Understanding Reading Comprehension in Secondary Schools through the Lens of the Four Resources Model

TERRY UNDERWOOD
Sacramento State University

MONICA S. YOO AND P. DAVID PEARSON
University of California, Berkeley

What it means to teach reading comprehension has changed in profound ways. As we document in this chapter, state standards embrace a more complex notion of comprehension than the field has seen in the past. Even the standards-driven anthologies that teachers use as curricular resources similarly derive from a more complex perspective on comprehension. The only element that has *not* changed in order to integrate more complexity into the comprehension model is testing: the standards-based and standardized tests employed to measure comprehension belie a different view of reading than underlies either the standards or literature anthologies.

With that background, we attempt to provide insights for teachers trying to come to terms with state standards, curricular materials, and standardized tests that are now largely nonnegotiable aspects of their daily work. We begin by offering what we think is a full-bodied model of reading, the Four Resources Model (Freebody, 1992; Freebody & Luke, 1990), grounded in the best current scholarship, to give teachers a conceptual framework for thinking through reading comprehension as a construct. We then examine, in turn, state standards, standardized tests, and widely

used anthologies through the lens of this comprehension model. We conclude by offering principles to guide teacher decision making in this area. Our hope is that the chapter supports teachers in their work of implementing standards, negotiating anthologies, and raising standardized test scores through an integrated, balanced design.

The Four Resources Model of Reading

In 1990, Freebody and Luke named their emerging model of literacy instruction, which they have since fine-tuned, “the four resources model of reading” (Freebody, 1992; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1997). The model suggests that, depending on a wide range of contextual variables (e.g., pedagogical context, purpose, perceptions of consequences), readers pass through four necessary roles:

- Code breaker (cracking the code or cipher that maps spellings to sounds and vice versa)
- Meaning-maker (focusing on the message of the text, including the knowledge required to understand it)
- Text user (focusing on the pragmatics of use—what function a text serves in a social context)
- Text critic (a critical competence that entails unpacking social, economic, and political *assumptions* behind and *consequences* of using a text)

In an important online paper, Luke and Freebody (1999) unpack each of these resources (or roles as they sometimes label them) as “descriptions of the normative goals of classroom literacy programs” (n.p.). These descriptions have been widely circulated throughout the world and instantiated as the official curriculum in at least one Australian state for some time:

- *Break the code* of written texts by recognizing and using fundamental features and architecture, including alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, and structural conventions and patterns;

- *Participate in understanding and composing* meaningful written, visual, and spoken texts, taking into account each text's interior meaning systems in relation to the reader's available knowledge and experience of other cultural discourses, texts, and meaning systems;
- *Use texts functionally* by traversing and negotiating the labor and social relations around them—that is, by knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform inside and outside school and understanding that these functions shape the texts' structure, tone, degree of formality, and sequence of components;
- *Critically analyze and transform texts* by acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically neutral—that texts represent particular points of views, while silencing others, and influence people's ideas—and that text designs and discourses can be critiqued and redesigned in novel and hybrid ways (1999, n. p.; emphases added).

The competent reader is one who recognizes that, on different occasions, different resources occupy center stage and others play supporting roles from the wings. So, breaking the code is likely to be a part of any encounter with text, but it plays the starring role only when the cipher is obscure (really unfamiliar words and patterns) or knowledge is weak.

Historically, these four resources correspond to the successive rise and fall of different theoretical views of the reading process over the past fifty years. Prior to the mid-1970s, the field was dominated by "perceptual" views of reading that emphasized what some (e.g., Gough & Hillinger, 1980; Juel, 1988) have dubbed the simple view—that reading comprehension is the product of decoding and listening comprehension. In the simple view, reading is essentially a process of decoding print to speech and listening to the product to achieve understanding. This is quintessential reader as code breaker.

The 1970s brought to center stage the psycholinguistic and cognitive perspectives (see Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Pearson & Stephens, 1993) and, with them, the reader as meaning-maker. What mattered most was the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and comprehension. We use our knowledge in active

ways to control the reading process, always seeking congruence between what we know and what passes before our "eyes" in reading. Knowledge is the cause and the consequence of comprehension.

The sociolinguistic perspectives of the 1980s (see Heath, 1983; Wells, 1986) championed functional views of reading, and we wanted to know how the social and cultural contexts in which the reading was done shaped our sense of what was "appropriate." Thus, retelling a story to a friend who asked what the book was about requires a different "performance" than giving a formal "plot-theme-characters" retelling in a ninth-grade literature class. In the text-user role, the reader literally has to learn to "read context" as well as text.

Although critical perspectives that challenge the structuralist assumptions in "modern" views of epistemology and ontology have been available for centuries, it was not until the 1990s that postmodern perspectives (Foucault, 1980; Giroux, 1991) assumed a dominant role in the discourse of reading education; by that time, the term *reading* had been nearly universally replaced by the broader and more contextualized term *literacy* (see Gee, 1987). A key understanding in the critical resource is that texts are inherently "interested," written by individuals (or groups) with intentions, conscious or unconscious, to convey through text. Furthermore, texts are read by "interested" individuals, who bring histories to the reading act at many levels—idiosyncratic, social, and cultural. Hence, all acts of literacy—in addition to being verbal acts of communication—are social, political, or economic. To understand an act of literacy fully requires the asking and answering of many questions of power and control: In whose interests is this text written? Who are the champions? Who are the goats? Who is invisible?

