reading and student accountability at the secondary level. High school students are rarely held

accountable for what they read independently when compared to students studying at the college level. In essence, “college instructors assign readings, not necessarily explicated in class, for which students might be held accountable through exams, papers, presentations, or class discussions” (“Common Core Appendix A,” 2010, p. 3). Outside of requiring the reading of more complex texts, teachers may help struggling readers to read complex texts independently by providing in-class time to do so. This provides an opportunity, albeit time consuming, for teachers to monitor their students and to work with struggling students on independent reading strategies. Additionally, students can practice the behavioral skills of reading independently such as concentration and stamina during class time. Readers who have already acquired independent reading skills are not hampered by their counterparts and are able to read at their own pace. What does not get read during class must be finished at home where students are expected to prepare for the subsequent assessment on the text. As students gradually acquire the behavioral skills needed for independent reading, the amount of scaffolding (e.g., provided class time) may be adjusted. Teachers must understand the specific needs of the students they teach in order to make informed judgment calls regarding this classroom practice. Furthermore, as the readability grade level of assigned texts increased, English Language Arts teachers may need to reevaluate whether a reduction in provided class time is a tactic that will reinforce the reading of complex text or contribute to its extinction. In summation, students must understand that they will be held accountable for reading independently through subsequent forms of formative assessment. Teachers must follow through with an appropriate assessment in order to bridge the current student accountability gap between at the secondary level study and that representative of postsecondary studies as well as the world of work.

Suggestions for Future Research

If informational texts are simply more complex on average when compared to literary texts, an investigation into these informational texts' specific psycholinguistic features as well as students' perceptions of these texts is in need. If research can identify what makes these texts more difficult to read, then appropriate reading interventions may be developed in order to meet the needs on an increased number of incoming college-bound students. What textual features make reading a narrative easier than expository texts for secondary education students? What dimensions of the reader make unpacking a narrative less arduous? One suggestion for future research involves identifying the relationship between readers' motivations, average amount of exposure of narrative and expository texts, and differences in student reading comprehension between these types of text.

Although readability formulas were not developed in order to evaluate brief statements (e.g., standardized test items), examinations that include reading passages of more than 300 words each may be an area where these formulas prove advantageous. The New York State Comprehensive English examination requires grade 11 students to read three passages for reading comprehension assessment purposes. If these passages do not represent an approximate readability grade level of 11.0, then students may be able to pass this examination without actually having the comprehension skills necessary to be successful at the grade 12 level let alone the realms of college and careers. If an evaluation of these passages results in a significantly lower readability level, the validity of the examination may be called into question. Essentially, this grade 11 assessment may not actually be aligned appropriately for testing grade 11 English Language Arts skills if the passages are not, on average, at the readability grade level of 11.0. An investigation may be worthy to investigate the range of readability grade level of

each New York State Comprehensive English examination from the past 20 years to evaluate for a relationship between standardized test expectations and English language Arts instructional trends.

If more English Language Arts teachers from across the nation provided more opportunities for students to unpack complex literary and informational texts and students were held accountable for what they read independently, the nation might see an increase in the readiness of students entering the college classroom in the up-and-coming years. This research may provide valuable insight into the large-scale impact of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. A longitudinal study may help to track the nation's trends in secondary English Language Arts curriculum that is aligned with the CCSS, average SAT scores, average rate of required remedial courses for incoming college freshmen, and average number of semesters it takes for students to complete a bachelor's degree. If the new standards do not have a positive impact on one or all of these areas, law makers and educational professionals may need to reevaluate the standards or how they are being implemented in the English Language Arts and content area classrooms.

CCSS Text Sequence Reference Guide

This study has demonstrated that readability formulas can offer insight into the text complexity of some CCSS Appendix B grades 11-CCR literary and informational texts. The results of this study have led to the development of a research-based reference guide, outlined in Table 12, which lists these texts sequentially from least difficult to most difficult. Several conclusions can be drawn about these texts by interpreting the data provided in Table 12.

Assuming this study's validity and methodology are sound, the readability grade level range for all 34 evaluated texts is 6.14 to 21.2. This data is considerably wider than the 11-CCR grade

band that the CCSS suggests they are appropriate within. A discussion of these findings is particularly important because many education professionals from across the nation are referencing the CCSS Appendix B when realigning their grades 11-CCR English Language Arts curricula to the new standards.

Given the vast number of experienced professionals and professional groups associated with the development of the CCSS Appendix B, the only logical conclusion for this spread of data is that the CCSS, did indeed, considered other factors when developing this list of suggested works. A three-part model for measuring text complexity can be found in the CCSS Appendix A on page four (“Common Core Appendix A,” 2010). To reiterate, those three parts include qualitative dimensions of text complexity, quantitative dimensions, and reader and task considerations. In essence, this model is grounded in one part objectivity and two parts, what this researcher will call, “informed subjectivity”.

A precise method of text complexity evaluation was not provided in any CCSS document. Because of this, the reasoning behind their identification and inclusion in the CCSS Appendix B is ambiguous. For instance, texts with readability grade levels well below the 11-CCR grade band, including the literary text *Their Eyes were Watching God* (6.14) and the informational text *Black Boy* (8.12), may contain highly complex levels of meaning, structure, or require background knowledge for comprehension (qualitative measures). To uphold this logic, texts with readability grade levels well above the 11-CCR grade level, including the literary text *Billy Budd, Sailor* (13.52) and the informational text *The Declaration of Independence* (21.2), may contain lower level qualitative measures (meaning, structure, or required background knowledge). Many would not find these “truths” to be self-evident. Furthermore, the qualitative

and quantitative dimensions of text complexity do not provide enough information about the texts to explain their alignment within the 11-CCR grade band.

The reader and task considerations component of the standards' approach to text complexity better explains the wide range in readability grade level. This list of texts represents the reading abilities of a heterogeneous general education classroom in many schools across the nation. In the ideal classroom, English 11 students will all be able to comprehend texts with a readability grade level of 11.0 to 11.9. Students will not fall behind, nor will students feel unchallenged. However, this is rarely the case and the student reading levels of any given 11-CCR English Language Arts class may be widely divergent. A wide range of complex texts may meet more 11-CCR grade level students' reading needs.

