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The Common Core State Standards in U.S. English Language Arts call for teachers to use complex literature in the classrooms starting from the primary grades. Shanahan (2013) suggested that instead of giving students simplistic books at their reading levels, the CCSS guide teachers to have students grapple with challenging texts at their reading levels. For primary-grade students (K-3), literary and informational texts are commonly picture books. What is a *challenging* picture book? Is a challenging picture book also *complex*? And if so, what makes a picture book both challenging and complex for primary grade-level students? It is the teacher's role to select these texts. So what is the process for selection using the Common Core State Standards? We suggest that in order for teachers to select complex texts for their students, teachers must first understand the meaning of complexity in language arts texts and be able to distinguish *challenging* from *complex*, including the interplay between text, illustration, and reader engagement in K-3 picture books, ultimately focusing on reader/task connections. Regarding complexity, "[t]he reading standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a, p. 31). By calling for teachers to guide students to understand and to enjoy complex works of literature, CCSS puts the responsibility on educators to identify texts that will align with the standards.

The CCSS offers a three-part model of text complexity to help teachers in the process of text selection: *quantitative*, *qualitative*, and *reader and task connections*. The quantitative dimension, which considers text factors such as word length/frequency and sentence length, can be measured by computer algorithms. In contrast, the qualitative aspect of text selection relies on teachers' professional judgment. In Appendix A, the CCSS writers (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b) offer four dimensions to clarify the qualitative issue: *levels of meaning or purpose*, *structure*,

language conventionality and clarity, and *knowledge demands*. *Levels of meaning or purpose* denote a range from texts with literal or obvious meaning and purpose to complex texts in which multiple levels of meanings make the text ambiguous and its theme difficult to comprehend. The CCSS text dimension of *structure* refers mainly to text organization. A simple *structure* is a level of text organization that is predictable and chronological. Conversely, a text *structure* that is complex relies on unpredictability and shifts both in chronology and point of view. Illustrations that are part of complex structure (see also the notion of *interdependent storytelling* on p.8*)* are "essential to understanding the text and may provide information that is not otherwise conveyed in the text." (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b, p.6). An example of simple *language conventions and clarity* refers to language that is literal, familiar, and conversational, while complex language is figurative, ironic, and abstract. Lastly, a high level of complexity associated with *knowledge demands* refers to texts on themes that are not part of common experiences, for example, those that are culture-specific or distant in time or texts that reference or allude to other texts to communicate meaning.

We suggest that qualitative categories also include reader-task connections. We also recommend that reader-task connections bear the critical weight when considering holistic complexity. The CCSS writers acknowledge that their proposed dimensions are tentative and that more accurate (insightful) qualitative measures of text complexity are urgently needed to assist teachers in purposefully assessing and embedding text complexity as part of their instruction (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b, pp. 5, 8). However, the underlying theory and research on text complexity that support our efforts are minimal (Pearson & Hiebert, 2013). This paper engages and extends the qualitative application of CCSS for Language Arts text complexity by developing a textual-visual framework for identifying complex picture books to teach in the K-3

setting. The discussion and proposed framework will help to guide teachers to select complex and engaging picture books for their K-3 students.

Extending CCSS Framework for Complexity

The CCSS rationale for exposing students to complex texts is that it prepares them for college, careers, and citizenship. While advancing qualitative assessments of text complexity, the kind of complexity invoked most often by the CCSS is based on quantitative measures, e.g. Lexile scores. In this article, we focus on and extend qualitative dimensions of complexity to text-image relationships. The skills required for engaging with this kind of complexity move students cognitively from simply enjoying and doing their reading work to examining both image and text as integral parts of their literacy.

As we assess text complexity, we need a framework that is able to evaluate complexity in terms of texts and images as perceived by the readers. The current CCSS quantitative assessment of text complexity is mostly reserved for computer algorithms that assess texts based on word frequency or sentence length (e.g., lexile model). The qualitative dimensions of text complexity are assessed by an "attentive human reader" who analyzes text qualities, such as structure and levels of meaning. Qualitative and quantitative dimensions are considered to focus on the "inherent complexity of text" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b, p. 4). However, the qualitative realms of CCSS rarely address reader-task connections with the text. We propose that the reader is inherent in the qualitative assessment of text complexity. This article expands the assessment of complexity in picture books as a construct determined by K-3 readers and teachers as they construct complex responses stimulated by the interconnections between written language and visual elements through interaction with the visual/textual elements of the literature on the level of reader/task connections.

