Key Shifts in the Common Core and their Impact on Teaching:
What to Look for in the Classroom
Dr. David Pook

What Are the Key Shifts in the Standards?

Engage NY says...
West Ed says...
Smarter Balanced says...
The Publishers Criteria says...
Fordham says...
PARCC says...

Underlying the different ways of framing the key shifts in the CCSS is a common agreement on the desired outcome:
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Underlying the different ways of framing the key shifts in the CCSS is a common agreement on the desired outcome:

Helping Students Achieve Independence

How the Standards Envision Helping Students Achieve Independence

“A three-fold cord is not easily broken...”

Choosing Complex Texts: Select, Sort, and Share

Teaching Complex Texts: Depth, Design, and Delivery

Responding to Complex Texts: Attend, Articulate, and Assess
First Step Towards Achieving Independence

Choosing Complex Texts

Select: Texts meet the grade-band requirements for complexity

Sort: Curricula strike the required balance of literary and informational texts

Share: Districts ensure that all students are taught complex texts

Next Step Towards Achieving Independence

The shifts inherent in Choosing Complex Texts – selecting, sorting, and sharing them – pose many challenges for school districts, but these challenges lie largely outside day to day classroom instruction...

Our goal today is to look closely at the shifts that need to happen in instruction when Teaching Complex Texts
Second Step Towards Achieving Independence

Teaching Complex Texts

Depth: Students build knowledge through close reading of the text facilitated by text dependent questions that require evidence drawn from the text.

Design: Mastery of the text achieved through attention to academic vocabulary and text structures, sequenced text-dependent questions, and scaffolding that retains the experience of text complexity.

Delivery: Teachers emphasize close reading to cultivate in students interest in the text, responsibility for leading discussions and performing analysis, and the confidence and stamina necessary for gradual release.

Close Reading Exemplars Stress Key Shifts

The shifts to instruction surrounding Depth, Design, and Delivery when Teaching Complex Texts manifest themselves most clearly when we examine a Close Reading Exemplar.
What is Close Reading?

Close reading is the methodical investigation of a complex text through answering text dependent questions geared to demystify its meaning. This approach levels the playing field for all students as it does not privilege background knowledge while simultaneously preparing them for the kinds of complex texts encountered after graduation. Close reading directs students to examine the text itself through a series of activities that focus student learning on the meanings of individual words and sentences as well as the development of events and ideas. Close reading forces students to extract evidence as well as make inferences that logically follow. They can then assemble the evidence they have gathered into written analyses and oral presentations. Ultimately, close reading motivates students to read inquisitively and discover the beauty and insight within the text that makes it worthy of reading carefully.

How Close Reading Exemplars Reflect Key Shifts in Instruction

Regarding Depth & Design:

- "text dependent questions"
- "evidence drawn from text"
- "sequenced questions"
- "attention to text structures & academic vocabulary"
- "scaffolding that retains text complexity"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplars for Teachers</th>
<th>Holding Exemplars for Students</th>
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<td>(60) Are students to notice and use all the argument elements in the first paragraph of this selection? (Is it how the first line of text underlined the title of the first paragraph?)</td>
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<td>(61) What was the point of the argument in the first paragraph of this selection? (Is it how the first line of text underlined the title of the first paragraph?)</td>
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<td>(62) What did the student see as characteristic of what happened next? (Is it how the first line of text underlined the title of the first paragraph?)</td>
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**Table:** The Jacob's Ladder

Texts were designed with a focus on how the Jacob's Ladder impacts minority students and the "magnitude" of the experience. Students were asked to justify their answers as "significant," "important," or "incremental," and were required to explain their reasons for selecting a particular category.
How Close Reading Exemplars Reflect Key Shifts in Instruction

Regarding Delivery:

"student responsibility for leading discussions & performing analysis"

"cultivate student interest through close reading"

"promote the confidence and stamina necessary for gradual release"

Steps Within A Close Reading Exemplar

1. Introduce the passage and students read independently.

Other than giving the brief definitions offered to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in the text), avoid giving background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson, instead letting the students read the text silently. This close reading approach forces students to rely exclusively on the text instead of privileging background knowledge and levels the playing field for all students as they seek to comprehend Freedman’s prose. It is critical to cultivating independence and creating a culture of close reading that students initially grapple with rich texts like Freedman without the aid of prefatory material, extensive notes, or even teacher explanations.
Steps Within A Close Reading Exemplar

2. Read the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text.

Asking students to listen to Freedman’s text exposes them a second time to the rhythms and meaning of his language before they begin their own close reading of the passage. Speaking clearly and carefully will allow students to follow Freedman’s explanation, and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English.

