



# **Quick and Easy Access to Measures of Text Complexity Using the Lexile Framework for Reading**

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## QUICK AND EASY ACCESS TO MEASURES OF TEXT COMPLEXITY USING THE LEXILE® FRAMEWORK FOR READING

As schools across the country continue their implementation of standards for college and career readiness, educators find themselves re-examining and reconsidering the complexity of the texts they ask students to read. And rightly so. Research<sup>1</sup> “makes clear that the complexity level of the texts students read are significantly below what is required to achieve college and career readiness” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012).

Likewise, parents understand the need to provide their students with the variety, quality, and volume of texts that will help them progress toward their personal college and career goals. Parents understand the importance of reading as a gateway skill that helps students build knowledge and understanding of the world around them that will be drawn upon throughout their lifetimes. Students must be able to comprehend and embrace a range of texts that cross genres, cultures, and eras and that also models the kind of thinking and writing they should aspire to in their own work as well.

To this end, new educational standards for college and career readiness “hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012).

One of the questions most frequently asked is how educators and parents can find valid and reliable measures of text complexity to address this need. Luckily, there are a number of quick and easy methods an individual can use to find a Lexile® measure of a text. With this information, educators and parents can better match their students to texts with the appropriate level of complexity.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chall, Conard, Harris (1977); Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolfe (1996); Williamson (2006); ACT, Inc. (2006).

The Lexile Framework for Reading is an approach to reading and text measurement. There are two Lexile measures: the Lexile text measure and the Lexile reader measure. A text receives a Lexile measure by running it through the Lexile analyzer which utilizes a linguistic algorithm that examines the semantic and syntactic features of the text. The lower the Lexile text measure the easier it is to read. For example, *Frog and Toad Together* (Lobel) is a 330L text, *Charlotte's Web* (White) is a 680L text, *The Pearl* (Steinbeck) is a 1010L text, and *The House of the Spirits* (Allende) is a 1280L text. Lexile text measures are rounded to the nearest 10L. A student gets his or her Lexile reader measure from a reading test or program. For example, if a student receives an 880L on her end-of-grade reading test, her reader measure is 880L. Higher Lexile measures represent a higher level of reading ability. A Lexile reader measure can range from below 200L for early readers to above 1600L for advanced readers. More information about the Lexile Framework for Reading can be found by visiting the following URL: <http://www.lexile.com/about-lexile/lexile-overview/>

The Lexile Framework, which comprises the Lexile measures and Lexile scale, is not an instructional program any more than a thermometer is a medical treatment. But just as a thermometer is useful in informing medical care, the Lexile Framework is useful in informing a student's reading development.

