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Introduction

Here we are, teaching and learning at the beginning of a new era of educational standards: the Common Core Era. This new directive has ushered in a slew of educational guidelines that are somewhat familiar and yet entirely ambitious. While the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts address many educational basics (reading comprehension, proficiency in the conventions of English grammar, the ability to express oneself both in writing and in speech), they also seek to define what it means to be a literate, resourceful, perceptive person in the 21st century. Ultimately, they aim to equip each student with the tools needed to be that kind of person.

Introduction *(cont.)*

With this new, ambitious focus comes the need for a new type of educational material—one that challenges and interests students while meeting the multifaceted criteria of the Common Core. There are a total of 25 units in *Mastering Complex Text Using Multiple Reading Sources*, and each one fits the bill. Here’s how:

✱ **The units in this book are both familiar and innovative.**

They are familiar in that they pair reading passages with activities that test reading comprehension. They are innovative in how they accomplish this goal through the use of multiple text sources and multiple answer formats. These materials promote deeper understanding and thought processes by prompting students to analyze, synthesize, hypothesize, and empathize.

✱ **The use of multiple reading sources promotes close reading.**

Close reading is the underlying goal of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. Close reading involves understanding not just the explicit content of a reading passage but also all of the nuances contained therein. A close reading of a text reveals all of the inferential and structural components of the content, while also illuminating the craft that went into the writing of it.

The Common Core State Standards suggest that the best way to foster close reading of informational text is through text complexity. It offers four factors needed to create a high level of text complexity—all four of which are achieved through this book’s use of multiple reading sources:

| Factor | Meaning |
|--|--|
| 1. Levels of Purpose | The purpose of the text should be implicit, hidden, or obscured in some way. |
| 2. Structure | Texts of high complexity tend to have complex, implicit, or unconventional structures. |
| 3. Language Conventionality or Clarity | Texts should use domain-specific language and feature language that is figurative, ironic, ambiguous, or otherwise unfamiliar. |
| 4. Knowledge Demands | Complex texts make assumptions that readers can use life experiences, cultural awareness, and content knowledge to supplement their understanding of a text. |

✱ **The activities prompt students to explore the reading material from all angles.**

By completing the four different activities found in each unit, students will be able to display a broad understanding of the reading material. Each activity and question is designed to make students think about what they have read—everything from how it was written, to why it was written that way, to how its subject matter can be applied to their lives. They gain experience locating information, making inferences from it, and applying knowledge in a variety of ways.

The units in this book are supplemented by a comprehensive answer key (pages 101–108) and a full list of Common Core State Standards correlations (pages 109–112). And even more educational value can be mined from each unit’s reading material with “Additional Activities” (page 100). Make copies of this page (one per student per unit) and have students follow the instructions.

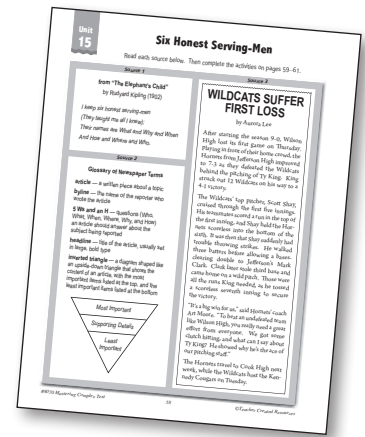
How to Use This Book

This book is divided into 25 units, which do not need to be taught in any particular order. Each unit is composed of reading material (one or two pages) and activity pages (two or three pages):

Reading Material

The reading material for each unit consists of three or four text sources. Have students read all of a unit's text sources before proceeding to the activity pages. These sources complement each other, and a connective thread (or threads) runs throughout them. Sometimes these connections will be explicit, while at other times they will be hidden or obscured.

*** Another Approach** After reading the source material, ask students to name all of the ways in which the reading sources seem to be related or connected. See page 100 for more details.



Activity Pages

Each unit is supported by two or three pages of activities. These activity pages are divided into four parts:

Part 1

The Common Core asks students to draw on information from multiple print sources and show the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently. This section directly correlates to that standard. Students will gain valuable practice in scanning multiple text sources in order to locate information.

Before beginning this section, remind students to read the directions carefully. Some of the information can be found in two or more sources, which means that students will need to fill in more than one bubble in those instances.

*** Another Approach** Have your students practice their recognition of genres and formats. For each unit, have them fill in the chart on page 100.

