**This sample text analysis was completed by Carey Swanson.**

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: *Your Name Is a Song*** by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow; Illustrated by Luisa Uribe |
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| **Key Ideas of This Text:**  In this text, a little girl is upset after the first day of school because her teacher and classmates mispronounced her name. Her mother teaches her that all names are songs, comparing multiple names (including many examples of Arabic names, names from other cultures, including Black American names, Spanish, Japanese, Irish, and more) to music, fire, rain, and more. This text has strong themes of inclusion, empowerment, and pride in one's background and culture, as well as examples of the impact of “othering” by classmates and teachers. |
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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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|  |  | 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. |
| **X** | ✅ | 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: I do have a student who uses a more common American style nickname rather than his Arabic name—will want to be thoughtful about framing the choices we make about our names as empowering. Also need to be cautious around some of the unknowns around name origin in the class (e.g., [student] in foster care, [student] lives with uncle). | | |

**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?  I am a white, monolingual English-speaking woman who has always lived in America, and I have a name (Carey) that is always easy for folx to say. I have not experienced the kind of othering that the girl in the text experiences. I *do* understand a **very small** element of the ideas behind how personal your name is, and how it feels when folx get names wrong, as I have a name that can be spelled in so many ways, which has been frustrating for me at different times in my life. | **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?  My students are 95% Black, many of Caribbean descent. I have a couple of students with Arabic names (two referenced in the book). I also have several students with unique spellings; names that are African American and distinct. Even students with more common American English names are likely to relate to the book, and see themselves either as the girl or recognize the laughter/negative interactions she experienced on day 1. |
| --- | --- |
| **Research & Reflection:**  💭 What do I need to know more about before engaging more deeply with this text?[[3]](#footnote-2)   * I need to research and practice all names stated in the book. (See author-created [video resource](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmXqJGherE8) stating each name.) * I need a resource to support student learning re” Their real names were stolen long ago so they dream up new ones.” * I’d like to learn more about Jamila Thompkins-Bigelow to understand her perspective and how it influenced this text. (<https://jamilahthewriter.com/>) | |