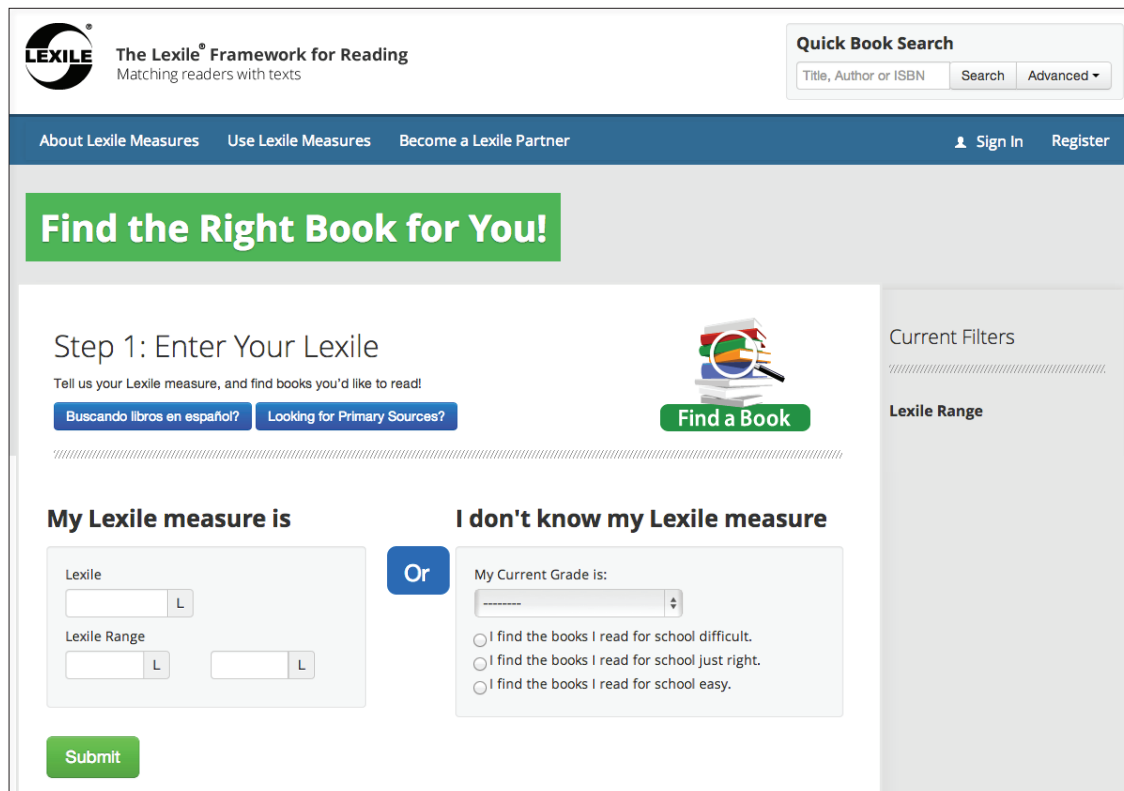
Among the convenient methods of finding a Lexile measure of a text and evaluating its level of complexity are the following:

- The "Find a Book" feature at Lexile.com;
- Websites of prominent booksellers Barnes & Noble.com and Amazon.com;
- Online educational and research databases; and
- The Lexile® Analyzer at Lexile.com

## “FIND A BOOK” AT LEXILE.COM

Visitors to the Lexile.com website have access to the “Find a Book” feature which will allow them to quickly and easily identify a Lexile measure of a book. *Figure 1* shows the user interface for “Find a Book.”

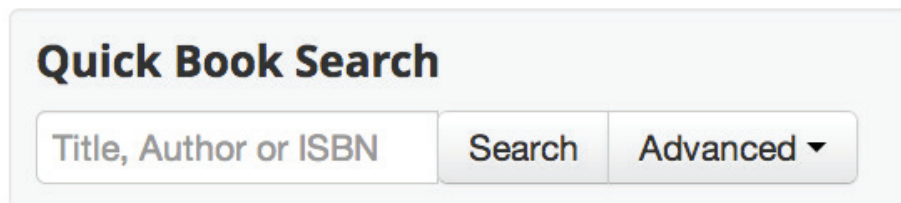
**Figure 1: The “Find a Book” user interface**



The screenshot shows the Lexile.com website's "Find a Book" interface. At the top left is the Lexile logo and the text "The Lexile® Framework for Reading Matching readers with texts". At the top right is a "Quick Book Search" box with a text input field labeled "Title, Author or ISBN", a "Search" button, and an "Advanced" dropdown menu. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: "About Lexile Measures", "Use Lexile Measures", "Become a Lexile Partner", "Sign In", and "Register". The main content area has a green banner that says "Find the Right Book for You!". Below this is a section titled "Step 1: Enter Your Lexile" with the instruction "Tell us your Lexile measure, and find books you'd like to read!". There are two buttons: "Buscando libros en español?" and "Looking for Primary Sources?". To the right is a "Find a Book" button with a magnifying glass icon. Below the instruction are two options: "My Lexile measure is" and "I don't know my Lexile measure". The "My Lexile measure is" option has input fields for "Lexile" (with an "L" suffix) and "Lexile Range" (with "L" suffixes). The "I don't know my Lexile measure" option has a "My Current Grade is:" dropdown and three radio button options: "I find the books I read for school difficult.", "I find the books I read for school just right.", and "I find the books I read for school easy.". A "Submit" button is at the bottom left. On the right side, there is a "Current Filters" section with a "Lexile Range" filter.