Part 2

In this section, students are asked to provide the best answer(s) to multiple-choice questions. What sets these apart from the usual multiple-choice questions is their emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. Very few questions ask for simple recall of information. Instead, these questions are designed to provide practice and strengthen knowledge in a variety of areas, including the following:

- * inference
- * deduction
- * grammar and usage
- * vocabulary in context
- * word etymology
- * parts of speech
- * literary devices
- * authorial intent
- * compare and contrast
- * cause and effect
- * analogies
- * computation

*** Another Approach** Ask each student to write an original multiple-choice question based on the reading sources. Use the best or most interesting questions to create a student-generated quiz. See page 100 for more details.

How to Use This Book *(cont.)*

Activity Pages *(cont.)*

Part 3

This two-question section takes the skills addressed in Part 1 and approaches them from another angle. Part 3 is in the form of a scavenger hunt that asks students to search the sources in order to locate a word or phrase that fits the criteria described. Students are also asked to name the source in which they found the word or phrase.

*** Another Approach** Assign students to small groups, and have each group collaboratively come up with two suitable scavenger hunts from the reading material. These student-created scavenger hunts can then be completed and discussed by the entire class. See page 100 for more details.

Part 4

This section is composed of three questions that ask students to integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write knowledgeably about a subject. The vast majority of these questions are open-ended, while the rest involve using a new format (e.g., chart, diagram, graph) to organize and/or interpret data and information.

The questions in this section challenge students to blend close-reading concepts with flexible-thinking skills. Students are asked to do the following:

| Analyze | Synthesize | Hypothesize | Empathize |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">* authorial choices* intent of characters/historical figures* overall meanings* quotations in context* statistical data | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* combine different takes on the same subject* use information from different genres and formats (nonfiction, fiction, graphs, etc.) to draw conclusions* compare and contrast characters, ideas, and concepts* draw conclusions from information and/or numerical data | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* make predictions about future events* explore alternatives to previous choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* connect to one's own life* put oneself in a character's/historical figure's place |

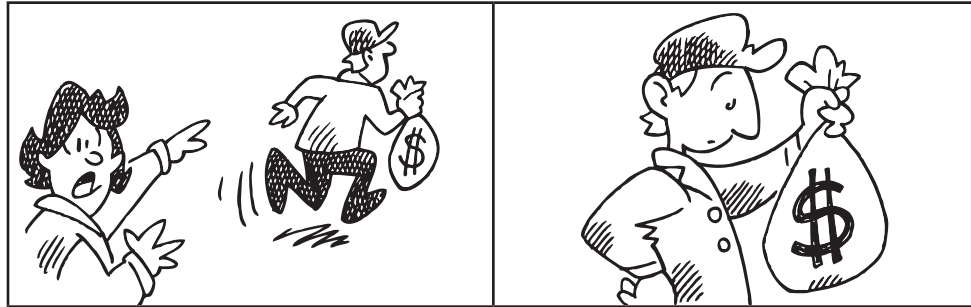
*** Another Approach** The Common Core places a strong emphasis on teaching and applying speaking and listening skills. Many of the questions in Part 4 lend themselves well to meeting standards from this strand. Have individual students present oral reports on specific Part 4 questions. Or, form groups of students and ask them to engage in collaborative discussion before presenting their findings.

#Symbols

Read each source below. Then complete the activities on pages 17–18.

Source 1

**#NOT
TOO
SHARP**



“Stop that thief! He is stealing money.”

“How does she know that?”

Source 2

The # symbol has the following meanings:

- **number sign**—This symbol is used to designate a number (“#2” can be read as “number two”).
- **pound sign**—In the United States, the # sign on a telephone keypad is often called the “pound sign.” In the United Kingdom, it is never referred to in this way. The term “pound sign” is only used when referring to the symbol for pound sterling, which is a form of English currency (money). The symbol for this currency looks like this: £.
- **hash sign**—In many countries, the # symbol is called a hash sign. In the 2010s, this symbol has seen an increase in usage due to social media on the Internet. In this context, the hash sign is used in front of a topic. Together, the symbol and the topic are referred to as a “hashtag” (for example, “#money” is read as “hashtag money”).

Note: The # sign should not be confused with the sharp sign (♯) in musical notation. The horizontal lines on the sharp sign slant upward from left to right, unlike those on the number sign.

