

Text Complexity Analysis Template

| Text complexity analysis | | | |
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| Created by: | Kathleen Simoneau | Event/Date: | TeachFest Connecticut: Summer Academy, 7.29.14 |
| Text and Author | <i>The Boy In The Striped Pajamas</i> by John Boyne | Where to Access Text | www.randomhouse.com/teens or at the library/book store ISBN13: 9780385751896 |
| Text Description | | | |
| <p>This text is a historical fiction chapter book that is set in 1942 during World War II. It is told through the eyes of a nine-year-old son of a Nazi officer named Bruno. After moving from Berlin to “Out-With” with his family, Bruno is lonely and after “exploring,” he befriends a boy in striped pajamas who lives behind a wire fence next to Bruno’s house.</p> | | | |
| Quantitative | | | |
| Lexile and Grade Level | 1080L, 5.8 ATOS, Grade 6 | Text Length | 216 pages |
| Qualitative | | | |
| Meaning/Central Ideas | | Text Structure/Organization | |
| <p>This text is very complex because there are multiple levels of meaning throughout it. The themes of innocence, compassion, and evil are developed across the entire text and are implicit. Textual evidence can be extracted from various part of the book to track the development of the theme. The author’s choice of the third person point of view attributes to the complexity of this text. The reader must analyze Bruno’s account of the events while using his/her background knowledge of World War II to fully comprehend the meaning of this text.</p> | | <p>The text is organized in twenty chapters. Each chapter contains a heading that can be utilized to summarize and determine importance. Although most of the text is clear and in chronological order, there are a couple chapters that represent flashbacks of experiences that Bruno recalls from his childhood (for example chapter 8 <i>Why Grandmother Stormed Out</i>). The text is based around one central plot but also contains a couple of additional storylines. The author primarily uses dialogue between the characters and Bruno’s internal thoughts to tell the story. There are no graphics.</p> | |
| Prior Knowledge Demands | | Language Features | |
| <p>The knowledge demands required of this text are exceedingly complex as it describes experiences that are distinctly different from those of the “common reader.” The reader must have sufficient background knowledge of World War II, in particular the concentration camps and geography of the countries mentioned, as well as some cultural knowledge in order to fully comprehend the text and its highly sophisticated theme and message.</p> | | <p>Overall the language features in this text are between very complex. The sentence structure contains predominately complex sentences with transition words and subordinate clauses, however, the text is written using familiar and conversational vocabulary. There is also some figurative language that is utilized to convey meaning and describe the events. For example, “like putting a tiny candle of light in the corner of a huge castle on a misty moor on a dark winter’s night” (p. 31). It is also important to note that the fence, illustrated on the front cover, is a metaphor for divisions amongst people. The author has also chosen to have the main character mispronounce the name of the camp (“Out-With”) and Hitler’s name (“the Fury”). This wordplay is intentional and serves to represent the many concentration camps that were present at this time instead of limiting it to Auschwitz.</p> | |

Potential Reader/Task Challenges

This text handles a serious subject matter. It is an account of a highly sensitive historical event. Reading this text will result in in-depth, possibly emotional conversations. Readers must have background knowledge of this historical event and understand the intentional choices that the author has made in order to carefully craft the text. These choices include: figurative language, word play, point of view, descriptions of characters in particular Bruno and Shmuel, and descriptions of the setting.

Big Takeaway

Even in an environment full of hatred and evil, two young boys found friendship and companionship. Even though they were from two different worlds/backgrounds, they also had striking commonalities and developed a strong bond. The text is written in such a way that it transcends time and forces the reader to relate the events in the text to our society today especially when the author writes on the last page, “Of course all this happened a long time ago and nothing like that could ever happen again. Not in this day and age.” The author challenges us through this fictional text to recognize the “fences” that exist in our world today and consider how we can make steps towards taking them down.

Vocabulary Analysis Template:
Close Reading of Chapter 4 *What They Saw Through the Window*

| | Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete) | Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. words with multiple meanings and/or that are part of a word family) |
|---|---|---|
| Words that can be determined in context | <p>Relatives Pavement Plaque Inscription Greenery Countryside Soldiers Wheelbarrows Huddled</p> | <p>Argument (“argument stood against her”) Spotted (“didn’t want to be spotted”)</p> |
| Words that cannot be determined in context | <p>Occasion Telegraph poles Barbed wire Smoke stacks Modern Suitable (“suitable reply”) Spades Rehearsal</p> | <p>Clearing (open area of land) Surveyed (to look at and examine all parts) Subject (as in a king’s subject) Conviction (“said with great conviction”) Business (“going about their business”) Extraordinary (as in unusual)</p> |