For visitors who know the title, author, or ISBN of the text they are searching for, they can use the quick book search feature located in the upper right-hand corner of the screen (*Figure 2*). This quick search allows the user to locate the Lexile measure of a text.

**Figure 2: Lexile.com’s quick book search feature**



This is a close-up of the "Quick Book Search" feature. It consists of a light gray rounded rectangle containing the title "Quick Book Search" in bold. Below the title is a search bar with the placeholder text "Title, Author or ISBN". To the right of the search bar is a "Search" button, and to the right of that is an "Advanced" dropdown menu with a downward arrow.

For example, if a visitor wanted to find a Lexile measure for Joseph Bruchac's young adult biography of Jim Thorpe, she could simply type the title, author, or ISBN into the quick book search feature. From the results list, she could then click on the link to the book's page and quickly find the Lexile measure (circled in red in *Figure 3*).


**Figure 3: Book Detail Page for Jim Thorpe, Original All-American with the Lexile measure circled in red**

The screenshot shows the Lexile Framework for Reading website. At the top, there is a logo for LEXILE and the text "The Lexile® Framework for Reading Matching readers with texts". To the right is a "Quick Book Search" box with a search bar and buttons for "Search" and "Advanced". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: "About Lexile Measures", "Use Lexile Measures", "Become a Lexile Partner", "Sign In", and "Register". The main content area features a book cover for "JIM THORPE ORIGINAL ALL-AMERICAN" by JOSEPH BRUCHAC. To the right of the cover is a "Summary" section with a paragraph of text. Further right is a "Lexile Measure" section showing a green circle with the number "950L" inside, which is circled in red. Below the Lexile measure are buttons for "Find It", "Like It", and social media links for Facebook and Twitter.

The book detail page also includes quick links to be able to purchase the book from an online bookseller, if desired, or locate the nearest library that has the book available for check out.

Additionally, visitors who may not know the precise text they are looking for can also utilize the "Find a Book" feature to search for titles within a particular Lexile range. By entering a Lexile reader measure or a Lexile range, visitors can search for new books in one or more of 350+ categories and sub-categories (as shown in *Figure 4* on the following page).

**Figure 4: Interest categories on “Find a Book”**



**The Lexile® Framework for Reading**  
Matching readers with texts

**Quick Book Search**


Title, Author or ISBN

[About Lexile Measures](#)
[Use Lexile Measures](#)
[Become a Lexile Partner](#)
[Sign In](#)
[Register](#)

## Find the Right Book for You!

### Step 2: Categories

Select your interests, and find books you'd like to read!



Please select one or more interests below. You will be able to refine your selection(s) later on.

Adventure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Animals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	Biography	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business & Law	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairy Tales, Myths, & Folktales	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family, Childhood, & Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fantasy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fiction & Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food & Home	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graphic Novels & Comics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
History & Social Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Humor & Games	<input type="checkbox"/>
Military	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music, TV, Movies, & more	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mystery	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nature	<input type="checkbox"/>
Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reference & Languages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion & Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Romance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science & Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel & Places	<input type="checkbox"/>	True Crime	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Current Filters**

Lexile Range  
\_\_\_ L. to \_\_\_ L.

**Categories**

These results, too, report a Lexile measure for each title. Searches can even be saved and returned to at a later date for easy access.

Occasionally, there are titles that are not included in the “Find a Book” feature or shorter works that are not book length. For texts such as these, please consult the Lexile Analyzer section below.

## WEBSITES OF PROMINENT ONLINE BOOKSELLERS

Major online booksellers like Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com provide Lexile measures for over 150,000 of their books. Barnes & Noble offers a Lexile wizard that allows users to build a custom book list based on their Lexile measure and interests. For more information on Lexile measures and Barnes & Noble, visit [www.lexile.com/using-lexile/barnes-noble/](http://www.lexile.com/using-lexile/barnes-noble/).