The Text Sequence Reference Guide can offer solutions to teachers who teach students of varying reading abilities, whether they are in the same course or whether the teacher is responsible for teaching several grade levels. Struggling readers may experience less frustration and increased motivation when provided with texts on the lower end of complexity (Wehby et al, 1998). Whereas students at or above grade level will be appropriately challenged when provided with an opportunity to unpack the texts identified as at or above the 11-CCR grade level. For example, a unit on emerging modernism might feature a differentiated instructional approach where students who can handle 11-CCR texts get to read *The Great Gatsby* (12.07) whereas other students are provided the opportunity to unpack a complex text of lesser quantitative complexity such as *The Eyes were Watching God* (6.14), *A Farewell to Arms* (7.27), or *As I Lay Dying* (8.0). English Teachers who teach more than one grade level or departments who align their curriculum according to thematic units might enjoy teaching modernist or transcendentalist works simultaneously. To reiterate, grade 9 students can learn and read about these movements

through *As I Lay Dying* while grades 11-CCR are studying *The Great Gatsby*. Additionally, English Language Arts teachers may wish to align these thematic units with the curriculum of a content area teacher. The readability of specific texts may help to select appropriate texts while developing cross-curricular educational experiences. Furthermore, the Text Sequence Reference Guide can provide valuable insight that can save time and resources while aligning curricula to the new standards.

The Text Sequence Reference Guide might also be used to help inform independent or summer reading selections. In this case, teachers can empower their students to make informed choices about which texts to read by considering their background knowledge, topics of interest, and their personal reading skills. Students might also benefit from a brief tutorial regarding readability statistics and how they can help to inform their reading selections as well as providing an objective evaluation of their own writing.

The CCSS Text Sequence Reference Guide can save the time and financial resources of teachers, curriculum coordinators, and administrators who must develop or oversee a CCSS-aligned English Language Arts curriculum. Budget conscious school districts that are also eager to redesign English Language Arts curricula cannot afford to waste financial resources on the purchasing of texts that are outside of students' zone of proximal development. The Reference Guide can help to make informed choices about which CCSS texts will provide a challenge to students while exposing them to the level of text complexity that may better prepare them for the realms of college and careers. For school districts that are financially unable to acquire some or all of the CCSS Appendix B texts, the reference guide may help to evaluate the complexity of the currently available texts by means of comparison. Although there are benefits to using the guide, it is not without flaw.

The Text Sequence Reference Guide provides some insight into CCSS Appendix B text difficulty. Although this guide includes 34 literary and informational texts, it is only a preliminary document. As the CCSS and other English Language Arts professionals identify additional texts for the 11-CCR grade band, those texts should be evaluated and rank ordered according to their complexity within this reference guide. One deficit remains, the guide cannot provide information about the semantic and thematic components of a text, nor should it be the only factor in appropriate text selection. Educators must be cautious about assigning or suggesting texts of mature themes to students who may not have the background knowledge or cognitive development to comprehend its meaning or purpose. Additionally, some of the texts will require a specific type of background knowledge for comprehension. When considering a complex text on the list, teachers can survey their students' to identify what important key terms they understand and what conceptual or theoretical foundations might need clarification prior to working with the text.

The research on readability, text complexity, and reading comprehension will help educators to make informed decisions about how to effectively align the current curricula to the new Common Core State Standards. The present study identifies the range of readability grade level of 17 literary and 17 informational texts not to critically evaluate how or why the CCSS developers aligned them within the 11-CCR grade level band but to provide a means of comparing these texts according to their psycholinguistic features.

Key Points

- a) The use of readability formula calculators is a relatively straightforward method of gathering important information about texts' complexity and its relative level of reading

difficulty. Their results are utilized in decision making in the domains of education, the United States Military, the health care field, and insurance industries.

- b)** Text complexity, reading difficulty, and reading comprehension are all multidimensional. Although readability statistics provide information on the predictive difficulty of a text, semantic, syntactic, reader dimensions must all be considered when assigning texts in a pedagogically responsible manner.
- c)** The CCSS Appendix B texts represent a wide array and wide range of literary and informational texts. Some are predictive of texts appropriate for readers at the middle school level while others are predictive of text appropriate for those studying at the postsecondary level.
- d)** The informational texts outlined in the CCSS Appendix B are more complex than their literary counterparts.
- e)** Scaffolding is a technique that provides students with the assistance they need in order to accomplish a task. The CCSS Appendix A asserts that too much scaffolding may disable students from unpacking complex texts independently and proficiently.
- f)** The CCSS Appendix B texts will help to bridge the text complexity gap. By modeling the college culture of student reading accountability, high school students may be better prepared for the different set of expectations and increased consumption of complex texts when they begin their postsecondary studies or enter the workforce.

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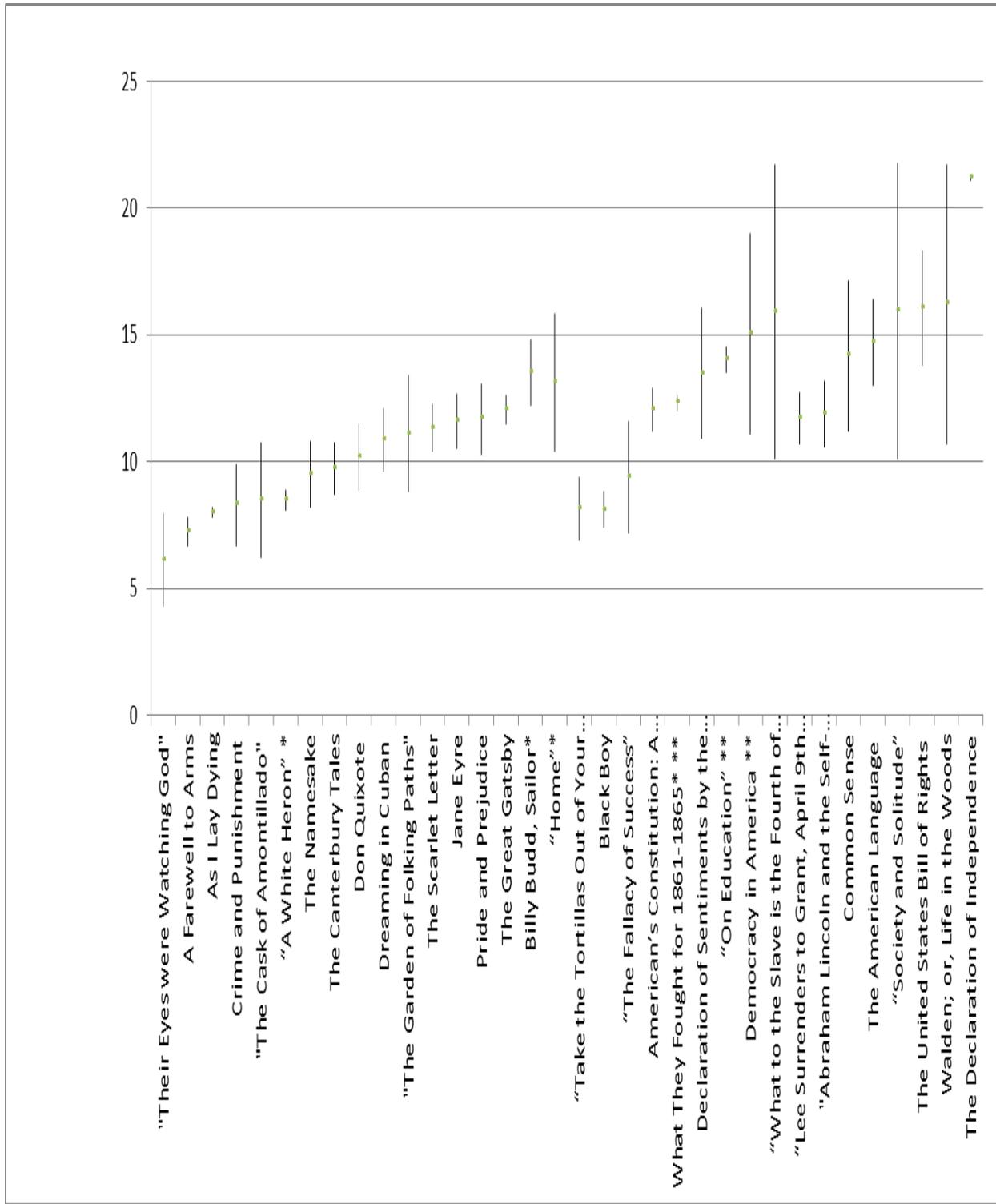
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Appendix A