Steps Within A Close Reading Exemplar

3. Ask the class to answer a small set of text-dependent guided questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate.

As students move through these questions and re-read Freedman’s text, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary (boldfaced in the text) and sentence structure. At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary or syntax.
**Student Copy of Close Reading Exemplar**

**Text Under Discussion**

In the fall of 1962, after a week of heavy rain, the ground began to crack. The earthquakes had been small, but they were frequent. People around the area were concerned, and the government was called in to investigate. The investigations revealed that the fault line was active and that there was a chance of a major earthquake. The residents were warned to be prepared, and they began to take precautions. The government set up a network of monitoring stations to track the movement of the fault line. The residents were encouraged to prepare kits with food, water, and other essential supplies. The government also provided training on how to respond in case of an earthquake.

**Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions for Students**

1. What evidence suggests that an earthquake may be imminent? 
2. How might the government and residents respond to the situation? 
3. Ask the class to answer these questions: What do you think the government should do? What should the residents do? How might the earthquake affect the local community?

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**Instructor Copy of Close Reading Exemplar**

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Language in Teacher Effectiveness Rubrics

What Kind Of Questions Should Teachers Ask?

“higher-level questions” (DCPS, Newark, Prince George’s County)

“higher order questions” (Pittsburgh)

“effective questioning” (Denver)

“questions push students beyond their initial thinking” (Baltimore, Memphis)

“variety of questions” (Hillsborough)

“questions challenge students to think” (LAUSD)

“questions that result in critical thinking and problem solving” (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)

How Shifts Would Impact Teacher Effectiveness Rubrics

What Kind Of Questions Should Teachers Ask?

“questions that are closely tied to the text itself”

“questions that require students to extract evidence from the text”

“high quality questions that require students to make inferences from what is stated in the text”

“sequenced series of questions that build depth of understanding”

“questions that pay attention to text structures”

“questions that draw notice to academic vocabulary”
Evaluating the Teaching of Complex Texts

How the Standards Envision Helping Students Achieve Independence

“A three-fold cord is not easily broken...”

Choosing Complex Texts: Select, Sort, and Share

Teaching Complex Texts: Depth, Design, and Delivery

but also...

Responding to Complex Texts: Attend, Articulate, and Assess
Final Step Towards Achieving Independence

Responding to Complex Texts

Attend: Responses should be attuned to scope of the task and address the needs of the intended audience.

Articulate: Students should use evidence when writing or speaking, employing an appropriate style to convey their point (using technology as support when appropriate).

Assess: Curricula offer assessment opportunities that genuinely measure progress towards achieving independence.

How Close Reading Exemplars Reflect Key Shifts in Instruction

Regarding Attend, Articulate, and Assess

“employ an appropriate style”
“convey their point”
“attuned to scope of task & intended audience”
“use evidence”
“assessments that genuinely measure progress towards achieving independence”
Steps Within A Close Reading Exemplar

4. The teacher ends the class by asking students to write an essay explicating the central argument within Freedman's text.

With regard to the text extracted from Freedman's 'The Voice That Challenged a Nation,' an appropriate thesis statement would be "Why was Marian Anderson's concert on the Mall in Washington an important event in the struggle for civil rights?"

Essays that offer purposeful organization will note why Marian Anderson was initially prevented from singing in Washington, how the venue was changed, and ultimately why it was such an important event for civil rights. They will provide ample evidence for each of these points and explain how the evidence provides reasons in support of their argument regarding the importance of the occasion. In presenting their evidence and reasons they will pay close attention to how their argument unfolds and coheres. They will end their essays with a compelling conclusion, linking their analysis back to their thesis one more time.

Questions & Comments