***This sample text analysis was completed by Kristen Peeples.***

*See the full Text Analysis Toolkit resources* [*here*](https://achievethecore.org/page/3369/text-analysis-toolkit)*.*

**Initial Considerations for Complexity and Cultural Relevance**

*This tool is intended to support your analysis of anchor texts for both complexity and opportunities for culturally relevant pedagogy[[1]](#footnote-0) to determine whether/how to use a text and to prepare for instruction. First, read to yourself the full text you are considering (or the text included in your instructional materials you are required to teach), all the way through.*

| **Text: “When I Was Growing Up”** by Nellie Wong |
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| **Key Ideas of this Text:**  Nellie Wong is a poet and activist born in Oakland, California to Chinese immigrant parents. “When I Was Growing Up” is an autobiographical poem of the discrimination and subsequent struggle with self-acceptance and internalized shame Nellie endured because of her appearance and skin color. Nellie describes how she “longed to be white”—or what she perceived as “normal”—while growing up.  The poem explores the impact due to the lack of authentic representation and the negative stereotypical representations of Asian American women in Western popular culture. The result of never seeing herself portrayed positively made Nellie ashamed of her Chinese heritage. |
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**Move forward with analyzing this text and considering for use with students?**

|  | ⛔ | Text contains harmful content, such as stereotypes and/or inaccurate representation. DO NOT USE. |
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| **X** |  | Text has one or more cautions about the way this content is presented or how this story is told that will take careful teacher planning. MOVE TO ANALYSIS, TENDING CAREFULLY TO PLANNING FOR CAUTIONS THROUGH TASKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. |
|  | ✅ | No initial concerns about the way this content is presented or how this story is told; for example, this text is affirming of the characters/topics it portrays. MOVE TO ANALYSIS; USE WITH INTENTIONAL PLANNING. |
| Notes:  Consider how a discussion on racism, stereotypes, and beauty standards might be triggering to certain students. The poem provides important insights into concepts of assimilation, cultural affirmation, and the necessity for diversity in media. However, Nellie’s use of the word “yellow” as a descriptor to refer to other Asian people is historically rooted in the discrimination, exclusion, and violence done to people of Asian descent on the basis of their skin color. Instruction around the history of this word is recommended. The stereotypes in this poem are meant to be challenged, critiqued, and questioned. | | |

**Consider what you bring to this text, what your students could bring,**

**and how you’ll prepare for instruction.**

| **Locating Myself within This Text:**  Are the identities,[[2]](#footnote-1) ideas, perspectives, and content of this text close to or far away from my own?  Nellie Wong is an Asian American activist and poet born to Chinese immigrant parents. Her poetry spans issues of feminism, assimilationism, and the fight against racism. The identities that most closely resemble my own in this text are that of a woman and a daughter, an activist and a feminist. The identities far away from my own are that of a first-generation immigrant and person of Chinese descent. As a Queer, White, monolingual, English speaking woman, I have not experienced anything like the experiences of a first-generation immigrant or person of Chinese descent, and understanding my own identity in relation to both the text and my students’ identities is imperative. | **Locating Students within This Text:**  Are the identities, ideas, perspectives, and content of this text close to or far away from students? In what ways and for which students?  The identities most closely resonant with many of my students is that of the children of immigrants and that of someone having felt the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture. Despite the author describing her specific experiences as an Asian American woman, I believe the poem will resonate with any student—particularly immigrants and first-generation students—regardless of specific race and gender. This text may be farthest from those students not being raised by immigrant parents, those whose families are monolingual, and those who are part of the dominant culture. |
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| **Research & Reflection:**  💭 What do I need to know more about before engaging more deeply with this text?[[3]](#footnote-2)  Reading more about Nellie Wong’s upbringing and her writing and activist work can give me a more thorough understanding of her experiences detailed in this poem. As no two people’s experiences are quite the same with regards to assimilation, it could also be helpful to read varying accounts of one’s journey and relationship with their identity. | |

