Literary Texts Qualitative Analysis Tool

*This tool is organized around the four categories of qualitative complexity: purpose (chiefly informational)/meaning (chiefly literary), language, structure, and knowledge. Within each category, you will first analyze the complexity level of each category, drawing from the [Literary Text Qualitative Rubric](#), to determine what makes this text more or less complex. Then, you will also identify relevant opportunities and cautions for culturally relevant pedagogy.[1] **Note specific examples from the text** that support your determinations in each section. **Use these notes to plan for instruction**.*

MEANING			
HIGH COMPLEXITY	**MIDDLE HIGH**	**MIDDLE LOW**	**LOW COMPLEXITY**
☐ Multiple levels/layers of complex meaning	☐ Multiple levels/ layers of meaning	☐ Single level/layer of complex meaning	☐ Single level/layer of simple meaning
Opportunities		**Cautions**	
☐ Explores **power, equity**, **justice**, or **injustice** ☐ Messages **disrupt stereotypes**/dominant ways of thinking. ☐ **Own stories** are being told (consider shared identity markers of author and characters/content, lived experiences, etc.).		☐ Messages **reinforce and accept the status quo** (e.g., do not showcase ability to organize for change, do not challenge preconceived notions). ☐ Messages (text/images) **reinforce dominant** ways of thinking or **stereotypes.**	

Additional questions to ask yourself:
- How might this text connect to experiences that lead students to take action in their lives and communities? How could it be used for critical conversation?
- Whose perspective is presumed or centered in this text? How does this reflect students' perspectives or identities?
- For which students in my class could this text serve as a mirror to their own experiences/identity? For which students in my class could this text serve as a window to new experiences/identities?[2]

Text-Based Notes:[3]

STRUCTURE			
HIGH COMPLEXITY	**MIDDLE HIGH**	**MIDDLE LOW**	**LOW COMPLEXITY**
☐ **Narrative Structure:** complex, implicit, and unconventional ☐ **Narration:** many shifts in point of view	☐ **Narrative Structure:** some complexities, more implicit than explicit, some	☐ **Narrative Structure:** largely simple structure, more explicit than implicit, largely conventional	☐ **Narrative Structure:** simple, explicit, conventional ☐ **Narration:** no shifts in point of view

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[1] Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A. K. A. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 74–84.
[2] Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives, 1 (3), ix–xi.
[3] Consider connections to text-specific questions to ask around particularly complex qualitative elements, the purpose for reading/re-reading, and other connections to lesson planning.

☐ **Order of Events:** frequent manipulations of time and sequence (not in chronological order)	unconventionality ☐ **Narration:** occasional shifts in point of view ☐ **Order of Events:** several major shifts in time, use of flashback	☐ **Narration:** few, if any, shifts in point of view ☐ **Order of Events:** occasional use of flashback, no major shifts in time	☐ **Order of Events:** chronological

Opportunities	Cautions
☐ Narration and/or images have potential to **expand on students' notions of themselves** and their histories. ☐ Narration and/or images have the opportunity to increase **awareness**, **appreciation, and understandings** of historically marginalized communities.	☐ Narration and/or images contribute to **stereotypical beliefs** that have been constructed in society (e.g., gender roles).

Additional questions to ask yourself:
- Does this text uphold dominant representations of certain genres (e.g., European fairy tales) or disrupt those notions?
- How might the identity/perspective of this author or illustrator influence the way in which they tell this story?

Text-Based Notes:

LANGUAGE

HIGH COMPLEXITY	MIDDLE HIGH	MIDDLE LOW	LOW COMPLEXITY
☐ **Conventionality:** heavy use of abstract and/or figurative language or irony ☐ **Clarity:** generally *unfamiliar,* * archaic, domain-specific, and/or academic language; dense and complex; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading	☐ **Conventionality:** contains abstract and/or figurative language or irony ☐ **Clarity:** somewhat complex language that is occasionally *unfamiliar,* * archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic	☐ **Conventionality:** subtle use of figurative language or irony ☐ **Clarity:** largely contemporary, *familiar, conversational* * language* that is explicit and literal; rarely unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic	☐ **Conventionality:** little or no use of figurative language or irony ☐ **Clarity:** contemporary, *familiar, conversational* * language* that is explicit and literal; easy-to-understand

* In making these determinations, consider the students in the room. For whom is language conversational? From whom would it be "easy-to-understand"? How does this allow you, or not allow you, to center historically and/or currently marginalized students?