The CCSS authors have suggested a tripartite model for assessing "how easy or difficult a particular text is to read" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b, p. 4). Our framework extends the qualitative dimension of text complexity into the textual-visual realm. The CCSS authors define this dimension by using four qualitative measures of text complexity. We extend the qualitative measures by bringing in visual-text relationships that can render meaning complex (see Table 1). In order to examine these relationships, we provide guiding questions for K-3 teachers to use when reading and selecting a picture book that will fulfill the CCSS requirements for complex literary text. For instance, for *Levels of Meaning*, we suggest the following guiding questions: Do the text and the illustrations tell the same story? How are the text and the illustrations connected? Do the illustrations provide additional clues to enrich the meaning of the text? Visual information such as the expressions of the characters and the details in the environment will stimulate readers to go deeper in their interpretation.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Theoretical Background

While trying to define text complexity, one often finds *complexity* invoked side-by-side with *difficulty* (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b, pp. 2-9). Together, complexity and difficulty constitute the interactive and often dialectical relationship between text and reader (Adams, 1991; Chafe, 1991; Elam 1991; Rosenblatt, 1983). Difficulty points to the involvement of the reader (the reader's perceptions of the text, judgments, etc.), while text complexity is better suited to represent the nature of the text (sentence structure, vocabulary, etc.). Complexity is a variable upon which the reader initially exerts no control. However, this changes with interaction.

The reader engages with and perceives the text based on varying personal background and reading experience, which shape the young reader's assessment of text difficulty. No doubt,

the sense of difficulty based on prior experience with texts also influences the reader's assessment of complexity. A reader with extensive experience reading a particular genre or subject matter should have less difficulty accessing a new text in the familiar genre or context than a first time reader with no prior experience. Common texts, based upon prior curricula, allow a teacher to establish baseline trust with students regarding reading and text complexity.

Although *text difficulty* and *text complexity* are intertwined with each other, they are not synonymous concepts. Purves (1991) offers a constructivist view of *text difficulty* as consisting of a two-step process between reader and text. First, the reader judges what sort of text it appears to be. Second, the reader proceeds with a self-assessment of his or her ability to read the text. Both are estimates that lead to an assessment. However, these assessments of difficulty are not an assessment of text complexity, i.e., a systematic analysis of text and image elements separately and together with the intended purpose to uncover complexities that cause the perceived difficulties. Ordinarily, a reader may comment that "This book is written in a simple style; it's easy to read." (Purves, 1991, p. 2), implying that "I will understand what it is about." Nevertheless, the reader can still fail to estimate the complexity of a text, consequently over-estimating his/her ability to understand its layered meaning.

Between the reader and the text, Rosenblatt (1983) has established that the reader counts for at least as much as the text. This is, in part, what makes the assessment of complexity so challenging because teachers generally come to approach and appreciate texts first as readers. As mentioned above, we learn a great deal about complexity by exposing students to a text. While Purves (1991) focuses our attention on the reader's assessment of the readability of the text as one indicator of complexity, Rosenblatt (1983) points to complexity as a transformative and reflective process arising from the act of reading as exemplified by the upcoming summary of

students' responses to *This Is Not My Hat* (Klassen, 2012). Given the varying nature of complexity, responses might not be just expressions of difficulty comprehending a text but can extend to other complex responses such as tension, discomfort and uncertainty, viewed as necessary reactions for reflection, critical thinking and inquiry to ensue (Dewey, 1910; Rosenblatt, 1983). Responses may also be followed by judgments, moral or otherwise. As K-3 teachers determine the complexity of a book, they must consider how the text and the illustrations trigger multiple layers of meaning in their young readers.

