

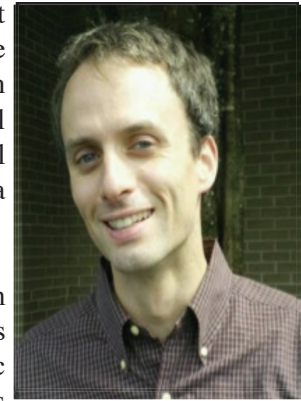
Common Core State Standards and Economics: *Reading Like a Detective, Writing Like a Reporter, and Thinking Like an Economist*

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Common Core State Standards (CCSS), is an initiative to develop common English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics standards across the country to prepare students with the skills and knowledge to be successful in college and in a career. The CCSS is a state-led initiative and joint project of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). CCSS exist for K-12 for mathematics and the English Language Arts (ELA), which includes literacy in history/social studies and science/technical subjects. In this article, we examine the CCSS for literacy in terms of how it can be interpreted for Economics Education.

Common Core Shifts in Instruction: Implications for Economics

The foremost goal of this paper is provide Economics teachers with a clear philosophy through which to integrate CCSS goals with Economics instruction. This paper will also act as a short

reference resource by which teachers can plan instruction that is sure to address CCSS requirements.

Coleman (2011) identified the key shifts in literacy instruction required by the CCSS in the English language arts. One of the big ideas underlying these standards is that they will be used in content areas, not to replace content, but to augment learning of content. Indeed, literacy skills are more effectively acquired in the pursuit of content-area knowledge (Pearson, in press), and the CCSS are at their best when literacy skills form a foundation for disciplinary inquiry (C3 Framework, 2013, p. 19). It is our view that the requirements of the CCSS have the potential not only to enhance core literacy competencies, but also to strengthen the teaching of Economics as well. In this article we examine some of these key shifts that have potential to impact Economics Education. In particular, we will outline a method by which teachers can use proven literacy techniques in a coherent fashion to help students

access Economics-related texts.

In this, we attempt to remain firmly grounded not just in the studies of Literacy and Economics, but also within the broader camp of the Social Studies. For this, we follow the lead of The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. The C3 Framework is an attempt to guide Social Studies instruction away from the too-common lecture format and toward an inquiry-based model that comports with the disciplines of Social Studies and the literacy requirements of the CCSS. We use this Framework mainly because it forms an excellent ground for discipline-based inquiry and connects with past research in the Social Studies (Whelen, 2006; Vansledright, 2011). We hope, therefore, that the approach will be rigorous from the standpoint of economic theory, coherent and accessible for non-specialist teachers of Social Studies, and acceptable to literacy experts and CCSS assessments.

First, note the dependence on beginning with “compelling questions” (C3 Framework, 2013, pp. 16-17, 22-24), for example, “Why are some parts of our city so polluted while others are so clean?” Such an introductory question acts as a “hook” for student interest and sets up students for a process of investigation. In the case of the compelling question above, for example, the economic concept at hand would be externalities and property rights, and students would have to bring CCSS skills to bear in order to access necessary data, construct reasoned conclusions, and communicate their thoughts. Furthermore, we seek to give Economics its due respect as a discipline, rather than making it merely a conduit for literacy instruction. Lastly, note the importance of the final product (C3 Framework, pp. 58-61). It is not enough to give students a set of comprehension questions; rather, their inquiry should come to a place where they can create an argument that builds on what they have learned through Economics. The argument may be written, but may also be spoken or created

in multimedia form – so long as the students demonstrate mastery of literary and economic concepts in their reasoning.

Use of More “Complex” Informational Text

A key component of the CCSS is that students need to read more complex or challenging texts. This complexity requirement does not apply to beginning readers in Kindergarten and Grade 1; however, students should be exposed to complex texts in the classroom – even if the teacher reads the texts aloud.