Titles and Readability Grade Level Range



Appendix B***CCSS Appendix B Literary and Informational Text Samples*****Literary Texts*****Their Eyes Were Watching God***

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is a life of men. Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly. So the beginning of this was a woman and she had come back from burying the dead.

She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny bloom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening lead-buds; from the lead-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. This singings she heard that had nothing to do with her ears.

And one night he had caught Walter standing behind Janie and brushing the back of his hand back and forth across the loose end of her braid ever so lightly so as to enjoy the feel of it without Janie knowing what he was doing. Joe was at the back of the store and Walter didn't see him. He felt like rushing forth with the meat knife and chopping off the offending hand. That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. That was all. She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others. But he never said things like that. It just wasn't him. Take the matter of the yellow mule, for instance.

A Farewell to Arms

I came back to next afternoon from our first mountain post and stopped the car at the smistimento where the wounded and sick were sorted by their papers and the papers marked for the different hospitals. I had been driving and I sat in the car and the driver took the papers in. It was a hot day and the sky was very bright and blue and the road was white and dusty. I sat in the high seat of the Fiat and thought about nothing. A regiment went by in the road and I watched them pass.

I looked in her eyes and put my arm around her as I had before and kissed her. I kissed her hard and held her tight and tried to open her lips; they were closed tight. I was still angry and as I held her suddenly she shivered. I held her close against me and could feel her heart beating and her lips opened and her head went back against my hand and then she was crying on my shoulder. Oh, darling, she said. You will be good to me, won't you?

We're not at from the top,. I wouldn't be able to get the stretcher out along. He started the car, The stream kept on. In the dark I could not see where it came from the canvas overhead. I tried to move sideways so that it did not fall on me. Where it had run down under my shirt it was warm and sticky. I was cold and my leg hurt so that it me sick. After a while the stream from the stretcher above lessened and started to drip again and I heard and felt the canvas above move as the man on the stretcher settled more comfortably.

Sometimes in the dark we heard the troops marching under the window and guns going past pulled by motor-tractors. There was much traffic at night and many mules on the roads with boxes of ammunition on each side of their pack-saddles and gray motor trucks that carried men, and other trucks with loads covered with canvas that moved slower in the traffic. There were big guns too that passed in the day drawn by tractors, the long barrels of the guns covered with green branches and green leafy branches and vines laid over the tractors. To the north we could look across a valley and see a forest of chestnut trees and behind it another mountain on this side of the river. There was fighting for that mountain too, but it was not successful, and in the fall when the rains came the leaves all fell from the chestnut trees and the branches were bare and the trunks black with rain. The vineyards were thin and bare-branched too and all the country wet and brown and dead with the autumn. There were mists over the river and clouds on the mountain and the trucks splashed mud on the road and the troops were muddy and wet in their capes; their rifles were wet and under their capes the two leather cartridge-boxes on the front of the belts, gray leather boxes heavy with the packs of clips of thin, long 6 point 5 mm cartridges, bulged forward under the capes so that the men, passing on the road, marched as though they were six months gone with child.

As I Lay Dying

Jewel and I come up from the field, following the path in single file. Although I am fifteen feet ahead of him, anyone watching us from the cottonhouse can see Jewel's frayed and broken straw hat a full head above my own. The path runs straight as a plumb-line, worn smooth by feet and baked brick-hard by July, between the green rows of laidby cotton, to the cottonhouse at four soft right angles and goes on across the field again, worn so by feet in fading precision. The cottonhouse is of rough logs, from between which the chinking has long fallen. Square, with a broken roof set at a single pitch, it leans in empty and shimmering dilapidation in the sunlight, a single broad window in two opposite walls giving onto the approaches of the path. When we reach it I turn and follow the path which circles the house. Jewel, fifteen feet behind me, looking straight ahead, steps in a single stride through the window. Still staring straight ahead, his pale eyes like wood set into his wooden face, he crosses the floor in four strides with the rigid gravity of a cigar store Indian dressed in patched overalls and endued with life from the hips down, and steps in a single stride through the opposite window and into the path again just as I come around the corner. In single file and five feet apart and Jewel now in front, we go on up the path toward the foot of the bluff. Tull's wagon stands beside the spring, hitched to the rail, the reins wrapped about the seat stanchion. In the wagon bed are two chairs. Jewel stops at the spring and takes the gourd from the willow branch and drinks. I pass him and mount the path, beginning to hear Cash's saw. When I reach the top he has quit sawing. Standing in a litter of chips, he is fitting two of the boards together. Between the shadow spaces they are yellow as gold, like soft gold,

bearing on their flanks in smooth undulations the marks of the adze blade: a good carpenter, Cash is. He holds the two planks on the trestle, fitted along the edges in a quarter of the finished box. He kneels and squints along the edge of them, then he lowers them and takes up the adze. A good carpenter. Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in.

Crime and Punishment

“I want to attempt a thing like that and am frightened by these trifles,” he thought, with an odd smile. “Hm yes, all is in a man’s hands and he lets it all slip from cowardice, that’s an axiom. It would be interesting to know what it is men are most afraid of. Taking a new step, uttering a new word is what they fear most. But I am talking too much. It’s because I chatter that I do nothing. Or perhaps it is that I chatter because I do nothing. I’ve learned to chatter this last month, lying for days together in my den thinking. of Jack the Giant-killer. Why am I going there now? Am I capable of that? Is that serious? It is not serious at all. It’s simply a fantasy to amuse myself; a plaything! Yes, maybe it is a plaything.”

An expression of the profoundest disgust gleamed for a moment in the young man’s refined face. He was, by the way, exceptionally handsome, above the average in height, slim, well-built, with beautiful dark eyes and dark brown hair. Soon he sank into deep thought, or more accurately speaking into a complete blankness of mind; he walked along not observing what was about him and not caring to observe it. From time to time, he would mutter something, from the habit of talking to himself, to which he had just confessed. At these moments he would become conscious that his ideas were sometimes in a tangle and that he was very weak; for two days he had scarcely tasted food.