Example of Complexity in Picture Books

Teachers can easily identify complex books when the backdrop is on serious and heavy issues --such as war, racial relationships, or family conflict; and/or when the language is challenging in terms of learning new syntax and vocabulary. Yet, how does a complex picture book look like when the language is seemingly simple, the topic is less sober, and the tone is considerably lighter? We offer an example: Jon Klassen's, *This is Not My Hat*, a complex picture book and the 2012 Caldecott medal winner, written with simple language and a playful tone, illustrated with delightful pictures that tell a complementary story of their own, and engaging of readers through the book's additional underlying motifs of morality and relationships. First, we make the assumption that the publisher and the Library of Congress have accurately assessed the grade level and difficulty of the text; we, like other teachers, confirm this assumption through observation. While, we could have assured our observations through quantitative measurements, they are not the point of this example of a holistic evaluation of complexity prior to selection for class use; rather we want to focus on reader-text transaction. We begin with a textual analysis, followed by a visual analysis of the illustrations, and culminate with a preliminary test of student reactions before selecting the text for inclusion as a complex

text for K-3 Language Arts.

Textual Analysis

This hat is not mine.

I just stole it.

> *I stole it from a big fish.*

> *He was asleep when I did it.*

And he probably won't wake up for a long time.

And even when he does wake up, he probably won't notice that it is gone.

> *And even if he does notice that it's gone,*

> *he probably won't know that it was me who took it.*

(Excerpted from Klassen, *This Is Not My Hat*, 2012)

This is the self-talk of a little fish in *This Is Not My Hat*. The simple prose provides a sharp contrast to the complex layers of meaning. The text starts with a declaration about the hat. In five words, the little fish acknowledges that there is a hat, and the hat does not belong to him. This negative declaration immediately causes the reader to engage with the narrator, "Well, whose hat is it?" Then the narrator confesses, "I just stole it." Does this mean that the narrator stole it a short time ago, or that he/she stole it on a whim and doesn't know why? The syntax of the speaker creates enough ambiguity to augment the reader's engagement. Next, the little fish reveals that the big fish was sleeping when the little fish stole the hat. The focus of the little fish's narration then changes from "I" to "he." The little fish continues with repeated attempts to calm himself by using the *if-then, not* sentence structure to create an illusion of safety. Anxiety begins to creep in as the little fish tries to assure himself that he will still be fine even when the

big fish wakes up, when the big fish notices that the hat is gone, and when he may go to retrieve

his hat. Foreshadowing enhances the complexity with just a few short sentences.

Visual Analysis

The short, to-the-point sentence structure is mirrored by Klassen's succinct use of visual

elements, as well as limiting the color to earth tones on a predominantly black background. The

graphic style is simple, focusing on the bare essentials that allow the reader to identify the main

characters as fish. The drawings are flat, without any suggestion of depth except through viewing

the fish behind underwater plants. Yet, it would be misleading to suggest that the absence of

graphic details suggests a lack of complexity. Instead, the author's attention to details enhances

the story and provides amusement to the readers, for example the relative sizes are exaggerated.

The big fish fills two whole pages in this oblong book while the comically smaller little fish, is

often placed in the center of one page. Later, the little hat is on top of the big fish's head.

The complexity of the illustrations lies in its subtlety and minimalistic detail, e.g.,

expressed through the shape of the eye and through the position of the black pupil on the white

iris, showing emotion and awareness. Playing off each other, both the text and the eye give the

reader access to the little fish's thoughts, underscoring the subtle composition and the complex

interplay of word and illustration. Further elements that carry meaning are space and movement.

Across the entire book, the reader moves along left to right, cognitively and spatially, with the

plot moving through the underwater environment, for instance, the air bubbles trailing the fish.

The readers become omniscient observers of the big fish chasing the little fish. A crab is

strategically placed in the illustration to contradict the self-comforting words of the little fish by

pointing the way. The reader *sees* and *knows* more than either of the two fish by being able to see

what is ahead of the big fish and behind the little one. This *interdependent storytelling* (Agosto,

1999), i.e., where text and illustrations combine to create meaning (at times, as in this example, by delivering contradictory messages), requires of readers to attend closely to both (see also Table 1, Guiding Questions for Teacher Analysis). Such stories may be considered inherently more complex than stories in which the image and text content mirror or repeat the same information, i.e., what you read is what you see.

Readers become engaged as they take a role in the complexity of the picture book. The final pages of the book are silent; they have no text. The reader sees a wall of water plants. The little fish has entered the plants followed by the big fish. It is a complex shift for primary grade readers to build meaning from words and pictures to pictures only. Finally, the big fish emerges from the plants with the little hat on his head and swims back toward the opposite direction.