*Now that you have read through the text once, identify 1) potential rationales for using this text with your students and 2) the quantitative level (e.g., Lexile) as an initial gauging of this text’s grade-level complexity.*

| **Why Read This Text with These Students?**  *Identify the potential rationales for reading this text by highlighting any of the possible relevant purposes in the table. Add additional rationales as needed. Read more about these three pillars of culturally relevant pedagogy from Gloria-Ladson Billings* [*here*](https://www.cue.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/images/Source%205%20-%20ladson-billings%20culturally%20relevant%20pedagogy%20-%20the%20remix.pdf)*.*   | **Academic Success** | **Cultural Competence** | **Critical Consciousness** | | --- | --- | --- | | Builds academic language | Connects to (some) students’ identities or lived experiences | Provides accurate representation | | Reads text with rich thought and/or ideas | Teaches (some) students about other cultures, identities, or experiences | Connects to current events and/or topics that matter to students | | Builds knowledge about a topic, perspective, or event | Shows joy, agency, creativity and/or resilience of non-dominant or historically marginalized identities | Explores power, equity, justice, or injustice | | Connects to content knowledge of a unit of study | Provides opportunity for multilingual learners to leverage their existing language resources and/or vocabulary from content under study | Sparks critical conversation | | *Other:* Opportunities for building knowledge on an experience (assimilation) | *Other:* Opportunities for Social-Emotional Learning (i.e., identity, relationship to others, embracing and learning from differences, respecting and learning from other cultures) | *Other:* Opportunities to reflect on the author’s experiences with white dominant culture | | **Quantitative Level[[4]](#footnote-3)**  *Will this text give students the chance to interact with a complex, grade-level text?*   | Grade Band | Lexile Ranges | | --- | --- | | PK–2 Read-Aloud | 420–1010 L | | 2–3 | 420–820 L | | 4–5 | 740–1010 L | | 6–8 | 925–1185 L | | 9–10 | 1050–1335 L | | 11–12 | 1185–1385 L |   **Quantitative Measurement &**  **Associated Grade Band:**   | **1050–1335** | | --- |   Note that in order to fully determine grade-level complexity, **qualitative** demands (meaning/purpose, knowledge, language, structure) must also be considered. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| **Initial Text Reflections**  Based on your initial read, do you see **potential rationales** for reading this text with students? Is this text **within the quantitative grade band**? If not, does it have another relevant purpose for reading with your students?  There are multiple reasons for reading this poem with students. The poem falls within the quantitative grade band (9–10) and presents ideas that can teach students about other cultures. Lessons and activities can be used to extend the poem, helping students build knowledge around the topics of culture and identity, assimilationism, and white dominant culture through various modalities (e.g., audio, book, video) and from various perspectives (cultural insider and cultural outsider). |
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**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*](https://achievethecore.org/page/2725/text-complexity)*, to determine what makes this text more or less complex. Then, you will also identify relevant opportunities and cautions for culturally relevant pedagogy.[[5]](#footnote-4)*

