



Text Complexity Analysis of *Katie's Trunk*

By Ann Turner

Text Type: Informational – Historical Fiction

Text Description

In this piece of historical fiction set during the early days of the American Revolution, the narrator, a young Tory girl named Katie, describes the conflict her family encounters as a result of remaining loyal to England. Katie's encounter with rebel troops unveils unexpected forms of courage.

Recommended Complexity Band Level

Although the quantitative features of *Katie's Trunk* place it at the grade 2-3 band, the qualitative features (e.g. themes) as well as reader and task considerations (e.g. grade level standards) may make this text more appropriate for the grade 4-5 complexity band.

Quantitative Measure

Quantitative Measure of the Text:

660L

Range:

450-790

Associated Band Level:

Grade 2-3 Band

Qualitative Measures

Text Structure:

Very Complex - This text presents a side of the Revolutionary War not frequently depicted, that of the Tories who remained loyal to England and their treatment by the Patriots. Multiple themes surface for readers, some of which are clear, such as goodness, friendship, loyalty, and fairness, while other themes are more subtle, such as moral conflict and the impact of war on human relationships.

Language Features:

Moderately Complex – Told through first person narration from the perspective of a young Tory girl, the text organization is generally a sequential accounting of the events that occur when Patriot rebels ransack Katie's home in search of valuables to buy arms. The account does include references to events that have led up to this point in time (e.g. Boston Tea Party) that help set the context. Illustrations strongly support understanding, and are particularly important to establishing the mood and tone.

Meaning/Purpose:

Very Complex - Vernacular of the time period (e.g. "the rebels were arming") is used in this text, and this, coupled with lengthy and complex sentence structures and figurative language adds to the complexity of the text. Dialogue is included along with the first person narration. Vocabulary is somewhat unfamiliar at points (e.g. parlor, kin, Torries), mostly with regard to the time period, but there is enough familiar vocabulary to help support overall understanding.

Knowledge Demands:

Very Complex - Knowledge of the time period is necessary to fully grasp this story (e.g. early stages of American Revolution, Tory vs. Rebel). Readers will be able to relate to some of the experiences of the narrator (e.g. aspects of friendship, name-calling, bullying, fear of war) but other aspects may need more clarification (e.g. segregation, labeling, heroism, destructive nature of war).



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Considerations for Reader and Task

Possible Major Instructional Areas of Focus (include 3-4 CCS Standards) for this Text:

- Reading Literary Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4 at the grade 4-5 span
- Writing Standard 9 at the grade 4-5 span
- Language Standards 4, 5, and 6 at the grade 4-5 span
- Opportunities for close reading practice are abundant.

Below are factors to consider with respect to the reader and task:

Potential Challenges this Text Poses:

Knowledge demands of this time period are significant for understanding this text.

Additionally, the complex sentence structures coupled with the vernacular and vocabulary of the time period may require support.

The more subtle themes presented through the text may also require teacher direction to unearth in greater depth. Readers may need to reread the text multiple times to unearth the wide variety of themes, deeper meanings, and purposes this text serves to convey.

Differentiation/Supports for Students:

Text read aloud models sentence phrasing with complex sentence structures.

Some vocabulary could be introduced in advance of reading to support understanding, particularly vocabulary for which the context does not provide enough support to determine meaning.

Scaffolding to understand thematic elements may be necessary.

An additional caution is that students who come from backgrounds in which they have experienced war or segregation may have strong reactions to this text.