Encountering Literature

The initial difficulty in engaging with a text is the encounter with the text itself. Thus, we decided to read the story to a group of children ages 5-8 years old. Interestingly, when we read the book to children (K-3rd grade), they found tension in the plot, the actions, the relationships, and in their own responses. The combination of perceived tension in the plot and unease in the reader is one indicator of the presence of complexity. Three story elements evoked the strongest responses from the children–prior knowledge (re levels of meaning), structure, and knowledge demands. Language commonality and clarity were incorporated throughout the reader responses.

Prior Knowledge. First, the perception that a crime (i.e., theft) or injustice (i.e., taking something without asking) had occurred caused unease among the children. This unease came from their prior knowledge of values and norms within their psycho-social realms. The children used different methods to deal with their uneasiness, ultimately looking for a satisfying solution. One found it perplexing that a big fish should care about a hat that was too small for him. "He

looked funny with that hat." Another kindergartner tried to reduce the perplexity of the relationship by suggesting that the little fish was the son of the big fish, as they looked alike in the illustration. The hypothesized father-son relationship reframed the act of stealing to a prank by the son on his dad. With the reconfigured relationship, the uneasiness caused by stealing disappeared. The chase became a playful game between the father and son. All the children heartily accepted this relationship until they realized that the big fish might have eaten the little fish. The unsettling scenario that the father might have eaten the son was too difficult to integrate into the comprehension scheme of the children. They instantly returned to the theft frame of the story. Killing a thief was difficult to witness; eating one's son was overwhelmingly unacceptable. Students responded to the interplay between the textual and the visual elements. Although the text does not provide any information about the action of either fish; whereas the absence of the little fish in the illustration strongly suggests the fatal ending of the little fish.

   Structure. Second, the perception of anomalies within the story stimulated discussion. A third grader found the small fish's behavior "weird." Most thieves would claim that the stolen goods were their own; in contrast, the little fish started the story with a confession, "This hat is not mine. I stole it." The simple self-talk of the little fish reveals the complexity of the little fish's thinking and reasoning. He is being candid and lying at the same time. Most thieves would be scared if they were being chased; in contrast, the little fish seemed calm during his attempt to escape. The little fish did not lie about his action, at least to the reader, when most thieves would have lied. However, the little fish lied to himself about being safe from the big fish as he was trying to run away and to hide himself. The young readers attempted to impose a moral structure on the story, which requires them to use and reconfigure knowledge from their own lives and from the story.

Knowledge demands. Third, an open ending adds to the complexity of the story. Open-endedness in picture books such as *This is Not My Hat* (Klassen, 2012) or Lee's (2007) *Waiting for Mama* (see book recommendations), is created in two ways: first, through the shift from the combination of text and illustration to illustration as the sole mode of providing meaning, and second, through the deliberate exclusion of visual information. Students interpreted the disappearance of the little fish from the illustration as an act of revenge. The perception that the big fish ate the little fish for an act of theft triggered a strong emotional response. Most children agreed that stealing was not right. One second grader voiced that it was "okay" for the little fish to steal the hat because the hat was too small for the big fish. It fit the little fish better. But all of them took issues with the way that the big fish handled the thief. He should not eat the little fish just because the little fish stole his hat. The revenge was too severe for a petty theft. Two kindergartners proposed another solution, "When the big fish finds the little fish. He should tell the little fish that this is my hat. May I have my hat back? Please!" It appeared that children preferred a more peaceful ending to a crime. Instead of seeking fairness and delivering punishment, they preferred restoring the situation to its before-theft state. The children sought clarity between what the story implied and what their own actions would have been. In order to mitigate the assumed brutality of the solution, students proposed various levels of discipline to deal with the theft.

Conclusion

In the current framework, we have combined both the use of the *CCSS Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity* and the textual-visual extensions that create additional layers of complexity in children's picture books for teachers and students to uncover. Moreover, we connect the readers' responses to the interaction between text and image as indicators of

complexity, often manifested by readers' expression of conflict or uneasiness as well as subsequent attempts to accommodate and resolve the conflict. Through examining extensions in textual-visual elements, guiding questions, and responses to text and illustrations, we provide a framework for guiding K-3 teachers to analyze complexity. As reading teachers, our shared goal is to facilitate children's engagement in literacy, to align our instruction with the required Common Core State Standards, and all-the-while to provide motivation, inspiration, and skill for K-3 students to access and enjoy complex texts.

