**This sample text analysis was completed by Dr. Autumn Griffin.**

See the full Text Analysis Toolkit resources [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/3369/text-analysis-toolkit).

**Initial Considerations for Complexity and Cultural Relevance**

*This tool is intended to support your analysis of anchor texts for both complexity and opportunities for culturally relevant pedagogy[[1]](#footnote-0) to determine whether/how to use a text and to prepare for instruction. First, read to yourself the full text you are considering (or the text included in your instructional materials you are required to teach), all the way through.*

| **Text: *Girl*** by Jamaica Kincaid |
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| **Key Ideas of This Text:**  Girl is an essay written in a single sentence (tied together by a series of semicolons) that imparts the advice of a mother to her daughter. The advice is intended to “help” that daughter as she prepares for her own journey into adulthood, specifically womanhood. The advice is largely practical and intended to help the daughter keep a house of her own eventually, as it includes suggestions on laundry, ironing, cooking, sweeping, setting the table, and more. The mother also gives meaningful advice about the relationships she anticipates her daughter may have with men. In many instances, the advice is driven by fear, as the mother does not want the daughter to become or be perceived as a “slut.” While the majority of the essay is written from the mother’s narrative voice, the “girl” interrupts twice to ask a question or defend herself. The essay uses repetition to highlight certain points, as well as punctuation (or lack thereof) to string together the series of statements that provide both wisdom and admonishment. Importantly, this essay is not told chronologically, and has no beginning, middle, or end. |
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**Move forward with analyzing this text and considering for use with students?**

|  | ⛔ | Text contains harmful content, such as stereotypes and/or inaccurate representation. DO NOT USE. |
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| **X** |  | Text has one or more cautions about the way this content is presented or how this story is told that will take careful teacher planning. MOVE TO ANALYSIS, TENDING CAREFULLY TO PLANNING FOR CAUTIONS THROUGH TASKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. |
|  | ✅ | No initial concerns about the way this content is presented or how this story is told; for example, this text is affirming of the characters/topics it portrays. MOVE TO ANALYSIS; USE WITH INTENTIONAL PLANNING. |
| Notes:  While the stereotypes in this text are meant to be challenged, critiqued, and questioned, the teacher will need to be able to carefully unpack these messages with students. | | |

**Consider what you bring to this text, what your students could bring,**

**and how you’ll prepare for instruction.**

| **Locating Myself within This Text:**  Are the identities,[[2]](#footnote-1) ideas, perspectives, and content of this text close to or far away from my own?  Although the identity of the narrator is not revealed in the text, the author is a Black woman, who is considered a Black Feminist writer, which is important for context, especially since the narrator seems to be speaking from a Carribean context (namely Antiguan; Kincaid was raised in Antigua during British rule). Another identity present in this text is that of womanhood. Thus, I would have to say the identities that most closely resemble my own in this text is that of a woman and a daughter. The identities perhaps far away from my own are that of a mother and Caribbean identity. | **Locating Students within This Text:**  Are the identities, ideas, perspectives, and content of this text close to or far away from students? In what ways and for which students?  The identity most closely resonant with many of my students is that of a child, specifically a child who identifies as a girl. I imagine that many of my students are also daughters or at least youth responsible to some adult in their lives. This text may be farthest from those students not being raised by any woman figure. Although the text is not written about or from the perspective of boyhood or gender fluidity, I do imagine my students who identify as boys and those who identify as gender fluid or non-binary are probably receiving some sort of gendered advice, if not from a parent, from some caretaker or stakeholder in their lives. I imagine this text may also resonate with my students who are immigrants or first-generation, particularly students who may be from a Caribbean household. |
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| **Research & Reflection:**  💭 What do I need to know more about before engaging more deeply with this text?[[3]](#footnote-2)  I need to educate myself more on Antiguan culture, specifically several antiguan terms (i.e. benna; wharf-rat; okra (perhaps); dasheen; doukona; pepper pot). I also need to learn more about gender relations in Antigua around the time the text was written/around the time of Kincaid’s childhood. [This interview](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPgjWIYKm5w) would be a helpful start for me to watch and think about clips I may want to share with students either prior to or after reading the text. | |