These four resources become our rubric, our guide for evaluating the curriculum enacted in schools every day—through standards, tests, and literature anthologies. We ask of each of these elements whether it represents all of the resources in some plausibly balanced approach—and, if it doesn't, where it falls short.

Reading Comprehension Standards in California and Massachusetts

The federal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (No Child Left Behind, 2001 [NCLB]) has resulted in a proliferation of academic standards in virtually every state, including standards related to reading comprehension. But evidence of considerable variability in these standards has been reported in the literature (Cross, Rebarber, & Torres, 2004; Linn, 2000). Although an analysis of similarities and differences in reading comprehension standards with the Four Resources Model as an analytical tool is beyond the scope of this chapter, such an analysis could be done within each state to validate individual standards vis-à-vis a widely known scholarly model of reading. Such an analysis would undoubtedly reveal the existence of academic standards that narrow rather than expand opportunities for children to grow along each dimension of the Four Resources Model, but we argue in this section that reading comprehension standards in California and Massachusetts, which we have selected as exemplars, open up instructional possibilities for reading comprehension along the dimensions of the model to a greater degree than they constrain them.

When we look at the tests employed to measure reading comprehension in these states, however, it is clear that the instructional possibilities suggested by the standards are diminished to the degree that teachers teach to the tests rather than to the standards. In essence, when teachers gear instruction to features of the reading comprehension tests that states use as accountability measures, the breadth and complexity of state standards disappear, and comprehension instruction becomes a matter of teaching students to break the code and make meaning in some shallow sense, but not to develop their capacities as text users and text critics. More optimistically, we argue in a later section that secondary English textbooks may not stretch the boundaries of the text-user and text-critic aspects of the model, but they often imply a curriculum that could offer authentic opportunities to students to develop along these dimensions.

California Standards

California's English Language Arts Content Standards (California Department of Education, 2005a) for the high school level depict reading as behavior that cuts across each dimension of the Four Resources Model. In California, students are expected to have become accomplished meaning-makers by ninth grade, where the standards move beyond behaviors such as monitoring comprehension of single texts or summarizing information toward behaviors such as ". . . generat[ing] relevant questions on issues that can be researched" and ". . . synthesiz[ing] the content from several sources or works by a single author dealing with a single issue" (Grades 9 and 10 Standards 2.3, 2.4). Clearly, the California reader uses texts to move forward an intellectual agenda with the intention of creating original ideas and understandings (i.e., synthesis).

Unlike standards in other states—such as Texas, for example, where teachers are directed to give students opportunities to use texts in social settings (e.g., participate in discussions, share journal entries)—the California standards are not explicit about this expectation. But, in the first years of high school, students are expected to use a *lot* of texts individually: by ninth and tenth grades, they should ". . . make substantial progress toward [the] goal [of] read[ing] two million words annually on their own, including a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, and online information" (Grades 9 and 10 Standard 2.0). Moreover, students should become text users, in that they should learn to "compare and contrast the ways in which media genres (e.g., televised news, news magazines, documentaries, online information) cover the same event" (Grades 9 and 10 Standard 1.2). Presumably, these events are part of students' life experiences; by implication, students ought to become text critics in the face of questions such as *Who* benefits from the way a particular media text is made?

An entire section of the California standards is devoted to "expository critique"—becoming text critics—wherein students in the first two years of high school are expected to "critique the logic of functional documents" and "evaluate the credibility of

an author's argument or defense of a claim" (Grades 9 and 10 Standards 2.7, 2.8). By graduation, students should be able to "critique the power, validity, and truthfulness of arguments set forth in public documents; their appeal to both friendly and hostile audiences; and the extent to which the arguments anticipate and address reader concerns and counterclaims (e.g., appeal to reason, to authority, to pathos and emotion)" (Grades 11 and 12 Standard 2.6). This standard comes close to the core of the text-critic dimension of the Four Resources Model, wherein readers ask not only "What does the text mean?" but also "Whose interests does it serve?"

Massachusetts Standards

Massachusetts standards for reading comprehension (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2001) are organized in a section of a curriculum framework titled "reading and literature" and are spelled out as "general standards," with subsections delineating expectations for grade-level clusters. General Standard 8, titled "understanding a text," is divided into two categories: "imaginative/literary texts" and "informational/expository texts." This standard is clear about the expectation that students are to develop skill as meaning-makers: "Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation." At the high school level, however, being a meaning-maker is linked to being a text user and a text critic, according to standards in the subsection for grades 9 and 10: "For example, students read two political columnists in *The Boston Globe* . . . and identify the authors' main argument. Then they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments and cite the authors' best evidence as set forth in the columns" (Standard 8.31).

General Standard 9 requires students to act as meaning-makers with regard to individual texts but extends the cognitive work of the reader beyond negotiating an understanding of texts to making connections with the context in which texts were produced: "Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its contemporary context or historical background." The example given for grades 11 and 12

makes clear that the intent is to expect students to become text users: " . . . [S]tudents read *The Scarlet Letter* . . . [and] poems by Anne Bradstreet, transcripts of the Salem witch trials. . . . Then students relate what they have learned to events, characters, and themes in *The Scarlet Letter*" (Standard 9.6). This sort of reading work seems ideally suited to help Massachusetts students develop as text users in settings where a myriad of other texts affords them grounds for analysis.