He was so badly dressed that even a man accustomed to shabbiness would have been ashamed to be seen in the street in such rags. In that quarter of the town, however, scarcely any shortcoming in dress would have created surprise. Owing to the proximity of the Hay Market, the number of establishments of bad character, the preponderance of the trading and working class population crowded in these streets and alleys in the heart of Petersburg, types so various were to be seen in the streets that no figure, however queer, would have caused surprise. But there was such accumulated bitterness and contempt in the young man’s heart, that, in spite of all the fastidiousness of youth, he minded his rags least of all in the street. It was a different matter when he met with acquaintances or with former fellow students, whom, indeed, he disliked meeting at any time.

“The Cask of Amontillado”

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness, with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its

redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within. No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in reply only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*

“A White Heron”

Half a mile from home, at the farther edge of the woods, where the land was highest, a great pine-tree stood, the last of its generation. Whether it was left for a boundary mark, or for what reason, no one could say; the woodchoppers who had felled its mates were dead and gone long ago, and a whole forest of sturdy trees, pines and oaks and maples, had grown again. But the stately head of this old pine towered above them all and made a landmark for sea and shore miles and miles away. Sylvia knew it well. She had always believed that whoever climbed to the top of it could see the ocean; and the little girl had often laid her hand on the great rough trunk and looked up wistfully at those dark boughs that the wind always stirred, no matter how hot and still the air might be below.

She crept out along the swaying oak limb at last, and took the daring step across into the old pine-tree. The way was harder than she thought; she must reach far and hold fast, the sharp dry twigs caught and held her and scratched her like angry talons, the pitch made her thin little fingers clumsy and stiff as she went round and round the tree's great stem, higher and higher upward. The sparrows and robins in the woods below were beginning to wake and twitter to the dawn, yet it seemed much lighter there aloft in the pine-tree, and the child knew she must hurry if her project were to be of any use.

Sylvia's face was like a pale star, if one had seen it from the ground, when the last thorny bough was past, and she stood trembling and tired but wholly triumphant, high in the tree-top. Yes, there was the sea with the dawning sun making a golden dazzle over it, and toward that glorious east flew two hawks with slow-moving pinions. How low they looked in the air from that height when one had only seen them before far up, and dark against the blue sky. Their gray feathers were as soft as moths; they seemed only a little way from the tree, and Sylvia felt as if she too

could go flying away among the clouds. Westward, the woodlands and farms reached miles and miles into the distance; here and there were church steeples, and white villages, truly it was a vast and awesome world.

The Namesake

On a sticky august evening two weeks before her due date, Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment, combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, then slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix. Ashima had been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones.

One day he attends a panel discussion about Indian novels written in English. He feels obligated to attend; one of the presenters on the panel, Amit, is a distant cousin who lives in Bombay, whom Gogol has never met. His mother has asked him to greet Amit on her behalf. Gogol is bored by the panelists, who keep referring to something called “marginality,” as if it were some sort of medical condition. For most of the hour, he sketches portraits of the panelists, who sit hunched over their papers along a rectangular table. “Teleologically speaking, ABCDs are unable to answer the question ‘Where are you from?’” the sociologist on the panel declares. Gogol has never heard the term ABCD. He eventually gathers that it stands for “American-born confused deshi.” In other words, him. He learns that the C could also stand for “conflicted.” He knows that deshi, a generic word for “countryman,” means “Indian,” knows that his parents and all their friends always refer to India simply as desh. But Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India.

And Gogol’s formal education begins. At the top of sheets of scratchy pale yellow paper he writes out his pet name again and again, and the alphabet in capitals and lowercase. He learns to add and subtract, and to spell his first words. In the front covers of the textbooks from which he is taught to read he leaves his legacy, writing his name in number-two pencil below a series of others. In art class, his favorite hour of the week, he carves his name with paper clips into the bottom of clay cups and bowls.

A number of onlookers cry out in alarm. Moushumi’s hand goes to her mouth. Half the crows is looking down, away, shaking their heads. From the splayed feet at one end of the stretcher, wearing a pair of beige flat-heeled shoes, she can tell that it’s a woman. From a professor, she learns what happened: Alice, the administrative assistant, had fallen suddenly by the mailboxes. One minute she was sorting campus mail, the next minute she was out cold. By the time the paramedics had arrived she was dead from an aneurysm. She was in her thirties, unmarried, perpetually sipping herbal tea. Moushumi had never been particularly fond of her.

The Canterbury Tales

When in April the sweet showers fall and pierce the drought of March to the root, and all the veins are bathed in liquor of such power as brings about the engendering of the flower, when also Zephyrus with his sweet breath exhales an air in every grove and heath upon the tender shoots, and the young sun his half-course in the sign of the Ram has run, and the small fowl are making melody that sleep away the night with open eye (So nature pricks them and their heart engages).

“But let me briefly make my purpose plain; I preach for nothing but for greed of gain and use the same old text, as bold as brass, radix malorum est cupiditas. And thus I preach against the very vice I make my living out of—avarice. And yet however guilty of that sin myself, with others I have power to win them from it, I can bring them to repent; But that is not my principal intent. Covetousness is both the root and stuff of all I preach. That ought to be enough “Well, then I give examples thick and fast from bygone times, old stories from the past.

In ecstasy he caught her in his arms, his heart went bathing in a bath of bliss and melted in a hundred thousand kisses, and she responded in the fullest measure either all that could delight or give him pleasure. So they lived ever after to the end in perfect bliss; and may Christ Jesus send us husbands meek and young and fresh in bed, and grace to overbid them when we wed. And—Jesus hear my prayer!—cut short the lives of those who won’t be governed by their wives; and all old, angry niggards of their pence, God send them soon a very pestilence!

Don Quixote

If to be welcomed by the good, O Book! thou make thy steady aim, no empty chatterer will dare to question or dispute thy claim. But if perchance thou hast a mind to win of idiot’s approbation, lost labor will be thy reward, though they’ll pretend appreciation. They say a goodly shade he finds who shelters beneath a goodly tree. And such a one thy kindly star in Bejar bath provided thee. A royal tree whose spreading boughs a show of princely fruit display. A tree that bears a noble Duke, the Alexander of his day.

The scatterbrain that gave La Mancha more rich spoils than Jason’s; who a point so keen had to his wit, and happier far had been if his wit’s weathercock a blunter bore. The arm renowned far as Gaeta’s shore, Cathay, and all the lands that lie between. The muse discreet and terrible in mien as ever wrote on brass in days of yore. He who surpassed the Amadis all, and who as naught the Galaors accounted, supported by his love and gallantry: Who made the Belianises sing small, and sought renown on Rocinante mounted. Here, underneath this cold stone, doth he lie.

