*Quilt of a Country* is an informational article that falls within the 9th-10th grade band. The vocabulary, historical references and allusions make this a challenging text for most students. The article remains relevant a decade after it was written and raises many important ideas that students will find engaging about identity, immigration and the United States. . It is an appropriate stretch text for 7-8 and instructional/independent text for 9-10.

**Recommended Complexity Band Level**

This article appeared in *Newsweek* magazine two weeks after the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States. Like many texts throughout U.S. history, it seeks to describe the vast complexities of what it means to be “American.”

**Text Description**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quantitative Measure of the Text:**  1260L | **Range:**  1050-1335L | **Associated Band Level:**  9-10 |

**Quantitative Measure**

**Text Structure: Very Complex**

The structure and organization is complex, shifting between historical examples and reflections. For example, the paragraph preceding the following quote focused on a 1994 poll of American’s attitudes, followed by reflections and examples that subtly set up the next point. “There is that Calvinist undercurrent in the American psyche that loves the difficult, the demanding, that sees mastering the impossible, whether it be prairie or subway, as a test of character…”

**Language Features: Very Complex**

The text is full of metaphorical language, complex and abstract terms that are poetical and descriptive, but will pose a challenge to the average reader: “…because it was built of bits and pieces that seem discordant, like the crazy quilts that have been one of its great folk-art forms, velvet and calico and checks and brocades.” “Historians today bemoan the ascendancy of a kind of prideful apartheid in America, saying that the clinging to ethnicity, in background and custom, has undermined the concept of unity.”

The sentences are also complex: “With the end of the cold war there was the creeping concern that without a focus for hatred and distrust, a sense of national identity would evaporate, that the left side of the hyphen--African-American, Mexican-American, Irish-American--would overwhelm the right.” “Faced with this diversity there is little point in trying to isolate anything remotely resembling a national character, but there are two strains of behavior that, however tenuously, abet the concept of unity.”

**Meaning/Purpose: Very Complex**

This text is full of abstract ideas and has subtle, multiple levels of meaning that require inferences on the part of students. Some statements provide concrete details and context clues to support inferences: “When photographs of the faces of all those who died in the World Trade Center destruction are assembled in one place, it will be possible to trace in the skin color, the shape of the eyes and the noses, the texture of the hair, a map of the world.”

**Knowledge Demands: Very Complex**

The frequent allusions to historical events and people and literary references place a high cognitive demand on students to understand the text.

**Qualitative Measures**

Created by Cindy Parker [cindy.parker@education.ky.gov](mailto:cindy.parker@education.ky.gov) September, 2012

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

**Potential Challenges this Text Poses:**

Students may be confused by Quindlen’s specific word choices and allusions to other historic events and people. It is an appropriate stretch text for 7-8 and instructional/independent text for 9-10.

**Differentiation/Supports for Students:**

Additional background knowledge of events of the September 11, 2001, as well as subsequent events related to immigration issues, would help students contextualize the events and the point of view of the author writing it so soon after the event.

Related readings might enhance the student’s understanding of the historical significance of this event and the different social and political conflicts that ensued. Repeated readings may deepen the reader’s comprehension of the text.

For learning extension, consider having students apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening (L.11-12.3).

**Possible Major Instructional Areas of Focus (include 3-4 CCS Standards) for this Text:**

RI.9-10.3 - Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

* Focus on how Quindlen uses references to other historical events, people to make connections.
* Text-based questions—explain what is meant by “the Newark of which Portnoy complained…”

RI.9-10.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

* Focus on specific word and phrase choices and how they contribute to establishing an overall tone
* Text-based questions—explain what is meant by “mongrel nation,” “disparate parts,” etc.

R.9-10.6 - Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

* Focus on how Quindlen’s rhetoric aligns with the purpose of the text.
* Explain the juxtaposition of nationalities coming together that contributes to the quilt metaphor.
* Analyze how rhetoric such as “mongrel,” disparate,” “conundrum” contribute to the purpose of the article.

L. 9-10.5 - Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

* Focus on use of quilt metaphor and how other word choices relate to this—“calico,” “mongrel,” etc.

**Considerations for Reader and Task**