Text Complexity Analysis

Text complexity analysis			
Created by:	Steve Turgeon	**Event/Date:**	Teachfest Summer Program, July 29, 2014
Text and Author	*"This Was Their Finest Hour"* speech excerpt – Winston Churchill, June 1940	**Where to Access Text**	Bedford St. Martins's – A History of Western Society Digital Primary Sources

Text Description

The text is a primary speech delivered by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the British House of Commons in June, 1940. The main thrust of the text is a reassurance of the strength of the British position from the Prime Minister to the British constituency, as well as a call to the British people to persevere against the Germans for the benefit of future generation. Churchill begins by reassuring the House that the British supplies have been recovered from the recently defeated France. He then goes on to extol the strengths of the British military force, especially the British air force, in repelling and responding to German aerial attacks on the British mainland. Finally, he calls upon the British people to show strength in the face of adversity by presenting the potential consequences of British success and failure in repelling Hitler's Germany.

Quantitative

Lexile and Grade Level	1460L – For use with grade 10 HONORS.	Text Length	768 words (1 ½ pages, double-spaced.)

Qualitative

Meaning/Central Ideas	Text Structure/Organization
The big ideas here are twofold – to reassure the British in the wake of a French defeat, and to call the British people to do their part in standing up to Hitler. The former is implied through Churchill's explanations of British strengths as well as the date of the speech provided, and the latter is somewhat explicitly stated in the conclusion. It would require some background of WWII to understand the entirety of the ideas in the speech.	The text is a written account of a speech. The language is somewhat more sophisticated than might be spoken today, but still understandable (which has a lot to do with Churchill's intended audience – the people). There are no graphics or sections to separate ideas, however a citation for the speech is provided on a subtext on the last page of the document. The connections between the descriptions of British strengths are tied together, but their presence as a reassurance is not made entirely explicit.

Prior Knowledge Demands	Language Features
Students would need to be familiar with the context of WWII through June of 1940, especially the fall of France to the Nazis. Students would also need to be able to infer that this is a **speech** being delivered to the **House of Commons**, and the implications thereof. This would help students understand Churchill's tone and purpose.	Given the nature of the piece, most of the language is literal. Some of the words may be archaic. Most of the students will be able to understand most of the words in context. There are a few content-specific words that would require prior knowledge of the context.

Potential Reader/Task Challenges

In the context of a modern world history class, with the appropriate knowledge background, this text should be fairly accessible for Honors students. However, because of the advanced lexile level, some of the language may be more challenging for students reading at-grade-level. Though this challenge is somewhat lessened by the length of the piece, being able to infer what Churchill's message is requires not only context but ability to decipher the language and infer his greater message from the words provided.

Big Takeaway

The British people must fight back against Nazi attacks, to preserve civilization as they knew it. They were the last barrier between Hitler and complete domination of Western Europe, and what Churchill called "Christian civilization." He uses this speech to impassion his countrymen and women with the reassurance of British strength and the call for resolve in the face of oppression.

Vocabulary Analysis

	Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete)	**Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. words with multiple meanings and/or that are part of a word family)**
Words that can be determined in context	- Stores (T2) - Island (implied – Great Britain) (T3) - Gentry (T2) - Munitions (T3) "Battle of France" (T3) - Institutions (T2) - Perverted (T2)	- British Empire (T3) "Sunlit uplands" (T3)
Words that cannot be determined in context	- Fortnight (T2) - House (implied – of Commons) (T3) - Scores (T2) - General Weygand (T3)	- Dunkirk (T3) - No-man's land (T3) "Christian civilization" (T3)