*Now that you have read through the text once, identify 1) potential rationales for using this text with your students and 2) the quantitative level (e.g., Lexile) as an initial gauging of this text’s grade-level complexity.*

| **Why Read This Text with These Students?**  *Identify the potential rationales for reading this text by highlighting any of the possible relevant purposes in the table. Add additional rationales as needed. Read more about these three pillars of culturally relevant pedagogy from Gloria-Ladson Billings* [*here*](https://www.cue.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/images/Source%205%20-%20ladson-billings%20culturally%20relevant%20pedagogy%20-%20the%20remix.pdf)*.*   | **Academic Success** | **Cultural Competence** | **Critical Consciousness** | | --- | --- | --- | | Builds academic language | Connects to (some) students’ identities or lived experiences | Provides accurate representation | | Reads text with rich thought and/or ideas | Teaches (some) students about other cultures, identities, or experiences | Connects to current events and/or topics that matter to students | | Builds knowledge about a topic, perspective, or event | Shows joy, agency, creativity and/or resilience of non-dominant or historically marginalized identities Consider with “Cautions” noted below. | Explores power, equity, justice, or injustice | | Connects to content knowledge of a unit of study | Provides opportunity for multilingual learners to leverage their existing language resources and/or vocabulary from content under study | Sparks critical conversation | | *Other:* | *Other:* | *Other:* Opportunities to connect with current sociopolitical issues (e.g., gender inequity) | | **Quantitative Level[[4]](#footnote-3)**  *Will this text give students the chance to interact with a complex, grade-level text?*   | Grade Band | Lexile Ranges | | --- | --- | | PK–2 Read-Aloud | 420–1010 L | | 2–3 | 420–820 L | | 4–5 | 740–1010 L | | 6–8 | 925–1185 L | | 9–10 | 1050–1335 L | | 11–12 | 1185–1385 L |   **Quantitative Measurement &**  **Associated Grade Band:**   | **1050-1335** | | --- |   Note that in order to fully determine grade-level complexity, **qualitative** demands (meaning/purpose, knowledge, language, structure) must also be considered. |
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| **Initial Text Reflections**  Based on your initial read, do you see **potential rationales** for reading this text with students? Is this text **within the quantitative grade band**? If not, does it have another relevant purpose for reading with your students?  *Note: Don’t reject a text for simply not being within the grade-level quantitative band, but be thoughtful about the purpose for reading. Consider the fact that over the course of a school year, all students should have ample learning opportunities with rich and complex text and language.*  There are multiple reasons for reading this text with students. The text does fall within the quantitative grade band (9-10) and presents ideas that can teach students about other cultures, and can help them learn about sociopolitical issues related to issues of gender inequity and societal pressures for women and femmes. Since this book has all of these functions, lessons and activities can be used to extend the text, helping students build knowledge around these topics through various modalities (e.g., audio, book, video) and from various perspectives (cultural insider and cultural outsider). |
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**Literary Texts Qualitative Analysis Tool**

*This tool is organized around the four categories of qualitative complexity: purpose (chiefly informational)/meaning (chiefly literary), language, structure, and knowledge. Within each category, you will first analyze the complexity level of each category, drawing from the* [*Literary Text Qualitative Rubric*](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/SCASS_Text_Complexity_Qualitative_Measures_Lit_Rubric_2.8.pdf.pdf)*, to determine what makes this text more or less complex. Then, you will also identify relevant opportunities and cautions for culturally relevant pedagogy.[[5]](#footnote-4)*

*To use the tool on a computer, consider highlighting levels of complexity and relevant opportunities/cautions. Take care to* ***note specific examples from the text*** *that support your determinations in each section.* ***Use these notes to plan for instruction****.*