The Massachusetts standards are so rich that we could take up an entire chapter detailing them, but, for our purposes, two more examples serve to illustrate how these standards map the Four Resources Model. The standard for genre texts (General Standard 10: Genre) is built from the assumption that the structure, language, and content of texts are shaped and interpreted socially by participants (text users and critics) in recurrent events—past, present, and future. In Massachusetts, readers use texts with awareness of what they are—not because of mechanistic rules governing correct textual behavior in English class, but because of their purposes as elements of social and cultural forces playing out in history. Here is an excerpt from that standard for grades 9 and 10:

> 10.5 *Compare and contrast the presentation of a theme or topic across genres to explain how the selection of genre shapes the message.*
> For example, students compare and contrast three reactions to Lincoln's death: Walt Whitman's poem, "O Captain, My Captain," Frederick Douglass's eulogy, and the report in the *New York Times* on April 12, 1865. They make specific contrasts between the impersonal newspaper report and the personal poem and eulogy and between the two personal genres.

Another exemplary standard, General Standard 18: Dramatic Reading and Performance, requires students to ". . . plan and present dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and purpose" and reference standards in the Theater strand of the Arts curriculum. The rationale for this standard derives from a view of readers as text users: "The excitement and satisfaction of performing

in front of an audience should be part of every student's school experience."

As these examples illustrate, whether an English teacher practices in California or Massachusetts, the standards authorized by the legislatures and sanctioned by the federal government call for an instructional focus grounded in the dimensions of the Four Resources Model. This call is not reinforced, however, by the reading comprehension tests mandated in these states, as our next section shows.

Reading Comprehension Tests in California and Massachusetts

The complex history of reading comprehension tests has been discussed at length elsewhere (e.g., Sarroub & Pearson, 1998; Pearson & Hamm, 2005), and innovative approaches to comprehension assessment, ranging from oral reading analyses to think-alouds to curriculum-embedded events to portfolios, have been developed in the past few decades. Although some of these innovative approaches could lead to the development of techniques useful in measuring student reading performances across the dimensions of the Four Resources Model, our analysis of the reading comprehension tests actually used in California and Massachusetts suggest that few if any of the lessons learned from the performance-based assessment work of the 1980s and 1990s show up in test design. Although these tests may have the veneer of assessing text-user or text-critic dimensions, at best they measure readers as code breakers and meaning-makers.

California Standards Test

California's Department of Education releases test items on a yearly basis, as does Massachusetts. We examined the California Standards Test (California Department of Education, 2005b) for use in tenth grade through the lens of the Four Resources Model. According to test specifications spelled out in material that prefaces the items, the CST measures many aspects of meaning-making, e.g., "analyze the structure and format of functional work-

place documents" (10RC2.1) and "analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text" (10RL3.3). The specifications also call for measurement of the cognitive behaviors of text users and text critics. For example, the test claims to measure how well students "synthesize . . . content from several sources by a single author dealing with a single issue" (10RC2.4) and how they "evaluate the credibility of an author's argument or defense of a claim" (10RC2.8). Note that the specifications for literary response and analysis contain fewer indications of the intent to measure text-user and text-critic behaviors. One specification comes close: "Analyze the way in which a work of literature is related to the themes and issues of its historical period" (10RL3.12).

What does the CST (2005) reading test for tenth grade actually look like? To their credit, California test designers took seriously the charge that short snippets of text, characteristic of earlier comprehension tests, are inadequate to measure reading in the real world. The CST consists of authentic texts of substance, including personal essays by Mark Twain and Louise Erdrich; several functional documents, including advertisements; several lengthy poems; and even rough drafts of essays written by students. All test questions are presented in a multiple-choice format; however, it is impossible to find an item that engages students in synthesis or evaluation of the sort called for in the state standards (and in the text-user and text-critic roles of the Four Resources Model). The closest that the test comes to measuring anything but behavior of meaning-makers appears in an item testing comprehension of Mark Twain's essay "My Watch: An Instructive Little Tale." In the text, through his experiences with watchmakers, Twain teaches us not to fix what isn't broken; in the test item, readers are asked to link the text to its historical period:

> One indication that this was *not* written in the present time is the comparison of the watch to a
>
> A. pair of scissors.
>
> B. musket.
>
> C. spider's web.
>
> D. bee.

The argument could be made that this item gets at the text-user dimension because it assumes that readers ought to recognize where and how texts link to the context of their production, but this item does not necessarily test this behavior. The fact that the item can be answered without having read the passage is not the biggest problem with the validity of the item. The distractors (scissors, bee) *are* mentioned in the text and in the test item to "trick" the reader. Good readers who are not careful with the question stem might easily select "spider's web," which was *not* in the text, entirely on the basis of their reading of the test item, not the Twain passage.

Measures in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts standards document acknowledges that many of its standards are not measurable using its state assessment system. These standards are accompanied by asterisks and readers find in a footnote that they must be assessed locally. An analysis of the English Language Arts Test Grade 10 sample test released in 2005 confirms that the asterisks are well placed. Like tests in California, the Massachusetts test is built from lengthy passages that engage readers in sustained acts of negotiating meaning. Although the Massachusetts test includes constructed response, almost all of the items are traditional multiple-choice format. For instance, "What is this article mainly about?" is followed by four options. Even constructed response items probe students' capacity to make meaning and not to use or critique text: "Describe how Professor Dragoo shows his affection for skunks. Use relevant and specific information from the text to support your answer."