Whom, if perchance thou should come to know him, thou shalt warn to leave at rest where they lie the weary mouldering bones of Don Quixote, and not to attempt to carry him off, in opposition to all the privileges of death, to Old Castile, making him rise from the grave where in reality and truth he lies stretched at full length, powerless to make any third expedition or new sally. For the two that he has already made, so much to the enjoyment and approval of everybody

to whom they have become known, in this as well as in foreign countries, are quite sufficient for the purpose of turning into ridicule the whole of those made by the whole set of the knights-errant.

Dreaming in Cuban

Celia del Pino, equipped with binoculars and wearing her best housedress and drop pearl earrings, sits in her wicker swing guarding the north coast of Cuba. Square by square, she searches the night skies for adversaries then scrutinizes the ocean, which is roiling with nine straight days of unseasonable April rains. No sign of gusano traitors. Celia honored. The neighborhoods committee has voted her little brick-and cement house by the sea as a primary lookout for Santa Teresa del Mar. From her porch, Celia could spot another Bay of Pigs invasion before it happened. She would be feted at the palace, serenaded by a brass orchestra, seduced by El Lider himself on a red velvet divan.

The day after his grandfather dies, Ivanito asks his mother if he can go to the Hungarian circus in Havana. He's seen billboards with fire-eating clowns and a pretty woman in a feathered head-dress. A boy told him there were albino elephants from Siam. But Ivanito never found out if it was true. His mother's days begin with the ritual of a Beny More song called Rebel Heart. The record is warped and scratched from the heat and so much playing, and the words bend as it they're underwater.

Celia remembers Felicia in another bathing suit, a tiny lemon-yellow one she wore the year the sea retreated beyond the horizon, the year the archaeology of the ocean floor revealed itself-catacombs of ancient coral, lunar rocks exposed to the sun. Felicia squatted, examining the shells as if they were unexpected gems, then rearranged them on the sand. Around her neighbors scrambled with wooden buckets, looting the beach for stranded fish and crabs.

“The Garden of Forking Paths”

“Before unearthing this letter, I had questioned myself about the ways in which a book can be infinite. I could think of nothing other than a cyclic volume, a circular one. A book whose last page was identical with the first, a book which had the possibility of continuing indefinitely. I remembered too that night which is at the middle of the Thousand and One Nights when Scheherazade (through a magical oversight of the copyist) begins to relate word for word the story of the Thousand and One Nights, establishing the risk of coming once again to the night when she must repeat it, and thus on to infinity. I imagined as well a Platonic, hereditary work, transmitted from father to son, in which each new individual adds a chapter or corrects with pious care the pages of his elders. These conjectures diverted me; but none seemed to correspond, not even remotely, to the contradictory chapters of Ts'ui Pen. In the midst of this perplexity, I received from Oxford the manuscript you have examined. I lingered, naturally, on the sentence: I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths. Almost instantly, I understood: `the garden of forking paths' was the chaotic novel; the phrase `the

various futures (not to all)' suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. A broad rereading of the work confirmed the theory. In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pen, he chooses simultaneously—all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork. Here, then, is the explanation of the novel's contradictions. Fang, let us say, has a secret; a stranger calls at his door; Fang resolves to kill him. Naturally, there are several possible outcomes: Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they both can escape, they both can die, and so forth. In the work of Ts'ui Pen, all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forkings. Sometimes, the paths of this labyrinth converge: for example, you arrive at this house, but in one of the possible pasts you are my enemy, in another, my friend. If you will resign yourself to my incurable pronunciation, we shall read a few pages."

The Scarlet Letter

It is a little remarkable, that—though disinclined to talk over much of myself and my affairs at the fireside, and to my personal friends—an autobiographical impulse should twice in my life have taken possession of me, in addressing the public. The first time was three or four years since, when I favored the reader—inexcusably, and for no earthly reason that either the indulgent reader or the intrusive author could imagine—with a description of my way of life in the deep quietude of an Old Manse. And now—because, beyond my deserts, I was happy enough to find a listener or two on the former occasion—I again seize the public by the button, and talk of my three years' experience in a Custom-House. "They mostly do," said the clergyman, gripping hard at his breast, as if afflicted with an importunate throb of pain. "Many, many a poor soul hath given its confidence to me, not only on the death-bed, but while strong in life, and fair in reputation. And ever, after such an outpouring, oh, what a relief have I witnessed in those sinful brethren! Even as in one whom at last draws free air, after a long stifling with his own polluted breath. How can it be otherwise? Why should a wretched man—guilty, we will say, of murder—prefer to keep the dead corpse buried in his own heart, rather than fling it forth at once, and let the universe take care of it! So said Hester Prynne, and glanced her sad eyes downward at the scarlet letter. And, after many, many years, a new grave was delved, near an old and sunken one, in that burial-ground beside which King's Chapel has since been built. It was near that old and sunken grave, yet with a space between, as if the dust of the two sleepers had no right to mingle. Yet one tomb-stone served for both. All around, there were monuments carved with armorial bearings; and on this simple slab of slate—as the curious investigator may still discern, and perplex himself with the purport—there appeared the semblance of an engraved escutcheon.

Jane Eyre

The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mama in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group; saying, "She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation, that I was endeavoring in good

earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children.”

“Mama dislikes being disturbed in an evening,” remarked Eliza. I soon rose, quietly took off my bonnet and gloves, uninvited, and said I would just step out to Bessie—who was, I dared say, in the kitchen—and ask her to ascertain whether Mrs Reed was disposed to receive me or not to-night. I went, and having found Bessie and dispatched her on my errand, I proceeded to take further measures. It had heretofore been my habit always to shrink from arrogance: received as I had been to-day, I should, a year ago, have resolved to quit Gateshead the very next morning; now, it was disclosed to me all at once that that would be a foolish plan. I had taken a journey of a hundred miles to see my aunt, and I must stay with her till she was better—or dead: as to her daughters’ pride or folly, I must put it on one side, make myself independent of it.

The last letter I received from him drew from my eyes human tears, and yet filled my heart with divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. I know that a stranger’s hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord. And why weep for this? No fear of death will darken St. John’s last hour: his mind will be unclouded, his heart will be undaunted, and his hope will be sure, his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this—“My Master,” he says, “has forewarned me. Daily He announces more distinctly,—‘Surely I come quickly!’ and hourly I more eagerly respond,—‘Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!’”

Pride and Prejudice

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. "My dear Mr Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?" Mr Bennet replied that he had not.

Colonel Fitzwilliam seemed really glad to see them; anything was a welcome relief to him at Rosings; and Mrs Collins's pretty friend had moreover caught his fancy very much. He now seated himself by her, and talked so agreeably of Kent and Hertfordshire, of travelling and staying at home, of new books and music, that Elizabeth had never been half so well entertained in that room before; and they conversed with so much spirit and flow, as to draw the attention of Lady Catherine herself, as well as of Mr Darcy. What is that you are saying, Fitzwilliam?

Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew; and as she gave way to all the genuine frankness of her character in her reply to the letter which announced its arrangement, she sent him language so very abusive, especially of Elizabeth, that for some time all intercourse was at an end. But at length, by Elizabeth's persuasion, he was prevailed on to overlook the offence, and seek a reconciliation; and, after a little further resistance on the part of his aunt, her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself.

The Great Gatsby

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motorboats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing brushes and hammers and garden shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruit monger in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvres, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

“Home”

When the governess had gone, Bilovsky sat down in an easy-chair before his writing-table and began to think. For some reason he pictured to himself his Seriozha enveloped in clouds of tobacco smoke, with a huge, yard-long cigarette in his mouth, and this caricature made him smile. At the same time the earnest, anxious face of the governess awakened in him memories of days long past and half-forgotten, when smoking at school and in the nursery aroused in masters and parents a strange, almost incomprehensible horror. It really was horror. Children were unmercifully flogged, and expelled from school, and their lives were blighted, although not one of the teachers nor fathers knew exactly what constituted the harm and offence of smoking. Even very intelligent people did not hesitate to combat the vice they did not understand. Bilovsky called to mind the principal of his school, a highly educated, good-natured old man, who was so shocked when he caught a scholar with a cigarette that he would turn pale and immediately summon a special session of the school board and sentence the offender to expulsion. No doubt that is one of the laws of society—the less an evil is understood the more bitterly and harshly it is attacked.

The attorney thought of the two or three boys who had been expelled, of their subsequent lives, and could not but reflect that punishment is, in many cases, more productive of evil than crime itself. The living organism possesses the faculty of quickly adapting itself to every condition; if it were not so man would be conscious every moment of the unreasonable foundations on which

his reasonable actions rest and how little of justice and assurance are to be found even in those activities which are fraught with so much responsibility and which are so appalling in their consequences, such as education, literature, the law—

And thoughts such as these came floating into Bilovsky's head; light, evanescent thoughts such as only enter weary, resting brains. One knows not whence they are nor why they come; they stay but a short while and seem to spread across the surface of the brain without ever sinking very far into its depths. For those whose minds for hours and days together are forced to be occupied with business and to travel always along the same lines, these homelike, untrammelled musings bring a sort of comfort and a pleasant restfulness of their own.

Billy Budd, Sailor

At sea in the old time, the execution by halter of a military sailor was generally from the fore-yard. In the present instance, for special reasons the main-yard was assigned. Under an arm of that lee-yard the prisoner was presently brought up, the Chaplain attending him. It was noted at the time and remarked upon afterwards, that in this final scene the good man evinced little or nothing of the perfunctory. Brief speech indeed he had with the condemned one, but the genuine Gospel was less on his tongue than in his aspect and manner towards him. The final preparations personal to the latter being speedily brought to an end by two boatswain's mates, the consummation impended. Billy stood facing aft. At the penultimate moment, his words, his only ones, words wholly unobstructed in the utterance were these -- "God bless Captain Vere!" Syllables so unanticipated coming from one with the ignominious hemp about his neck -- a conventional felon's benediction directed aft towards the quarters of honor; syllables too delivered in the clear melody of a singing-bird on the point of launching from the twig, had a phenomenal effect, not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor spiritualized now thro' late experiences so poignantly profound.

Without volition as it were, as if indeed the ship's populace were but the vehicles of some vocal current electric, with one voice from below and aloft came a resonant sympathetic echo -- "God bless Captain Vere!" And yet at that instant Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as he was in their eyes. At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them, Captain Vere, either thro' stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock, stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship-lover's rack.

The hull deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward was just regaining an even keel, when the last signal, a preconcerted dumb one, was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapory fleece hanging low in the East, was shot thro' with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and, ascending, took the full rose of the dawn. In the pinioned figure, arrived at the yard-end, to the wonder of all no motion was apparent, none save that created by the ship's motion, in moderate weather so majestic in a great ship ponderously cannoned.

Informational Texts

Black Boy

One winter morning in a long-ago, four-year-old days of my life I found myself standing before a fireplace, warming my hands over a mound of glowing coals, listening to the wind whistle past the house outside. All morning my mother had been scolding me, telling me to keep still, warning me that I must make no noise. And I was angry, fretful, and impatient. In the next room Granny lay ill and under the day and night care of a doctor and I knew that I would be punished if I did not obey. I crossed restlessly to the window and pushed back the long fluffy white curtains-which I had been forbidden to touch- and looked yearningly out into the empty street.

Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly. The hunger I had known before this had been no grim, hostile stranger; it had been a normal hunger that had made me beg constantly for bread, and when I ate a crust or two I was satisfied. But this new hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent.

Yet I was not angry with her for speaking broken English; my English, too, was broken. But why could she not have taken more patience? Only one answer came to my mind. I was black and she did not care. Or so I thought...I was persisting in reading my present environment in the light of my old one. I reasoned thus: Though English was my native tongue and America my native land, she, an alien, could operate a store and earn a living in a neighborhood where I could not even live.

“Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry”

In a recent lecture, “Is Nothing Sacred?”, Salman Rushdie, one of the most censored authors of our time, talked about the importance of books. He grew up in a household in India where books were as sacred as bread. If anyone in the household dropped a piece of bread or a book, the person not only picked it up, but also kissed the object by way of apologizing for clumsy disrespect. He goes on to say that he had kissed many books before he had kissed a girl. Bread and books were for his household, and for many like his, food for the body and the soul. This image of the kissing of the book one had accidentally dropped made an impression on me. It speaks to the love and respect many people have for them. I grew up in a small town in New Mexico, and we had very few books in our household. The first one I remember reading was my catechism book. Before I went to school to learn English, my mother taught me catechism in Spanish. I remember the questions and answers I had to learn, and I remember the well-thumbed, frayed volume which was sacred to me. Growing up with few books in the house created in me a desire and a need for them. When I started school, I remember visiting the one room library of our town and standing in front of the dusty shelves. In reality there were only a few shelves and not over a thousand books, but I wanted to read them all. There was food for my soul in the books, that much I realized.

“The Fallacy of Success”

There has appeared in our time a particular class of books and articles which I sincerely and solemnly think may be called the silliest ever known among men. They are much more wild than the wildest romances of chivalry and much more dull than the dullest religious tract. Moreover, the romances of chivalry were at least about chivalry; the religious tracts are about religion. But these things are about nothing; they are about what is called Success. On every bookstall, in every magazine, you may find works telling people how to succeed. They are books showing men how to succeed in everything; they are written by men who cannot even succeed in writing books. To begin with, of course, there is no such thing as Success.

