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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded, Grades 6-8*. This excerpt outlines and carefully explains the 6-8 reading standards and provides guidance for your instruction.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents and Reviews.

The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to one another and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Note on Range and Content of Student Reading

To become college and career ready, students must grapple with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries. Such works offer profound insights into the human condition and serve as models for students' thinking and writing. Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare. Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts.

* Please consult the full Common Core State Standards document (and all updates and appendices) at <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>. See “Research to Build Knowledge” in the Writing section and “Comprehension and Collaboration” in the Speaking and Listening section for additional standards relevant to gathering, assessing, and applying information from print and digital sources.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for

Reading

The College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards are the same for all middle and high school students, regardless of subject area or grade level. What varies is the specific content at each grade level, most notably the level of complexity of the texts, skills, and knowledge at each subsequent grade level in each disciplinary domain. The guiding principle here is that the core reading skills should not change as students advance; rather, the level at which they learn and can perform those skills should increase in complexity as students move from one grade to the next.

Key Ideas and Details

This first strand of reading standards emphasizes students' ability to identify key ideas and themes in a text, whether literary, informational, primary, or foundational and whether in print, graphic, quantitative, or mixed media formats. The focus of this first set of standards is on *reading to understand*, during which students focus on *what* the text says. The premise is that students cannot delve into the deeper (implicit) meaning of any text if they cannot first

grasp the surface (explicit) meaning of that text. Beyond merely identifying these ideas, readers must learn to see how these ideas and themes, or the story's characters and events, develop and evolve over the course of a text. Such reading demands that students know how to identify, evaluate, assess, and analyze the elements of a text for their importance, function, and meaning within the text.

Craft and Structure

The second set of standards builds on the first, focusing not on *what* the text says but *how* it says it, the emphasis here being on analyzing how texts are made to serve a function or achieve a purpose. These standards ask readers to examine the choices the author makes in words and sentence

and paragraph structure and how these choices contribute to the meaning of the text and the author's larger purpose. Inherent in the study of craft and structure is how these elements interact with and influence the ideas and details outlined in the first three standards.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

This third strand might be summed up as *reading to extend or deepen one's knowledge* of a subject by comparing what a range of sources have said about it over time and across different media. In addition, these standards emphasize the importance of being able to read the arguments; that is, they look at how to identify the claims the texts make and evaluate the evidence used to support those claims

regardless of the media. Finally, these standards ask students to analyze the choice of means and medium the author chooses and the effect those choices have on ideas and details. Thus, if a writer integrates words, images, and video in a mixed media text, readers should be able to examine how and why the author did that for stylistic and rhetorical purposes.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

The Common Core State Standards document itself offers the most useful explanation of what this last standard means in a footnote titled "Note on range and content of student reading," which accompanies the reading standards:

To become college and career ready, students must grapple with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries. Such works offer profound insights into the human condition and serve as models for students'

own thinking and writing. Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare. Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts. (CCSS 2010, p. 35)

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Literature

6 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

7 Cite **several pieces** of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

8 Cite the textual evidence **that most strongly** supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Informational Text

6 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

7 Cite **several pieces** of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

8 Cite the textual evidence **that most strongly** supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

History/Social Studies

6 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

7 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

8 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Science/Technical Subjects

6 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

7 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

8 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

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Common Core Reading Standard 1

What the **Student** Does

Literature

6 Gist: Say what happens or is said in the text, citing a piece of evidence from the text that supports your inference.

- What happens or is said in this text?
- What piece of evidence supports your inference as to the explicit meaning of the text?

7 Gist: Say what happens or is said in the text, citing several pieces of evidence from the text that support your inferences.

- What happens or is said in this text?
- What pieces of evidence support your inference as to the explicit meaning of the text?

8 Gist: Say what happens or is said in the text, citing the strongest, most compelling evidence from the text itself that supports your inferences.

- What happens or is said in this text?
- What pieces of evidence provide the strongest support for your inferences?

History/Social Studies

6 Gist: Say what the primary or secondary source says, citing evidence from the text that supports your analysis.

- Is this a primary or secondary source?
- What does the text say?
- What evidence can you cite to support your analysis of the text's meaning?

7 Gist: Say what the primary or secondary source says, citing evidence from the text that supports your analysis.

- Is this a primary or secondary source?
- What does the text say?
- What evidence can you cite to support your analysis of the text's meaning?

8 Gist: Say what the primary or secondary source says, citing evidence from the text that supports your analysis.

- Is this a primary or secondary source?
- What does the text say?
- What evidence can you cite to support your analysis of the text's meaning?

Informational Text

6 Gist: Say what happens or is said in the text, citing a piece of evidence from the text that supports your inference.

- What happens or is said in this text?
- What piece of evidence supports your inference as to the explicit meaning of the text?

7 Gist: Say what happens or is said in the text, citing several pieces of evidence from the text itself to support your inferences.

- What happens or is said in this text?
- What pieces of evidence support your inference as to the explicit meaning of the text?

8 Gist: Say what happens or is said in the text, citing several pieces of evidence from the text itself to support your inferences.

- What happens or is said in this text?
- What pieces of evidence provide the strongest support for your inferences?

Science/Technical Subjects

6 Gist: Say what the scientific or technical text says, citing evidence from the text that supports your analysis.

- Is this a primary or secondary source?
- What does the text say?
- What evidence can you cite to support your analysis of the text's meaning?

7 Gist: Say what the scientific or technical text says, citing evidence from the text that supports your analysis.

- Is this a primary or secondary source?
- What does the text say?
- What evidence can you cite to support your analysis of the text's meaning?