*To use the tool on a computer, consider highlighting levels of complexity and relevant opportunities/cautions. Take care to* ***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? The poem can help equip students with acquiring the critical thinking skills to reflect deeply on issues of immigration and assimilation as well as beauty standards rooted in and uplifted by white dominant culture. * Whose perspective is presumed or centered in this text? How does this reflect students’ perspectives or identities? The perspective of an Asian American female and daughter is centered in this text, but it is meant to be understood as a representation of many individuals’ and groups’ real experiences of assimilating into a dominant culture. * 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?[[6]](#footnote-5) I imagine this text will serve as a mirror for some of my students—particularly immigrant and first-generation students—and any students who resonate with having felt the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture. This text may serve as a window for students who are a part of the dominant culture and/or have not experienced marginalization due to their race. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:[[7]](#footnote-6)  This text is high in complexity because there are many themes addressed. First, there are the beauty standards to which Nellie Wong compares herself, which are rooted in white dominant ideals. Additionally, the text focuses on the experience of pressure to assimilate and struggle to connect to one’s identity. This challenge—while a ubiquitous experience for many—is not an experience all have a direct relationship with. The message in the poem challenges students to critique the stereotypes Nellie confronts. It is important to discuss with students how the author is using and then reclaiming stereotypes in a few places in the poem (re: class placement, use of "yellow", etc.). | | | |
| **STRUCTURE** | | | |
| **HIGH COMPLEXITY** | **MIDDLE HIGH** | **MIDDLE LOW** | **LOW COMPLEXITY** |
| * **Narrative Structure:** complex, implicit, and unconventional * **Narration:** many shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** frequent manipulations of time and sequence (not in chronological order) | * **Narrative Structure:** some complexities, more implicit than explicit, some unconventionality * **Narration:** occasional shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** several major shifts in time, use of flashback | * **Narrative Structure:** largely simple structure, more explicit than implicit, largely conventional * **Narration:** few, if any, shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** occasional use of flashback, no major shifts in time | * **Narrative Structure:** simple, explicit, conventional * **Narration:** no shifts in point of view * **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? The poem doesn’t uphold dominant narratives of a certain genre, but it does bring to light dominant beauty standards in Western media as well as narratives about experiences with assimilation. * How might the identity/perspective of this author or illustrator influence the way in which they tell this story? The poem is autobiographical and thus seems to be narrated linearly, leading to the end in which Nellie informs readers “I know now that I once longed to be white,” indicating that she no longer feels that way. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  The structure of the poem is low complexity and narrated linearly with no narrative shifts. The speaker is the author, and she highlights her ongoing struggles to accept her cultural identity as she is growing up, with the indication by the end of the poem that she has ultimately been liberated from these thoughts. | | | |
| **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?  Some of the language included in the poem—such as “oriental chick” and “yellow people”—requires unpacking, as these terms are pejorative and offensive to people of Asian descent. The poem otherwise contains abstract descriptions and feelings. | | | |
| **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? While the entire text is written in English, it does contain a few words that may require some explicit vocabulary instruction on the front end. * Is there language or voice that’s local to the characters in the story (e.g., diary entries, dialogue, etc.)? The author of the poem is a cultural insider, and it is written from an authentic perspective. * How complex is the sentence structure (e.g., rich vocabulary, complex syntax, or other elements of [“juicy sentences"](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Juicy%20Sentence%20Guidance.pdf))?[[8]](#footnote-7) The sentence structure within the poem is low complexity and straightforward, though the sentences are stringy at times and packed with a lot of detail and emotion. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  There is use of some very contextual language, but overall, the vocabulary is not what makes this poem challenging. | | | |
| **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? This poem allows me to center the historical and contemporary marginalized experiences of people of color, specifically those individuals or groups who immigrated to the United States. | | | |
| **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 ortopics 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? ​​The poem centers on the concept of cultural identity and how damaging white dominant culture can be to one’s relationship with their cultural identity. * How can the content of this text engage students in understanding the context or impact of real world problems? The poem can lead to critical conversations about stereotypes and white dominant culture as well the necessity for positive representation of diverse groups in media. The poem can be used to help students critically analyze the components that make up one’s identity and which of these components they decided for themselves and which components were decided for them by society. * 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? Because English is the dominant language used in the text, students who are multilingual learners/users may need additional language support. For students who may not have been exposed to the experiences of many immigrants and marginalized groups, this poem can be an opportunity to learn about others’ experiences. Lastly, this poem can be used to build the knowledge and empathy of students who haven’t been exposed to issues of assimilation. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  There are some cultural bases of knowledge that will make for a richer read, and it will be necessary to brainstorm with students what factors caused Nellie to long to be white and what “whiteness” means to Nellie. The ending (“I know now that once I longed to be white”) is intended to convey to the reader Nellie’s resiliency in the face of both white dominant culture and the images and messages she was inundated with as she was growing up that affirmed to her that she was “less-than” due to her culture and the color of her skin. This knowledge is apparent to cultural insiders but likely to be missed by readers without this background/life experience. Some examples include “their imported cotton dresses, cashmere sweaters…”; “...an exotic gardenia, anxious to fit the stereotype of an oriental chick”; “in an area I later learned was a ghetto, one of many hearts of Asian America.” | | | |

