# Your Living Curriculum©

## Considerations when Writing a Short Passage.

Usually, writers don't normally reflect on how or why they write. They just start writing. At some point however, their attention becomes focused on readying the text for publication. Educational materials are no different. Below are some elements to consider when writing literary or expository materials for students.

### Genre

There are many genres and sub-genres. However, the two largest classifications are fiction (imaginary) and non-fiction (non-imaginary). Readers and writers usually have a preference for one or the other.

### Text Complexity

Adding or eliminating complexity in a text makes the degree of comprehension challenging in two ways, the text itself (sometimes referred to as readability) and the meaning it conveys (understanding the content).

**Element 1:** While reading, the text itself may be more or less difficult to read through. A universally accepted measurement for this type of complexity is called a text's Lexile Range. Check out the Lexile website for more information. Complexity of this type is easily manipulated by adding more refined vocabulary (sometimes referred to as "domain specific" vocabulary), increasing sentence length, challenging semantic and syntactic phrasing.

**Element 2:** After reading, to what degree can a reader comprehend the content explicitly and implicitly (the reader's depth of understanding)? This level of complexity takes into consideration the topic, word choice, how an author may chose to develop character(s), an over all "mood or tone" the text/poem conveys, etc. This type of complexity opens up more subjective interpretations which promote discussions and multiple understandings. Expository topics or mature subject matter can also be developmentally out of the range of a reader's capacity.

### Topics & Subject Matter

Topics are as endless and varied as genres. Topics and subject matter effects Element 2 of complexity. For example, the naming of a cell's parts (with an image) or how they function within an organisms is an example of lower to higher levels of topic complexity. A cell"s parts introduced in a coloring book is low complexity. How they function, even with a diagram, can be very complex. Both topics are about the same thing, cells. But, the content's complexity addressed different learning abilities that's developmentally significant for the reader.

When composing short passages the complexity, genre, structure, and topic contribute significantly to the degree of complexity and understanding. We suggest looking through other passage websites that have educational materials in the [Resources](#) menu. Those examples will be very helpful in developing materials for readers of a particular grade level.

### Composition and Structure

A fully developed passage is a short complete work with a clearly defined introduction, body, and conclusion. It may contain a variety of structural arrangements such as cause and effect, problem/solution, rising/falling action, supporting details with fully developed main ideas, first or third person perspectives, dialogues, or combinations of these. An author's use of these is subjective and crosses many different types of genre. Valuable passages may contain a well thought out combination of these.