During workshops, several curriculum specialists in Social Studies have remarked to the authors of this paper that the CCSS may be one of the best things that has happened to the discipline in a long time. Because the CCSS require a greater amount of informational texts in the classroom – beginning with a 50/50 split between literary and informational texts in K-5, and progressing toward a 30/70 split in high school – Social Studies texts are gaining prominence in elementary literacy blocks. However, this does not preclude using children’s literature, novels, and fictional video clips to illuminate concepts. For example, much attention has been paid to the use of children’s literature for teaching economic concepts (Rodgers, Hawthorne, & Wheeler, 2007; & Day, et al, 2006) especially in K-5. In response to the CCSS, the first author has found that school districts are advocating a mix of fiction and informational texts in Social Studies. Educators use these texts in order to help students understand complex economic concepts, which are key to the disciplinary literacy necessary to the subject area.

Disciplinary Literacy and Academic Vocabulary

In Economics, students use specialized language and literacy academic vocabulary (Bauman & Graves, 2010). Bauman & Graves defined discipline-specific vocabulary as “the content

specific words used in disciplines like biology, geometry, civics, and geography” (p. 6). In Economics, these words could include technical vocabulary (Fisher & Frey, 2008) such as: scarcity, opportunity cost, marginal analysis, market economy, supply and demand, and relative scarcity. In their study of Economics, students would also be exposed to general academic vocabulary or “words that appear in texts across several disciplines or academic domains” (Bauman & Graves, p. 6). Finally, students would learn the relevant symbols used in the discipline, such as the mathematical symbols and equations used in graphs and charts.

In order to use the disciplinary language of Economics, the CCSS Speaking and Listening, and Language strands should be considered as essential skills. In K-5 Economics lessons, the recommended CCSS strands include: Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking & Listening. Alternatively, in 6-12, only Reading and Writing have separate standards for History/Social Studies; however, the speaking/listening and language skills are naturally present in the reading and writing activities. Furthermore, many highly effective and engaging Economics lessons involve simulations. While these simulations do not always involve reading, they include extensive disciplinary language usage and are aligned with the CCSS standards for Speaking and Listening. Resources that involve simulations could be further aligned to CCSS by adding reading or writing, which would naturally occur in the simulations. Furthermore, these simulations could be in the form of online games or challenges, like stock market simulations, where students can participate in real world experiences. Situations for authentic learning, whether face-to-face or in online environments, are essential activities in terms of CCSS requirements.

Economic literacy is the ability to “think like an economist” or participate in the Economic Way of Thinking (Heyne, 1999). Thinking like an economist involves making rational decisions

through the analysis of human choices in the context of scarce resources. Lessons in economic literacy typically include an investigation of the effects of scarcity, opportunity cost, incentives, economic systems, voluntary trade, and risk in human interactions (Schug, 1981; 1996). These economics concepts are key to a basic understanding of the discipline.

Close Reading

While the CCSS do not specifically call for close reading as a distinct strategy, the standards refer to the importance of students “reading closely” to find evidence and make inferences from texts. This focus has created a surge of new literacy research on effective close reading strategies (c.f. Fisher & Frey, 2012b; Hinchman & Moore, 2013). Close reading “involves sustained probing analyses, with students reading and rereading to obtain deep and thorough understandings of texts and to grasp the way texts shape understandings” (Hinchman & Moore, p. 443).

While close reading has been used with traditional text, the strategies are essential, not just for the written word, but also for the close “viewing” of images, videos, charts, and graphs. Close reading, therefore, is deep reading for analysis of evidence in texts.

So how could close reading be used in Economics? In Figure 1, we provide an example, using a short Adam Smith quote from *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in conjunction with some articles and a video clip that use the term “the Invisible Hand,” which is included in the original primary source quote.

