



**TABLE 2.2:**  
**Qualitative Factors of Text Complexity**

	3 Points (Stretch) Texts That Stretch a Reader or Require Instruction	2 Points (Grade Level) Texts That Require Grade- Appropriate Skills	1 Point (Comfortable) Texts That Are Comfortable or Build Background, Fluency, and Skills
<b>Levels of Meaning and Purpose</b>			
Density and Complexity	Text has significant density and complexity, with multiple levels of meaning; meanings may be more ambiguous.	Text has a single, but more complex or abstract level of meaning; some meanings are stated, while others are left to the reader to identify.	Text has single and literal levels of meaning; meaning is explicitly stated.
Figurative Language	Figurative language plays a significant role in identifying the meaning of the text; more sophisticated figurative language is used (irony and satire, allusions, archaic or less familiar symbolism); the reader is left to interpret these meanings.	Figurative language such as imagery, metaphors, symbolism, and personification are used to make connections within the text to more explicit information, and readers are supported in understanding these language devices through examples and explanations.	There is a limited use of symbolism, metaphors, and poetic language that allude to other unstated concepts; language is explicit and relies on literal interpretations.
Purpose	The purpose is deliberately withheld from the reader, who must use other interpretative skills to identify it.	The purpose is implied but is easily identified based on title or context.	The purpose or main idea is directly and explicitly stated at the beginning of the reading.
<b>Structure</b>			
Genre	Genre is unfamiliar or bends and expands the rules for the genre.	Genre is either unfamiliar but is a reasonable example or it is a familiar genre that bends and expands the rules for the genre.	Genre is familiar and the text is consistent with the elements of that genre.
Organization	The organization distorts time or sequence in a deliberate effort to delay the reader's full understanding of the plot, process, or set of concepts; may include significant flashbacks, foreshadowing, or shifting perspectives.	The organization adheres to most conventions, but digresses on occasion to temporarily shift the reader's focus to another point of view, event, time, or place, before returning to the main idea or topic.	The organization is conventional, sequential, or chronological, with clear signals and transitions to lead the reader through a story, process, or set of concepts.
Narration	An unreliable narrator provides a distorted or limited view to the reader; the reader must use other clues to deduce the truth; multiple narrators provide conflicting information; shifting points of view keep the reader guessing.	Third-person limited or first-person narration provides accurate, but limited perspectives or viewpoints.	Third-person omniscient narration or an authoritative and credible voice provides an appropriate level of detail and keeps little hidden from the view of the reader.



Text Features and Graphics	There is limited use of text features to organize information and guide the reader. Information in the graphics is not repeated in the main part of the text but is essential for understanding the text.	Has a wider array of text features including margin notes, diagrams, graphs, font changes, and other devices that compete for the reader's attention; graphics and visuals are used to augment and illustrate information in the main part of the text.	Text features (such as bold and italicized words, headings, and subheadings) organize information explicitly and guide the reader; graphics or illustrations may be present but are not necessary to understand the main part of the text.
Language Conventuality and Clarity			
Standard English and Variations	The text includes significant and multiple styles of English and its variations, and these are unfamiliar to the reader.	Some distance exists between the reader's linguistic base and the language conventions used in the text; the vernacular used is unfamiliar to the reader.	The language closely adheres to the reader's linguistic base.
Register	The register is archaic, formal, domain specific, or scholarly.	The register is consultative or formal, and may be academic but acknowledges the developmental level of the reader.	The register is casual and familiar.
Knowledge Demands			
Background Knowledge	The text places demands on the reader that extend far beyond his or her experiences, and provides little in the way of explanation of these divergent experiences.	There is distance between the reader's experiences and those in the text, but there is acknowledgement of these divergent experiences, and sufficient explanation to bridge the gaps.	The text contains content that closely matches the reader's life experiences.
Prior Knowledge	Presumes specialized or technical content knowledge and little in the way of review or explanation of these concepts is present in the text.	Requires subject-specific knowledge, but the text augments this with review or summary of this information.	The prior knowledge needed to understand the text is familiar, and it draws on a solid foundation of practical, general, and academic learning.
Cultural Knowledge	The text relies on extensive or unfamiliar intertextuality and uses artifacts and symbols that reference archaic or historical cultures.	The text primarily references contemporary and popular culture to anchor explanations for new knowledge; intertextuality is used more extensively but is mostly familiar to the reader.	The reader uses familiar cultural templates to understand the text with limited or familiar intertextuality.
Vocabulary Knowledge	Vocabulary demand is extensive, domain specific, and representative of complex ideas; the text offers little in the way of context clues to support the reader.	Vocabulary draws on domain specific, general academic, and multiple meaning words, with text supports to guide the reader's correct interpretations of meanings; the vocabulary represents familiar concepts and ideas.	Vocabulary is controlled and uses the most commonly held meanings; multiple meaning words are used in a limited fashion.

Source: Adapted from Fisher et al., 2012.