

May, 2018

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Response to EdReports Evaluation
***Collections* ©2017, Grades 6-8**

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on EdReports' review of *Collections* ©2017 Grades 6-8. It is a profound privilege to know that *Collections* teachers have encouraged millions of students to become lifelong readers and learners. Though we are confident that the efficacy of *Collections* ©2017 speaks for itself, we are also aware that opinions may vary. Allow us to shed new light on a few criteria that Houghton Mifflin Harcourt stands behind wholeheartedly but that EdReports has reviewed with mixed favorability. Included below are references to essential resources that EdReports did not consider in their analysis:

Gateway One: Text Quality and Alignment to Standards

- **1c and 1d:** *Collections* presents carefully chosen groups of topically related texts which together create impactful, powerful, and memorable instructional experiences. In some instances, a few texts will not follow a sequence of increasingly complex texts on a simple quantitative measure such as a Lexile score. These texts are included because they illuminate the Collection theme or teach critical literacy skills. In other instances, texts may be in the mid-range on the quantitative measure (Lexile score) but have higher cognitive demands in the qualitative areas of levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality, or knowledge demands. All texts considered collectively fit the appropriate grade-band placement and reinforce the spiraling ladder of text complexity across the grades. Teachers can prepare for needed accommodations and/or scaffolding by consulting the Text Complexity Rubric and the Text X-Ray. Both quantify the characteristics of the text and identify challenges in advance of each lesson.
- **1f:** *Collections* prides itself on its diverse literature, representing a balance of genders and ethnicities, experiences, and perspectives. Multiple genres and media forms reveal the different perspectives of authors on the same theme or essential idea. *Collections* presents an array of protagonists struggling with social or emotional competencies and persevering using Growth Mindset® principles. Teachers love that *Collections* is flexibly designed to honor teachers' professional judgment and preferences. As such, teachers are free to include beloved full-length novels of their choosing. Numerous digital resources help teachers align novels to the themes of the Collections, such as More Texts by Collection, Nonfiction Connections, and Novel Resources.
- **1h:** Every selection in *Collections* was meticulously chosen to elicit active reading and lively discussion. Evidence-based questions and tasks are plentiful and gear students up for both the selection and Collection level Performance Tasks. Examples of text-based questioning and activities that pave the way for the culminating Performance Tasks include:

- Close Read Screencasts
- Close Read Application
- Guiding Questions by Collection
- Collaborative Discussion
- Strategies for Annotation
- Close Reader: Short Response; Read/Reread/Discuss
- Analyze Story Elements
- Analyze the Text
- **1i and 1j:** In each and every Collection across the grades, Close Read Screencasts provide modeled academic conversations for students to actually hear discussion protocols in action. Students listen to the screencasts and then emulate the discussion best practices with their own Close Read Application. Interactive Lessons on Speaking can be used for whole group instruction, partner work, or self-paced independent lessons. They are linked into the digital Student Edition if the lessons apply to the assigned Performance Task. In addition, task-specific rubrics are available for teachers and students to understand the expectations and grading criteria of the Collection level Performance Tasks.
- **1k:** Each group of texts within *Collections* offers multiple opportunities for on-demand writing, short, focused projects, and process writing. On-demand writing is stitched into the program—in the Close Reader consumable, the digital Interactive Writing Lessons, the myNotebook, and much more. The selection level Performance Tasks would represent shorter, more focused projects that pave the way for the larger Performance Tasks at the Collection level. These exemplify process writing at its best and include explicit, step-by-step support on completion and evaluation.
- **1n:** Conventions and grammar are addressed on the Plan pages under the Language Conventionality and Clarity section in the Text Complexity Rubric and after the readings in a section called Language Conventions. Here, the grammatical term is defined, and students study the text for analysis. In addition to these opportunistic grammar lessons, teachers have numerous digital tools to enhance their instruction, such as Grammar Notes and Level Up Tutorials.

