

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 Three

**RL3 Anchor Standard: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.**

**Pre-Kindergarten: With modeling and support, identify characters, setting, and major events in a story.**

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 texts by listening to and identifying characters, setting, and major events in the text.

It is essential that students learn at an early stage through teacher modeling that thinking about what one already knows about the subject matter of the text, previewing the text's title and illustrations or photographs, and making prediction about the text's content assist in understanding.

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Equally essential is that students develop age-appropriate attention while being read to. As the teacher stops at various intervals during reading and after reading is complete, student should be able to identify characters, settings, major events within a text. Young learners respond to these demands in a variety of ways—oral response, drawing, dramatizing, etc. Pre-Kindergarteners might identify characters through physically pointing out a character in a text, a setting by drawing a picture of a place or an object in the setting, or a major event by presenting a portrayal of the event.

**Kindergarten: With prompting and support, identify characters, setting, and major events in a story.**

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 texts by listening to and identifying characters, settings, and major events 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 identifies characters, settings, and major events through active learning such as teacher-directed and child-directed activities like dramatic play, puppets, developmentally appropriate writing/drawing etc. In its very basic form, this experience enables the child to go from a concrete to an abstract understanding of a literary text.

**Grade One: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story using key details.**

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 the 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 describing character, setting, and major events in a story.

The more independent first grader uses his/her background knowledge of story elements to locate important details about the character, setting, and important events. Students use these details and language choices to explain traits, feelings, and actions of character, the setting, time and place, and major events from the story. A first grader tells what a character looks like, how a character behaves, and what a character thinks about things or other characters, if a literary text yields those details. Additionally, a first grader expresses the appearance of a setting or a time of day, of year, or of time period. Finally, a first grader determines events in a story that are more important than others and describes these parts of a story.

**Grade Two: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard a reads a wide variety of literary texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to fables, folktales, realistic fiction, historical fiction, play, and poems. To meet the demands of this standard, students build upon the knowledge of how characters are described to a realization that within the course of a narrative, a character may change.

With an expanding knowledge of story elements, a second grader begins to realize that a catalyst for character change can often be the more important elements of plot development which may give rise to challenges faced by a character. These external influences within a narrative can make a character change from the beginning to the end of a story. For example, at the beginning of a story a character may appear angry about a move to a new neighborhood but as the plot progresses, that same character at the end of the story may no longer be angry but become acceptant of the change. A second grader can describe those changes in attitude experienced by the character and identify what happened in the plot that has caused those changes.

**Grade Three: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. To meet the demands of this standard, students draw upon their knowledge of a character's responses to major events and challenges to clarify how these responses can move the plot of a narrative. Understanding a character's traits, feelings, and motivations helps a reader further understand a character's actions and how those actions can move a plot in a narrative.

A third grader can identify character traits (stubborn, cheerful, enthusiastic) and is able to differentiate traits from feelings (pouty, happy, excited). A third grader can also explain how the character's personality (traits) and feelings may work individually or together to motivate or influence a character's actions. As well, a third grader is able to connect a character's actions to the order of events in a sequence. For example, a particular character feeling caused a particular response, which initiated a particular event in the narrative. Because of this ordered explanation, a third grader can offer a more in depth description of story elements and begins to understand the reciprocal relationship among them.

**Grade Four: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions)**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. To meet the demands of this standard, students continue the practices established in previous grades of describing a

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characters through their thoughts, words, actions and interactions and how those elements create feeling within characters, which, in turn, cause those characters to behave in a certain manner. A fourth grader can expand upon this basic knowledge of character and explain how this interaction of character elements causes characters to change and grow as plots develop. These characters are generally classified as major, those who play important roles and move the plot along, and minor, those who play less important roles but serve a purpose in a narrative and may play small, but pivotal roles in plot movement.

As was established in earlier grades, a fourth grader defines setting as where and when a narrative takes place; however, the fourth grader can delve into deeper detail regarding setting. A fourth grader can extract specific details from a literary text such as time of day, dates, seasons, geographical locations, eras, landscape details, and weather elements as he or she describes setting, which may allow insight into a character's mood or actions.

A fourth grader uses those character and setting elements to isolate major events in a plot and can explain the impact of these events on the development of a plot.

**Grade Five: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in a text (e.g., how characters interact.)**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. For incremental growth in independent reading, a fifth grader continues to locate and cite specific details about characters, settings, and events in a narrative to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

A fifth grader is able to expand upon in depth examinations of characters in the same narrative by determining shared traits, beliefs, and/or actions between or among two or more characters. Conversely, an examination of two or more characters within the same narrative can reveal traits, beliefs, and/or actions in opposition between or among these characters. This same comparison and contrast among characters can be realized in two different narratives. Examining one character through the lens of the examination of another character lends an even greater depth to the analysis of the entire narrative. A fifth grader begins to see that characters developed within the same narrative can give rise to plot movement and that like or similarly different characters in different narratives have developed along the same lines and often behave similarly in the different plots.

