

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 Four**

**RI4 Anchor Standard: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.**

**Pre-Kindergarten: With modeling and support, answer questions about unknown words in a text**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student has read to him/her a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts. In a teacher-directed venue, a student engages in active learning with these texts by listening to and answering questions about unknown words in a text.

It is essential that a pre-kindergartener develop age-appropriate attention while being read to. As the teacher stops at various intervals during and after reading is complete, students are able to discuss unknown vocabulary words and word meanings through oral response. Given access to an informational text's drawings and photographs, a

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student may use these graphic aids to assist in responding. A combination of aural and visual means is the venue through which a pre-kindergartener reaches a response.

### **Kindergarten: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student has read to him/her a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts. In a teacher-directed venue, a student engages in active learning with these texts by listening to. Identifying, discussing and defining unknown words in a text.

With encouragement and support from the teacher, students engage in previous-learned pre, during, and post reading strategies as the teacher reads. To meet the demands of this standard, with assistance, a kindergartener identifies unknown words and phrases questions about them. In return, a kindergartener answers questions posed by the teacher and other students about unknown words and phrases. This interchange in its very basic form is a precursor for the reciprocal nature of classroom discussion with older students.

### **Grade One: Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads or has read to him/her a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts. In a teacher-directed venue, whether a student is reading or being read to, the texts must be age appropriate and sufficiently complex to serve as a source for understanding the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

The more independent first grader uses reading strategies and background knowledge to locate and identify words and phrases that require further clarification. An age-appropriate close reading focused upon such language enables students to realize what words meanings are necessary to understanding an informational text.

### **Grade Two: Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

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Like the first grader, the second grader uses reading strategies and background knowledge to locate and identify words and phrases that require further clarification in the more complex texts demanded of a second grader. By reading short pieces of text independently, a second grader identifies words that he/she knows require meaning for an understanding of text. A student might use context or an age appropriate word reference to help with the meanings of words.

### **Grade Three: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Using the skills learned in previous years, a third grader refines determining the meaning of words necessary to an understanding of an informational text. Refinement occurs when the teacher identifies academic and domain specific words that are necessary for the understanding of a specific informational text but are also those words that become a part of acquired vocabulary. Academic vocabulary serves the third grader in more than one subject area while domain specific words serve the student in that particular subject area not only for the current text but for continued reading or understanding in that subject area. To determine the meanings of these words, a student uses context, knowledge of word parts, text features, and outside resources such as grade appropriate dictionaries and online databases.

### **Grade Four: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Using the skills learned in previous years, a fourth grader refines determining the meaning of words necessary to an understanding of an informational text. Refinement occurs when the teacher identifies academic and domain specific words that are necessary for the understanding of a specific fourth grade informational text but are also those words that become a part of acquired vocabulary. Academic vocabulary serves the fourth grader in more than one subject area while domain specific words serve the student in that particular subject area not only for the current text but for continued reading or understanding in that subject area. To determine the meanings of these words, a student uses context, knowledge of word parts, text features, and outside resources such as grade appropriate dictionaries and online databases.

**Grade Five: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.**  
**To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.**

Using the skills learned in previous years, a fifth grader refines determining the meaning of words necessary to an understanding of an informational text. Refinement occurs when the teacher identifies academic and domain specific words that are necessary for the understanding of a specific fifth informational text but are also those words that become a part of acquired vocabulary. Academic vocabulary serves the fifth grader in more than one subject area while domain specific words serve the student in that particular subject area not only for the current text but for continued reading or understanding in that subject area. To determine the meanings of these words, a student uses context, knowledge of word parts, text features, and outside resources such as grade appropriate dictionaries and online databases.

**Grade Six: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Building upon word knowledge acquired through past learning, sixth graders focus more on discovering the meanings of figurative words and phrases, connotative words, and technical words. Having already learned to examine figurative words, a sixth grader knows that these words have a specific impact on the meaning of a text. The more complex literary nonfiction text read by a sixth grader should yield more or different opportunities to interpret different types of figurative words and apply that interpretation to a deeper understanding of text.

