

Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for Reading Literature  
Clarifications

Maryland State Department of Education  
English Language Arts/Literacy  
Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards Clarifications



The English Language Arts Department at MSDE facilitated the formation teams of educators from all across the state to participate in writing Clarifications for the Common Core Standards at grades Pre-K through twelve. These serve as resources to educators across this state and others as we implement the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards.

Educators from the local systems worked together to create clarification statements that make up a coherent document that reflects the instructional shifts necessary to achieve the Common Core State Standards. The Clarification statements detail for educators the skills necessary for students to demonstrate proficiency in each grade level standard in Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. These Clarifications are an integral part of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards Curriculum toolkit.

## Standard Two

**RL2 Anchor Standard: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.**

**Pre-Kindergarten: With modeling and support, retell familiar stories/poems.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student has read to him/her a wide variety of literary texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to fiction, nonfiction, fables, folktales, and poems. In a teacher-directed venue, a student engages in active learning with these literary texts by listening to and retelling story or poetry details in his/her own words.

It is essential that students learn early through teacher modeling that thinking about what one already knows about the subject of the text, previewing the text's title and illustrations or photographs, and making predictions about the text's content assists with understanding.

A student's ability to display age-appropriate attention while listening to a text being read is equally essential. When the teacher stops at intervals during reading and stops after

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reading is finished, a student should be able to retell in his/her own words or expression the story or poem through speech, drawing, or dramatizing.

**Kindergarten: With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student has read to him/her a wide variety of literary texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to fiction, nonfiction, fables, folktales, realistic fiction, historical fiction, plays, and poems. In a teacher-directed venue, a student engages in active learning with these literary texts by listening to and retelling in his/her own words important details in the texts.

With encouragement and support from the teacher, students engage in previously-learned pre-reading strategies and continue applying previously-learned during and post-reading strategies as the teacher continues to read. To meet the demands of this standard, with assistance, the kindergartener retells the story in his/her own words focusing on important details that exhibit an understanding of the story.

**Grade One: Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard a student reads or has read to him/her a wide variety of literary texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to fables, folktales, realistic fiction, historical fiction, plays, and poems. To meet the demands of this standard, whether a student is reading or being read to, the texts must be age appropriate and sufficiently complex to serve as a source for retelling.

To begin the teacher models retells from a variety of literary texts by using think alouds as a vehicle for instruction. Next, the more independent first grader displays an understanding of a retelling by placing the important events from the story in sequential order and making certain to note important details about these events as he/she speaks or writes. In addition a first grader should attend to the listening of a reading or read carefully enough so that he/she can identify and state the main idea or message from the story.

**Grade Two: Recount stories, including fable and folktales from diverse cultures and determine the central message, lesson, or moral.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts representing diverse cultures from an ever broadening range of genres, including fables and folktales. A fable is a story that teaches a lesson that usually involves animals or inanimate objects taking on human characteristics. A folktale is a traditional story within a culture that has been passed orally through generations.

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Within a variety of texts, a second grade student builds upon his or her knowledge of retelling stories by narrating a series of events using appropriate and necessary details to determine a specific message, lesson, or moral. At second grade a message may be directly stated in a story or the student infers a plausible message from significant events, characters, etc... throughout a story. At second grade, a lesson like a message may be directly stated in a literary text. A lesson is a principle taught through the vehicle of the story whereas a moral relays a generally accepted truth about the nature of right and wrong.

**Grade Three: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate materials representing diverse cultures. Students increase their ability to recount stories, fable, and folktales, either oral or written, established in second grade. To recount a story, students must identify the beginning, middle, and end of the story as well as identify its problem and resolution. Once these elements are established, a third grader narrates the story in correct order in his or her own words.

Student must be able to differentiate between myths, fables, and folktales.

- Myths are traditional stories, usually by an unknown author, that answer a question about the world
- Fables are brief tales, usually involving animals or inanimate objects taking on human characteristics that teach lessons about human nature.
- Folktales are traditional stories within a culture passed orally from generation to generation

Third graders expand the ability to analyze concrete details to develop an understanding of a literary text. A third grade student distinguishes between key and minor details within a story that relay the message, lesson, or moral. Once a student identifies the important details, he or she infers or draws a conclusion about a plausible message, lesson, or moral within the text and be able to defend that inference or conclusion by indicating the story details that lead to the inference of conclusion.

**Grade Four: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age-appropriate, sufficiently complex literary text representing diverse cultures from an ever-broadening range of genres. A fourth grader continues the previously established practices of identifying the central message, lesson, or moral of a literary text.

But a fourth grader refines this process by determining a theme of a literary text. Theme is a formal literary element and is defined as the author's message about a topic in a text. To identify a theme of a literary text, a student must first find broader important concepts in a text such as family, prejudice, courage, or love. Then a student observes

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carefully what characters say and do that relates to that concept. A combination of a "big" idea and what is said or suggested in the text about that idea is a theme. A theme can be a recurring idea in a text, but it also moves outside the text and applies to people in general, not just the characters in the story.

A fourth grader can recount a literary text inclusive of its key events and details in the order in which they occurred. Narrating these important events in a student's own words allows a listener or reader to judge how well the student understands a text and simultaneously permits a student to cement his or her own comprehension. This combination of recounting the important events of a literary text in one's own words be they oral or written constitutes a summary of a literary text.