Turning over a popular magazine, I find a queer and amusing example. There is an article called "The Instinct that Makes People Rich." It is decorated in front with a formidable portrait of Lord Rothschild. There are many definite methods, honest and dishonest, which make people rich; the only "instinct" I know of which does it is that instinct which theological Christianity crudely describes as "the sin of avarice." That, however, is beside the present point. I wish to quote the following exquisite paragraphs as a piece of typical advice as to how to succeed.

A hundred years ago we had the ideal of the Industrious Apprentice; boys were told that by thrift and work they would all become Lord Mayors. This was fallacious, but it was manly, and had a minimum of moral truth. In our society, temperance will not help a poor man to enrich himself, but it may help him to respect himself. Good work will not make him a rich man, but good work may make him a good workman. The Industrious Apprentice rose by virtues few and narrow indeed, but still virtues. But what shall we say of the gospel preached to the new Industrious Apprentice; the Apprentice who rises not by his virtues, but avowedly by his vices?

“Lees Surrender to Grant, April 9th 1865”

When Lee came to the sentence about the officers' side-arms, private horses & baggage, he showed for the first time during the reading of the letter a slight change of countenance & was evidently touched by this act of generosity. It was doubtless the condition mentioned to which he particularly alluded when he looked toward General Grant, as he finished reading & said with some degree of warmth in his manner, "This will have a very happy effect upon my army." General Grant then said: "Unless you have some suggestions to make in regard to the form in which I have stated the terms, I will have a copy of the letter made in ink, and sign it." "There is one thing I should like to mention," Lee replied, after a short pause. "The cavalymen and artillerists own their own horses in our army. Its organization in this respect differs from that of the United States." This expression attracted the notice of our officers present, as showing how firmly the conviction was grounded in his mind that we were two distinct countries. He continued: "I should like to understand whether these men will be permitted to retain their horses." "You will find that the terms as written do not allow this," General Grant replied; "only the officers are permitted to take their private property." Lee read over the second page of the letter again, and then said: "No, I see the terms do not allow it; that is clear." His face showed plainly that he was quite anxious to have this concession made; and Grant said very promptly, and without giving Lee time to make a direct request: "Well, the subject is quite new to me. Of

course I did not know that any private soldiers owned their animals; but I think we have fought the last battle of the war,—I sincerely hope so,—and that the surrender of this army will be followed soon by that of all the others; and I take it that most of the men in the ranks are small farmers, and as the country has been so raided by the two armies, it is doubtful whether they will be able to put in a crop to carry themselves and their families through the next winter without the aid of the horses they are now riding, and I will arrange it in this way: I will not change the terms as now written, but I will instruct the officers I shall appoint to receive the paroles to let all the men who claim to own a horse or mule take the animals home with them to work their little farms.”

“Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth”

Lincoln was shaken by the presidency. Back in Springfield, politics had been a sort of exhilarating game; but in the White House, politics was power, and power was responsibility. Never before had Lincoln held executive office. In public life he had always been an insignificant legislator whose votes were cast in concert with others and whose decisions in themselves had neither finality nor importance. As President he might consult with others, but innumerable grave decisions were in the end his own, and with them came a burden of responsibility terrifying in its dimensions. Lincoln’s rage for personal success, his external and worldly ambition, was quieted when he entered the White House, and he was at last left alone to reckon with himself. To be confronted with the fruits of his victory only to find that it meant choosing between life and death for others was immensely sobering. That Lincoln should have shouldered the moral burden of the war was characteristic of the high seriousness into which he had grown since 1854; and it may be true, as Professor Charles W Ramsdell suggested, that he was stricken by an awareness of his own part in whipping up the crisis. This would go far to explain the desperation with which he issued pardons and the charity that he wanted to extend to the conquered South at the war’s close. In one of his rare moments of self-revelation he is reported to have said: “Now I don’t know what the soul is, but whatever it is, I know that it can humble itself.” The great prose of the presidential years came from a soul that had been humbled. Lincoln’s utter lack of personal malice during these years, his humane detachment, his tragic sense of life, have no parallel in political history.

American’s Constitution: A Biography

It started with a bang. Ordinary citizens would give themselves across a continent and over the centuries, under rules that the populace would ratify and could revise. By uniting previously independent states into a vast and indivisible nation, New World republicans would keep Old World monarchs at a distance and thus make democracy work on a scale never before dreamed possible. With simplified words placed in a document’s most prominent location, the Preamble laid the foundation for all that followed.

Yet none of these three documents explained how the people at any other time might properly alter what they had originally ordained. If these amendments clauses were the exclusive means of constitutional revision, didn’t they abridge the theoretically inalienable right of the people to

alter or abolish? Theory aside, if these clauses were read as exclusive, were their seven- to fifteen-year waiting periods wise? What is an urgent set of issues arose before the fixed review period? Such questions could never have been far from the minds of the Philadelphia delegates. After all, they were hoping that these three states, along with the other ten, would ratify the proposed federal Constitution sometime before mid-1788. Though these hoped-for ratifications would amend existing state constitutions, the amendments would need to occur seven years before the 1795 date specified in Massachusetts and several years ahead of the schedule review dates in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.

Any reader hardy enough to have made it thus far deserves both my thanks and an explanation. What have I been trying to prove in the preceding pages? Which interpretive methods have informed my tale, and why? Substantively, how does the foregoing account fit with, or run against, other writings on the Constitution? Where might critics justly take issue with the conclusions I have presented? What is missing from this constitutional biography? Where should lay readers and scholars go from here?

What They Fought For 1861-1865

One of the questions often asked a Civil War historian is, “Why did the North fight?” Southern motives seem easier to understand. Confederates fought for independence, for their own property and way of life, for their very survival as a nation. But what did the Yankees fight for? Why did they persist through four years of the bloodiest conflict in American history, costing 360,000 northern lives—not to mention 260,000 southern lives and untold destruction of resources? Puzzling over this question in 1863, Confederate War Department clerk John Jones wrote in his diary: “Our men must prevail in combat, or lose their property, country, freedom, everything. On the other hand the enemy, in yielding the contest, may retire into their own country, and possess everything they enjoyed before the war began.” If that was true, why did the Yankees keep fighting? We can find much of the answer in Abraham Lincoln’s notable speeches: the Gettysburg Address, his first and second inaugural addresses, the peroration of his message to Congress on December 1, 1862. But we can find even more of the answer in the wartime letters and diaries of the men who did the fighting. Confederates who said that they fought for the same goals as their forebears of 1776 would have been surprised by the intense conviction of the northern soldiers that they were upholding the legacy of the American Revolution.

Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and

the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled. The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world. He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise. He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice. He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners. Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead. He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns. He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

“Education”

In September of 1889, Jane Addams moved to an immigrant slum neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago. With Ellen Gates Starr, a close college friend, she had rented the top floor of the former Charles J Hull mansion in order to live and work with the poor. The social settlement that was established in this way, which was called Hull House, quickly became a vital neighborhood center as well as a meeting place for me and women from all walks of life and from all around the world. It provided a variety of services to the people of its neighborhood, among them a day nursery, a savings bank, a medical dispensary, and a kitchen that sold hot meals to workers in nearby factories.

