

Text Complexity Analysis Template

Text complexity analysis			
Created by:	Rachael Maginess	Event/Date:	LearnZillion TeachFest- Hartford, July 2014
Text and Author	<i>An Introduction to Poetry</i> By Billy Collins	Where to Access Text	http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176056
Text Description			
<p><i>An Introduction to Poetry</i> by Billy Collins describes a teacher’s experience teaching poetry to his students. Filled with humorous imagery and irony, students enjoy the big takeaways and the opportunity to do a close reading to discuss word choice.</p>			
Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	Lexile: N/A 7 th grade and up	Text Length	109 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
<p>The meaning and central idea of the poem is that while some people want to endlessly discuss each word and possible meaning of a poem, sometimes it is best just to appreciate the beauty and emotional response to a piece of art- in this case, a poem. The central idea of the poem is fairly explicit. The author describes ways he feels students should interact with poetry, while ending with how students actually engage with poetry. His emphasis is on poetry as a form of art, as opposed to something that needs to be defined and ‘figured out’. Collins says he wants students to “waterski/ across the surface/ of the poem,” but all his students want to do is “tie the poem to a chair with rope /and torture a confession out of it.”</p>		<p>There are no graphics. The poem has a title and seven stanzas and is written in free verse. Three stanzas are couplets and three are tercets. One stanza has one line, and it is further set apart because it is written in iambic tetrameter. The narrator is reliable and consistent and presents his ideas as well as the point of view of his students. There is a clear shift from his point of view, to that of the students.</p>	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
<p>The text doesn’t require the reader to be familiar with other texts. Students should have a basic introduction to or knowledge of literary elements, such as imagery, similes, metaphors, and personification. Students should also have a basic understanding of poetry structure, including stanzas and lines. A typical student should have the knowledge base to work with the poem by grade 7. Many students are familiar with the feeling of dread that is often associated with studying poetry and are pleasantly surprised with the author’s stance on poetry.</p>		<p>The language is contemporary and easy to understand. Language should be familiar, with the exception of the phrase “color slide,” which may need an explanation.</p>	

Potential Reader/Task Challenges

Most students won't experience many challenges with this poem. It is an excellent poem to use to introduce students to a poetry unit, specifically because it reminds them to embrace and appreciate what words can mean on the surface, as opposed to beating the poem to death. Students can have rich discussions about the point of view and imagery presented in the poem, though it may take some students a while to infer the narrator is a teacher and is referring to his students. Students grapple with the irony of discussing a poem in detail, specifically with this close reading activity, when the author actively encourages his students and the audience to do the opposite.

Big Takeaway

The big takeaway that students should have is that poetry can be discussed, deconstructed, and annotated, but one must not forget to appreciate what the poet has created. Students should focus on the author's purpose for writing this poem, which directly relates to his central idea.

Vocabulary Analysis Template

	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	Probe (tier 2) Confession (tier 2)	
Words that cannot be determined in context		Color slide (tier 2)