Additional Work with Related Texts
Overview

The Common Core state standards call for a consistent emphasis on increasingly complex texts for *all students* throughout the grades. Instruction with complex text is important for fostering robust reading skills, acquiring academic vocabulary, building content knowledge, and eventually, preparing students for college and career (Shanahan, 2002. Hiebert, 2012. Gomez, 2008. Liben, 2010, et al.). Furthermore, a growing body of research suggests that instruction with increasingly complex texts within the study of a single topic can lead to greater gains in reading rate, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension (Adams, 2009. Morgan, 2009. O’Connor, 2010. Williams, 2009.). Adolescent readers, however, can benefit from also reading less complex texts related to a unit of study or a module topic. Essentially, as students learn more about a topic they can read more difficult texts on that topic, and if given support, improve their foundational reading and comprehension skills as well.

Key strategies for teaching students to navigate complex texts successfully (such as close reading, rereading, and defining words from context) are embedded in nearly every lesson in the modules. Still, all students—particularly those who have difficulty reading—can benefit from additional work with related texts which may or may not always be complex. Ideally, *this additional work should focus on texts relevant to the topic of study*, providing extra practice and support, while broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding of the topic. The purpose of this resource is to offer general suggestions to consider for planning both guided small group work and differentiated center work with related texts.

The activities in this resource are organized to give students practice in navigating four key aspects of text complexity: *meaning, structure, knowledge, and language*.

- Suggestions in the *Meaning* section focus on skills such as understanding layers of meaning, identifying the overall purpose of the writing, locating main ideas and supporting details, and summarizing.
- Suggestions in the *Structure* activities can help students to explore text features, organization, sentence structure, or genre in order to better understand a text.
- Suggestions in the *Knowledge* section help students to build a knowledge base using research and other texts.
- Suggestions in the *Language* section include vocabulary and sentence structure activities.

When focused on a specific text, which in an intervention setting should be as complex as the readers can manage with some teacher support, activities in any or all of these four areas can help students to better understand that text and to develop strategies for approaching complexity in new texts as well. The activities in this resource likely are familiar to many teachers. They are not intended to introduce new pedagogy; rather, they are meant to spark ideas about how teachers can apply what we already know about teaching reading.

This resource includes guidelines for creating and organizing text-specific activities, ideas for tailoring tasks to meet students’ needs, and a sample five-day schedule. The ideas included in this resource can be used to plan center activities for additional literacy time that occurs alongside the module lessons and also provides guidance for planning whole group instruction in areas where it is determined that the whole class needs additional support.
Overview

The Additional Work with Related Texts resource includes the following sections:

- **Getting Started:** Choosing a focus, creating activities, and differentiating
- **Focusing on Meaning:** Activities to help students understand the meaning of texts
- **Focusing on Structure:** Activities to help students understand structure of texts
- **Focusing on Knowledge:** Activities to help students build a knowledge base around the topic of a text that they are reading
- **Focusing on Language:** Activities to help students understand the language (vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure) of texts
- **Related Text Center—Sample Schedule and Example:** Sample schedule specifically for the “Additional Work with Related Text Center”
  - (within additional literacy time, for example intervention time)
- **References:** Citations for those who would like to do further study

Getting Started
Choosing a Text

The purpose of the activities in this resource is to give students additional work and practice with texts that are related to those that are being used in the modules. Ideally, this work is going back to the module texts or using texts from the Recommended Text Lists that are included with each module. This time should guide students to better understand meaning, structure, or language of a text or to acquire additional knowledge and context.

Any text chosen to be read in additional literacy time or an intervention setting should be relevant to the topic in order to continue to provide purpose for the reading and to continue to build knowledge on the subject. When choosing a relevant complex text to read in additional literacy time, it is important to consider what students are struggling with in the complex texts they are reading in the module lessons and to choose a text that provides opportunities to practice those specific skills. For example:

- Are text features confusing them (structure)?
- Is there a gap in their experiences that makes it hard to understand a key concept (knowledge)?
- Or is there an unusual amount of new academic vocabulary to learn (language)?

For example, if students are struggling with the text features of a text in the module lessons, it would be advisable to choose a relevant text with similar text features and focus the instruction in additional literacy time on helping students to become more familiar with those features.

Text complexity rubrics and other materials designed to help teachers understand what makes a text complex can help pinpoint where students may need support. See rubrics for evaluating features of text complexity at the following link: [http://www.achievethecore.org/page/656/finding-ccss-grade-levels-for-texts-scass-rubrics](http://www.achievethecore.org/page/656/finding-ccss-grade-levels-for-texts-scass-rubrics).
In many cases, it will make sense to plan activities in meaning, structure, language, and knowledge. Very often, exploring all four areas can be helpful in boosting overall understanding and developing strategies for reading complex texts. Learning to analyze complex text in this way also is valuable professional development.

