

Knowledge Building with a Model Lesson

Why build knowledge with model lessons?

Lessons that exemplify high-quality literacy instruction are anchored in complex grade-level text. A high-leverage, evidence-based strategy to support students in accessing complex text is to anchor that text in a conceptually coherent set of resources that build needed knowledge and vocabulary. This work is particularly critical for students not yet reading at grade level.

What is included in a knowledge-building model lesson?

Each knowledge-building model lesson includes a close-reading model lesson paired with a short set of knowledge-building resources and tasks. Educators can engage in knowledge building with any close-reading lesson, as long as the lesson is centered on a complex grade-level text and series of text-specific oral and/or written tasks.

The knowledge-building resources follow similar guidance for more extensive text sets, but on a much smaller scale. The selection of resources follow a quad text set model developed by Comprehensive Reading Solutions and based on the article by Sarah Lupo and colleagues, "Building Background Knowledge Through Reading: Rethinking Text Sets." In a quad text set model, three to five texts are selected that help students develop knowledge critical to the complex text at the center of the close-reading lesson. Each of these supplemental texts is paired with a lightweight text-dependent task to support students' comprehension and knowledge-building work.

How might a teacher use a knowledge-building model lesson?

Educators can use the knowledge-building resources in the order indicated in the "Quad Text Set with Text-Dependent Tasks" table to help build knowledge and vocabulary when engaging with a close-reading model lesson. Implementing these knowledge-building texts and tasks can be done in a variety of ways; they are lightweight enough to be done either during short portions of class or as homework. For example:

- If completed as homework, the partner portion of each task can be completed in class.
- If the whole class (or majority of students) has little to no knowledge of the topic under study, the text set could be used in whole-class instruction.
- If there are just a few students who have little to no knowledge of the topic of study, the text set could be used in small groups with teacher guidance.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Educators should use their judgment about student needs to determine how best to use the resources.

How can I support knowledge building with model lessons?

1. **Select an aligned lesson.** First you need a complex, grade-level text and series of text-specific oral and/or writing tasks. This text is the center of your “quad” text set, providing the anchor text and instructional goal for the rest of the text set.
2. **Determine the knowledge demands in the anchor text.** Next, consider the lesson’s anchor text. What knowledge, context, vocabulary, or concepts do students need to better understand or access this text?
 - a. What guidance about the knowledge demands do the aligned lesson materials provide?
 - b. As needed, use text complexity analysis tools to determine the knowledge demands: [Text Analysis Tool](#) worksheet and [informational](#) or [literary](#) text complexity rubrics.
3. **Create the Quad Text Set with Text-Dependent Tasks.** Use the quad text set model developed by Comprehensive Reading Solutions and based on the article by Sarah Lupo and colleagues, “[Building Background Knowledge Through Reading: Rethinking Text Sets](#).” Select texts that are likely to help students comprehend the anchor text. See [this table for a set of quality knowledge-building resources](#) to select from.

| Quad Text Set | |
|--|--|
| A visual text , consisting of still images or a video clip, requiring little reading but contributing quickly to background knowledge in a way that not only <i>tells</i> but also <i>shows</i> . | One or more accessibly written factual texts can fill gaps in knowledge that the author of the target text assumes readers possess. |
| A young adult text or a more informal source such as a blog, which could be either fiction or an information source, piques interest by demonstrating how the target text is relevant. | Central complex text from the model lesson. |

- a. Pair the texts with text-dependent tasks so that students pull key learnings from each text and make connections between texts in the set. See [this table](#) for a selection of lightweight text-dependent tasks.
- b. Create a copy of [this document](#) to draft your quad text set and add it to your model lesson.

How can I learn more about building knowledge?

For deeper learning on building knowledge, consider:

- [This *Aligned* blog post](#), “Supplementing Your Curriculum with Knowledge-Building Text Sets.”
- [This annotated bibliography for research](#) supporting the Common Core.
- [A more in-depth training](#), “Building Knowledge: Expanding the World Through Reading.”

What does a final knowledge-building quad text set look like?

See an example of a knowledge-building model lesson below. Knowledge-building model lessons for middle and high school can be found within the [close-reading model lesson](#) collection on [achievethecore.org](#)

Example Model Lesson Insert Building Knowledge with a Model Lesson

I. Anchor Text

Excerpt from *Night* by Elie Wiesel

Lexile: 700L–800L

Grade: 8

Used for [this mini-assessment on ATC](#)

II. Knowledge and Language Demands

- The text includes information specific to time, place, and culture: religions, World War II, and the Holocaust. Central ideas for understanding the text are Fascism and anti-Semitism, which are referred to but not clearly defined. There are also references to Judaism and religious holidays.
- The vocabulary is complex due to unfamiliar domain-specific terms (e.g., Hungarian, Galicia, Gestapo, Malka); many of these terms are proper nouns. Other vocabulary is complex, and context clues are present in the text to determine meaning (e.g., synagogue, exterminate, annihilate).

III. Quad Text Set with Text-Dependent Tasks

The table below details the knowledge-building resources to use in support of the model close-reading lesson: what text to use, in what order to use it, details about the text, and a text-dependent task to support knowledge building. The resources are listed below in their suggested order for use. Task directions have been written in student-facing language and teacher notes added in italics when necessary. Links to full task descriptions have been provided when possible.

| Title | Resource Type | Lexile Level | Summary | Task |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|---|---|
| "Learning About the Holocaust" | Informational Article | 910L | Provides background on the Holocaust, details about Judaism and persecution, and why the Holocaust should be remembered. | With a partner, discuss the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have Jews been treated throughout history? 2. What was Hilter's "Final Solution"? For each question, find at least two pieces of text evidence that support your ideas. Be prepared to share your findings with others. |
| The Holocaust in Europe | Map | n/a | Visual depiction of concentration camps (all kinds) in Nazi Germany. | What conclusion(s) can best be drawn based on this map? Jot down at least two conclusions and trade with a partner to see if you drew similar or different conclusions. |
| "Hungary After the German Occupation" | Informational Article | 1300L | Explains the origins of incarceration sites in Germany and the various types of camps along with their locations. | On a post-it note, write four key words that strike you as the most important words in the passage. Partner with another student, compare lists, and determine the four words you both think are key. Then each student should write a one- to two-sentence summary using the agreed-upon words. |
| Night | Anchor Text | 700L - 800L | Excerpt from the novel <i>Night</i> by Elie Wiesel, about his experience as a young Jewish man and his family during World War II. | See the text and assessment task in the mini-assessment here . |
| "Holocaust Survivor and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Elie Wiesel, Has Died" | Video (3:30) | n/a | Short biographical video announcing the passing of Wiesel (the author of the excerpt) and detailing his life before, during, and after the Holocaust. | What was Wiesel's main goal in life after World War II? Prepare some notes and discussion as a small group. |