Recommended Children's Books

The following book recommendations follow the grade-based distribution of informational and literary texts as suggested by CCSS. Anticipating the defined 50-50 split between the two text types by grade 4, we provide a balanced set of informational and literary texts for grades K-3. Many of CCSS samplers of complexity are literary classics that were published years ago. It becomes problematic for the exemplary informational texts as they are on average about 25 years old with the median publication year of 1991. Both types of texts require updated examples that can capture the present state of complexity as exemplified by the visual vocabulary present in contemporary books and recent developments in the sciences and technology. Lastly, we suggest contemporary titles including international books and those dealing with diversity, poverty and immigration as well as informational texts focused on STEM, biology and the environment.

Literary Texts

- Chen, C.Y. (2004). *Guji Guji*. La Jolla, CA: Kane/Miller Book. An extra-large egg rolls into Mother Duck's nest one day when she is busy reading. Growing up with other hatchlings, no one pays attention to Guji Guji's extra-large size and his crocodile-like

appearance. Much of the complexity of this Taiwanese story rests on the question of identity and appearance and thus has multiple levels of meaning. It is obvious from the illustrations that Guji Guji is different from the ducklings from the beginning; yet the text always emphasizes on Guji Guji being part of the family.

- Fleischman, P. (2013). *The Matchbox Diary*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick. A box of sunflower seed shells, a ticket stub from a baseball game, and a fish bone are items in match boxes that a great-grandfather keeps from his past. The parallel structure of the past in black and white illustration and the present in color, the information from the text and the visual clues from the objects in the illustration engage readers to make meaning at multiple levels.

- Hughes, L. (2013). *I, Too, Am America.* New York: Simon & Schuster. This book is an illustrated interpretation of Langston Hughes' 1925 poem for a visual history of railway porters. The mixed media illustrations form a collage of shapes and text. Complexity is imbedded within multiple levels of meaning as Hughes' poetic language describes the author's present and an expression of a desired future. The illustrator plays with the text references to the future and with the structure by layering images to mirror the layers of time referenced in Hughes' words.

- Klassen, J. (2012). *This Is Not My Hat*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick. A little fish takes a hat away from a big fish who is sleeping. A chase ensues with an unconventional open ending. Complexity of this book rests on a deceptively simple and carefully crafted story that takes full advantage of the interaction between text and image while challenging notions of right and wrong.

- Lamb, A. (2011). *Tell Me the Day Backwards*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.

Before going to bed, a bear cub and his mother remember the day in a backwards sequence all the way to waking up in the morning after hibernating all winter. The main element that renders this book complex is its structure. The reader is required to attend to and reflect on a non-traditional reverse chronological sequence of events and time as depicted in text and illustrations.

- Lee, T. (2007). *Waiting for Mama*. New York: NorthSouth. This international book from Korea depicts a young boy who waits for his mother at tram station. The complexity lies in the abstract nature of the illustrations and the open-endedness of the text of the story in contrast to the meaning communicated through the images.

- Wiesner, D. (2001). *The Three Pigs*. New York: Clarion. The classical story of the three little pigs is reinterpreted as the three pigs leave the pages of the story to find a different setting. There are several elements contributing to the complexity including levels of meaning created by the contrast in agency between the painter and the painted, structure of the text which moves the story through various settings, as well as the textual-visual relationships contributing to a metacognitive story within a story structure.

- Woodson, J. (2012). *Each Kindness*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books. A young girl rejects a new classmate and reflects on the missed opportunity to connect with her. The reader is confronted with issues connected to poverty within a text structure that does not provide a clear resolution. The second complexity relates to issues of poverty and race provided by the visual clues but not in the text: the poor child in the book is white and the child who rejects her is a person of color.

- Yu, L. (2011). *A New Year's Reunion*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick. When papa comes home from faraway places, he brings gifts to mama and Maomao and fixes cracks in their

house. This international book is written from the point of view of a little girl in China who sees her father only once a year when he returns home for Chinese New Year. The complexity of the book rests on the knowledge demands on cultural practices and life experiences that readers in the United States might not be familiar with.

