

# The POWER of Syntax in Comprehension

SoR Planning Challenge with @mrsmcmanusela



# Why it matters?

- Comprehension often breaks down at the sentence level.
- A blog post by Shanahan on Literacy says that “the kids who understand syntax comprehend better than the ones who don’t.”
- It goes on to say “that the ability to make sense of complex sentences is more crucial than the ability to evaluate grammatical accuracy.

Shanahan, Timothy. “Trying Again – What Teachers Need to Know about Sentence Comprehension.” *Shanahan on Literacy*, 13 Aug. 2022, [shanahanonliteracy.com/blog/trying-again-what-teachers-need-to-know-about-sentence-comprehension](https://shanahanonliteracy.com/blog/trying-again-what-teachers-need-to-know-about-sentence-comprehension). Accessed 13 June 2025

# What goes into reading level?

- Vocabulary complexity and frequency
- Sentence structure and length
- Text cohesion and organization
- Background knowledge required
- Difficulty of concept/content

# Scarborough's Reading Rope

## Language Comprehension **LC**

**Background Knowledge**  
facts, concepts, etc.

**Vocabulary**  
breadth, precision, links, etc.

**Language Structures**  
syntax, semantics, etc.

**Verbal Reasoning**  
inference, metaphor, etc.

**Literacy Knowledge**  
print concepts, genres, etc.

## Word Recognition **D**

**Phonological Awareness**  
syllables, phonemes, etc.

**Decoding**  
alphabetic principle,  
letter-sound correspondences

**Sight Recognition**  
of familiar words

INCREASINGLY STRATEGIC

**Skilled Reading** **RC**

INCREASINGLY AUTOMATIC

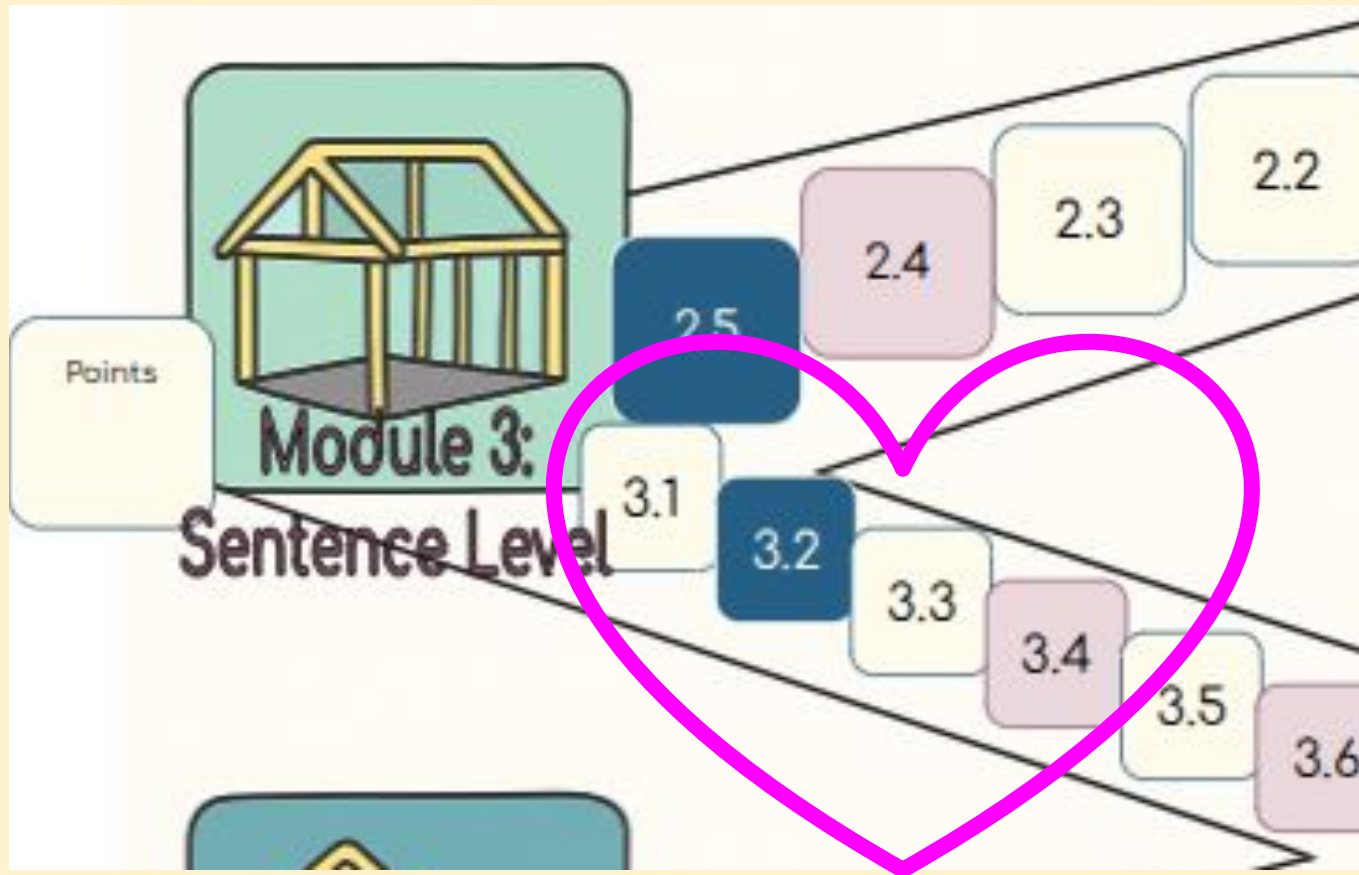
$$\text{LC} \times \text{D} = \text{RC}$$