A lesson involving the reading about “the invisible hand” by Adam Smith requires students to read closely to find evidence about what he meant when he referred to “the invisible hand.” Students would read to find evidence from the text and make inferences. Then, they would compare with other secondary sources (see Figure 1 for

Figure 1. Adam Smith Text for Close Reading

Quote from Adam Smith:

“But the annual revenue of every society is always precisely equal to the exchangeable value of the whole annual produce of its industry, or rather is precisely the same thing with that exchangeable value. As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it” (par. IV.2.9)

Other Texts to Use with the ‘Invisible Hand’

1. Invisible Hand video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulyVXa-u4wE>
2. New York Times: The Invisible Hand, Trumped by Darwin? http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/business/economy/12view.html?_r=0
3. Economist: A Little Help from the Invisible Hand <http://www.economist.com/node/21564594>
4. For more information and texts, see: Adam Smith Institute: <http://www.adamsmith.org/adam-smith>

possible articles) to see if the interpretation in the articles corroborates student evidence and inferences made from the primary source text. One of the key concepts necessary to help lead students through a close reading is to use text-dependent questions before, during, and after reading.

Text-Dependent Questions

Fisher and Frey (2012a) have defined text-dependent questions as: “effective questions about literature and nonfiction texts [that] require students to delve into a text to find answers” (p. 70). For example, consider the quote from Adam Smith (see Figure 1). A teacher could ask: 1) “Why is it that you can go to the grocery store, and every

time you can be confident that they will have the goods and services that you need? Who decides this stuff anyway?” or 2) “What does this reading tell us about the relationship between Individual Rights and the Common Good?” Students could answer the first question without even reading the text. However, the second question requires the students to read the text; that is the essence of the text-dependent question.

Tables 1-3 illustrate sample questions based on the Adam Smith ‘Invisible Hand’ theme. These questions are based on the CCSS reading anchor standards, which are listed on the left hand side of Tables 1-3. For example, in Table 1, in the left column, the CCSS anchor standard for reading is

listed, along with a summarizing term: CCSS for Reading #1 is the “close reading” standard, #2 is the “main ideas & supporting details” standard, and #3 is the text “development and interactions” standard.

Text-dependent questions about key ideas and details. Text-dependent questions certainly require reading like a detective. However, in Economics, “thinking like an economist” is also an essential skill necessary to understand the discipline. Therefore, the questions asked should help students further understand the content. These questions are best illustrated through an example.

Text-dependent questions for close reading. Adam Smith, the “father” of Economics, is often cited in relation to the Invisible Hand. Countless people have written about Adam Smith or used his term “Invisible Hand,” but do they really understand what he meant by the term? That is one of the key concepts of the CCSS: Students

read closely to find evidence and make inferences about what the author meant. Close reading questions should require students to read what the author says explicitly and make inferences, based on the evidence they read in the text in order to answer an overarching question. These are questions that require students to read for very specific evidence.

Text dependent questions for main idea/supporting details. On the other hand, main idea/supporting detail questions are more focused on discovering the central idea and supporting details of a text. These are questions that are frequently asked in Economics and other Social Studies lessons. They are the questions that require students to read and summarize a text. They are the who, what, when, where, how, and why questions.

Text development and interactions questions. Finally text development and interactions questions require students to analyze a text further in

Text-Dependent Questions for CCSS Anchor Reading Standards 1-3	Economics Examples: the Invisible Hand
<p>CCSS for Reading #1 Close Reading: <i>Read closely</i> to determine what the text says <i>explicitly</i> and to make logical <i>inferences</i> from it; <i>cite</i> specific textual <i>evidence</i> when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p>	<p>“This is a much-cited passage from <i>The Wealth of Nations</i>, in which Adam Smith discusses the ‘the Invisible Hand.’ What is this Invisible Hand, as described by Adam Smith? Cite evidence from the text to support your conclusions.”</p>
<p>CCSS for Reading #2 Main Idea & Supporting Details: Determine <i>central ideas</i> or themes of a text and analyze their development, summarize the <i>key supporting details</i> and ideas.</p>	<p>“What is the central idea of the quote from Adam Smith? What are some key details that Adam Smith discussed as integral components of the ‘Invisible Hand?’”</p>
<p>CCSS for Reading #3 Development & Interaction: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas <i>develop</i> and <i>interact over the course of a text</i>.</p>	<p>“According to Adam Smith, what is the relationship of the individual to industry in terms of way the ‘the Invisible Hand’ works?”</p>