Tests in General

Momentum in the use of large-scale, high-stakes, standards-driven tests has intensified steadily over the past decade, but no parallel source of energy has been directed toward improving the nature of these tests. As Linn, Baker, and Betebenner (2002) explained, NCLB increased testing requirements for all states and linked

these requirements to federal grants, but the relationship between tests and state standards was never specified. The legislation did not stipulate whether open-ended (constructed) responses or multiple-choice formats should be used in the design of comprehension tests. The absence of a position on test design is a significant issue; researchers have repeatedly demonstrated that the nature of a test influences instruction (Frederiksen & Collins, 1989; Resnick & Resnick, 1991). In fact, this issue was at the heart of the development of major initiatives in alternative reading assessment during the 1990s (Claggett, 1996; Myers & Pearson, 1996; Simmons & Resnick, 1993). Given the goal of the improvement of teaching and learning, this failure to bring test design into the mix is clearly a problem for the standards movement. The vision of the standards movement takes in much of the complexity of reading as scholars currently construe the phenomenon, although the tests do not, and so teachers find themselves in the crossfire. What help do they get from their anthologies?

Enacting the Standards: Accountability in the Language Arts

Use of Anthologies

Although the wide range of state standards for California and Massachusetts encourage breadth and complexity in the teaching of language arts, the pressures faced by teachers to help students perform well on standardized tests constrain possibilities for instruction (Smith, 1991), especially when high stakes are attached to tests. In schools with concerns about issues such as their AYP (NCLB's provision for Adequate Yearly Progress—toward a magical goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014), the curricular focus for students struggling in language arts is often on breaking the code and on meaning-making, rather than on developing students' abilities as text users and text critics. Increasing demands for accountability have prompted schools and districts to align their language arts curriculum with standards; and, in some states, this has led to mandates requiring schools and districts to choose a language arts programs from a handful

of publishers. With the move toward comprehensive, state-adopted programs for language arts in kindergarten through eighth grade, textbook publishers have attempted to build in accountability at the high school level by revising textbooks to reflect a focus on standards. On the face of it, given our salutary review of standards in the previous section, this new focus would not be all bad.

In their recent incarnation, anthologies for high school language arts and their accompanying materials serve as bridges between curriculum, standards, and assessments. Lesson and unit objectives are geared toward helping students gain mastery over standards preselected by textbook writers and editors. In this section, we examine how the teachers' editions of ninth-grade language arts textbooks produced by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Prentice Hall, and Glencoe McGraw-Hill address the standards in California and succeed or fail to provide opportunities for student learning along the dimensions of the Four Resources Model. We have chosen to look at anthologies for ninth-grade language arts because ninth grade is the year prior to students' first opportunity to take the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). In many California schools, ninth grade is also when students receive reading intervention instruction to prepare them with skills they may need to pass the CAHSEE in the tenth grade. Because the publishers Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Prentice Hall, and Glencoe McGraw-Hill have footholds in Massachusetts as well as California, we operate under the premise that there are similarities between the treatment of standards and their relationship to the curriculum, regardless of the state in which a textbook has been adopted. Although each state employs experts to oversee and ensure the alignment of standards to curriculum, the basic format, selection of literary works, and questions on core comprehension that are written for students largely remain the same for each publisher.

Comparing Anthologies

Because the anthologies published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Prentice Hall, and Glencoe McGraw-Hill contain several of the same classic pieces of literature and acknowledge the incor-

poration of standards from each state, one might assume that these three publishers would draw upon the same set of standards as foci for the pieces of literature. Using the California teacher's editions of the three anthologies, we compared the three publishers' treatments of "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe and found that each text differed in its choice of state standards and important story elements for literary analysis.

In these three anthologies, each literary selection is prefaced by prereading activities—focusing on the frontloading of key concepts, themes, and vocabulary—and followed by a review section that includes comprehension questions, writing activities, vocabulary development, and short grammar lessons. This format is reminiscent of the "into, through, and beyond" sequence that dominated language arts instruction in the 1990s (after Langer, 1990). Key questions in teacher and student editions echo an overarching emphasis on particular standards; yet the standards highlighted seem somewhat arbitrary, especially because they are so different across the three publishers.

By comparing the three anthologies, we do not intend to determine which best speaks to the components of the Four Resources Model. Instead, we aim to examine how anthologies in general take stock of state standards and a variety of literacy and thinking skills. The figures in this section represent language arts standards adopted by each publisher for Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" and sample questions related to those standards from the student and teacher editions. Although the anthologies do not explicitly connect these particular questions to the acknowledged standards, links can be drawn by means of the content in the questions as well as the proximity of the standard mentioned to the location of the questions in the textbook.

In Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," the narrator Montresor describes how he led Fortunato, the victim, to an unfortunate demise. The Holt anthology's "Before you Read" section identifies the unreliable narrator as a "literary focus" for this selection. Throughout the duration of reading the story, the teacher is directed, by means of suggestions in the annotated margins of the teacher's edition, to indicate, allude to, and question the words and actions coming from the narrator in order to help students realize his positioning and influence as a storyteller. Likewise,

this focus is pursued in the review questions listed at the end of the selection in the student edition.