Gateway Two: Building Knowledge with Texts, Vocabulary, and Tasks

- **2b:** *Collections* strives to give each and every student the tools to access appropriate, complex texts with increasing independence. Rigor builds from selection to selection, Collection to Collection. Teachers can track progress through online assessment options, digital activities like Strategies for Annotation, or more formal Performance Tasks. Teachers can teach and model the kind of thinking and questioning students need to learn for text analysis using their Teacher’s Guide Close Reading questions and remove scaffolds as the year progresses. The Student Resources online include a version of these questions that can be assigned for independent or small group work.
- **2c:** In addition to the consistent text-dependent options already mentioned (see **1h**), the **selection** Performance Tasks ask students to revisit a text and expand their views on the theme, perspective, issues, and structure around it. These tasks very much pave the way for the **Collection** Performance Tasks. By contrast, these call for synthesis of ideas across several texts in the Collection. Similarly, the Performance Assessment resource requires students to read two or three new texts, and to analyze, compare, and synthesize ideas across all of them. Students then apply their knowledge to their own writing. In the Close Reader, each selection is directly related to an anchor text in the Student Edition. This pairing sets up a comparative structure as students integrate ideas across both texts.

- **2d:** *Collections* supports teachers and students in every step of the writing process. Students receive a Performance Task Preview at the start of each Collection that helps them focus their energy and annotations during reading. They also have a treasure trove of Interactive Writing Lessons, linked in their eBooks at point of use. Moreover, tools like revision charts and scoring rubrics set students up for success and give teachers a consistent measure for evaluation. The Performance Assessment resource provides stepped-out instruction on how to synthesize multiple texts and then respond in writing using text evidence.
- **2e:** The use of academic vocabulary in *Collections* is research-based and intentional. *Collections* uses academic vocabulary as a tool for effective expression, and it is reinforced and practiced throughout the curriculum. Close Read Screencasts often portray students discussing the meaning of challenging words, both academic and critical vocabulary. Academic vocabulary is introduced at the opening of each Collection and comes full circle with the Collection level Performance Task. By contrast, vocabulary that is specific to the subjects or domains of each individual selection is called critical vocabulary. These words are defined at point of use (with audio support in the eBook).
- **2f:** *Collections* provides a rigorous, year-long approach to writing. Lessons engage students in writing to sources, creating their own texts, and analyzing and critiquing the writing of their peers. In *Collections*, writing instruction begins with the reading and analyzing of texts. The standards and skills lessons following selections often present the critical elements of a type of writing that students will tackle in the upcoming Collection Performance Tasks. To further students' learning of key elements of writing, the self-paced Interactive Lessons in the eBook take students into the specific skills they will need to master in their writing. Students experiment with these elements in many of the selection Performance Tasks and then bring the elements together in the more sustained Collection Performance Task. For further practice and even for formative assessment, teachers may use the lessons in the Performance Assessment resource. The three-part lesson asks students to demonstrate competencies such as reading and analyzing several related texts, making comparisons, synthesizing ideas, and citing evidence in an original essay—all in preparation for writing they will encounter on high-stakes tests.
- **2g:** Research skills are often weaved into the Selection and Collection Performance Tasks when students are asked to further explore historical background or cultural connections. Other times they are required to find and analyze additional texts that enrich or provide compelling contrast to the themes of the Collection. Additional opportunities for research and writing include:
 - The Interactive Research Lessons
 - Extend and Reteach Lessons
 - Writing and Research in a Digital Age
 - FYI site
- **2h:** Resources for Independent Reading in the Teacher's Edition at the end of every Collection offer suggestions on how to create and maintain an independent reading program. Digital resources support this effort as well:
 - The FYI website at www.hmhfyi.com is an ideal asset to address students' interest and knowledge as well as foster their love of reading.
 - NovelWise
 - More Texts by Collection
 - Nonfiction Connections

It is with absolute confidence that Houghton Mifflin Harcourt places *Collections* ©2017 in the hands of millions of teachers and students, and we are proud of the proven difference it has made.