**Grade Five: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age appropriate, sufficiently complex literary text representing diverse cultures from an ever-broadening range of genres. For incremental growth in independent reading, a fifth grader continues to use reading strategies as well as to pinpoint and cite specific details from a literary text to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

A fifth grader determines how characters, setting, and plot contribute to a story's theme as well as how the author, poet, or playwright conveys the theme. Theme is defined as the author's message about a topic in the text. A theme constitutes a common thread through a narrative, poem or play that suggests a deeper meaning to the text beyond its surface details. By connecting repetitive patterns of character behavior, details of setting, or symbols etc. a fifth grader can identify this thread. By observing character actions, particularly when they are in conflict, a fifth grader takes note of how these actions drive the plot while supporting the theme of a literary text. In poetry, observation of important details, use of poetic language and rhythm can reflect a speaker's ideas about the poem's topic.

Like the fourth grader, a fifth grader recounts a literary text inclusive of its key events and details in the order in which they occurred. Narrating these important events in a student's own words allows a listener or reader to judge how well the student understands a text and simultaneously permits a student to cement his or her own comprehension. This combination of recounting the important events of a literary text in one's own words be they oral or written constitutes a summary of a literary text.

**Grade Six: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinion or judgments.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts representing diverse cultures from an ever-broadening range of genres. A student entering middle school examines a text to determine a central idea, which is the most important point that is implied throughout the text. Support for a central idea in a literary text is found through details of characterization, plot development, repeated words, ideas, and/or symbols. Establishing how these parts

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work together leads the student to determine the text's central idea. A sixth grader then determines the theme, or author's message about the central idea. A theme is a combination of a central idea and what is said about that idea. A theme is a recurring idea in a text, but it also moves outside the text and applies to people in general, not just the characters in the story.

A sixth grader has previously summarized a literary text in grades four and five by determining the most important events in the beginning, middle, and end of a story and narrating those events verbally or in written form in sequential order. Building on this practice, the sixth grade student now crafts a summary that focuses on these essential plot actions that is free from his or her own ideas or evaluations about the text.

**Grade Seven: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts representing diverse cultures from an even broadening range of genres. Continuing the practices established in grade six, the seventh grader is capable of identifying and understanding themes in literature. While reading a piece of literature, a seventh grader locates the central idea of the story. Then, he or she determines how and what the author relays about this central idea throughout the story and analyzes or examines how an idea may change or evolve as a narrative continues. He or she is able to analyze, or examine closely and evaluate a text by isolating, examining, and judging how these story elements or ideas work together, in order to comprehend the author's meaning or message.

A seventh grader has previously summarized a literary text in grades four through six by determining the most important events in the beginning, middle, and end of a story and narrating those events verbally or in written form in sequential order. Continuing with this practice, the seventh grade student now crafts a summary that focuses on these essential plot actions that is free from his or her own ideas or evaluations about the text.

**Grade Eight: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts representing diverse cultures from an even broadening range of genres. Continuing the practices established in previous grades, the eighth grader is capable of identifying and understanding themes in literature. While reading a piece of literature, an eighth grader locates the central idea of the story. Then, he or she determines how and what the author relays about this central idea throughout the story and analyzes or examines how an idea may change or evolve as a narrative continues. An eighth grader is able to analyze, or examine closely, and evaluate a text by isolating, examining, and judging how these story elements or ideas work together, in order to comprehend the author's meaning or message. To expand how theme is a unifying force in a literary text, an eighth grader will study the roles of characters and setting and the development of plot in a given text to determine the connections each of these elements has to theme. A student looks at specific elements of fiction such as dialogue between

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characters, characters' actions, direct and indirect characterization, time period and imagery used to describe the setting, and important plot points such as conflict, climax, and resolution to determine the development of theme. For example, a description of a setting may provide an ideal background for a particular character's actions or thoughts and at the same time provide a mirror to theme.

An eighth grader has previously summarized a literary text in grades four through six by determining the most important events in the beginning, middle, and end of a story and narrating those events verbally or in written form in sequential order. Continuing with this practice, the seventh grade student crafts a summary that focuses on these essential plot actions that is free from his or her own ideas or evaluations about the text. An eighth grader continues the same practice as a seventh grader but with more involved, complex literary text.

**Grades Nine and Ten: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age-appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts containing a central theme. These texts represent a diversity of cultures from an every broadening range of genres. From previous years' instruction and practice, a 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grader can identify this central theme and the features of the text i.e., plot, character, setting, conflict etc. that reveal, shape, and refine that theme. These students are also able to locate examples of stylistic devices that affect a reader's understanding of a central theme. For example, a 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grader who is proficient in the determination and analysis of theme could identify justice as a theme topic in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* and then trace that theme through the actions of the characters Atticus Finch and the sheriff of Macon, Georgia, the conflict between the Ewell family members and Tom Robinson, as well as the setting in a segregated Southern town. These students can also explain how the author's choice of a young female narrator and inclusion of significant symbolism enhances a reader's understanding of theme.

Ninth and tenth grade students continue and expand upon practices begun in elementary school to compose a summary of an ever increasingly complex literary text that is free from comments or evaluations.

**Grades Eleven and Twelve: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads age-appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts representing diverse cultures from an ever broadening range of genres. Eleventh and twelfth graders can identify a central theme and use the features of a text, plot, character, setting, conflict, etc. to understand how they reveal, shape, and affect a reader's knowledge of a central theme. Because of the increasingly complex texts read in the last two years of high school, these students, in addition, to determining a central theme determine multiple themes within a text. These additional themes may serve as subsets of the central theme or may serve as one of multiple

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significant themes throughout a text. However, once multiple themes have been identified, eleventh and twelfth grade students analyze these themes for their relationships to each other to determine how they work together to yield sophisticated literary texts with nuanced characters and plot constructions. The multiple themes also offer a window to author's purpose and while creating the complexity within the text also assist a reader in clarifying understanding at a literal level as well as interpretive and analytic levels.

Eleventh and twelfth grade students continue and expand upon practices begun in elementary school to compose a summary of an ever increasingly complex literary text that is free from comments or evaluations.