

THE 5 PLAGUES OF THE DEVELOPING READER

In his book 'Reading Reconsidered', Doug Lemov points out that there are five types of texts that children should have access to in order to successfully navigate reading with confidence. These are complex beyond a lexical level and demand more from the reader than other types of books.

Read his blog article here: <http://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/on-text-complexity-and-reading-part-1-the-five-plagues-of-the-developing-reader/>

Archaic Language

The vocabulary, usage, syntax and context for cultural reference of texts over 50 or 100 years old are vastly different and typically more complex than texts written today. Students need to be exposed to and develop proficiency with antiquated forms of expression to be able to hope to read James Madison, Frederick Douglass and Edmund Spenser when they get to college.

Non-Linear Time Sequences

In passages written exclusively for students—or more specifically for student assessments—time tends to unfold with consistency. A story is narrated in a given style with a given cadence and that cadence endures and remains consistent, but in the best books, books where every aspect of the narration is nuanced to create an exact image, time moves in fits and start. It doubles back. The only way to master such books is to have read them time and again and to be carefully introduced to them by a thoughtful teacher or parent.

Narratively Complex

Books are sometimes narrated by an unreliable narrator- Scout, for example, who doesn't understand and misperceives some of what happened to her. Or the narrator in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" who is a madman out of touch with reality. Other books have multiple narrators such as Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. Others have non-human narrators such as the horse that tells the story in *Black Beauty*. Some books have multiple intertwined and apparently (for a time) unrelated plot lines. These are far harder to read than books with a single plot line and students need to experience these as well.

Figurative/Symbolic Text

Texts which happen on an allegorical or symbolic level. Not reflected in Lexiles; critical forms of text complexity that students must experience.

Resistant Texts

Texts written to deliberately resist easy meaning-making by readers. Perhaps half of the poems ever written fall into this category. You have to assemble meaning around nuances, hints, uncertainties and clues.