Although the standards-related question asks students to "think about whether or not Montresor is an unreliable narrator," previous prompts from the teacher and the text have already led students to the answer that Montresor is not to be wholly trusted on his views regarding Fortunato and his version of events in the story. The supporting questions are "think and search" questions (Raphael, 1982, 1984, 1986) that uphold the positioning of Montresor. Both the standard and its representative questions fall into the meaning-making dimension of the Four Resources Model. Yet, if the teacher has followed the activities in the teacher's edition, most of the meaning has already been made *for* the students by the prompts given prior to the start of the story and by the teacher's scaffolding during the story's reading. The questions in Figure 5.1 invoke a transmission model of reading in which meaning is transmitted from the author to the reader, as a passive receiver, rather than a transactional one in which the reader dynamically transacts with the text and creates meaning through an interpretation based on his or her own background knowledge, experiences, purposes, and goals (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978; Schraw & Brunig, 1996). In a transmission model (Schraw & Brunig, 1996), the teacher and the questions in the anthology act as brokers between text and student, ensuring that, given the right kinds of scaffolding, students will take away the author's intended meaning instead of make the meaning themselves.

Similar to the way that the Holt anthology attends to the unreliable narrator as a literary device, the Prentice Hall edition prefaces mood as a primary literary element and centers on returning to this focus throughout the teaching of the story. In Prentice Hall's "Prepare to Read" pages, the text states, "In 'The Cask of Amontillado,' Edgar Allan Poe carefully chooses words and details to create a mood of eerie suspense" (p. 5). Students are told up front what the mood is, rather than being invited to ascertain the mood for themselves. Questions about the unreliable narrator presented in the Holt text are similar to those students are asked in the Holt text: to examine how the text makes meaning about the mood and to discuss the changes in meaning

California Language Arts Standards	Representative Standards-Related Questions
Reading—Literary Response and Analysis Grades 9 and 10 Standard 3.9 "Explain how voice, persona, and the choice of a narrator affect characterization and the tone, plot, and credibility of a text."	"Think about whether or not Montresor is an unreliable narrator. Do any details suggest that he might have imagined 'the thousand injuries' and the insult—or even the whole story? Can you find evidence in the story to support Montresor's claim that Fortunato did in fact injure and insult him? To support your answers consider Montresor's actions, statements, and voice." (p. 181)(*Student edition, review question*)

FIGURE **5.1.** Holt Literature and Language Arts, Third Course *(Beers & Odell, 2003).*

as the story unfolds. Although the actual questions asked at the end of the selection might encourage a transaction between reader and text, the supposed transaction implied in the questions is somewhat misleading: the prereading section spells out the mood and thus limits other possible answers, a clear constraint on text-use behaviors.

Although the first question in Figure 5.2 from the teacher's edition is a "right there" question, asking students to locate details from a particular section of the text, questions in the review guide of the student edition are "author and you" questions, in which the students must base their answers on what they can interpret about the mood change based on what the author has written (Raphael, 1982, 1984, 1986). Although the standards-related questions in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 might be within the making-meaning categorization of the Four Resources Model, the depth of the questions varies insofar as they each call for different demands on cognitive reasoning.

Although the prereading section of "The Cask of Amontillado" in the Glencoe anthology features background information, questions regarding the revenge motif, and frontloaded vocabulary in a fashion similar to the Prentice Hall and Holt

California Language Arts Standards	Representative Standards-Related Questions
Reading—Literary Response and Analysis Grades 9 and 10 Standard 3.6 “Analyze and trace an author’s development of time and sequence, including the use of complex literary devices (e.g., foreshadowing, flashbacks).”	“Ask students to define the mood created by the first two paragraphs. Which specific details create this mood?” (p. 7)(*Teacher’s edition, scaffolding question*)“(a) Describe the mood of the scene in which Montresor first tells Fortunato about the Amontillado. (b) How does the mood change as the story unfolds?” (p. 13).(*Student edition, review question*)

FIGURE 5.2. Prentice Hall Literature: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes, Gold Level *(Kinsella, Feldman, Stump, Carroll, & Wilson, 2002).*

texts, it does not contain a focus on one or two main literary elements such as mood or narrative technique. Furthermore, the Glencoe text addresses standards in a different manner. Instead of highlighting one or two main standards to unify the teaching focus of a particular literary work, it lists standards on every couple of pages, while adding to or deleting standards as necessary to accommodate the text, guiding questions and activities prescribed in the teacher’s edition. In short, it adopts a distributed rather than a massed approach to unpacking the standards. Perhaps this less intense focus on teaching one or two standards and literary devices leads to more opportunities for students to determine their own transactions with the text. Based on the questions sampled as being representative of a standards focus, we consider that the questions listed in this anthology allow room for students to contribute their points of view rather than echo answers already supplied by text and teacher.

