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EDDN 637

Professor Cowin

Fall 2025

Text Analysis & Critique: **UPDATED WITH COPILOT PROMPTING**

Analysis of a Chapter or Aspect

My text analysis and critique is on the story Places in my Neighborhood by Shelly Lyons.

This is a non-fiction text that comes from HMH Into Reading- Grade 1, Module 2: My Family,

My Community, Lesson 9. The reading skill students will be doing while reading this text is

Making Connections. The content objective is: Students will be able to make connections

between self and text (Next Generation Learning Standard: NYS.NGLS.1R9).



I have been teaching from this curriculum for reading and writing for 3 years. There are a lot of benefits to this curriculum, and a lot of downfalls. This curriculum offers a strong, structured approach that connects reading, writing, speaking, listening, and foundational literacy skills. One of its biggest strengths is the variety of teaching tools and resources it provides, such as Family Letters in a large variety of languages, Anchor Charts with visuals, Minilessons, Read and respond Journals, Small Group materials, and Decodable Texts. Each module includes

fifteen lessons meant to be taught over three weeks, however, to ensure student comprehension, some lessons are broken up into two days, which makes the module a bit longer. I like that students have their own MyBooks, where students can track the text as the teacher reads it aloud, and annotate in the text, which supports citing text evidence. However, one major challenge is that the reading passages can be too complex for many students, including English Language Learners, because the texts are not always aligned with their reading levels. This often leads to frustration and requires significant teacher scaffolding. I often find myself having to differentiate for students, and have long and detailed background knowledge discussions before reading the texts. As a result, lessons become longer, and younger students, especially first graders, struggle to stay focused for the entire duration.

Places in My Neighborhood by Shelly Lyons is an ideal text for supporting English Language Learners in the early stages of language development due to its low text complexity and rich opportunities for language scaffolding. Quantitatively, the book's Lexile level of IG470L and concise word count of 157 make it accessible for first-grade ELLs. The short, patterned sentences, such as "This is a park", use high-frequency, concrete vocabulary that supports decoding and builds confidence in early readers. Qualitatively, the book's meaning is straightforward and reinforced by real-life photographs that closely match the text, helping ELLs make visual connections to unfamiliar words. The repetitive structure allows students to internalize sentence patterns, which can be extended through oral practice and shared writing. However, some students may need additional support to understand places they haven't encountered before, such as a post office or fire station. Teachers can address this through pre-teaching vocabulary, using realia, or connecting the book to students' lived experiences. Reader

and task considerations are especially important for ELLs; activities like drawing their own neighborhoods, taking community walks, or creating multilingual labels for familiar places can personalize the learning and validate diverse backgrounds. With intentional scaffolding, this book becomes a powerful tool for building vocabulary, sentence structure, and cultural understanding in a way that honors students’ identities and fosters meaningful engagement.

OVERVIEW	ISSUES	TEXT ANALYTICS	SCORE
4 ▼	2 ▼	157 ▼	A ▼
Text Analysis Summary			
Word Count			157
Average Word Length			4
Average Sentence Length			6.3
Syllables per Word			1.4
Words per Paragraph			6.8
Sentences per Paragraph			1.1
Readability Grade Levels			
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level			3.1
Gunning Fog Index			6.1
Coleman-Liau Index			5.3
SMOG Index			7.7
Automated Readability Index			2.3
FORCAST Grade Level			8.9
Text Composition			
Adjectives			8
Adverbs			1
Conjunctions			3
Determiners			24
Interjections			2
Nouns			63
Proper Nouns			7
Prepositions			23
Pronouns			13
Qualifiers			0
Verbs			20
Unrecognised			1
Non-Words			0

Development of Thesis and Purpose

The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate how Places in My Neighborhood by Shelly Lyons supports English Language Learners in developing foundational reading skills, vocabulary, and real-world connections through accessible text features and visuals. This informational text, with a Lexile level around 300L–500L, contains short, decodable sentences and high-frequency words that promote early reading fluency. On the first read of this text, the teacher reads the text aloud, on the second reading, students echo the teacher reading the story, and on the third read, students partner read the text with a student that speaks the same native language, for full comprehension and accessibility of the text. The use of real photographs provides meaningful visual support, allowing students to make direct connections between the book and their everyday experiences. However, most of the places in the story do not look like the same places in our neighborhood. Before reading, I build background knowledge by discussing familiar community places that the students go to with their family, and while reading, I display real images of locations such as the clinic, fire station, library, park, and grocery store. These scaffolds help ELL students link the text to places they see regularly, which enhances comprehension, supports decoding, and builds confidence in reading informational texts. **This analysis aims to demonstrate that when paired with intentional scaffolding, even simple texts can serve as powerful tools for linguistic and cultural development among multilingual learners.**

Linguistic Analysis

Vocabulary

Critical Vocabulary: Community, Places, Purpose, Clinic

Big Idea Vocabulary: Area, Population, Working

Example of vocabulary card from the curriculum:

Vocabulary Card 2.24

com • mu • ni • ty (n.)

community

Teach the Word

- 1 Say the word. Ask children to repeat it.
- 2 Explain the meaning. A *community* is made up of people who live near each other and the places around them.
- 3 Talk about examples.