8 Gist: Say what the scientific or technical text says, citing evidence from the text that supports your analysis.

- Is this a primary or secondary source?
- What does the text say?
- What evidence can you cite to support your analysis of the text's meaning?

Common Core Reading Standard 1

What the **Teacher** Does

To teach students how to “read closely,” do the following:

- Provide students access to the text—via tablet or photocopy—so they can annotate it as directed.
- Model close reading for students by thinking aloud as you go through the text with them or displaying your annotations on a tablet via an LCD projector; show them how to examine a text by scrutinizing its words, sentence structures, or any other details needed to understand its explicit meaning.
- Display the text via tablet or computer as you direct students’ attention—by highlighting, circling, or otherwise drawing their attention—to specific words, sentences, or paragraphs that are essential to the meaning of the text; as you do this, ask them to explain what a word means or how it is used in that sentence, or how a specific sentence contributes to the meaning of the larger text.
- Pose questions—about words, actions, or details—that require students to look closely at the text for answers.

To get students to determine “what the text says explicitly,” do the following:

- Ask students to “say what it *says*”—not what it means, since the emphasis here is on its literal meaning.
- Offer students an example of what it means to read explicitly and support your inferences with evidence; then tell them what a passage explicitly says, and ask them to find evidence inside the text to support their statement about its meaning.
- Give students several pieces of evidence and ask them to determine what explicit idea in the text the evidence supports.

To develop students’ ability to “cite specific textual evidence,” do the following:

- Offer them a set of samples of evidence of different degrees of specificity and quality to evaluate, requiring

them to choose the one that is best and provide a rationale for their choice.

- Show students how you would choose evidence from the text to support your inference; discuss with them the questions you would ask to arrive at that selection.

To “make logical inferences,” ask students to do the following:

- Take what they *learn* (from the text about this subject) to what they already *know* (about that subject); then *confirm* that their reasoning is sound by finding evidence that supports their inferences.
- Think aloud (with your guidance) about the process and how they make such inferences, and then have students find and use evidence to support their inferences.

To find the textual evidence “that most strongly supports _____,” do the following:

- Create with your students—through collaborative groups or class discussion—a list of different pieces of evidence they might cite; together, develop and apply criteria by which to evaluate the different pieces to identify those which would offer the strongest, most effective support; then ask them to apply these same criteria to new evidence they find themselves as they read the rest of this article or another.

To help your English Language Learners, try this one strategy:

- Repeat the process used to make such inferences, verbally labeling each step as you demonstrate it; then ask them to demonstrate their ability to do it on their own or with your prompting. Post the steps (e.g., “Inferences = What You Know + What You Learned”) with an example on a poster or handout they can reference on their own as needed.

Notes

Common Core Reading Standard 1

Academic Vocabulary: Key Words and Phrases

Analysis of primary and secondary sources: Primary sources are those accounts recorded from people who witnessed or participated in the event themselves; these sources include journals, letters, and oral history recordings; secondary sources are those written by others *based on* primary sources and the opinions of scholars past and present.

Cite specific textual evidence: All claims, assertions, or arguments about what a text means or says require evidence from within the text itself, not the reader’s opinion or experience; students should be able to quote or refer to a specific passage from the text to support their idea.

Conclusions drawn from the text: Readers take a group of details (different findings, series of events, related examples) and draw from them an insight or understanding about their meaning or importance within the passage or the text as a whole.

Evidence that most strongly supports an analysis: Evidence in general includes facts, data, quotations, and any other sources of data that support the claims writers make; in this case, however, it refers to only that evidence that “most strongly supports an analysis.” Such evidence would typically be more precise, specific, and effective in its ability to back up one’s analysis.

Explicitly: This refers to anything clearly stated in great or precise detail; it may suggest factual information or literal meaning, though not necessarily the case.

Informational text: These include nonfiction texts from a range of sources and written for a variety of purposes, everything from essays to advertisements, historical documents to op/ed pieces. Informational texts include written arguments as well as infographics.

Literature: This refers to fiction, poetry, drama, and graphic stories but also artworks such as master paintings or works by preeminent photographers.

Logical inferences [drawn from the text]: To infer, readers add what they *learned* from the text to what they already *know* about the subject; however, for the inference to be “logical,” it must be based on evidence *from the text*.

Primary and secondary sources: *Primary sources* are those documents—letters, journals, oral histories, and the like—recorded by those who participated in or observed the events firsthand; *secondary sources* are those articles that draw on such primary sources and others to examine or explain events authors did not witness themselves.

Read closely (close reading): This refers to reading that emphasizes not only surface details but the deeper meaning and larger connections between words, sentences, and the full text; it also demands scrutiny of craft, including arguments and style used by the author.

Several pieces of textual evidence: Evidence is described above; this phrase refers to the act of including evidence not from several *different* texts but different pieces of textual evidence—a number of quotations, some data, several specific examples, for example—from *one* text the student is reading.

Support analysis: This is related to “citing textual evidence.” This phrase requires readers to back up their claims about what a text says with evidence, such as examples, details, or quotations.

Text: In its broadest meaning, a text is whatever one is trying to read: a poem, essay, or article; in its more modern sense, a text can also be an image, an artwork, speech, or multimedia format such as a website, film, or social media message, such as a Tweet.

Textual evidence: Not all evidence is created equal; students need to choose those examples or quotations that provide the best example of what they are saying or most compelling quotation to support their assertion.

Notes

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