**Activity # 2: Practice Core Action 1, High-Quality Texts (KEY)**

What Makes This Text Complex?

1. **Quantitative Measure**

Go to <http://www.lexile.com/> and enter the title of your text in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile, measure in this database. For more information on other valid quantitative measures, click [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/2725/text-complexity).

Use this chart for quick reference:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2–3 band | 420–820L |
| 4–5 band | 740–1010L |
| 6–8 band | 925–1185L |
| 9–10 band | 1050–1335L |
| 11–CCR band | 1185–1385L |

1000L

1. **Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension, note some examples from the text that make it more or less complex. For more information on these four dimensions, click [here](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion_to_Qualitative_Scale_Features_Explained.pdf).

**Text Structure**

**Meaning/Purpose**

**Language Features**

**Knowledge Demands**

**Slightly Complex**

The organization of the text is mostly a series of topics on the urban planning mistakes that caused of The Great Fire disaster. Connections between topics are explicit, (“The situation was worst in…”, “Wealthier districts were by no mean free of hazards.”, “Fires were common in all cities…”). The first and final paragraph are not part of this structure, instead providing a description of the start of the fire at the O’Leary’s barn.

**Moderately Complex**

The purpose (that the construction and organization of Chicago made the Great Fire so devastating) is not explicitly stated, but is easy to identify, (“*The Great Fire of Chicago is considered the largest disaster of the 1800s.”, “*Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn.”)

The purpose is singular –.

**Moderately Complex**

The vocabulary is mostly familiar with some academic language included, (“engulfed”, “proclaimed”, “highly combustible knot”, “indicate”). The sentences are mostly simple, (“It was also a common practice to disguise wood as another kind of building material.”), with some complex constructions (“Fire ran along the dry grass and leaves, and took hold of a neighbor’s fence”, “Because both Patrick and Catherine O’Leary worked, they were able to put a large addition on their cottage despite a lot size of just 25 by 100 feet.”).

**Slightly Complex**

The passage contains simple, concrete ideas with little outside knowledge demanded by the text. The text fully describes the Great Fire and its main causes, (“The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these structures were made entirely of wood.”, “Lot sizes were small, and owners usually filled them up with cottages, barns, sheds, and outhouses—all made of fast-burning wood, naturally.”, “What made Sunday the eighth different and particularly dangerous was the steady wind blowing in from the southwest.”).

1. **Reader and Task Considerations**

What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?

The language features are likely to be the most challenging to students, especially the various more complex sentence constructions and unfamiliar vocabulary. Supports might include: providing questions that provide the opportunity for students parse the meaning of these more complex sentences, questions that use specific context clues within the text to define unfamiliar vocabulary words or providing a glossary of words without context clues. The connections between the urban planning mistakes (ubiquitous use of wood, crowded lots, poor building construction) and the extent of the Great Fire in Chicago could be made clear with a graphic organizer or focus questions.

How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?

Students will build content knowledge about a major event in American history, the Great Chicago Fire. The will also build knowledge about the importance of quality urban planning (use of non-flammable materials, zoning to ensure dangerous materials such as paint and coal aren’t warehoused alongside apartment buildings, minimizing the number of buildings on a lot).