Creating Activities and Differentiating

The ideas in each section can be used to plan activities for an “Additional Work with Related Text Center”, to provide extra support in a “pull-out” or “push-out” session for a student or a group of students, or even as full-class instruction in an area where most students need remediation or reinforcement. Teachers can further differentiate by:

- Creating different activities (with different areas of emphasis) for individuals or groups of students
- Varying the level of adult guidance provided using specialists, paraprofessionals, or volunteers
- Modifying versions of the same activity to reflect student needs (i.e., adjusting the amount of text, limiting the number of new words, adding sentence stems or “hints,” etc.)
- Chunking tasks into smaller parts or allowing more time for some students or groups

Focusing on Meaning

Often, students will need support in drawing meaning from complex text. Truly understanding a story or article may involve exploring layers of meaning, identifying the overall purpose of the writing, locating main ideas and supporting details, or summarizing. All students will need to learn and practice these key skills with teacher guidance.

“Meaning” activities may focus on an entire text or specific parts of a text, and may target basic understanding or more nuanced understanding of a fiction or nonfiction text.

For students who struggle with a text, the most useful support may be basic work on literal comprehension before a text is formally introduced in class, or even simply listening to the text being read on an audio recording while following along. For others, work in this area might lead to a more nuanced understanding of a theme or concept.

Activities to help students understand the meaning of related complex texts may include the following:

1. **Pre-reading or Rereading:** Students may read part or all of the text silently, whisper read independently or with a partner (the student reads a piece repeated times, in a whisper-level voice), or read aloud into a recording device (use the recordings of fluent readers to create a listening center next year). Repeated reading is a simple and powerful way to increase comprehension.
2. **Reading Along:** Students can read along with a prerecorded version of the text. Try recruiting parents or other students to create a library of texts used in the modules for your classroom. Audio versions of some books can be found at local libraries or ordered through interlibrary loan.
3. **Comprehension Question Sheets:** Teachers can create sets of comprehension questions tailored to build or extend understanding of a text. Questions may target literal comprehension (for students who need extra time to develop a basic understanding) or higher-level comprehension (for students who need enrichment). They may prompt students to take a deeper look at the whole text or a particular part of the text.

4. **Cloze Procedure:** The cloze procedure is a technique in which the teacher reproduces a passage, strategically deleting words and leaving blank spaces for students to fill in. Reading carefully, students insert words that make sense in context to complete and construct meaning from the text. Cloze exercises can focus students when rereading and can be used to develop or assess basic comprehension. More information on constructing this type of activity can be found by searching using the key words “cloze” and “reading” on the Internet.

5. **Graphic Organizers:** Students can complete graphic organizers that scaffold basic understanding. Examples include organizers that prompt students to identify the main characters, setting, problem and solution in a story, or the main idea and details in an informational piece or a single paragraph.

6. **Summaries:** Students can produce written summaries of texts or sections of a text. For students who need additional support, these can be scaffolded using templates or sentence stems, or by having students work together in pairs or small groups.

**Focusing on Structure**

Understanding text structures can help students build meaning when reading both literature and informational texts. Structure includes things like text features, organization, sentence structure, and the understanding of genre. The following are suggestions for activities to help students better understand the structure of the text they are working with. These can be done alone or with a group, and are easily adaptable to an interactive whiteboard if such technology is available.

**Activities to help students understand the structure of complex texts may include the following:**

1. **Text Puzzles:** Enlarge and cut apart the text or part of the text and ask students to reassemble the parts so that the text is well organized and makes sense. After they have finished, students can check their work using a copy of the original text. A variety of puzzles can be made—students can be asked to reassemble a set of paragraphs, sentences within a paragraph, sections of a text, or even complex sentences.

2. **Connections:** To help students develop an awareness of the purpose of text features, prepare a copy of the text in which you have removed selected text features. These could include captions, subheads, or illustrations. Using a glue stick, students replace the missing features—for example, correctly matching a caption with an illustration or a subhead with the correct section of information. Students can be asked to place paragraphs under the correct subhead or paste transition sentences between paragraphs.

3. **Color Code:** Have students use color to show the relationship between parts of a text. This activity can be fairly concrete (Find the word “camouflage” defined in word box at the bottom of the page. Now find the word “camouflage” in the text. Color them both blue. What does “camouflage” mean in this sentence?) or more abstract (This paragraph talks about a problem and solution. Color the problem red and the solution blue.).
Focusing on Knowledge

The Common Core state standards encourage us to integrate text into our work in the content areas in order to build a knowledge base. Where possible, students should create this knowledge base from the text itself, but sometimes additional information is needed. In these cases, the focus should be on teaching students to find the needed information themselves. It is crucial that any content or concepts needed to understand the text be available to all students, not just to those who have been fortunate enough to have rich life experiences.

Activities to help students build a knowledge base around the topic of a text that they are reading may include the following:

1. **Use Audio or Visual Resources:** Students can listen to recordings, watch short videos, learn educational songs, or analyze sets of images to deepen their understanding of a concept or topic. It is important that these resources augment, and not replace, content knowledge built by reading the complex text itself.

2. **Research:** Students can be given very short, simple research to do (individually or in groups) related to the text. Research questions should be designed around ideas that are not well covered in the text itself but are important to comprehension. For example, if the text is written in a way that assumes students know the dangers of being lost on a snowy mountaintop, and you live in an area where it never snows, you may want to have students research the hazards of snowy weather. Research like this can be done by individuals or groups using the Internet, the library, or other sources and shared with the class.