| **MEANING** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **HIGH COMPLEXITY** | **MIDDLE HIGH** | **MIDDLE LOW** | **LOW COMPLEXITY** |
| * Multiple levels/layers of complex meaning | * Multiple levels/ layers of meaning | * Single level/layer of complex meaning | * Single level/layer of simple meaning |
|
| **Opportunities** | | **Cautions** | |
| * Explores **power, equity**, **justice**, or **injustice** * Messages **disrupt stereotypes**/dominant ways of thinking. * **Own stories** are being told (consider shared identity markers of author and characters/content, lived experiences, etc.). | | * Messages **reinforce and accept the status quo** (e.g., do not showcase ability to organize for change, do not challenge preconceived notions). * Messages (text/images) **reinforce dominant** ways of thinking or **stereotypes.** | |
| Additional questions to ask yourself:   * How might this text connect to experiences that lead students to take action in their lives and communities? How could it be used for critical conversation? The book can help equip students with acquiring the critical thinking skills to reflect deeply on issues of gender inequity and with discussion, and facilitate opportunities for them to gain the language necessary to resist and critique stereotypical thinking about gender norms. * Whose perspective is presumed or centered in this text? How does this reflect students’ perspectives or identities? The perspective of the mother is centered in this text, but it is meant to be understood as problematic and to be critically analyzed for deeper discussion with students. This intersects with students’ perspectives, as they are growing up in a world where even though gender discrimination is publicly discussed, it very much still happens both at home and in the workplace. * For which students in my class could this text serve as a mirror to their own experiences/identity? For which students in my class could this text serve as a window to new experiences/identities?[[6]](#footnote-5) I imagine this text will serve as a mirror for some of my young girl students and those growing up in Caribbean or immigrant households where male perspectives are dominant and women are expected to be subservient and of service lest they be labeled “slut.” This text may also be a mirror to any student who has heard this type of discourse in their homes or in public generally. This text may serve as a window for students who have never explored issues of gender equity and/or issues of intersectionality (the specific ways that race and gender intersect to create simultaneous multiple marginalized experiences). | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:[[7]](#footnote-6)  This text is middle high in complexity because there are multiple messages that students receive about the identities, cultures, activities, and places included in this text (ideas gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality). The messages in the book do reinforce stereotypes but in a way that would cause students to critique the text and the ideas highlighted within it | | | |
| **STRUCTURE** | | | |
| **HIGH COMPLEXITY** | **MIDDLE HIGH** | **MIDDLE LOW** | **LOW COMPLEXITY** |
| * **Narrative Structure:** complex, implicit, and unconventional * **Narration:** many shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** frequent manipulations of time and sequence (not in chronological order) | * **Narrative Structure:** some complexities, more implicit than explicit, some unconventionality * **Narration:** occasional shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** several major shifts in time, use of flashback | * **Narrative Structure:** largely simple structure, more explicit than implicit, largely conventional * **Narration:** few, if any, shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** occasional use of flashback, no major shifts in time | * **Narrative Structure:** simple, explicit, conventional * **Narration:** no shifts in point of view * **Order of Events:** chronological |
|
| **Opportunities** | | **Cautions** | |
| * Narration and/or images have potential to **expand on students’ notions of themselves** and their histories. * Narration and/or images have the opportunity to increase **awareness**, **appreciation, and understandings** of historically marginalized communities. | | * Narration and/or images contribute to **stereotypical beliefs** that have been constructed in society (e.g., gender roles). | |
| Additional questions to ask yourself:   * Does this text uphold dominant representations of certain genres (e.g., European fairy tales) or disrupt those notions? The text disrupts most genre conventions: there are no quotation marks though it is dialogue, no paragraph structure. It doesn’t uphold dominant narratives of a certain genre, but it does bring to light dominant narratives about women. * How might the identity/perspective of this author or illustrator influence the way in which they tell this story? The essay was written by Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid. She wrote the essay after immigrating to the U.S. and we see her experiences with gender oppression both in her household (and also likely in the U.S.) throughout the text | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  The structure of the book is middle-high complexity and highlights the historical and multiple marginalized identities of a presumed young girl in the text. There is some opportunity for abstract and critical thinking, as the text is not written in chronological order and does have two narrative shifts. The shifts are represented by use of italics. The speaker is presumed to be the mother; understanding this assumption and where it comes from should be addressed in lessons. The order of events is unclear. While it is possible this is one moment in time, it is more likely the ongoing voice of the mother in the daughter’s ear over time, rather than within a specific moment. | | | |
| **LANGUAGE** | | | |
| **HIGH COMPLEXITY** | **MIDDLE HIGH** | **MIDDLE LOW** | **LOW COMPLEXITY** |
| * **Conventionality:** heavy use of abstract and/or figurative language or irony * **Clarity:** generally *unfamiliar,\** archaic, domain-specific, and/or academic language; dense and complex; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading | * **Conventionality:** contains abstract and/or figurative language or irony * **Clarity:** somewhat complex language that is occasionally *unfamiliar,\** archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic | * **Conventionality:** subtle use of figurative language or irony * **Clarity:** largely contemporary, *familiar, conversational\* language* that is explicit and literal; rarely unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific, or overly academic | * **Conventionality:** little or no use of figurative language or irony * **Clarity:** contemporary, *familiar, conversational\* language* that is explicit and literal; easy-to-understand |
|
| **\*** In making these determinations, consider the students in the room. For whom is language conversational? From whom would it be “easy-to-understand”? How does this allow you, or not allow you, to center historically and/or currently marginalized students?  Because the essay is written as a dialogue from mother to daughter, it has a largely conversational tone, especially when read aloud. It will likely be conversational for the native English speakers in the class, and for some students from Caribbean contexts depending on their level of comfortability with English. Non-English speaking students or those from non-Caribbean contexts may struggle to understand some of the terms. However, with vocabulary instruction, I imagine they will be able to digest the text. | | | |
| **Opportunities** | | **Cautions** | |
| * Builds **academic language** * Provides opportunities to connect to **multilingual learners’** home language, based on prior knowledge or topics under study | | * Language makes **generalizations** or implies something is normal and absolute or a norm for all individuals and/or groups of people. Does not acknowledge or make space for different cultural norms. * Language makes **assumptions** about a specific culture or group of people | |
| Additional questions to ask yourself:   * Is the language likely to be familiar to students and/or in language that represents the spoken language of students in the classroom? How so? While the entire text is written in English, it does contain a few words specific to Antiguan language, and it will require some explicit vocabulary instruction on the front end. * Is there language or voice that’s local to the characters in the story (e.g., diary entries, dialogue, etc.)? The author of the essay and the characters within it are both cultural insiders. The essay is written from an authentic perspective. * How complex is the sentence structure (e.g., rich vocabulary, complex syntax, or other elements of [“juicy sentences"](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Juicy%20Sentence%20Guidance.pdf))?[[8]](#footnote-7) Given that the entire essay is written in one sentence, it does require a bit of an advanced understanding of punctuation (namely semicolons). | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  There is use of some very contextual language, but overall, the vocabulary is not what makes this text challenging.  Considering sentence structure and the use/placement of the semicolon will be important for students to make sense of the use of language.  There is some culturally specific language (benna, wharf-rat, dasheen, doukona) that students may want to learn more about if not already in their vocabulary, but none that would cause large misunderstandings about the text. | | | |
| **KNOWLEDGE** | | | |
| **HIGH COMPLEXITY** | **MIDDLE HIGH** | **MIDDLE LOW** | **LOW COMPLEXITY** |
| * **Life Experiences:** explores multiple complex, sophisticated themes; multiple perspectives presented; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are distinctly different to *the common reader\** * **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** requires an *extensive depth of literary/cultural knowledge;\** many references/ allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements. | * **Life Experiences:** explores multiple themes of varying levels of complexity; experiences portrayed are not fantasy but are *uncommon to most readers\** * **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:***requires moderate levels of cultural/literary knowledge;\** some references/ allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements | * **Life Experiences:** explores a single complex theme; experiences portrayed are *common to many readers\** or are clearly fantasy * **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:***requires some cultural/literary knowledge;\** few references/ allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements | * **Life Experiences:** explores a single theme; single perspective presented and *everyday experiences\** are portrayed that are *common to most readers\** or experiences are clearly fantasy * **Cultural/Literary Knowledge:** requires only *common, everyday cultural/literary knowledge;\** no references/allusions to other texts and/or cultural elements |
|
| \*In making these determinations, consider the students in the room. How much do you know about students’ cultural/literary knowledge related to the content in this text? Whose cultural/literary knowledge are you considering as you think about what will be “common”? How does this allow you, or not allow you, to center historically and/or currently marginalized students? When it comes down to how much I know about my students’ cultural/literary knowledge related to this text (e.g., Antiguan culture and gender identity), I currently do not know how much they know about these specific topics. The text allows me to center the historical and contemporary marginalized experiences of women, especially women of color, specifically Black, immigrant women or Black women outside of the U.S. | | | |
| **Opportunities** | | **Cautions** | |
| * Opportunity to **center historically marginalized** identities, experiences, or knowledge * Shows **joy, agency, creativity or resilience** of historically marginalized identities * Builds knowledge about a **topic, perspective, or event** * Connects to content knowledge of a **unit of study** * Connects to current events ortopics that **matter to students** | | * Focuses **on challenges/obstacles** faced by historically marginalized identities * Portrays characters as **race/culture/identity neutral** or without depth | |
| Additional questions to ask yourself:   * How does the author describe the character(s) and their identities? There is no direct description of the character/speakers in the text. As readers, we are left to make assumptions about them and their identity based on reading the dialogue. * How can the content of this text engage students in understanding the context or impact of real world problems? The book can be used to help students critically analyze the social, political, and gendered forces that impact gender inequity. Caution must be given, though, to not making gender inequity seem like an issue that only takes place in Caribbean contexts. * For which students does this text provide opportunities to leverage their existing funds of knowledge and language resources? For which students might this text build new knowledge of others and the world? Because English is the dominant language used in the text, students who are multilingual learners/users may need additional language support. For students who may not have been exposed to Antiguan culture, this can be an opportunity to learn about another culture. Lastly, this text can be used to build the knowledge and empathy of students who haven’t been exposed to issues of gender inequity through explicit dialogue. | | | |
| Text-Based Notes:  There are some cultural bases of knowledge that will make for a richer read: for example, calypso songs, food references, experiences based in Antigua. The ending (“after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won’t let near the bread?”) is possibly intended to be humorous, poking fun at a traditional custom. This knowledge is apparent to cultural insiders but likely to be missed by readers without this background/life experience. | | | |