The Barnes & Noble website often lists a Lexile measure for titles in the “Product Details” section of their webpages. *Figure 5* shows an example of this idea with the Lexile measure circled in red.

**Figure 5: An example of a Barnes & Noble webpage with the Lexile measure circled in red**

<b>Product Details</b>		
ISBN-13: 9781571103949		
Publisher: Stenhouse Publishers		
Publication date: 1/1/2005		
Edition description: New Edition		
Edition number: 1		
Pages: 176		
Sales rank: 142,917		
Lexile: 1350L (what's this?)		
Product dimensions: 7.30 (w) x 9.10 (h) x 0.60 (d)		
<b>Related Subjects</b>		
Personal Growth   Educational Levels & Settings   English Language Reference		
Educational Theory, Research & History		
<b>Table of Contents</b>		
Ch. 1	The benefits of Socratic circles	5
Ch. 2	The nuts and bolts of Socratic circles	25
Ch. 3	Preparing for classroom dialogue	37
Ch. 4	Facilitating the inner circle	57
Ch. 5	Facilitating the outer circle	75
Ch. 6	Socratic circles in action	93

## ONLINE EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH DATABASES

Finding Lexile measures for short, article length pieces is also fast and easy thanks to the many educational and research databases such as EBSCO®, Gale®, World Book®, and ProQuest®. Many states offer these databases free of charge to constituents living in their state. For a complete list of available databases listed by state, please visit [here](#).

The vast majority of the online databases are quite user friendly and operate in a similar fashion. As an example, *Figure 6* shows a screen shot of the user interface for Student Research Center powered by EBSCO available from the state library of Kansas. Much like the “Find a Book” feature at Lexile.com, many of these online databases allow users to limit their results to an identified Lexile range.

**Figure 6: The user interface for the Student Research Center powered by EBSCO with ability to limit search results to certain Lexile ranges circled in red**

The screenshot displays the Student Research Center interface, powered by EBSCOhost, for the State Library of Kansas. The top navigation bar includes links for Sign In, Folder, Preferences, Help, and Exit. Below this, there are tabs for New Search, Dictionary, Encyclopedia, and Teacher Resources. The main search area features a Basic Search section with a search bar and buttons for SEARCH and CLEAR. To the left, a sidebar lists various search topics such as Arts & Media, English & Language Arts, Business, Careers, Current Issues, Health, History, Math, Science, Social Studies, Sports, and Technology. The central content area is titled 'Search within:' and includes a section for Biographies with a description and a photo of a person. Below this, there are 'Top Searches' listed as links to various names. At the bottom, a 'Limit your results:' section allows users to refine their search. This section includes checkboxes for 'Full Text' and 'Published Date from' with dropdown menus for Month and Year. A red circle highlights the 'Lexile Reading Level' dropdown menu, which shows options: 'All', '200 - 950 (Grade 1 to Grade 5)', '850 - 1100 (Grade 6 to Grade 8)', and '1050-1300+ (Grade 9 to Grade 12)'. A 'Reset' button is located at the bottom right of the filter section.

And once users have identified an article, many of these online databases also report a specific Lexile measure for that particular text. For example, *Figure 7* shows the bibliographic information for a text available online. Here, too, the Lexile measure is circled in red.

**Figure 7: Bibliographic information for an article from an online database with the Lexile measure circled in red**

The screenshot shows the Student Research Center interface, powered by EBSCOhost, with the STATE LIBRARY OF KANSAS logo. The navigation bar includes links for Sign In, Folder, Preferences, Help, Exit, and Teacher Resources. The main content area displays bibliographic information for an article titled "Lady Gaga." by Michael Levy, sourced from Britannica Biographies, 3/1/2012, p1. The document type is Biography, and the Lexile measure is 1340, which is circled in red. Other details include a full text word count of 534, an accession number of 49149475, a persistent link to the record, and the database name, History Reference Center. A language selection dropdown and a Translate button are also visible.