*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:* | *Other: Connects to identity, language and culture* | *Other:* | | **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:**   | **480** | | --- |   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?  *Note: Don’t reject a text for simply not being within the grade-level quantitative band, but be thoughtful about the purpose for reading. Consider the fact that over the course of a school year, all students should have ample learning opportunities with rich and complex text and language.*  This text is a strong read-aloud for grades K-1 and a text directly in the quantitative (Lexile) grade band for grades 2-3. There is rich figurative language that is more complex than the Lexile level points to, as well as opportunities to connect to individual student experiences, culture, and language, making it a text that might also play a role in a 4th/5th-grade classroom. For this resource, I will target 3rd grade and ensure that students are doing the work of reading the text. |
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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* [*https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/SCASS\_Text\_Complexity\_Qualitative\_Measures\_Lit\_Rubric\_2.8.pdf.pdf*](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/SCASS_Text_Complexity_Qualitative_Measures_Lit_Rubric_2.8.pdf)*, 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? This text can be used to discuss the ways names represent children’s identity, and how we can take action to honor individuals’ names. * Whose perspective is presumed or centered in this text? How does this reflect students’ perspectives or identities? The text centers both the girl (Kora-Jalimuso) and her mother. Students are likely to relate to the girl’s feelings of frustration. * 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)The text is likely to serve as a window for my students with Arabic names in particular (two of whom have names mentioned in the book), as well as several of my students with spellings or name construction that may be unfamiliar to some. This text could be a window for some of my students with more commonly seen names who may not have deeply thought about names as identity. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:[[7]](#footnote-6)  The text has a singular level of meaning because the primary theme (names are important, names convey identity) is set up by Kora-Jalimuso’s frustrating experience at school and her mother’s advice/response. The progression of ideas in the text matches the text’s event: she emerges from school frustrated, her mother advises her, she goes to school the next day ready to show her learning (that names are songs, names are beautiful), and her teacher/fellow students listen and are convinced.  Resource about the author: <https://lydialukidis.wordpress.com/2020/08/12/author-jamilah-thompkins-bigelow-on-the-power-of-names/> | | | |
| **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? This text is set up conventionally (problem/solution narrative; realistic fiction) but is disruptive of dominant representation. * How might the identity/perspective of this author or illustrator influence the way in which they tell this story? The author is Muslim and notes that she centers Muslim children in her writing. She is also Black and explicitly celebrates Black American names (among the many cultures she’s included in the text). | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  There are some elements of this text that are complex when it comes to structure. While the text is conventional in terms of being a realistic fiction text following a problem/solution structure, it incorporates elements that are not time based: names as fire dances, names coming from the sky, names as stars. These are depicted through shifts in the visual/illustrations. In addition, while the story is told through a 3rd-person narrator, shifts in perspective occur throughout between the girl’s feelings/viewpoint and the mother’s. This is established primarily through dialogue. | | | |
| **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? The language is likely to be familiar to most students. The names featured are intentionally varied but begin with many Arabic names that are likely to be familiar to only a few students in the class. This may offer a chance for some students to have connections (“mirrors”). * Is there language or voice that’s local to the characters in the story (e.g., diary entries, dialogue, etc.)? See above re: Arabic names. * 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) There is rich figurative language. Sentences are primarily short. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  There are several opportunities to highlight the author’s use of language in this text. Names and the feelings they evoke are described in two ways, both through figurative language and through a feeling in the body.  Examples include→  Figurative language: names are songs, names come from your heart, some names have fire, storms in, fire dances, “fights a battle in your mouth,” “tongues bow,” “lunges like a dragon,” “pull them from the sky,” “sit on clouds”  Body: stomp, stuck in her mouth, swayed, wrinkled her brows, whispered, TAT-ta-TAP went her feet, did a jig, her feet slowed, choke, pokes me in the stomach, bopped, kicked, twirled and leapt, tapping, belted.  All but one name in this text are multisyllabic and include pronunciation keys, offering a chance to reinforce careful sounding out/reading fluency as well as the importance of correctly pronouncing people’s names. | | | |
| **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 |
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| \*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? | | | |
| **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 characters are not described in words but depicted in the illustrations—showing Momma’s hijab as well as their close relationship (holding hands, etc). * How can the content of this text engage students in understanding the context or impact of real world problems? This is an excellent text for students to think about “othering” and how we can validate/affirm or alienate those who are different from us, in school or elsewhere. * 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? As noted above, my Arabic and African American students are likely to connect to the names featured in the text. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  Many names in the text are culturally specific- including a range of cultural backgrounds, but also an opportunity to elevate Arabic or Black American names. On page 3, Momma mentions “drill team” which may be culturally specific information some children have/can share with the class. Momma is called “Ummi” which is Arabic and that may be familiar to some but not all students in the class. The most complex cultural knowledge displayed is when Momma says “Made-up names come from dreamers. Their real names were stolen long ago so they dream up new ones.” This is experience specific knowledge about the long history of enslavers changing the names of enslaved people (as well as the process of changing names during immigration)-- additional resources would be valuable here.  Noting caution around presenting the negative experience of name othering for the girl in the text by both teacher and fellow students, an experience that could connect to negative experiences faced by students with historically marginalized identities | | | |

| **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.)?  I think this text could be a beautiful way to engage students around the beauty and power of their names, as well as to ensure we are all prouncouning one another’s names correctly (making it great for the start of the school year). I’ll want to be thoughtful about children’s experiences, especially if they have had negative experiences that connect to the text’s themes. |
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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:  Exploration of figurative language, affirming/empowering students around the value of their name, language, and identity, building an inclusive class community. |
| **But,** the following **cautions** for culturally relevant pedagogy need to be attended to: Ensuring each child feels connected/empowered by the text and their own name story, being thoughtful about how each name in the text is pronounced and why that matters. |
| **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? Though this text is within the grade-level band for my class, the first read will be done aloud given the many names featured and the importance of correct pronunciation.  **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)? Resources to support knowledge building around the history of changing the names of enslaved people and immigrants to the U.S. | |

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)