Fluent word recognition and comprehension.

Without any one of the components, reading comprehension goes down.

<https://www.reallygreatreading.com/blog/scarboroughs-reading-rope>

Tasks  
for  
Today:



## Task 3.1 + 3.2

- Choose a grade appropriate grammar topic from the blog post to either teach or review with your students.
- Share your thoughts in the comments of the grade appropriate grammar blog. Do these topics align with what your school does?

### Vertically Aligned Grammar Requirements

According to CCSS



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## Task 3.3 + 3.4

- Plan a grade level grammar progression for this reading unit. What topics will you need to review and teach new?
- Share your favorite way to teach the grammar topic you've chosen in the Facebook group.

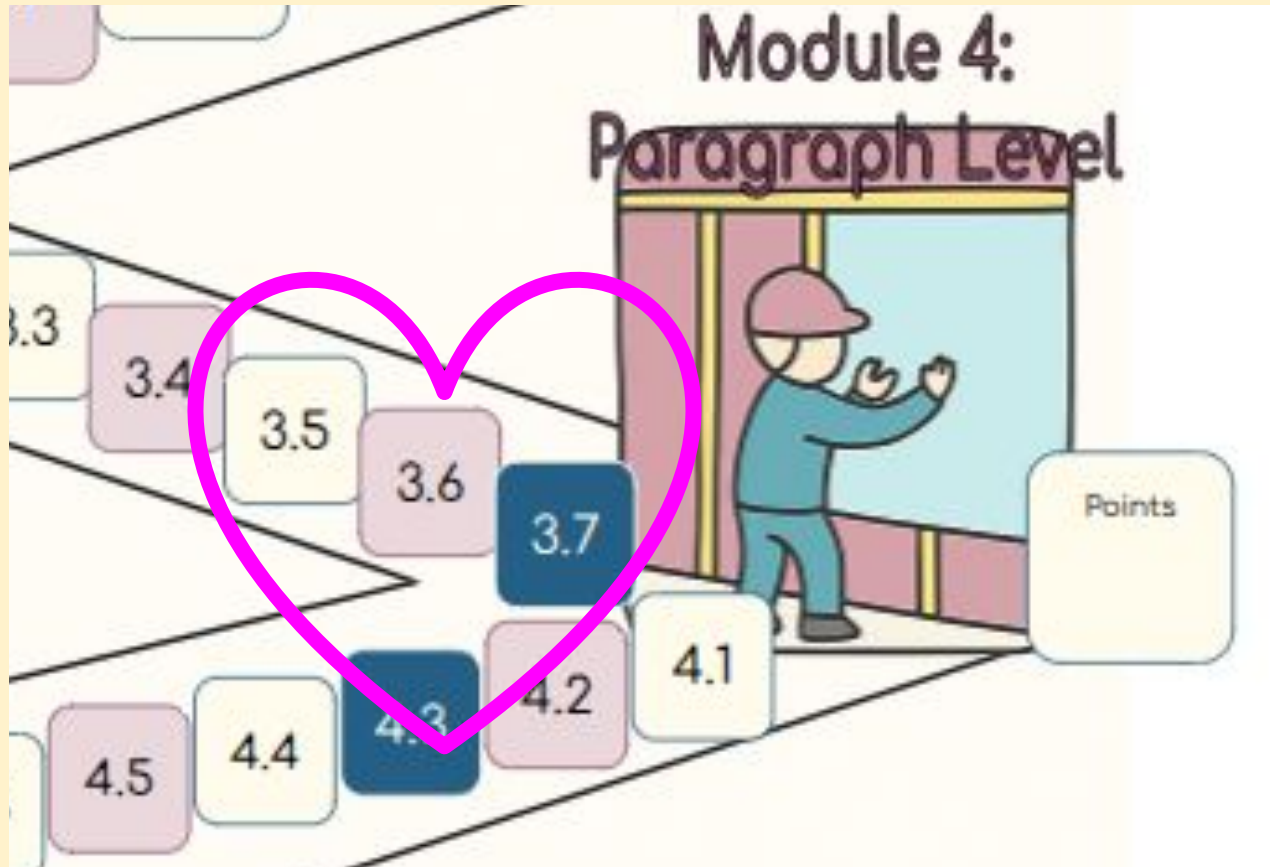
## Vertically Aligned Grammar Requirements

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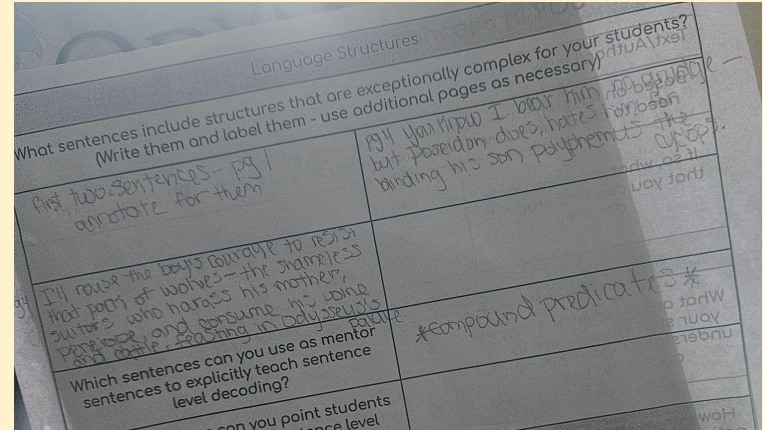
Tasks  
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## Task 3.5

- Find at least five sentences from the text that you could use as mentor sentences to teach a grade appropriate grammar topic. Look back at the Text Complexity Planner at what you identified as being potentially confusing for your students before reviewing the text itself.



## Task 3.6

- Choose a sentence level activity from the blog post or shared in the Facebook Group to add to your unit plan. Make sure to add any necessary materials or tasks to your to-do list.

## Teaching Sentence-Level Decoding in Secondary ELA



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## Task 3.7

- Invite a colleague to join us! Have them join the facebook group and use the invite link to grab the challenge guide.

SHARE ON  
SOCIAL MEDIA



SOR PLANNING CHALLENGE  
@MRSMCMANUSELA

## Our goals:

1. Learn about integrating Science of Reading research (Scarborough's Reading Rope) into our every day instruction.
2. Map out and plan a Science of Reading aligned unit for your secondary classroom.