

What makes this text complex?			
Created by:	Kim Reilly	Event/Date:	TeachFest Connecticut Summer Academy
Text and Author	"The Winnowing" by Isaac Asimov	Where to Access Text	http://www.bestlibraryspot.net/ScienceFiction/Asimov38/27296.html
Text Description			
<p>In this futuristic science fiction story, the world's population is suffering from famine. The "World Food Organization" decides to take desperate measures to decrease the population. They plan to add poisons to particular food shipments to the over-populated areas. To carry out their plan, they need biochemist Dr. Aaron Rodman's help. They attempt to coerce him into compliance by threatening his family. Rodman chooses not to go along with their scheme, and finds a way to avoid doing so. At a meeting with the officials, he serves sandwiches laced with the poisonous lipoprotein, knowing that they will be affected at random, which will lead to their deaths, like they planned to do for others to die. He matches the lipoprotein to his own metabolism, insuring that he will die and not be guilty of being involved in their ethically questionable plan. This ironic twist at the end of the story resolves the building suspense – in the end, the very members of the organization that were going to kill others will die, at random, in the way they envisioned others would die.</p>			
Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	1050 Lexile	Text Length	2526 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
<p>The big idea revolves around the essential question, "Is it ethical to sacrifice the lives of a few for the sake of the many?" Other important ideas to consider in the text are 1. "If it is essential to sacrifice the few to save the many, how should 'the chosen' be determined?" 2. "What would you do if you were put in a position where you are being coerced into making a decision that would kill others?" The text implicitly responds to these presumed questions with the conclusion that it is more ethical to sacrifice yourself than to be guilty of contributing to the ruin of others.</p>		<p>There are no graphics or headings, as is typical in a fiction piece for this grade level. Typical of science fiction, the author implicitly asks ethical questions and persuades the reader, through a though-provoking plot, to draw conclusions about those ethical questions. This narrative follows a chronological order and is told through dialogue and action, creating suspense and curiosity about what the characters thoughts are and what actions they will ultimately take.</p>	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
<p>Deep comprehension of the text requires a familiarity with the scientific and general academic vocabulary. Further, an awareness of the attributes of the science fiction genre will help students approach the text.</p>		<p>There are many scientific discipline-specific words that add to the complexity of full comprehension of the text. Sentence structure overall is varied with simple and complex sentences, adding to the sophistication of the text. Irony is used as a primary literary element of this text, leading up to which adds to the suspense of the story. Word choices require the reader to pay attention to connotative meaning, as the dialogue is filled with such demands for full comprehension.</p>	
Potential Reader/Task Challenges			
<p>I expect the students will struggle with the vocabulary and sentence complexity. It will be important for the teacher to do close readings with the students. It will be important for students to re-read and visit the text several times.</p>			

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"> • Famine • Blackmail • Mechanism • Infectious • Wearied. • Winnowing Famine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lipoprotein • Triage • Biochemistry • nucleic acid molecule • organism virus
Words that cannot be determined in context	Magnitude (1)	Indicator (2)