Myths of the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standardsidentify grade-specific standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. A number of these standards that directly address the use of literature in classrooms are often misinterpreted, leading to misunderstandings. The new directions related to literature and their corresponding myths include:

* An increase in the use of informational texts in classroom instruction, beginning in Kindergarten with a 50/50 split between literary and informational texts and gradually increasing to 70/30 in high school. Schools are encouraged to greatly increase the availability and use of informational texts.
  + Myth--narrative and literary fiction are not valued in the standards. The standards have a strong focus on literary texts and argue for a better balance of the types of texts used in classrooms, not an overbalance in the other direction.
  + Myth—the 70/30 split for high schools means that English teachers should only spend 30% of their instructional time with literary texts. The 70/30 recommendation is across the school day and includes the informational texts students are reading in content area classes. English teachers are encouraged to add more informational texts surrounding the literary texts but their focus remains primarily on literary texts.
* An emphasis on continual increases across grade levels in the complexity of texts that students are reading. CCSS provides a list of text exemplars for each grade level along with excerpts from these texts to demonstrate this increase in text complexity.
  + Myth--these lists are core books to be read by all students. The lists are exemplars to help teachers learn how to evaluate the complexity of texts in their school. The lists are exemplars of text complexity, not core reading lists.
  + Myth—text complexity is determined by quantitative measures, specifically by lexile levels. Text complexity in CCSS is determined by lexile levels along with teacher judgment about the difficulty of a text related to the readers in that classroom and the task in which they are engaged.
* A focus on the close reading of texts and text analysis where students cite evidence in the text as they discuss key ideas and details, craft and structure, and knowledge and ideas. Text analysis is viewed as bringing rigor to reading with an emphasis on high level critical reading.
  + Myth—reader response does not include text analysis, focusing only on personal connections that do not lead to critical thinking. This myth is a misunderstanding of reader response that has been incorporated into CCSS. Reader response begins with personal connections and interpretations and then readers analyze their response and interpretations through dialogue based on evidence from their lives and the text.