

**Text Analysis and Critique of The Closet Creature By Kelly Hashway**

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## **The Text:**

### **The Closet Creature By Kelly Hashway**

Bump! Bump! Scratch!

Adam opened his eyes and

pulled the covers up to his chin. He stared around his room, searching the darkness for the thing that was making those scary sounds.

The closet door moved as something banged on it from the inside.

“Who’s there?” Adam asked in a shaky voice.

The closet slowly began to open. Adam jumped out of bed and ran to the closet door, slamming it shut with his palms. He grabbed his desk chair and propped it against the door handle. Then he ran out of his room and down the hall. His brother’s door was wide open, and Adam jumped onto David’s bed.

“Adam?” David asked in a groggy voice. “What are you doing in here?”

Adam tugged on David’s arm. “There’s something in my closet!”

“You probably had a bad dream. Go back to bed.”

Adam yanked the blankets off the bed. “It wasn’t a dream. I was awake, and the closet door started opening by itself!”

David sighed. “Fine. But when we don’t find anything, you have to promise to leave me alone for the rest of the night.”

Adam nodded. David reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a flashlight. Then they headed to Adam’s room. Adam stopped in the doorway. He could hear something scratching his closet door.

“Do you hear that?” Adam asked.

David nodded. He walked over to Adam’s bed and pulled the case off one of the pillows. He opened the pillowcase.

“You open the door very slowly, and I’ll grab whatever it is.”

Adam slid the chair to the side and pulled the closet door open

a crack. Something banged against the door, trying to force it open. Adam took a deep breath and opened the door a few more inches. A small furry creature ran right into the pillowcase.

“I got it!” David said, closing the pillowcase and holding it in the air. “What is it?” Adam moved closer as David peeked inside.

David put the pillowcase on the bed and an orange cat climbed out.

Adam scooped the cat up. “Apricot? How did you get trapped in my closet?”

David laughed. “The poor cat. If I was locked in your closet with your stinky shoes, I’d be banging on the door to get out, too!”

“Poor, Apricot,” Adam said. “You were probably more scared than I was.”

When it comes to selecting an appropriate text or passage for the students to evaluate their comprehension it is very difficult to select a proper. Many teachers face this problem because the text or passage is difficult to read for students especially the ELLs and MLs. When selecting a text for ELLs and MLs, teachers should consider many factors to ensure the text is engaging, supportive of language development, appropriate, and not complex. Some other factors to keep in mind are visual support, text complexity, language proficiency level. Visuals help support entering and emerging students to comprehend the story and context with clear illustrations. According to NYSED “Comprehending text in different disciplines involves understanding the purposes, concepts, structural organization and language use unique to those disciplines, a consideration about learning in most disciplines that has typically not been explicitly addressed”. By considering these factors, teachers could make decisions when choosing books for ELLs, creating a positive and effective reading experience that supports their language development and academic growth. What can make a text complex? According to NYSED, the three things that make a text complex are quantitative elements of a text such as word length, word frequency, and sentence length, qualitative factors of a text such as text meaning or purpose, text structure, language conventions and clarity, and reader and task considerations that reflect characteristics of a specific reader, such as the reader’s background, motivation, and knowledge about the topic, and the specific task, such as the purpose and complexity of the task and the questions asked. When considering a text for ELLs and MLs use texts with shorter sentences and simpler vocabulary. As the students progress in their language skills, slowly they will be introduced to more complex texts with longer sentences and a wider range of vocabulary words. This paper explains the analysis and complexity of the text “The Closet Creature” By Kelly Hashway for a 3rd grade class. The summary of the text; The short

children's story revolves around a young boy named Adam and his encounter with mysterious sounds coming from his closet. The story, while brief, offers an engaging and suspenseful narrative that captivates young readers' imaginations.

The development of the thesis and purpose of this text is a short story that focuses on providing young readers engagement. The story tells a suspenseful and humorous story about a young boy named Adam, who hears scary sounds from his closet. This story creates curiosity, tension, and wonder about the mysterious sounds for the reader. The plot development of the text is suspenseful. The character interaction between both brothers Adam and David. The dialogues between both characters add humor to the text. Lastly, the resolution concludes that the noise from the closet was the family cat, Apricot. This story is meant to be engaging for students as they read. It develops a suspenseful plot with humorous elements, character interactions, and a surprise resolution to capture the interest of young readers.

As the text is generally accessible for English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners, especially those at the early stages of language development. There are still some aspects that could be challenging for ELLs such as vocabulary challenges. There are a few words and phrases that may be challenging for ELLs/MLs at the entering or emerging levels of language proficiency. Words like "propped," "peeked," and "stinky" may not be comprehensible for the young or early English learners causing difficulties to understand. The text primarily uses simple and age-appropriate vocabulary, making it accessible for young readers, including early English Language Learners (ELLs). Keywords include "bump," "scratch," "closet," "scary," "shaky," "open," "dream," "furry," "cat," and others. The complex sentences can make it difficult for ELLs/MLs to comprehend the story. Even though the text is short and straightforward there