Table 1. Text-dependent questions for Reading CCSS 1-3: Key Ideas and Details.

order to look for development of an idea, such as changes over a historical timeline. Consider a text that follows the production of a product from natural resource to consumer purchase. Students could track the path of production on a map. They could also discuss the interactions of the activities between locations or track the activities in terms of the Circular Flow model of a market economy. Furthermore, they could outline the decisions made at each stage and consider Economic decision making as a development of an idea. In order for students to analyze a text based on the PACED model for Economic Decision Making (see EconEdLink for a detailed description of the model <http://www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.php?lid=489&type=student>) they would have to delve deeply into the text to discover the development and interaction of the ideas.

Text-dependent questions about craft and structure. Reading Anchor Standards 4-6 require an interpretation of the way the author chose words, used text features, and illustrated a point of view or purpose for writing the text. These types of text construction questions are not often asked in Economics lessons.

Text-dependent questions about vocabulary and word meaning. A recent examination of Economics lessons provided a common theme: Lessons usually include very simple definitions. In fact, in many lessons, the teacher defines key economic terms prior to the students reading the text. Alternatively, the CCSS require students to interpret the words and phrases as they are used in the text. Ideally, teachers would guide students to find unfamiliar words and try to determine their meaning by their use in the text. Then, students would examine words and phrases to illustrate how the author’s choices emphasized the point of the text. For example, as illustrated in Table 2, a teacher could ask a question about Adam Smith’s use of the term “the Invisible Hand.”

Text-dependent questions about text structure. This standard requires students to analyze the structure of texts, which includes identifying traditional expository text structures, such as description, sequence, compare/contrast, cause & effect, and problem & solution. However, the standard also involves students’ ability to identify

Text-Dependent Questions for CCSS Anchor Reading Standards 4-6	Economics Example: the Invisible Hand
<p>CCSS for Reading #4: Vocabulary and Word Choice Interpret <i>words and phrases</i> as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, & figurative meanings, and analyze how specific <i>word choices shape meaning</i> or tone.</p>	<p>“Define the meaning of ‘the Invisible Hand’ by using context clues in the passage. Why did Adam Smith use this powerful phrase?”</p>
<p>CCSS for Reading #5: Text Structure Analyze the <i>structure of texts</i>, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</p>	<p>“How does Adam Smith structure his text? How does his discussion of the Invisible Hand contribute to the whole of the text?”</p>
<p>CCSS for Reading #6: POV & Purpose Assess how <i>point of view</i> or <i>author’s purpose</i> shapes content & style of a text.</p>	<p>“Why did Adam Smith write this passage? Do you notice any personal bias in his writing?”</p>

Table 2. Text-dependent questions for Reading CCSS 4-6: Knowledge and Ideas

the text structure and features of graphs, charts, tables, and spreadsheets. Students are asked to consider supply and demand curves and all of the features they would need to identify in order to “read” or interpret a graph. This standard also requires students to be able to identify text features on visual texts, videos, and non-linear texts such as, websites and interactive media. For example, if students were using the Adam Smith quote as a primary source, they could compare the structure of that text to some of the other online articles that use the Invisible Hand as a way to illuminate Economic ideas.

Text-dependent questions about Point of View (POV) and purpose. Questions about POV would require the students to delve further into information about the author. For example, considering Adam Smith, students could consider the date (1776) of publication, which could have influ-

enced his point of view. They could also consider how he may have been biased in his ideas based on his occupation or experiences. Furthermore, it is also important to ask questions about the purpose of the text. Why was it written? What is the tone? Are any loaded or descriptive words used? Who was the intended audience?

Text-dependent questions about knowledge and ideas. Reading Anchor Standards 7-9 require students to integrate knowledge and ideas; that is, they should gather and compare ideas across texts, evaluate sources, and analyze evidence. These questions include those that require including multimedia sources, evaluating arguments and claims, and making intertextual connections.