Source 3

Dear “Pete”:

I am shocked and appalled! I recently purchased a product called Bug Be Gone from Pete’s Pest Control. This product contains a large skull-and-crossbones symbol (☠) on the back of the can. I am aware that this symbol has long been used to show that something contains poison. Times change, however, and I feel that the use of this symbol on the outside of the container is now more dangerous than the chemicals found inside the container.

Now more than ever, children love pirates. My niece and nephew are big fans of a very popular TV show about a congenial pirate. They also love to play “Pirates.” They pretend their bunk bed is a pirate ship, and they decorate flags to hang from the bed. Can you guess what symbol they draw on their pirate flags? That’s right, they draw the skull-and-crossbones symbol, which has been used by pirates since the 1700s. Young children associate this symbol with fun games and colorful characters.

I am dismayed to think this symbol may draw young children to your toxic product. Please act immediately to alter this product’s label or remove it entirely from your shelves. Any other course of action would be irresponsible.

Sincerely,
A concerned aunt

#Symbols *(cont.)*

Name: _____

Part 4: Refer back to the sources, and use complete sentences to answer these questions.

11. Name some pros (positives) and some cons (negatives) to using symbols in place of words. Use examples from the sources to make your case for each side of the argument.

12. You work at Pete’s Pest Control, and it is your job to read the mail and inform Pete (the owner) about any issues. Pete feels he is too busy to read a whole letter, and he only wants to know the “important parts.” In the box below, write a brief summary of the letter in Source 3 and explain the customer’s concerns.

13. Do you agree or disagree with the author of Source 3 when she claims that a symbol on a container can be more dangerous than the poison inside the container? Explain your answer.

All Ears

Read each source below. Then complete the activities on pages 70–71.

Source 1

As my spacecraft touched down on Polypinnae, I thought back to my school days when I first read about this mysterious planet and its inhabitants. It had been decades since anyone from my planet had made contact with the Polypins.

Upon exiting my vehicle, I used my high-powered binoculars to observe a group of these two-foot-tall blue-green beings in the distance about 5,000 feet away. It was not their height or color, however, that most caught my eye. I knew from their planet's name that they would have many ears, but they appeared to be *all ears*. On each Polypin, I counted eleven ears of varying size. I could not see any mouths or eyes.

As I cleared my throat to call out to them, they seemed to recoil in pain. Into my megaphone, I announced, "I am from the planet—," but then stopped. The Polypins were hopping up and down in an agitated way. Under my breath, I muttered, "If only they would come closer."

One of the Polypins flapped its many ears and flew over to me. It whispered, "We are close enough. We can hear you from a mile away." It then retreated back to its group.

I put down my megaphone, and in a quieter voice said, "Forgive me, friends. I come in peace, and I bring urgent news. My people have unearthed a great threat that could adversely affect everyone in our galaxy cluster." The Polypins seemed to lose interest as I spoke. Many of them turned away.

I continued, "Please hear what I am about to say. My leaders have made it our planet's mission to warn our neighbors." My voice trailed off. Some of the Polypins were playing, others were lying down to sleep, and still others had simply flown away. All of them had stopped listening.

Source 2

Polypinnae



- ◆ located in Galaxy K7q4j
- ◆ the eleventh planet from Helio 592D
- ◆ discovered in the year 2326

named after its inhabitants (from the Greek root *poly* meaning "much" or "many" and the Latin word *pinnae* for "wings"; in zoology, *pinna* is the name given to the outer part of an animal's ear)

Source 3

Big Book of Literary Terms

hyperbole – extreme exaggeration

Example: I could hear his snoring from a mile away. (The snoring might be very loud, but not so loud that it could *literally* be heard from that great of a distance.)

idiom – an expression that has a figurative meaning and cannot be interpreted literally

Example: Joe said, "If you have something to say, I'm all ears." (Joe is not *literally* made up of only ears. Since ears are the organs associated with hearing/listening, Joe is saying that he is going to focus on listening to what the other person has to say.)

irony – a figure of speech in which a phrase ends up meaning the exact opposite of what one would expect it to mean

Name: _____

Part 4: Refer back to the sources, and use complete sentences to answer these questions.

11. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The main character in Source 1 is familiar with the information given in Source 2? State your opinion and provide evidence from the sources to support your claim.

12. Use the format of a four-panel comic strip to summarize the events of Source 1. In at least one panel, be sure to include a drawing of a Polypin.

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

13. Taking into consideration the information given in Source 3, what is ironic about the Polypins?