In addition, the same comparing and contrasting can occur between settings and events within the same narrative as well as in different narratives.

**Grade Six: Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.**

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To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. For incremental growth in independent reading, a sixth grader continues to locate and cite specific details about characters, settings, and events in a narrative to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

Having already learned how to identify and compare characters, settings, and events in a story or drama, a sixth grader expands upon the relationship among these literary elements and focuses upon them as a whole component: a plot. A plot is a series of connected episodes that includes exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The exposition consists of an introduction to the story or drama and may include main characters, setting and conflict. The rising action is the beginning series of events or episodes that unfold the conflict. The climax of the narrative occurs when the story action or episodes reach a critical point where characters may change or events merge in such a way that a dramatic change ensues. The resolution or denouement is the final part of the narrative where conflict is resolved and the author brings closure to a story or drama.

A sixth grader understands that characters are the catalyst that causes plots to develop and can describe how these characters change through their speech, actions, thoughts, motivations, and reactions to events within a plot. Upon resolution of the narrative, a sixth grader also can identify characters as dynamic, developed over the course of the story, or static, remained unchanged.

### **Grade Seven: Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. For incremental growth in independent reading, a seventh grader continues to locate, cite, and analyze specific details about characters, settings, and events in a narrative to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

Continuing the practices established in grade six, a seventh grader demonstrates an understanding of the elements of narratives such as setting, plot, characterization, conflict, and theme, which are the components through which a story or drama is told. Identification of each component and its relationship to all other components in a narrative assists a reader in comprehension of the entire text. Analyzing each element and determining how those elements work together allows a reader to delve into the complexity of a narrative. For example, a student might identify the role of setting in a narrative and observe that setting can relay information about characters. In turn, a character's reaction to a particular environment may offer clues to a character's feelings or a view into a character's actions. A careful seventh grade reader examines each literary element and then is able to discuss how the full complement of elements, like pieces of a puzzle, form a narrative.

**Grade Eight: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. For incremental growth in independent reading, an eighth grader continues to locate, cite, and analyze specific details about characters, settings, and events in a narrative to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

Having already learned how to examine the interactions among a story's literary elements, an eighth grader is capable of extending this analysis to include specific lines of dialogue between and among characters and distinguishing key events in a story from less important events. Given a specific literary text, an eighth grader may recognize that events that occur during the climax of a story may have more significance on characterization and resolution of the plot than minor events that occurred in the rising action. A close examination of these events allows a student to explain their purpose and how they move the story action, directly and indirectly describing a character's motivations and providing a catalyst for important movements within the plot. Similarly, an analysis of a character's speech can provide insights into that character's role in a narrative. Speech patterns, word choice, and content give clues to a character's background. Finally, dialogue may supply understanding about why a plot follows a certain path and may drive plot along that path.

**Grades Nine and Ten: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivation) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. For incremental growth in independent reading, a ninth or tenth grader continues to locate, cite, and analyze specific details about characters, settings, and events in a narrative to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

Ninth and tenth graders can provide a thorough analysis of complex characters, using appropriate vocabulary to describe these characters as static or dynamic, flat or round, and major or minor. These students can define a character as complex through identification and analysis of an internal conflict. An example would be the character Gene in [A Separate Peace](#). He is a complex character who, through his interactions with another character and the events in his own life, struggles to understand a human's capacity for good and evil.

The nature of a complex character is that he/she moves through a plot laced with complex thought. Because the development of this type of character is more intricate, the lines of the plot are more intricate and often more subtle. The complex character has more shading and nuances and because of this is capable of more complex thought which gives rise to development of theme. The perspective of an author often shows in

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these characters that become vehicles for universal ideas an author wishes to convey. In turn, as students perceive the theme or universal idea revealed through a character, they may also consider how authors craft text with interrelated literary elements support this theme.

**Grades Eleven and Twelve: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads grade level, age appropriate literary materials representing diverse cultures. For incremental growth in independent reading, an eleventh or twelfth grader continues to locate, cite, and analyze specific details about characters, settings, and events in a narrative to demonstrate understanding of this standard.

Eleventh and twelfth graders expand upon their abilities established in former grades to analyze elements of author’s craft. These students are more conversant with relationships that exist among plot elements. For example, they can articulate a complex relationship between setting and mood and extend that to explain how a character might reflect mood that is derived from setting. Or they can express how an author’s choice regarding the order of plot events regulates the development of a character and to postulate that if the order were changed exactly how the development of said character would be affected. Each plot element can be analyzed for its impact upon the whole narrative and can be questioned and speculated about within a text-based discussion.