Informational texts

- Arnosky, J. (2011). *At This Very Moment.* New York: Dutton Children's Books. Human daily activities are contrasted with what happens simultaneously in the different animal habitats across the globe. The poetic language of the book adds to its complexity. Unlike traditional informational texts, this book uses rhymes to engage the reader to reflect on mundane actions of both human and non-human animals.

- Kamkwamba, W., & Mealer, B. (2012). *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. New York: Dial Books. A boy in Malawi is interested in science and builds a windmill to create electricity and to bring water to his village. Most of the complexity stems from the knowledge demands such as cultural context, threat of famine, and connection between wind and electricity.

- Rotner, S., & White, D.A. *Body Actions*. (2012). New York: Holiday. This book provides brief factual information about human physiology and anatomy. The interaction between the text and the image increases the complexity of the book. The authors/illustrators overlay diagrams on top of photographs of young children engaged in daily activities, smoothly integrating abstracted physiological structures with the rest of the photographs. Readers can generate multiple layers of meaning by reading the text and exploring the information provided by the images.

- Rotner, S., & Woodhull, A. (2010). *The Buzz on Bees: Why Are They Disappearing?*

New York: Holiday. This informational book is about the disappearance of bees. The complexity of this book rests on the knowledge demands. Readers need to understand the interaction between the bees and the environment. Teacher guidance is needed to coordinate the information gleaned from the text and the photographs.

- Shea, S.A. (2011). *Do You Know Which Ones Will Grow?* Maplewood, NJ: Blue Apple Books. Through a series of rhyming questions, the reader is asked to differentiate between things that can grow and those that cannot, i.e. between living and non-living things. The main complexity is due to the use of language and irony. The authors play with size relationships as indicators of growth both for living things and objects.

- Sidman, J. (2011). *Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. "Spirals—bold, beautiful, and mysterious—are all around us. Can you find one?" This book starts with an invitation asking readers to look for the recurring shape in nature. The textual-visual elements of this book guide the readers to explore the simple designs in the complex natural environment.

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Table 1. Framework for Analyzing Complexity in K-3 texts

CCSS Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity	Extensions: Textual-Visual Elements	Guiding Questions for Teacher Analysis
Levels of Meaning	Alignment of textual and visual meaning (e.g., relationships and connections between text and illustrations)	• Do the text and the illustrations tell the same story? • Do the text and the illustrations interact to build depth to the meaning? • How do the illustrations add to from the meaning of the text? • How are the two connected? How much information can we derive from the image compared to the text?
Structure	Explicitness of textual and illustrated sequence of events. Layout, size and number of visual elements on a page	• Is the textual structure unpredictable? • Do the illustrations tell a coherent story? • Does the textual structure or visual layout add to the depth of the book?
Language Conventionality and Clarity	Comprehensible and age appropriate illustrations, image content and language	• Are the expressions in the text easy for children to understand? • Are the illustrations realistic or abstract? • How is the meaning influenced by the images? • Are the illustrations appropriate for the intended age group?
Knowledge Demands	Age appropriate background knowledge including visual representations required to comprehend and appreciate both text and illustrations	• What do students need to know in order to understand the text? • What do students need to know in order to understand the illustrations?

"Pause and Ponder"

- How can you differentiate between a complex and a simple picture book?
- What are typical indicators of text complexity for teachers?
- How do you react to a book that makes you feel uneasy or ambiguous?
- How do students react to complex vs. simple books?
- How do illustrations contribute to or subtract from text complexity?

"Take Action!"

1. Carefully review books not only for vocabulary and language demands required to access the text but also for visual vocabulary and visual demands, i.e., analyze illustrations like you would a text.
2. Assess students' visual vocabulary and visual comprehension skills. Do they see and understand illustrations like you do? What are common confusions and mistakes student make when extracting meaning from images? Can students comprehend an illustrated book without the text?
3. Consider teaching visual vocabulary and how meaning is created with images by showing a wide range of different positive and negative examples of illustrations, art and photographs prior to reading a book.
4. Look for how meaning is shaped by images vs. how it is shaped by the text? How do text and images relate to one another?
5. Consider creating a library of complex picture books at your school.
6. When a book makes you feel uneasy or ambiguous about its content (considered one indicator of text complexity), try it out with your colleagues before introducing it to students to get multiple perspectives.