



Literacy Connects

A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional Professional Development Program-Issue XLVII



Reading with Rigor and Relevance

The Common Core State Standards define the literate student as one who “actively seeks the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldview” (CCSS, page 3). Students who meet these standards are able to critically cull through large amounts of information, digital and print, and understand how their lives are impacted. The Standards also ask students to stop seeing texts as isolated pieces of work and to compare them to other texts. To address these requirements, teachers need to focus on how to design lessons that include a variety of texts, fiction and non-fiction, organized in authentic and meaningful ways. It is important for teachers to consider how and why a text is selected and to organize reading in a way that ideas connect and build on each other, all the while scaffolding reading instruction to support comprehension of increasingly more complex text.

In Supporting Students in a Time of Core Standards, Sarah Brown Wessling addresses this challenge by suggesting that teachers think of texts as falling into three categories (see chart below). **Context Texts** support reading instruction by generating prior knowledge while connecting to student interests, motivations, and questions. These entry-level texts provide the scaffolding essential for student understanding of the Target Text. **Target Texts** should meet grade-level complexity measures and are generally the traditional novels or plays read whole class. Often students struggle with the reading and knowledge demands of Target Texts, so they need support and guidance to be successful. By carefully choosing Context Texts that build essential background knowledge, introduce target vocabulary, and provide practice with text structure, teachers can prepare students for these more complex pieces. **Texture Texts** provide perspective and deeper meaning of the topic/theme of the unit. They may be read before, during or after reading the Target Text and can be used to contradict, support or highlight an aspect of the topic being studied. Texture Texts are often brief and can be at any reading level.

Context Texts	Target Texts	Texture Texts
<i>These accessible texts create a reservoir of prior knowledge that gives context to the complexity of further reading. These texts should be at the student’s reading level.</i>	<i>These more complex texts are often the traditional whole-class text. They are aligned with the appropriate grade-level complexity suggested by CCSS.</i>	<i>These texts are shorter than the Target Text; they can be used to compare/contrast or juxtapose the Target Text</i>
Art Film excerpts Informative pieces News/magazine articles Picture books Blog/podcast Radio shows Short stories Poetry Drama Graphic novel Brief fiction/nonfiction	Book-length fiction Book-length nonfiction Stories Drama Poem or series of poems Film	Art Film excerpts Informative pieces News/magazine articles Picture books Blog/podcast Radio shows Short stories Poetry Drama Graphic novel Brief fiction/nonfiction

By intentionally selecting reading that supports instruction and deliberately layering the types of texts students read, teachers can better support the complexity and range of reading demands of the CCSS.

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