They as reflected her renewed sense of connection with the example of her father. Indeed, the respectful humility and strength that Addams was to attribute to her father in *Twenty Years at Hull-House* were the very same qualities that were emerging in her as a result of her experience in Chicago. Most of all, however, the approach and the activities that began to take root at the Hull House during the 1890s reflected the influence upon Jane Addams of her extraordinary circle colleagues.

Many people impelled by these ideas have become impatient with the slow recognition to prepare and nourish the child and citizen for social relations. The educators should certainly conserve the learning and training necessary for the successful individual and family life, but should add to that a preparation for the enlarged social efforts which our increasing democracy requires. The democratic ideal demands of the school that it shall give the child's own experience a social value; that it shall teach them to direct his own activities and adjust them to those of other people.

Common Sense

Some writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our POSITIVELY by uniting our affections, the latter NEGATIVELY by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first a patron, the last a punisher. Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries BY A GOVERNMENT, which we might expect in a country WITHOUT GOVERNMENT, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which, we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. It is not in the power of Britain or of Europe to conquer America, if she do not conquer herself by DELAY and TIMIDITY.

"Thou hast tasted of prosperity and adversity; thou know what it is to be banished thy native country, to be over-ruled as well as to rule, and set upon the throne; and being oppressed thou hast reason to know how hateful the oppressor is both to God and man: If after all these warnings and advertisements, thou dost not turn unto the Lord with all thy heart, but forget him who remembered thee in thy distress, and give up thyself to fallow lust and vanity, surely great will be thy condemnation.

The American Language

The first American colonists had perforce to invent Americanisms, if only to describe the unfamiliar landscape and weather, flora and fauna confronting them. Half a dozen that are still in use are to be found in Captain John Smith's "Map of Virginia," published in 1612, and there are many more in the works of the New England annalists. As early as 1621 Alexander Gill was noting in his "Logonomia Anglica" that maize and canoe were making their way into English. But it was reserved for one Francis Moore, who came out to Georgia with Oglethorpe in 1735, to raise the earlier alarm against this enrichment of English from the New World, and so set the tone that English criticism has maintained ever since.

Elsewhere in the Bible belt the old taboos seem to be breaking down, In 1934 Doctor J M Steadman, Jr, of Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, undertook a study of the degree of prudery surviving among the students there incarcerated, most of them Georgians and probably a majority Methodists, or Baptists. Altogether, 166 males and 195 females were examined, or 361 in all. Two of them proved their evangelical upbringing by listing the word obscene as itself "coarse or obscene," and five added rotten, but the remarkable thing about the inquiry was the high degree of tolerance that it revealed.

As in the case of American German, two main varieties of Dutch American are to be found in the United States. The first is a heritage from the ages of the Dutch occupation of the Hudson and Delaware river regions, and the second is the speech of more recent immigrants, chiefly domiciled in Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota and the Dakotas. The former is now virtually extinct, but in 1910, while it was still spoken but about 200 persons, it was studied by Doctor J Dyneley Prince, then professor of Semitic languages at Columbia, and now professor of Slavonic.

Democracy in America

Amongst the novel objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of conditions. I readily discovered the prodigious influence which this primary fact exercises on the whole course of society, by giving a certain direction to public opinion, and a certain tenor to the laws; by imparting new maxims to the governing powers, and peculiar habits to the governed. I speedily perceived that the influence of this fact extends far beyond the political character and the laws of the country, and that it has no less empire over civil society than over the Government; it creates opinions, engenders sentiments, suggests the ordinary practices of life, and modifies whatever it does not produce.

In the absence of great parties, the United States abound with lesser controversies; and public opinion is divided into a thousand minute shades of difference upon questions of very little moment. The pains which are taken to create parties are inconceivable, and at the present day it is no easy task. In the United States there is no religious animosity, because all religion is respected, and no sect is predominant; there is no jealousy of rank, because the people is everything, and none can contest its authority; lastly, there is no public indignance to supply the means of agitation, because the physical position of the country opens so wide a field to industry that man is able to accomplish the most surprising undertakings with his own native resources.

The American struggles against the natural obstacles which oppose him; the adversaries of the Russian are men; the former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its weapons and its arts: the conquests of the one are therefore gained by the ploughshare; those of the other by the sword. The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends, and gives free scope to the unguided exertions and common-sense of the citizens; the Russian centres all the authority of society in a single arm: the principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter servitude. Their starting-point is different, and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems to be marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.

“What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?”

Fellow citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! We wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the Negro race. Is it not as astonishing that, while we are plowing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, and secretaries, having among us lawyers doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators, and teachers; and that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hillside, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives, and children, and above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

“Society and Solitude”

I fell in with a humorist on my travels, who had in his chamber a cast of the Rondanini Medusa, and who assured me that the name which that fine work of art bore in the catalogues was a misnomer, as he was convinced that the sculptor who carved it intended it for Memory, the mother of the Muses. In the conversation that followed, my new friend made some extraordinary

confessions. "Do you not see, he said, "the penalty of learning, and that each of these scholars whom you have met at the S--, though he were to be the last man, would, like the executioner in Hood's poem, guillotine the last but one?"

The world is always equal to itself, and every man in moments of deeper thought is apprised that he is repeating the experiences of the people in the streets of Thebes or Byzantium. An everlasting Now reigns in Nature, which hangs the same roses on our buses which charmed the Roman and the Chaldaean in their hanging-gardens. To what end, then, he asks, should I study languages, and traverse countries, to learn so simple truths? History of ancient art, excavated cities, recovery of books and inscriptions, yes, the works were beautiful, and the history worth knowing; and academies convene to settle the claims of the old school. What journeys and measurements, Niebuhr and Müller and Layard, to identify the plain of Troy and Nimround town!

It lives in the great present; it makes the present great. This tranquil, well-founded, wide-seeing soul is no express-rider, no attorney, no magistrate: it lies in the sun and broods on the world. A person of this temper once said to a man of much activity, "I will pardon you that you do so much, and you me that I do nothing." And Euripides says that "Zeus hates busybodies and those who do too much."

United States Bill of Rights

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed. No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation. In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense. In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise re-examined in any court of the United States, than according to

the rules of the common law. Excessive bail shall not be required nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted. The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people

Walden; or, Life in the Woods

When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again. I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life, which some would call impertinent, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent, but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent.

Meanwhile my beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground; indeed they were not easily to be put off. What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus. But why should I raise them? Only Heaven knows. This was my curious labor all summer—to make this portion of the earth's surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, johnswort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse.

There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at least which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

The Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to

institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.