

What makes this text complex?

Summary

Author of the text

Author of Keesh

Full name

B.P. Skinner from the Jack London story, "The Story of Keesh"

Description

Text that tells the story of a young man growing up in a native tribe near the Polar Sea. An illustration is included to help establish the setting. A discussion of the background might be needed. Published in 1904, the legend follows Keesh, a young hunter whose father has died years ago. Keesh must find a way to provide for his mother, as well as his village, following the example of his father. Ignored by his tribe's council, Keesh finds a way to provide the village food through the use of cunning. While the council is initially distrustful of Keesh's methods, they ultimately learn the lesson that hard work always comes with age. This text contains some typical components of a legend (lesson, exploration of another culture, belief in magic). While the text is linear, the vocabulary is quite complex, and will require interaction with numerous context-specific words and situations.

Complexive features

Grade level

4th Grade

5

Key features

Analytical Measures Rubrics to determine the particular features of your text that make it complex.

[Analytical Rubrics and support for using them](#), this can also be found beginning on page 46 of your TeachFest Guide.

Central Ideas/Purpose

Several possible messages/lessons in the text, including:

Students should avoid prejudice towards one another.

Intelligence is the most important asset.

It is important to care for others, not just yourself.

Students should stand up for yourself.

Persevere despite obstacles.

Themes of the text are generally conveyed with subtlety- most messages are fairly clearly implied; however, the presence of multiple messages throughout the text, making it fairly complex. Additionally, the reader needs to accumulate the themes by synthesizing events across the entire text.

Structure/Organization

The text is moderately complex, as it is told in a linear manner and follows a familiar fiction story structure (setting, introduction of characters, problem, conflict, resolution). There is a strong narrative presence, as the limited omniscient third person narrator initiates the text with a question and background information, leading to a clear closing. The narrator also provides glimpses into the primary character's thoughts and motivations. However, the connections between events require the reader to interpret. There is limited picture support, with only one picture to support the establishment of the setting.

Language Features

The text includes some figurative language (i.e. "his father's blood ran in his veins."). While the story takes place in the past, the narrator does not rely on archaic language or a specific dialect. Nevertheless, the vocabulary is quite complex. There are many unfamiliar words, as well as some words specific to the cultural context (marrow-bone, blubber, igloo) that cannot be inferred using context clues. The vocabulary is not likely to be familiar to students, contributing to the text's complexity.

Background Demands

The text demands that students be somewhat familiar with the setting and historical context of the story. Students will need to have an understanding of the setting (village, council, communalism) and a passing familiarity with the realities of life in a Northern native tribe in the past (igloos, hunting, survival, belief in magic). General familiarity with life of past native tribes (i.e. various Native American groups) would be supportive as there are many cultural elements. While knowledge of legends may assist in the understanding of the plot progression, establishing background knowledge of the characters portrayed would be most helpful in understanding the dynamics between characters and events of the story.

Reader/Task Challenges

High volume of new vocabulary, students may become frustrated as they first tackle the text. With context clue and vocabulary support, students may be able to make meaning and discern the central messages, as the text structure is familiar. Students may also struggle to understand characters and situational events without establishing some level of knowledge about life in a native tribe of the past. However, with these scaffolds, students may be able to infer some or all of the text's messages.

Vocabulary in this text

plays a critical role in text complexity and readers' ability to make meaning of complex text.

“[Identifying and sorting vocabulary words](#),” also on page 49 of your TeachFest Guide
 e 33 of Common Core State Standards [Appendix A](#).

[What words do I teach and how?](#)” (Short Article by David Liben, Student Achievement Partners)

	Words that demand less teaching time (i.e., the definition is singular and concrete)	Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. there are multiple meanings and/or are part of a word family)
can be used in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widow (Tier 2) • igloo (via picture) (Tier 3) • neediest → ? (word family) (Tier 2) • gristly (Tier 2) • “stuff yourselves” (Tier 2) • draped (Tier 2) • dispatched (Tier 2) • elated (Tier 2) • abuzz (Tier 2) • magnificent (Tier 2) • clawing (Tier 2) • squealing (Tier 2) • hauled (Tier 2) • chunk (Tier 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legend (Tier 2) • neglect (Tier 2) • grief-stricken (Tier 2) • assumed (Tier 2) • suspicious (Tier 2)

cannot be
in context

- rim (Tier 2)
- chief (Tier 3)
- jeered (Tier 2)
- beating (Tier 2)
- enormous (Tier 2)
- ample (Tier 2)
- bone-barbed (Tier 3)
- slain (Tier 2)
- cub (Tier 3)
- priority (Tier 2)
- confronted (Tier 2)
- recoiled (Tier 2)
- brimming (Tier 2)
- hind quarters (Tier 3)
- suffering (Tier 2)
- skinning (Tier 3)
- marrow-bone (Tier 3)
- blubber (Tier 3)

- humble (Tier 2)
- circumstances (Tier 2)
- village/villagers (Tier 3)
- “his father’s blood ran in his veins” (Tier 3)
- council (Tier 2)
- “blood pounded in his head” (Tier 2)
- unprecedented (Tier 2)
- mystified (Tier 2)
- regardless (Tier 2)
- prosperity (Tier 2)
- status (Tier 2)
- tormented (Tier 2)
- “fed up”(Tier 2)
- envious (Tier 2)
- expedition (Tier 2)
- convened (Tier 2)
- perilously (Tier 2)
- fist-sized (Tier 3)
- charm (Tier 2)
- rank (Tier 2)
- manner (Tier 2)
- witchcraft (Tier 3)
- devised (Tier 2)
- ease (Tier 2)
- headcraft (Tier 3)
- convinced (Tier 2)
- hollow (Tier 2)
- insignificant (Tier 2)