were multiple actions/events described in a single sentence. The ELLs at the entering or emerging levels might find these more complex sentence structures challenging, as they require a higher level of comprehension to understand the sequencing of events. Using sentence strips could be useful when the sentence structure is complex. Echevarria et al, (2017) mentions, “This common technique can be used in a variety of ways at all grade levels. In reading/language arts, students can review events in a story by writing each event on a sentence strip, then sequencing the strips to retell the story” (pg.111). This text can be used to illustrate how ELLs/MLs process through the entering, emerging, and transitioning level of language proficiency. For the MLs “Allow students to provide differentiated responses to questions and assignments. For oral responses, provide sentence frames for those students who need them” (Echevarria et al, 2017, pg.112. The WIDA framework is often associated with these levels to assess language development. For an entering level student who has very limited English language proficiency, they will struggle with understanding the text independently because of the language and vocabulary. These students are better with videos, visuals, gestures, and illustrations to comprehend the story. When using “gestures, body language, pictures, and objects to accompany speech”, it helps assist students in making sense of the information presented verbally (Echevarria et al, 2017, pg.109). In this text, the use of dialogue, simple sentence structures, and repetition can provide some support for ELLs at this level. However, understanding the plot and specific vocabulary items may be challenging. For an emerging level student this text may still require support. These students will find the text more accessible than those at the entering level. These students can understand some of the story’s sequence and vocabulary. They still may struggle to comprehend the story and require repetition to help them understand. Lastly, for transitioning level students they would have a more solid understanding of the text as the student

would know the vocabulary. They could follow the story, understand the plot, and interpret the sense of humor in the text. It's important to note that ELLs/ MLs progress at different rates, and their development depends on various factors, including their prior language and age. Teachers could provide the appropriate scaffolding and support to help ELLs/MLs to move from one proficiency level to the next. "The Closet Creature" serves as a text that can support ELLs at different stages of language proficiency and contribute to their language development journey.

The dialogue in the text can create confusion for the ELLs/MLs because they may find it hard to grasp on the humor, idiomatic expressions, or language. The inclusion of dialogue between the two brothers, Adam and David, helps convey their emotions and interactions. It also provides examples of conversational language for young readers. Often when ELLs have comprehended the lesson it is difficult for them to express their thoughts verbally, therefore "Hands-on activities can be used to reinforce the concepts and information presented, with a reduced linguistic demand on these students"(Echevarria et al, 2017, pg.109). Lastly, the text had one picture of Adam looking scared, but other than that there were no other illustrations or visuals provided to the ELLs/ MLs to help comprehend the text. According to NYSED "The time, effort, and intent of the teacher who has worked so hard to create a comprehensible text for her ELL and ML students, has unknowingly provided her ELLs and MLs with a text that has so little natural linguistic material to work with, it is actually more challenging to comprehend". It's important to consider the individual language proficiency levels and experiences of ELLs/MLs. Some ELLs may find this text more challenging compared to others. Teachers should provide appropriate scaffolding, such as pre-teaching key vocabulary and adding more visuals, to support comprehension and engagement.

The text incorporates repetition of phrases such as "There's something in my closet," "It wasn't a dream," "poor cat," and "stinky shoes." This repetition reinforces key ideas and vocabulary, which can benefit language learners. Repetition serves as a valuable tool for language learners in several ways. The text's repetition establishes language patterns and structures. ELLs/ML students can observe how sentences are constructed and they become more recognizable. Repetition contributes to comprehension, students then can recognize familiar words and phrases to understand the plot. Repetition is another way for cognitive engagement because it allows the students to engage with the text by predicting, confirming, or questioning elements of the story, and enhances their critical thinking skills.

When conducting a cognitive analysis of the text "The Closet Creature" by Kelly Hashway, it's essential to consider the cognitive demands placed on young readers, particularly 3rd-grade students, including ELLs/ MLs. Some cognitive aspects and potential difficulties are plot comprehension; ELLs may find it challenging to follow the plot's sequence, especially when there are sudden actions and changes. The text's fast pace, with actions like Adam jumping out of bed, running, and opening the closet. Another cognitive aspect and potential difficulties is emotion recognition and empathy; The understanding of the character's emotions, such as Adam's fear and relief, may pose difficulties for ELLs. Interpreting emotional language and recognizing character's feelings can be complex, when the students have limited exposure to English-language. Lastly, problem solving is a cognitive aspect and potential difficulties because as Adam and David attempt to capture the "creature" in the closet. ELLs must follow the logic of the characters' actions, which may be cognitively demanding, especially for those at the entering or emerging language proficiency levels. To accommodate these cognitive difficulties teachers must work with the ELLs/MLs closely by pre-teaching the vocabulary words, discussing

different kinds of emotions, and providing visuals to support comprehension. Echevarria et al, (2017) mentions, “New ideas and concepts presented in a new language can be overwhelming for English learners. Graphic organizers take the information, vocabulary, or concept and make it more understandable by showing the key points graphically” (pg.110). Graphic organizers may be more elaborate. Collaborative reading and group discussions can help accommodate those with the cognitive demands helping them build skills to comprehend.

In conclusion, reflecting on the analysis teachers can scaffold the reading experience by pre-teaching challenging vocabulary and facilitating discussions to support ELLs engagement and understanding. There are many strategies teachers could use when using a complex text while teaching. Teachers can shorten the text for the ELLs/MLs, they can pre-teach the vocabulary, use smaller groups work strategy, group work, and more. When considering a text for reading the teacher must check for the book's language features; including dialogue, repetition, and descriptive language. These features can enhance language acquisition and comprehension. The appropriateness for learning objectives; consider how the book aligns with your learning objectives. Does it support specific language skills, such as vocabulary acquisition, grammar, or listening comprehension? Also, consider what activities can facilitate the book to integrate into the classroom.



## References:

- Topic Brief 3: De-Mystifying Complex Texts: What are "Complex" Texts and How Can We Ensure ELLs and MLs Can Access Them?  
<https://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed/topic-brief-3-de-mystifying-complex-texts-what-are-complex-texts-and-how-can-we-ensure>
- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2016). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model* (5th ed.). Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.