Use the Image The children in this community came together to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Make a Connection Talk about the people and places in your community. Your home, your neighbors, and our school are in one *community*.

Grade 1 • Module 2 • Week 2



Example(s) of Teacher Made (made by me for my first grade class) vocabulary cards for ELL students, which includes photographs from real places that they see in their community/neighborhood, such as the supermarket, JMart, which is a neighborhood store in the area of the school that students go to. This includes a vocabulary discussion question, as well as a sentence frame for ELL students. Additionally, it has the vocabulary word as used in the text, so the teacher can pre-teach the vocabulary in the context of the story.

A community is made up of people who live near each other and the places around them.

com • mu • ni • ty (n.)

community



We are apart of the P.S. 186 school community



Who are some of the people in a community?

The people in a community are _____

Places are certain parts of a city or town.

pla · ces (n.)

places



Park



Library

What are some places you like to visit?

Some places I like to visit are _____.

The vocabulary in Places in My Neighborhood is simple, high-frequency, and concrete, featuring familiar nouns like “park,” “store,” “home,” and “school.” These words are closely tied to student’ everyday experiences, which supports comprehension and relevance. The text avoids idiomatic expressions, figurative language, or technical terminology, making it accessible to early English Language Learners. Visual supports such as real photographs reinforce meaning and help students make connections between words and concepts. For entering and emerging learners, scaffolding can include pre-teaching key vocabulary, using gestures, pointing to images, and labeling objects in the classroom, and most importantly, using real life examples. Transitioning and expanding learners can practice categorizing words or using them in sentences, while commanding learners can extend vocabulary by comparing and describing places in their own neighborhoods.

Sentence Structure

Sentence structures in the text are short and straightforward, primarily following a subject–verb–object pattern. The sentences are declarative and concrete, with minimal use of adjectives, adverbs, or complex grammatical constructions, allowing learners to focus on meaning rather than decoding complex syntax. For example, sentences like “I go to the park” provide a clear and predictable structure. Entering and emerging learners benefit from modeling these sentence frames and practicing repetition. Transitioning and expanding learners can be scaffolded by gradually adding modifiers, conjunctions, or more complex clauses, while commanding learners can create their own extended sentences or combine multiple SVO patterns to describe events or compare places. **This foundational syntax provides a scaffold for introducing more complex grammatical forms, such as compound sentences and relative clauses, as learners progress.**

Discourse Patterns

The discourse patterns in Places in My Neighborhood are sequential and descriptive, with each page focusing on a single place and employing predictable phrases like “I go to....” This repetition and organization support cohesion, help learners anticipate language, and make the overall text structure comprehensible. Discourse markers are minimal, which reduces cognitive load for early learners, while cohesive devices such as repetition and reference pronouns link sentences meaningfully. Entering and emerging learners can be supported with guided read-alouds, pointing to images while reading, and using graphic organizers. Transitioning and expanding learners can practice retelling the sequence or comparing locations, while commanding learners can analyze relationships between places or create their own narratives. **Including page numbers or direct quotes from the text would further strengthen the connection between linguistic features and instructional strategies.**

In Places in My Neighborhood, sequencing ideas is made accessible for English Language Learners because each page focuses on a single location in a predictable order, such as “I go to the park,” “I go to the store,” and “I go to the library.” This clear sequence allows students to anticipate language and connect ideas logically. The repetitive phrase “I go to...” serves as textual evidence that reinforces sentence structure and vocabulary, giving learners a pattern to follow when reading or speaking. For example, when students see “I go to the clinic,” they can link the word clinic with its purpose, helping people, supported by the photograph. Using this evidence, teachers can scaffold understanding by asking students to retell the sequence of places, predict what comes next, or describe their own neighborhoods using the same pattern. This textual structure reduces cognitive load, supports comprehension, and helps ELLs navigate the challenges of processing new vocabulary, sentence patterns, and discourse simultaneously. By organizing ideas sequentially and highlighting repetitive language, the text provides a framework that promotes both understanding and active participation.

