Text Complexity Analysis of

When Humans Begin Colonizing Other Planets, Who Should Be in Charge? (title)
Laura Poppick (author)
Recommended Complexity Band: 9-10

Qualitative Measures

Meaning/Purpose: (Briefly explain the levels of meaning (Literary Text) or purpose (Informational Text.) The author’s purpose is to pose ethical questions in regards to humans visiting and perhaps colonizing other worlds. The author asks the reader to ponder various issues related to possible human interaction as we explore our solar system.

Text Structure: (Briefly describe the structure, organization, and other features of the text.) The text is straightforward and no headings are used to break apart the article. Graphics are included but do not directly influence comprehension of the text.

Language Features: (Briefly describe the conventions and clarity of the language used in the text, including the complexity of the vocabulary and sentence structures.) The article contains simple, complex, and compound sentences. There are a variety of domain-specific words used (microbes, ecosystems, interplanetary, perchlorate, celestial) in which few have context clues to discern meaning. Academic vocabulary is also used (pockmarked, analog, inadvertently, realm).

Knowledge Demands: (Briefly describe the knowledge demands the text requires of students.) This text requires students to have a basic understanding of the features (atmosphere, temperature, composition) of the inner planets. Students should also understand the basic mechanics of contaminating sanitary (free of organisms from Earth) planets with Earth-borne microbes.

Quantitative Measures

Complexity Band Level (provide range): 9-10 and 11-CCR
Lexile or Other Quantitative Measure of the Text: 1310L (This is an unofficial Lexile measure.)

Considerations for Reader and Task

Below are factors to consider with respect to the reader and task.

Potential Challenges this Text Poses:
Students may have difficulty grasping the full implications of this text if they do not understand the implications of bringing foreign and potentially invasive Earth-borne species to another planet. In addition, if they do not recognize that the United States does not have sole authority over space travel, they may have difficulty understanding why this may be an issue when determining who will make and enforce laws regarding interplanetary travel.

Recommended Placement

Briefly explain the recommended placement of the text in a particular grade band: Qualitative and quantitative measures suggest that this content is most appropriate for 9th and 10th graders. The Lexile score is high due to academic-specific words, however, these vocabulary words are manageable for 9th and 10th graders.