

## Text Complexity Analysis Template

Text complexity analysis			
<b>Created by:</b>	Kailee Donovan	<b>Event/Date:</b>	July 29, 2014, TeachFest CT Summer Academy
<b>Text and Author</b>	“The Plague Hits Florence”, Giovanni Boccaccio	<b>Where to Access Text</b>	<a href="http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/mckaywest9e/default.asp#501550__510333__">http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/mckaywest9e/default.asp#501550__510333__</a>
Text Description			
<p>This is a primary source from the year 1350 as the plague was at its height in Florence, Italy. The plague had a remarkable and long lasting impact on European society. This source reveals some of those major impacts on an individual level as he observes the corpses, the lawlessness of the area, depression and fear of people, and the uncharacteristically scandalous behavior of the citizens as a result of the fear of imminent death. The text is somewhat stream of conscious and has a lot of difficult vocabulary.</p>			
Quantitative			
<b>Lexile and Grade Level</b>	1100L, 9-10 <sup>th</sup> grade	<b>Text Length</b>	283 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
<p>Big Ideas: Changes caused by the plague.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The rate at which people were dying was faster than the infrastructure could keep up with. (“magistrates are a prey to death or disease”). As a result, once civilized, organized societies were lawless and chaotic.</li> <li>Many reasoned the plague was a punishment from God for immoral behavior (“quit the church”, “crimes of late”). Some turned to God for a solution, but others turned away because God was not saving them.</li> <li>Many people turned to more secular values and behavior as a result of their impending death (“what things soever give promise of most gratification”)</li> </ul>		<p>The text is segmented into selections from a longer primary source (as signified by ... ). This makes it more difficult to understand in some ways because students must piece together a series of phrases to interpret a larger idea. The text feels more disjointed, though it is more succinct so there is less the students have to sift through to find the important pieces.</p> <p>Connections between ideas are fairly explicit but the sentence structure makes them very difficult to understand. This may be a challenge for students and teachers and teachers may consider reading chunks of text out loud to the students or asking students to “revise” some sentences using vocabulary and sentence structure that makes more sense to students.</p>	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
<p>This text does require prior knowledge to understand the big idea of the text. Students should know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the influence the Catholic Church had on the daily lives of Europeans (specifically Italians in this text)</li> <li>the basic ideas behind Catholicism and expectations for proper religious behavior</li> <li>a general idea of what the plague is and areas it impacted</li> </ul>		<p>The language used in the text is conventional for an educated individual living during the high middle ages, but not conventional for people today. Students will have to do some significant work with the vocabulary to understand the big ideas of this text. Be careful with this vocabulary as many of the words may be words students have seen before but have an alternate definition.</p>	

### Potential Reader/Task Challenges

The vocabulary and sentence structure in this text are much more complex than 9<sup>th</sup> graders are used to. Some significant time will have to be spent discussing the proper definitions and the context of the vocabulary words in this text for students to understand the real meaning of the text. Teachers must also help students understand this text by activating students prior knowledge and historical context. The text is more meaningful if students understand they are looking for a change from one way of life to another.

### Big Takeaway

The plague so greatly impacted European society that it ushered in a new way of life that was much more secular than during the middle ages. The plague greatly diminished the power the Catholic church had over European society. This was one of the major transitions from the medieval to the modern world.

#### **Standards Addressed:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

## Vocabulary Analysis Template

	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internment (T2)</li> <li>• Magistrates (T3)</li> <li>• Traverse (T2)</li> <li>• Gratification (T1)</li> <li>• condemned (T1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• retirement (T3)</li> <li>• recluse (T2)</li> </ul>
Words that cannot be determined in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tarry (T2)</li> <li>• riotous (T2)</li> <li>• antics (T1)</li> <li>• scurrilous (T3)</li> <li>• soever (T3)</li> <li>• carnal (T1)</li> <li>• unchaste (T3)</li> <li>• dissolute (T2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exile (T1)</li> <li>• Refuse (T2)</li> <li>• Secular (T3)</li> </ul>

**Source Text:**

*Dear ladies ... here we tarry, as if, I think, for no other purpose than to bear witness to the number of the corpses that are brought here for internment. ... And if we quit the church, we see dead or sick folk carried about, or we see those, who for their crimes were of late condemned to exile ... but who, now ... well knowing that their magistrates are a prey to death or disease, have returned, and traverse the city in packs, making it hideous with their riotous antics; or else we see the refuse of the people, fostered on our blood, becchini, as they call themselves, who for our torment go prancing about ... making mock of our miseries in scurrilous songs. ... Or go we home, what see we there? ... where once were servants in plenty, I find none left but my maid, and shudder with terror, and feel the very hairs of my head to stand on end; and turn or tarry where I may, I encounter the ghosts of the departed. ... None ... having means and place of retirement as we have, stays here ... or if any such there be, they are of those ... who make no distinction between things honorable and their opposites, so they but answer the cravings of appetite, and, alone or in company, do daily and nightly what things soever give promise of most gratification. Nor are these secular persons alone, but such as live recluse in monasteries break their rule, and give themselves up to carnal pleasures, persuading themselves that they are permissible to them, and only forbidden to others, and, thereby thinking to escape, are become unchaste and dissolute.*