Critique of Challenging Concepts for ELLs

Although *Places in My Neighborhood* is generally accessible, English Language Learners can still face specific linguistic, cultural, and cognitive challenges when engaging with the text. Linguistically, even high-frequency words like *clinic* or *library* may be unfamiliar to some learners. For this, I explain that doctors office, or hospital may be another word for clinic, and go over synonyms in detail with students. Additionally, I show them ‘clinic’s’ that are nearby our school that they may recognize. When having a discussion about the word library, I took the class on a walk to the school library and showed them photographs of the library in the community. Furthermore, abstract community concepts such as *population* or *working* can be

difficult to grasp without concrete contextual support. Sentence structures, while simple, require understanding of subject–verb–object order and repeated phrases, which can pose challenges for learners at entering or emerging proficiency levels. Culturally, some locations or community practices may not align with a student’s personal experience, for example, a student who has never visited a library may find it harder to connect the text to prior knowledge. Cognitively, sequencing multiple places and linking them to their purpose in the community requires holding several ideas in working memory, which can overwhelm early learners. **Pairing students strategically based on proficiency levels and native language can further enhance peer-supported comprehension.**

Strategies to overcome these challenges include pre-teaching key vocabulary using visuals, gestures, and videos, connecting new words to students’ experiences, modeling sentence frames, and providing guided repetition through read-alouds. When reading these stories, I tend to do a gradual release method where on the first read, I read the text aloud to the class, on the second read, students echo read with me and on the final read, students partner read the text in heterogeneous pairs. Graphic organizers and sequencing charts can help learners map the order of places and their purposes, while discussions or collaborative retellings encourage active use of language. By scaffolding at multiple levels, teachers can make abstract concepts concrete and support learners in accessing both vocabulary and meaning.

Attention to De-Mystifying Complex Texts

Even seemingly simple texts can contain complex elements that challenge ELLs, including quantitative, qualitative, and reader/task-related features. Quantitatively, Places in My Neighborhood has low word count and short sentences, but for early ELLs, any unfamiliar word increases processing demand. Qualitatively, the text introduces abstract concepts such as

community, area, and population, requiring higher-order thinking to connect words with real-world meaning. From a reader/task perspective, learners must integrate vocabulary, sentence structures, and visual cues to comprehend both sequence and purpose of places, which can be cognitively demanding. Thankfully, we read this story three times, for 3 different lessons and focusing on different reading skills, which allows students to spend more time comprehending the text.

To de-mystify complex texts, teachers can use strategies such as scaffolding key vocabulary, using visuals and realia, modeling sentence frames, and chunking the text into manageable sections. Additionally, teachers can break lessons up into two days, pre-teach vocabulary and take time to build on background knowledge by adding on to and connecting with what students already know. It is imperative to have formative assessments embedded throughout the lessons, to ensure student comprehension, and reteach concepts when necessary. Encouraging students to make personal connections, retell sequences in their own words, or act out parts of the story helps bridge comprehension gaps. Explicitly discussing abstract concepts and using repetition with support allows learners at all proficiency levels, from entering to commanding, to access the content effectively, reinforcing understanding while building both linguistic and cognitive skills. It is important to scaffold and differentiate for all learners.

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"Act as a New York State instructional TESOL coach specializing in academic writing for master's-level TESOL teacher candidates. Review my paper critically without rewriting it. Focus on the following areas:

Logical flow and organization of ideas

Clarity and consistency of my thesis and purpose

Depth and accuracy of my linguistic analysis

APA formatting, including in-text citations and reference list

How well I address challenges for ELLs and MLs

Sequencing of ideas with appropriate textual evidence

My reflection on the concept of 'complex' texts and strategies to support ELL/ML access

Please ask guiding questions where you see gaps, inconsistencies, or areas needing

clarification. Do not rewrite my work. Help me reflect on my thinking and improve my writing."

You AI Use Disclosure Statement which you MUST USE as an end note.

This paper was reviewed using Microsoft Copilot as an instructional coach. Copilot provided critical feedback on logical flow, APA formatting, and linguistic analysis. No content was rewritten by AI. All revisions were made independently by the author.

AREAS BOLDED ARE WHAT I ADDED AS A RESULT OF COPILOT'S FEEDBACK

Logical Flow and Organization of Ideas

Strengths:

- Clear structure: introduction, analysis, critique, and reflection.
- Each section builds logically, especially the linguistic analysis.

Suggestions:

- Add a sentence to bridge the curriculum overview and the specific text analysis to improve flow.
- Consider whether the "Development of Thesis and Purpose" section adds new insight or could be folded into the introduction for clarity.

Clarity and Consistency of Thesis and Purpose

Strengths:

- Purpose is clearly stated and revisited throughout.
- Focus on ELLs and foundational literacy is consistent.

Suggestions:

- Make sure each section ties back to your main thesis, especially in the "Critique of Challenging Concepts."
- Clarify whether you're using "ELLs" and "MLLs" interchangeably or if there's a distinction you want to make.

Depth and Accuracy of Linguistic Analysis

Strengths:

- Strong alignment with WIDA levels.
- Effective examples and scaffolds for vocabulary, syntax, and discourse.

Suggestions:

- Briefly define “Critical” and “Big Idea” vocabulary to clarify their instructional roles.
- Expand slightly on how simple sentence structures (SVO) can support growth into more complex grammar over time.