Additionally, a sixth grader understands connotation, which is an idea or feeling associated with a word. This association triggers an emotional response in the reader, which affects how a reader interprets and understands a literary nonfiction text.

Both figurative and connotative words create images in the mind of a reader and can clarify and intensify descriptions. The shades of meaning that figurative and connotative words bring to a text make that text a more complex, richer reading experience.

Additionally, a sixth grader understands that informational text contains words and phrases that are technically specific to the context of the text. For example, in a science textbook students may encounter a word like calibrate. In science the word calibrate has a technical meaning whose understanding is essential to understanding a text. However the word calibrate may be used in a general academic mode. The sixth grader

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distinguishes the technical meaning from the general academic meaning through the context of the informational text.

**Grade Seven: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Building upon word knowledge acquired through past learning, seventh graders focus more on discovering the meanings of figurative words and phrases, connotative words, and technical words. Having already learned to examine figurative words, a seventh grader knows that these words have a specific impact on the meaning of a text. The more complex literary nonfiction text read by a seventh grader should yield more or different opportunities to interpret different types of figurative words and apply that interpretation to a deeper understanding of text.

Continuing the practices established in grade six, the seventh grader determines the connotative, understood meaning, of words or phrases in the text. Connotation incorporates any association related to the word but particularly defined by its use in a literary nonfiction text. Denotation is a literal meaning of a word but again, considering multiple meanings, defined by its use in a literary nonfiction text. A seventh grader acknowledges that writers choose words carefully and that word choice impacts the meaning and tone of a text.

Technical meanings, which might be general academic words in other texts, exist in specific literary nonfiction texts. For example, a seventh grader reading a biography about a famous geologist might encounter technical meanings of words that apply, in that text, to the study of geology.

The way these words are used and the specific words chosen affect the reader's understanding of a literary nonfiction text. And because these words are selected by the author of the text, the words are one component used to determine tone, which is the author's attitude toward his/her subject.

**Grade Eight: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.**

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An eighth grade student already has the experience of determining the meaning of words and phrases as well as analyzing the impact of word choice on mood and tone. In addition to those skills, an eighth grader identifies comparisons or references made within a text to other notable informational texts and explains how these analogies or allusions affect the meaning and tone of a literary nonfiction text. For example, while reading a biography of a famous individual, a student might identify a reference to another notable biography. An eighth grader explains this connection and the relevance of the reference and its impact on the larger meaning of the first biography.

**Grades Nine and Ten: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Ninth and tenth graders continue the practice of understanding denotation of words, explaining the use of figurative, connotative, and technical words and phrases and their effect on general understanding, and realizing the impact of any word choices on an understanding of text and tone with the more complex text read during these two years of instruction.

These students understand and explain how authors manipulate language for different purposes and different audiences. As stated in the standard, the language of a court opinion is formal and its purpose is to show without question how laws affect a particular court case. But a newspaper article about the same subject has the purpose of letting the masses know what has occurred. The language is less formal and designed for a broader audience.

**Grades Eleven and Twelve: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).**

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not

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limited to explanatory and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Eleventh and twelfth graders continue the practice of understanding denotation of words, explaining the use of figurative, connotative, and technical meanings and their effect on text, and realizing the impact of any word choices on an understanding of text and tone with the more complex text read during these two years of instruction. By these final years of high school, these students have been working with these elements for a number of years. Finally, eleventh and twelfth graders read literary nonfiction texts looking for what is said as well as the way it is said. However, these more sophisticated students read to understand complex literary nonfiction text but also identify what creates distinctive language.

As stated in the standard, Madison's use of the word faction throughout Federalist No. 10 becomes the source center of the entire opinion. As the argument builds, the key term faction evolves with each stage of the argument.