As in the two other anthologies, the questions in the Glencoe text could be classified as meaning-making questions in accordance with the Four Resources Model. Yet, on examining the questions more closely, we find that these meaning-making questions predominately fall within the parameters of the “author and you” type, where the expectation of independent contributions from the reader is greater, rather than the more text-cen-

tric, "right there," and "think and search" forms. This sampling of questions also touches somewhat on the text-user and text-critic functions, as well as the meaning-making. Whereas the question on mood in the Prentice Hall text is a meaning-making one, the mood question in Figure 5.3 calls on students to consider themselves as text users in order to think about what they "are led to see and hear" in their imaginations (p. 93). Furthermore, one of the questions that is representative of the standards might actually touch on the text-critic function in addition to meaning-making as it asks, "In your opinion, why did Poe choose to write from the first-person point of view . . . ?" (p. 93). In the case of this question, the student is asked to evaluate why a particular point of view is chosen by the author over another one. Inherent in this question is the consideration of the role, persona, and perspective of the victim Fortunato and a consideration of what the author had to gain by choosing Montresor's first-person point of view.

This is not to say that the Holt and Prentice Hall anthologies neglect the text-user and text-critic dimensions of the Four Resources Model. In the Holt textbook's review section for "The Cask of Amontillado," students are asked to consider whether the text is merely a "story told for entertainment" or one that "reveals some truth about people who are consumed for a desire for revenge" (p. 181). Although, at the onset, this seems like a meaning-making question, it also has possibilities for considering the text-user dimension. A question in the Prentice Hall anthology asks students to evaluate the situation in the story and then probes, "Montresor acts as judge and executioner in this story. Explain whether you think individuals are ever justified in taking justice into their own hands" (p.12). Although this falls under the meaning-making parameters of the Four Resources Model, it also has possibilities for extensions into the text-critic category. If they were to compare social, political, and moral dilemmas regarding justice to the events of the story, students could analyze whether or not Montresor had the best justifications for taking Fortunato's life. Most of the questions in all three texts remain close to the meaning-maker dimension, although a few questions might touch on the text-user and text-critic dimensions.

California Language Arts Standards	**Representative Standards-Related Questions**
Reading—Literary Response and Analysis Grade 9 and 10 Standards 2.0 3.0, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11 3.3 "Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (e.g., internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, influences) and explain the way those interactions affect the plot."	"How does Montresor get Fortunato to come with him to his vaults? What is Montresor's main motive for leading Fortunato there?" (p. 93) (*Student edition, review question*)
3.4 "Determine characters' traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy."	"What can you infer about the character of the narrator from his dialogue with Fortunato?" (p. 88). (*Teacher's edition, scaffolding question*)
3.8 "Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and incongruities in a text."	"Describe the conversation between Montresor and Fortunato as they walk in the catacombs. What is ironic about Montresor's concern for Fortunato's health?" (p. 93) (*Student edition, review question*)
3.9 "Explain how voice, persona, and the choice of a narrator affect characterization and the tone, plot, and credibility of a text."	"In your opinion, why did Poe choose to write from the first-person point of view, describing only Montresor's thoughts and not Fortunato's?" (p. 93) (*Student edition, review question*)
3.11 "Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)."	"How does Poe create the mood? Consider his word choice and think about what you are led to see and hear in your imagination" (p. 93). (*Student edition, review question*)

FIGURE 5.3. Glencoe Literature: The Reader's Choice, Course 4 *(Chin et al., 2002).*

Although the Holt and Prentice Hall textbooks do not list as many standards for "The Cask of Amontillado" as the Glencoe version does, this does not mean that the questions and activities in the teacher's edition are related to only the one or two standards and literary devices emphasized for the lesson. For example, one of the review questions in the student edition of the Holt text asks, "Think about Poe's decision to set his story during carnival. What is ironic about the setting? In what ways does the setting suit the plot of the story?" This particular question aligns with the Reading: Literary Response and Analysis Grades 9 and 10 Standard 3.8 (see Figure 5.3) more so than with Grades 9 and 10 Standard 3.9 (see Figure 5.1). The anthologies are thus much more inclusive of standards than they claim to be. In other words, they deliver more than they promise.

Yet the avowed focus on particular standards increases the likelihood that more of the teacher's guide and review questions reflect the listed standards and thereby narrow the breadth of curricular possibilities. In a comparison of the review questions in the 1997 Holt anthology and the more recent 2003 version analyzed in this chapter, the bulk of the questions and the unreliable narrator as one of the story's major literary devices remain the same (see Probst, Anderson, Brinnin, Leggett, & Irvin, 1997). Based on this comparison, the content of the curriculum seems to have remained largely intact, although the standards have been added. For example, Grades 9 and 10 Standard 3.9, regarding the narrator's effect on "the tone, plot, and credibility of a text," has led to the inclusion of two additional questions about character and the deletion of two questions regarding the story's use of irony in the student review section. Aligning standards with curriculum has meant that textbooks have largely "plugged in" standards to match lessons and units that were already part of the anthologies. Aligning assessments with curriculum, however, has been a different story.

Including Assessment Practices in the Curriculum

To adjust to accountability measures placed on schools and districts by NCLB, language arts anthologies have added more short

nonfiction pieces to their collections. The average one- to two-page length of such pieces mimics the length of the nonfiction pieces typically found on the CAHSEE. These pieces are often informational or expository texts related to a theme, topic, or setting connected to one of the literary selections or its author. For example, following "The Cask of Amontillado," the 2003 Holt anthology includes an excerpt from a biography about Edgar Allan Poe and a series of three short newspaper articles that question the cause of Poe's death.