| **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.)?  Other considerations that can be taken into account in planning instruction would be to integrate diverse experiences with regards to identity through additional poems, stories and media and to offer various opportunities for student discourse and creative writing. |
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| **Summarize Your Analysis**  *Consider whether this is a grade-level text[[9]](#footnote-8) (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:  The text does call for some understanding of the idea of intersectionality at a very basic level with the infusion of the immigrant experience. |
| **But,** the following **cautions** for culturally relevant pedagogy need to be attended to: The caution is that students might walk away with a singular idea of the Asian American experience or even the immigrant experience as a whole. Assimilation is not the same experience for everyone, and it is often painful to reflect on. The poem is absolutely worth teaching, and it will require me to think carefully and engage in critical reflection before, during, and after teaching the poem. |
| **Scaffolds:** What [additional scaffolds](https://docs.google.com/gview?url=https%3A%2F%2Fachievethecore.org%2Fpeersandpedagogy%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2016%2F08%2FSupporting-All-Learners-with-Complex-Text-1.pdf&embedded=true) could support students when engaging with this text?   * Front-load vocabulary * Make social studies/historical connections * Engage in close reading * Annotate the text for key ideas * Allow students time to discuss and write about the text following the first read * Ask a series of text-dependent questions   **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)?   * “Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan * “Two Names, Two Worlds” by Jonathan Rodriguez (poem) * “Me Gritaron Negra” by Victoria Santa Cruz * “Masks of Woman” by Mitsuye Yamada * “Chinese Silence #62” by Timothy Yu * “Yuba City School” by Chitra Divakaruni * “Guidelines” by Lisa Suhair Majaj * “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes * “Naming Myself” by Barbara Kingsolver * “Search for My Tongue” by Sujata Bhatt * “How to Be a Southwest Indigenous Writer” by Vee F. Browne * [Between Two Cultures | Smrithi Ram | TEDxUCincinnati](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv_UfDBNWI8&t=1s) * [Opinion | A Sikh Temple’s Century - The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/08/opinion/a-sikh-temples-proud-history.html) * [How a Long History of Intertwined Racism and Misogyny Leaves Asian Women in America Vulnerable to Violence](https://time.com/5952819/history-anti-asian-racism-misogyny/) * [Asian American Racial Justice Toolkit – APALA](https://www.apalanet.org/uploads/8/3/2/0/83203568/asian_american_racial_justice_toolkit.pdf) | |

1. Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that’s just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy*.* *Theory Into Practice, 34*(3), 159–165. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. In considering identity, you might think about any of the following: ability, age, body type, ethnicity, gender, home language, immigration status, socio-economic status, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. For more, see [Let’s Talk, Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students, Learning for Justice](https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/TT-Let-s-Talk-Publication-January-2020.pdf#page=8), p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. For example, you may want to learn more about a historical event, a cultural practice that is unfamiliar to you, or accurate pronunciations of proper nouns. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. A [quantitative tool](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/CCSS_Grade_Bands_and_Quantitative_Measures%20updated%202015.pdf), such as a Lexile level, is one piece of information to gauge a text's overall complexity. This computer-generated numerical value is based on features such as sentence length and vocabulary complexity and is one way of ensuring that your students are regularly interacting with rich reading material. To find a text’s Lexile, visit <https://hub.lexile.com/find-a-book/search>; you may also [paste in portions of a text](https://hub.lexile.com/analyzer) to get an approximation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A. K. A. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 74–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives, 1 (3), ix–xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. [Juicy Sentence Guidance](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Juicy%20Sentence%20Guidance.pdf), based on the work of Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)