

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 Four

RL4 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 stories and 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, 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 discussing unknown words and word meanings in the 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 a literary text's drawings and photographs, a student

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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: 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 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 discussing/defining unknown words and word meanings 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: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

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 but of sufficient complexity to serve as a source of sensory detail.

The more independent first grader uses reading strategies and background knowledge to locate and identify words and phrases that lend themselves to an emotional connection with a text. An age-appropriate close reading focused upon such language enables students to relate to characters' emotions. Additionally, reviewing the five senses with first graders and offering text examples of words that appeal to the senses allows students to understand more clearly the kind of language that creates that appeal.

Grade Two: Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning to a story, poem, or song.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a second grader explains how a rhythmic structure or regular pattern of sound, the repetition of an initial consonant at the start of a word, rhyming or words with the same sound, and repetition of words, phrases, or lines contribute to the meaning of a literary text. The more independent second grader becomes more aware that selection of words and sounds adds to the quality and

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enjoyment of a story, poem, or song. Reading or listening to a given text with these uses of language can evoke responses in the reader from laughter to sadness. Sounds that are harsh or soft can elicit an emotional response that aids comprehension. Repetition of words, phrases, or lines serves as a cue to the importance of the ideas, emotions, etc. and become a means of comprehending a text. Second graders begin to understand that the choice of these words and phrases has a purpose.

Grade Three: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non literal language.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, students will use their previously established knowledge of how specific words and phrases appeal to the reader's feelings and senses.

To begin, a third grader knows that literal language is simply what it states. For example, *the car is blue* is literal language, which describes the color of a vehicle. Its opposite is non literal language, which suggests rather than directly states its intent. An example is *she is feeling blue*, which suggests that an individual is experiencing sadness. As a third grader reads a literary text, he/she uses the understanding of literal and non literal language and is able to correctly comprehend a text.

The basic understanding of words within a literary text can be determined through context, use of grade-appropriate affixes and root words, and use of reference texts.

Grade Four: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

To begin, a fourth grader determines the meaning of words through context, use of grade-appropriate affixes and root words, and use of reference texts. A fourth grader acknowledges the difference between literal and non literal language. These same practices and skills established in third grade are used with more complex fourth grade literary texts. In addition, a fourth grader applies basic literary allusion to further comprehension of a literary text. In particular references to Greek and Roman mythology supply another way to deepen comprehension by comparing words and phrases related to mythology to a character in another literary text. For example, a character might be said to have Herculean strength or an Achilles heel. A fourth grader reading such a text understands that Herculean strength means great strength and that an Achilles heel means a weak or vulnerable area.

Grade Five: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

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. For incremental growth in independent reading, a fifth grader uses

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reading strategies, as well as pinpoints and cites specific details from a literary text to demonstrate an understanding of the standard.

Students rely on their knowledge of word parts, word relationships, and specific word choices to determine the meaning of words and phrases. Word parts refer to the smallest part of a word that has meaning. Word relationships refer to synonyms, words that have the same meanings; antonyms, words that have opposite meanings, and homonyms, words that have the same sound. Word choice refers to the selection of a word that most accurately displays a desired meaning e.g., run or sprint.

A fifth grader uses figurative language as a means of deepening understanding of literary texts. Figurative language departs from literal meaning and delves into non literal meaning which is abstract and suggests rather than states intent. Specifically, simile and metaphor, which are means of comparing unlike things, allow students to evaluate the qualities of the object under comparison to develop an understanding of the reasoning behind the comparison. This type of thinking is interpretive and of a higher cognitive demand, and literary text which employs figurative language is likely to be more complex. A fifth grader, however, is not confined to simile and metaphor. Any figurative language found in age-appropriate text is suitable for study.

Grade Six: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative 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 age-appropriate, sufficiently complex literary texts representing diverse cultures from an ever-broadening range of genres.

Having already learned to examine figurative language including similes and metaphors, a sixth grader knows that words have a specific impact on the meaning of a text. The more complex literary text read by a sixth grader should yield more or different opportunities to interpret different types of figurative language 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 text.

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

A sixth grader uses background knowledge and context clues as a method of determining the meaning of words used in a text. Additionally, a sixth grader uses figurative language and connotation to expand an understanding of text. These denotative and connotative words coupled with figurative language are a means of determining the tone of a literary text. Tone, which is the author's attitude toward a

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subject or character, is established through a purposeful choice of words. Understanding the use of words in a literary passage is a pathway to a deeper understanding of the entire text.

Grade Seven: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

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.

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 text. Denotation is a literal meaning of a word but again, considering multiple meanings, defined by its use in a literary text. A seventh grader acknowledges that writers choose words carefully and that word choice impacts the meaning and tone of a text.

Because poetry is meant to be read aloud and heard by an audience, the sound of words is critical to understanding. Listening to the rhyming of words, their organization, the repetition of sounds, the imitation of natural sounds and the relationship among each of these entities within a poem or literary piece leads to an understanding of their contribution to the meaning of a those works. By analyzing each of these elements and then discovering the common thread among them, a seventh grader discovers the relationship between sound and sense and uncovers the complexity of a literary text.

Grade 8: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

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.

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 literary or informational texts and explains how these analogies or allusions affect the meaning and tone of a literary text. For example, a student might identify a reference to a Shakespeare play and then explain the connection or relevance to the literary text he/she is reading. Making these connections

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through a literary allusion or through an analogous relationship imparts a richer understanding of a complex text.

Grades Nine and Ten: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone)

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.

Ninth and tenth graders continue the practice of understanding denotation of words, explaining the use of figurative language and connotation and its 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.

In these more sophisticated literary texts, ninth and tenth graders are attuned to dialect, slang, dated language, etc. and can explain how these uses of language point to a particular time period or region. This understanding leads to a richer reading of a complex literary text. Acknowledging the degree of the formality of language assists a reader with understanding. Language that is precise, rejects contractions, is fluid and focused is formal while language that is casual, less focused, and might use current cant is informal and more indicative of common speech. Using the degree of formality of language is a gauge a reader employs to increase understanding of a literary text.

Grades Eleven and Twelve: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

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 continue the practice of understanding denotation of words, explaining the use of figurative language and connotation and its 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 texts looking for what is said as well as the way it is said. At times, the way an author uses language is so distinctive that the author is easily identified. However, these more sophisticated students read to understand complex literary text but also identify what creates distinctive language, which may include colloquialisms, idioms, figurative language, imagery, mood, or tone, etc.

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