Opportunities	Cautions
☐ Builds **academic language** ☐ Provides opportunities to connect to **multilingual learners'** home language, based on prior knowledge or topics under study	☐ Language makes **generalizations** or implies something is normal and absolute or a norm for all individuals and/or groups of people. Does not acknowledge or make space for different cultural norms. ☐ Language makes **assumptions** about a specific culture or group of people

Additional questions to ask yourself:
- Is the language likely to be familiar to students and/or in language that represents the spoken language of students in the classroom? How so?
- Is there language or voice that's local to the characters in the story (e.g., diary entries, dialogue, etc.)?
- How complex is the sentence structure (e.g., rich vocabulary, complex syntax, or other elements of "juicy sentences")?[4]

Text-Based Notes:

KNOWLEDGE

HIGH COMPLEXITY	MIDDLE HIGH	MIDDLE LOW	LOW COMPLEXITY
☐ **Life Experiences:** explores multiple complex, sophisticated themes; multiple perspectives presented; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are distinctly different to *the common reader** ☐ **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** requires an *extensive depth of literary/cultural knowledge;** many references/ allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements.	☐ **Life Experiences:** explores multiple themes of varying levels of complexity; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are *uncommon to most readers** ☐ **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** *requires moderate levels of cultural/literary knowledge;** some references/ allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements	☐ **Life Experiences:** explores a single complex theme; experiences portrayed are *common to many readers** or are clearly fantasy ☐ **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** *requires some cultural/literary knowledge;** few references/ allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements	☐ **Life Experiences:** explores a single theme; single perspective presented and *everyday experiences** are portrayed that are *common to most readers** or experiences are clearly fantasy ☐ **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** requires only *common, everyday cultural/literary knowledge;** no references/allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements

*In making these determinations, consider the students in the room. How much do you know about students' cultural/literary knowledge related to the content in this text? Whose cultural/literary knowledge are you considering as you think about what will be "common"? How does this allow you, or not allow you, to center historically and/or currently marginalized students?

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[4] Juicy Sentence Guidance, based on the work of Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore

Opportunities	Cautions
☐ Opportunity to **center historically marginalized** identities, experiences, or knowledge ☐ Shows **joy, agency, creativity or resilience** of historically marginalized identities ☐ Builds knowledge about a **topic, perspective, or event** ☐ Connects to content knowledge of a **unit of study** ☐ Connects to current events or topics that **matter to students**	☐ Focuses **on challenges/obstacles** faced by historically marginalized identities ☐ Portrays characters as **race/culture/identity neutral** or without depth

Additional questions to ask yourself:
- How does the author describe the character(s) and their identities?
- How can the content of this text engage students in understanding the context or impact of real world problems?
- For which students does this text provide opportunities to leverage their existing funds of knowledge and language resources? For which students might this text build new knowledge of others and the world?

Text-Based Notes:

Additional Student Considerations
Revisit your thinking about who you are, who students are, and how that intersects with this specific text. Are there other considerations for your students when engaging with this text (e.g., cultural considerations, students' lived experiences, etc.)?

Summarize Your Analysis
Consider whether this is a grade-level text[5] (quantitative and qualitative complexity), and what opportunities and cautions are present for culturally relevant content and instruction. Also think about any connections to units/topics under study, class-specific instructional needs, and how the text's complexity may influence placement within the school year.

This text is: ☐ Above grade level ☐ Below grade level ☐ Within grade level	**And,** has the following **opportunities** for culturally relevant pedagogy:
	But, the following **cautions** for culturally relevant pedagogy need to be attended to:

Scaffolds: What additional scaffolds could support students when engaging with this text?

Paired Resources: What other texts, resources, or multimedia could be paired with this text (e.g., to connect to units/topics under study or present a more full depiction of the topic)?

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[5] To determine if a text is of grade-level complexity: Use the quantitative measures to place a text within a grade band. Use the qualitative measures to place the text at the top, middle, or bottom of the band. Finally, consider what to do with the qualities of the text through instruction so students within a grade can access it in a meaningful way (reader and task considerations). Note that qualitative demands may cause you to determine that a text that falls outside of a specific grade band's range is appropriate to the grade level.