| **Additional Student Considerations**  Revisit your thinking about who you are, who students are, and how that intersects with this specific text. Are there other considerations for your students when engaging with this text (e.g., cultural considerations, students’ lived experiences, etc.)?  After reflecting on the other considerations, I want to continue to consider highlighting the issues of gender inequity and race alongside Antiguan culture without students walking away with the understanding that gender inequity exists largely or solely outside of the U.S. Instead, I want them to grapple with the idea that gender inequity is a global problem, and think about the unique ways it impacts those with multiple marginalized identities specifically. |
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| **Summarize Your Analysis**  *Consider whether this is a grade-level text[[9]](#footnote-8) (quantitative and qualitative complexity), and what opportunities and cautions are present for culturally relevant content and instruction. Also think about any connections to units/topics under study, class-specific instructional needs, and how the text’s complexity may influence placement within the school year.* | |
| --- | --- |
| This text is:   * Above grade level * Below grade level * Within grade level | **And,** has the following **opportunities** for culturally relevant pedagogy:  The text does call for some understanding of the idea of intersectionality at a very basic level. I could also choose to focus exclusively on gender & culture/ethnicity/nationality. |
| **But,** the following **cautions** for culturally relevant pedagogy need to be attended to: The caution is that students walk away with a singular idea of where gendered oppression takes place.The text is absolutely still worth teaching, and it will require me to think carefully and engage in critical reflection before, during, and after teaching the text. |

1. Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that’s just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy*.* *Theory Into Practice, 34*(3), 159–165. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. In considering identity, you might think about any of the following: ability, age, body type, ethnicity, gender, home language, immigration status, socio-economic status, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. For more, see [Let’s Talk, Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students, Learning for Justice](https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/TT-Let-s-Talk-Publication-January-2020.pdf#page=8), p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. For example, you may want to learn more about a historical event, a cultural practice that is unfamiliar to you, or accurate pronunciations of proper nouns. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. A [quantitative tool](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/CCSS_Grade_Bands_and_Quantitative_Measures%20updated%202015.pdf), such as a Lexile level, is one piece of information to gauge a text's overall complexity. This computer-generated numerical value is based on features such as sentence length and vocabulary complexity and is one way of ensuring that your students are regularly interacting with rich reading material. To find a text’s Lexile, visit <https://hub.lexile.com/find-a-book/search>; you may also [paste in portions of a text](https://hub.lexile.com/analyzer) to get an approximation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A. K. A. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 74–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives, 1 (3), ix–xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Consider connections to text-specific questions to ask around particularly complex qualitative elements, the purpose for reading/re-reading, and other connections to lesson planning. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. [Juicy Sentence Guidance](https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Juicy%20Sentence%20Guidance.pdf), based on the work of Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. To determine if a text is of grade-level complexity: Use the quantitative measures to place a text within a grade band. Use the qualitative measures to place the text at the top, middle, or bottom of the band. Finally, consider what to do with the qualities of the text through instruction so students within a grade can access it in a meaningful way (reader and task considerations). Note that qualitative demands may cause you to determine that a text that falls outside of a specific grade band’s range is appropriate to the grade level. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)