Text Complexity Analysis of *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* by Jacqueline Kelly

Qualitative Measures

Levels of Meaning: The novel has a single level of complex meaning: an 11 year-old vibrant and curious protagonist at the turn of the 20th century in small town Texas. Callie Vee and her naturalist granddad bond while they do science experiments together.

Structure: Told in the first-person voice of Calpurnia. The beginning of each chapter has an excerpt from Darwin's Origin of the Species.

Language Conventionality and Clarity: Calpurnia learns scientific terminology from her grandfather, a naturalist. Every sentence is beautifully crafted. We readers see the world through Callie's honest and keen observations. Some terminology is period-related in addition to the science-related words.

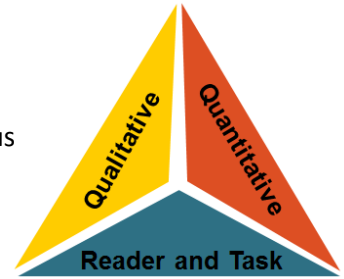
Knowledge Demands: This is a novel for thinking, questioning kids and adults. The writing is lyrical, the vocabulary enriching and the storyline excellent. Gives a good historical perspective too. The lower end of the recommended age of 4th–8th grade may be too young.

Quantitative Measures

Various readability measures of The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate *report that it is of appropriate complexity for Grades 4 - 8. The ATOS formula (used with the Accelerated Reader program) identifies this title as having a book level of 5.3. A Lexile measure for this novel is 830L.*

Reader-Task Considerations

These are to be determined locally with reference to gender (girls may relate better to story than boys) and to foundation in science.

Here in Kansas, educators might want to examine the following elements or issues: A family's openness to exposure/teaching of natural selection and evolution of species, although this issue is handled very smoothly.

This book was a Newbery Honor Book for 2010. It has been on numerous state award lists.