As the Holt anthology correlates these four nonfiction pieces about Poe's death with the California Grade 9 and 10 Standards in Section 2: Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials), the questions and activities in the teacher and student editions center less on an aesthetic stance toward reading, brought out by interpretive responses supported by the text, and more on an efferent stance in which the focus is on facts and information (Rosenblatt, 1978). Yet the purposes defined for efferent reading, as stated in the California standards, are not directed toward learning the facts for the sake of remembering them for an exam, but rather toward learning how to use the facts in order to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information from primary and secondary sources (see CA Grades 9 and 10 Standards 2.1, 2.4, and 2.5). Several standards in Section 2 tend to combine elements of the meaning-making and text-using functions of the Four Resources Model, lying at the border of their parameters—where meaning-making intersects with the purpose of achieving a form of academic literacy.

Most of the sample questions on the anthology's practice test address only the meaning-making dimension of the Four Resources Model, although there are some exceptions. The free-response questions for informational reading tend to go beyond the meaning-making function, whereas the multiple-choice questions tend to limit efferent reading practices to finding bits of information for the sake of eliciting right answers. The multiple-choice format also shows up in the three anthologies in the grammar and vocabulary practice lessons at the end of the review section accompanying a literary work. Although the multiple-choice questions only take up a slim portion of each of the anthologies, this format and that of other "skill and drill" type

formats are prevalent and predominant in reading comprehension instruction for struggling high school students receiving reading intervention.

Code-Breaking Skill and Drill

One program implemented for students who struggle with decoding at the high school level is SRA Corrective Reading, published by SRA-McGraw Hill. Its main components are a student book, workbook, and scripted teacher's guide. This particular program focuses only on the code-breaking and meaning-making components of the Four Resources Model. Although this program can be used with students in grade 3 and higher, the materials are neither differentiated nor created to take into account the interest of students at various ages. Most of the student lesson activities require students to read in the student book and fill in the blanks for "right there" questions about short fictional stories (see Engelmann, Meyer, Carnine, Becker, Eisele, & Johnson, 1999). Code-breaker activities in the workbook ask students to fill in blanks while identifying and either combining or dissecting word parts according to their meanings or sounds. A typical code-breaker activity gives students a set of words with endings that affect the word morphology and directs them to write the same words without endings.

Implementation and Enactment: The Teacher's Role

Despite all of the intentions of state and district officials to align standards, curriculum, and assessments, what teachers ultimately do in their classrooms and how they implement curricular materials vary. Teachers have to make difficult choices in how they address mandated reforms. These choices include following instructions wholesale and implementing materials selected by their district without changes to the program, participating in a local plan for the department that is consistent with the district's directives but flexible enough to accommodate and adjust to the needs of the students and the school, substituting other teaching

materials and techniques to address the gaps that exist in the district-adopted materials, and "schooling" the system or acting in mock compliance by following the letter of the law but not its spirit. The choices made by teachers likely depend on their experience, beliefs, and personalities. For example, beginning teachers may feel more pressure than experienced ones to follow orders given in school directives. Given their lack of experience, beginning teachers may even feel comforted by scripts and suggestions offered by particular texts and programs. In comparison, teachers with experience and insight recognize that there are inadequacies in any program and that the curriculum needs to be flexible enough to meet the needs of individual students. Furthermore, they often have or can find materials to supplement what they have been given by their schools.

Some teachers are renegades. Some may teach the multiple-choice exercises one day and engage students in other stimulating literacy learning opportunities during the rest of the week. Others may have students participate in prescribed curriculum while asking them to examine critically why they are being required to participate in certain kinds of literacy activities. These teachers stimulate students' thinking and also demand that students employ skills as text critics, regardless of whether or not the materials account for this particular dimension of the Four Resources Model.

Instructional Principles

In our view, there is a clear and powerful incongruity between the tests used to measure reading comprehension and the standards and curriculum materials that teachers are expected to use. This incongruity makes effective instructional decision making more difficult than it needs to be. Based on our analysis of this situation, we offer the following four principles to serve as a foundation for discussion around what ought to occur in the secondary school English classroom in the name of reading comprehension instruction:

1. Curricular planning at all levels—the individual course, the set of courses across all of the secondary school years, and remedial courses—ought to begin with standards. Using the Four Resources Model as an organizer, teachers can map learning opportunities that treat all aspects of reading in a balanced and coherent way.

2. Anthologies should be used as resources, not as curricula. Our examination showed that anthologies provide rich and varied learning opportunities for students to develop on each of the four dimensions, but the publishers appear to have simply "plugged in" standards rather than revising content from the ground up. Teachers may need to update the pedagogy described in the anthologies on their own.

3. Standardized tests ought not to serve as starting points for instruction. The model of comprehension at the core of these tests is antiquated and narrow, and using it as a basis for design severely limits opportunities for students to develop toward state standards. Teachers have a range of options in dealing with these tests: ignore them and teach well, incorporate activities implied by tests sparingly, and become politically active to get testing practices changed. Using standardized tests to guide instruction is not an option if teachers are serious about teaching to standards.

4. Teach *students*, and not cognitive strategies, or novels, or modes of writing. This idea is not new, but it is centrally important. If teachers embrace this notion and follow it faithfully—provided that their understanding of what it means to teach *students* is robust and informed by a defensible conceptual framework such as the Four Resources Model—they can resolve issues raised by standardized tests and outdated curricula.