Text-dependent questions about multimedia sources. Reading Anchor Standard 7 requires

Text-Dependent Questions for CCSS Anchor Reading Standards 7-9	Economics Example: the Invisible Hand
<p>CCSS for Reading #7: Multimedia <i>Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</i></p>	<p>“Find a articles, video clips, and political cartoons where individuals discuss the ‘Invisible Hand’ and compare them to your understanding based on Adam Smith’s original text.”</p>
<p>CCSS for Reading #8: Argument and Claims <i>Delineate and evaluate the argument and claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning and the relevancy and sufficiency of the evidence.</i></p>	<p>“Find an article (newspaper, magazine, or blog post, etc.) where the author uses the ‘the Invisible Hand’ to explain or critique economic activity. What argument does the author make? What claims does the author make?”</p>
<p>CCSS for Reading #9: Intertextual Connections <i>Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</i></p>	<p>“Read the two articles that reference the ‘the Invisible Hand’ and compare and contrast ideas that the authors generate in relation to Adam Smith’s term.”</p>

Table 3. Text-dependent questions for Reading CCSS 7-9: Knowledge and Ideas

that students understand the relationship between illustrations and text. For example, in an elementary classroom, using a children's book, a teacher could have students read the words and examine the illustrations in order to ascertain the evidence. Additionally, informational texts often present information using words, pictures, and other graphics. Most Economics textbooks include words and figures/tables/graphs. Often students skip these or read them separately and are unable to integrate the information. This standard requires that students integrate the information from different media both within and across texts. For example, using the Adam Smith text, students would use his quote and integrate information from other sources they read on the websites, as well as viewed in the video or other sources such as, political cartoons.

Text-dependent questions about arguments and claims. Reading Anchor Standard 8 requires that students evaluate the author's argument and supporting claims. By asking questions about the validity of the argument and the sufficiency of the evidence, students determine if the reasoning is valid. For example, students can examine one of the online texts where an author argues that a concept is related to the Invisible Hand. Then they can evaluate if the argument is valid and if there is enough information included in the text. They could also discuss further information that would have made the argument stronger. In addition, they may also discuss the author's use of the Invisible Hand and discuss whether the use of the concept was relevant in the article. The Invisible Hand is a concept often misquoted in articles so this is a great opportunity for students to dig deeper into texts.

Text-dependent questions for comparing texts. Reading Anchor Standard 9 involves using and comparing two or more texts in order to build knowledge or compare the approach or conclusions of the different authors. This is the perfect question to use for evaluating other people's use of Adam Smith's concept of the Invisible Hand;

this concept is often misunderstood. Therefore, students could read a variety of other articles, political cartoons, and video clips, then examine how different authors defined the Invisible Hand. They could thus compare and contrast the ideas using their own interpretation.

Summary

The latitude afforded by the Common Core for subject-area content gives teachers of Economics the space to address fascinating issues that will grab the students' attention: "Should the government bail out banks if the country is faced with a financial panic?" "Does war help or hurt an economy?" or "Is college really a good investment?" Students can address these economics-related questions by a process of guided inquiry, similar to the one they will need to use as informed and active citizens. This allows a teacher's Common Core instruction to be both by the Social Studies and ultimately for the Social Studies.

According to Coleman (2011), students should be able to read like detectives and write like reporters, and if we have anything to say about it, to think like economists. The CCSS enable the first two of these by tying reading directly to writing. As illustrated in the above examples, students can participate in a variety of reading activities, take notes, and report their findings. The CCSS require students to write for a variety of purposes and create more informational/explanatory and argumentative reports. They should read and research closely to gather information from multiple print and digital sources and report in a variety of forms, including oral reports and digital forms of writing. The end result, if done well, could be a generation of incisive thinkers and lucid writers. Or better still, picture this: journalists who can think like economists, and economists who can communicate like journalists.

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