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Lady Gaga.</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	<a href="#">Michael Levy</a>
<b>Source:</b>	<a href="#">Britannica Biographies, 3/1/2012, p1</a>
<b>Document Type:</b>	Biography
<b>Lexile:</b>	<b>1340</b>
<b>Full Text Word Count:</b>	534
<b>Accession Number:</b>	49149475
<b>Persistent link to this record (Permalink):</b>	<a href="http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&amp;db=khh&amp;AN=49149475&amp;site=src-live">http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&amp;db=khh&amp;AN=49149475&amp;site=src-live</a>
<b>Database:</b>	History Reference Center

## THE LEXILE® ANALYZER

When educators or parents have an electronic copy of a text for which they cannot locate a Lexile measure, the Lexile Analyzer can provide an estimate measure. Access to the Lexile Analyzer is free for registered users. Initially, a person will have a 1000-word limit; however, she can also request access to the Professional Lexile Analyzer to measure longer pieces of text.

Before being analyzed, a text file requires preparation. There will likely be elements within a book or passage that should be removed, such as chapter headings and footnotes. Complete instructions for preparing the text file and accessing the Lexile Analyzer can be found at the following URL: [www.lexile.com/analyzer/](http://www.lexile.com/analyzer/).

## THE LEXILE® FRAMEWORK FOR READING

The Lexile Framework for Reading, developed by educational research organization MetaMetrics®, is an indispensable part of any child's literacy development. Lexile measures take the guesswork out of connecting a child with appropriately challenging reading materials. More information regarding the Lexile Framework for Reading, including a six-minute animated overview video, is also available at the following URL: <http://www.lexile.com/about-lexile/lexile-video/>.

Regardless of the methods used to access a Lexile measure, educators and parents alike can make use of the Lexile Framework to ensure students are receiving regular practice with both the kinds and volume of complex text they need to grow as readers as they progress toward college and career readiness.

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## **ABOUT METAMETRICS®**

MetaMetrics, founded in 1984, is an educational measurement and technology organization whose mission is to connect assessment with instruction. The company's distinctive frameworks for English and mathematics bring meaning to measurement and are used by millions to differentiate instruction, individualize practice and improve learning across all levels of education.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**MATT COPELAND** is the Lexile Curriculum Specialist at MetaMetrics. A sixth-generation classroom teacher, Copeland most recently served as a Language Arts and Literacy Consultant for the Kansas State Department of Education where most of his work centered on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Copeland has presented numerous workshops around the country on the topic of text complexity and the Common Core State Standards. Recognized as a 2006 Distinguished Kansan of the Year in Education, 2005 Milken National Educator and 2003 Kansas Master Teacher, Copeland is a sought-after presenter at local, regional and national conferences. He is the author of *Socratic Circles: Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in Middle and High School*. Copeland also served as president and executive board member of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English and co-edited the journal *Kansas English*. He taught high school English for nine years and is currently a part-time adjunct professor for the University of Phoenix. He holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Kansas.



**DAVID LIBEN** is Senior Content Specialist of the Literacy and English Language Arts Team at Student Achievement Partners (SAP). David has over 40 years of experience in education. He has taught elementary, middle school and high school students in public and private schools as well as community college and teacher preparation courses in New York City and Vermont. David and his wife, Meredith, founded two innovative model schools in New York City. In 1985, they joined other teachers to found New York Prep, a junior high school in East Harlem. In 1991, David and Meredith founded the Family Academy. David served as the school's Principal and lead curriculum designer for the first twelve years of the school. Since 2003, David has been consulting with many schools and districts, working with educators on how to teach students to learn independently from complex text. David helped work with the writing of the CCSS as well as helping to synthesize the research for Appendix A. He is currently the Senior Content Specialist at Student Achievement Partners.





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