References

Anderson, R. C., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading comprehension. In P. D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp. 255–91). New York: Longman.

Beers, K., & Odell, L. (2003). *Holt literature and language arts: Third course* (Annotated teacher's edition). Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

California Department of Education. (2005a). *The California English language arts content standards*. Sacramento, CA: Author.

California Department of Education. (2005b). *Released test questions: English language arts grade 10*. Sacramento, CA: Author.

Chin, B. A., et al. (2002). *Glencoe literature: The reader's choice, course 4* (Teacher wraparound edition). Columbus, OH: Glencoe McGraw-Hill.

Claggett, F. (1996). *A measure of success: From assignment to assessment in English language arts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton/Cook.

Cross, R. W., Rebarber, T., & Torres, J. (Eds.). (2004). *Grading the systems: The guide to state standards, tests, and accountability policies*. Washington, DC: Fordham Foundation.

Engelmann, S., Meyer, L., Carnine, L., Becker, W., Eisele, J., & Johnson, G. (1999). *SRA corrective reading: Decoding strategies, B2* (Workbook). Columbus, OH: SRA McGraw-Hill.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977* (C. Gordon, Ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Frederiksen, J. R., & Collins, A. (1989). A systems approach to educational testing. *Educational Researcher, 18*(9), 27–32.

Freebody, P. (1992). A socio-cultural approach: Resourcing four roles as a literacy learner. In A. J. Watson & A. M. Badenhop (Eds.), *Prevention of reading failure* (pp. 48–60). Sydney, Australia: Ashton-Scholastic.

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1990). Literacies programs: Debates and demands in cultural context. *Prospect: Australian Journal of TESOL, 5*(7), 7–16.

Gee, J. P. (1987). What is literacy? *Teaching and Learning, 2*, 3–11.

Giroux, H. A. (Ed.). (1991). *Postmodernism, feminism, and cultural politics: Redrawing educational boundaries*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gough, P. B., & Hillinger, M. L. (1980). Learning to read: An unnatural act. *Bulletin of the Orton Society, 30*, 179–96.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Juel, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of 54 children from first through fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 437–47.

Kinsella, K., Feldman, K., Stump, C. S., Carroll, J. A., & Wilson, E. E. (2002). *Prentice Hall literature: Timeless voices, timeless themes, gold level* (California teacher's edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Langer, J. A. (1990) The process of understanding: Reading for literary and informative purposes. *Research in the teaching of English, 24*, 229–60.

Linn, R. L. (2000). Assessments and accountability. *Educational Researcher, 29*(2), 4–16.

Linn, R. L., Baker, E. L., & Betebenner, D. W. (2002). Accountability systems: Implications of requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. *Educational Researcher, 31*(6), 3–16.

Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1997). The social practices of reading. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies*: *Teaching and learning textual practice* (pp. 185–225). St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1999). Further notes on the four resources model. *Reading Online*. Retrieved August 12, 2006, from http://www.readingonline.org/research/lukefreebody.html

Massachusetts Department of Education. (2001). *Massachusetts English language arts curriculum framework*. Malden, MA: Author.

Myers, M., & Pearson, P. D. (1996). Performance assessment and the literacy unit of the New Standards Project. *Assessing Writing, 3*, 5–29.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110). (2002).

Pearson, P. D., & Hamm, D. N. (2005). The assessment of reading com-

prehension: A review of practices—past, present, and future. In S. G. Paris & S. A. Stahl (Eds.), *Children's reading comprehension and assessment* (pp. 13–69). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Pearson, P. D., & Stephens, D. (1993). Learning about literacy: A 30-year journey. In C. J. Gordon, G. D. Labercane, & W. R. McEachern (Eds.), *Elementary reading: Process and practice* (pp. 4–18). Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.

Probst, R., Anderson, R., Brinnin, J. M., Leggett, J., & Irvin, J. L. (1997). *Elements of literature: Third course* (Annotated teacher's ed.). Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Raphael, T. E. (1982). Question-answering strategies for children. *The Reading Teacher, 36,* 186–91.

Raphael, T. E. (1984). Teaching learners about sources of information for answering comprehension questions. *Journal of Reading, 27,* 303–11.

Raphael, T. E. (1986). Teaching question-answer relationships, revisited. *The Reading Teacher, 39,* 516–22.

Resnick, L. B., & Resnick, D. P. (1991). Assessing the thinking curriculum: New tools for educational reform. In B. R. Gifford & M. C. O'Connor (Eds.), *Changing assessments: Alternative views of aptitude, achievement and instruction* (pp. 37–75). Boston: Kluwer.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1938). *Literature as exploration.* New York: Appleton-Century.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Sarroub, L., & Pearson, P. D. (1998). Two steps forward, three steps back: The stormy history of reading comprehension assessment. *The Clearing House, 72,* 97–105.

Schraw, G., & Brunig, R. (1996). Readers' implicit models of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 31,* 290–305.

Simmons, W., & Resnick, L. (1993). Assessment as the catalyst of school reform. *Educational Leadership, 50*(5), 11–15.

Smith, M. (1991). Put to the test: The effects of external testing on teachers. *Educational Researcher, 20*(5), 8–11.

Wells, G. (1986). *The meaning makers: Children learning language and using language to learn.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.