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Nonfiction Text Usage in the Primary Grades

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NONFICTION TEXT USAGE
IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Project Report
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education
Master Teacher

by
Shanna Marie Carlson
May 2010

ABSTRACT

NONFICTION TEXT USAGE
IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

by

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The past and current role of nonfiction text, also referred to as informational text, in the elementary classroom setting was studied. The educational benefits of nonfiction use was examined and found to have a significant impact on the learning and success of students. Effective uses for nonfiction books were compiled into a handbook for the use of primary teachers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Project

Over the course of her career the author has been involved in several in-depth literacy trainings provided by the Highline School District and Central Valley School District. These trainings were based on classroom teaching and allowed for collaboration and reflection upon current best practices. Through close examination of the author's teaching and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of students, the author observed a trend in the ability students were able to comprehend informational text.

Many students showed great interest in reading nonfiction text but lacked the skills and strategies necessary for understanding and obtaining meaning when reading this genre. The author evaluated her use of nonfiction text in her personal and professional life by asking the following questions: How often was nonfiction text read both personally and professionally? How is nonfiction presented in the classroom? How often is nonfiction text read aloud to students? How is nonfiction text presented in district mandated curriculum? How often were students exposed to nonfiction text through other means? How well did the students understand the workings and organization of nonfiction text? And finally, to what extent is nonfiction text used in state standardized testing?

The author's initial research found a study conducted by Duke (2000) which looked at twenty first-grade classrooms and states that, results show a scarcity of informational texts in classroom print environments and activities--there were relatively few informational texts included in classroom libraries, little informational text on

classroom walls and other surfaces, and a mean of only 3.6 minutes per day spent with informational texts during classroom written language activities (p. 203).

This research prompted the author to look deeper into informational text and its role in primary instruction. Palmer and Stewart (2003) stated, “Nonfiction has been a small part of primary-grade instruction due, in part, to the lack of quality books written for this level. The author found that what hindered some teachers was lack of knowledge of what is available and lack of access to quality nonfiction” (p. 38). Duke (2004) argues the need for additional instruction around nonfiction text. She states, “We are surrounded by text whose primary purpose is to convey information about the natural or social world. Success in schooling, the workplace, and society depends on our ability to comprehend this material. Yet many children and adults struggle to comprehend informational text” (p. 40). She goes on to say that, “We should not wait to address this problem until students reach late elementary, middle, and high school, when learning from text is a cornerstone of the curriculum” (p. 40).

This startling “scarcity of informational texts” along with a “lack of knowledge” prompted the author to look deeper into the development and use of nonfiction text. The author compiled research-based best practices to create a handbook which would aid in the instruction of nonfiction text and create lifelong learners who comfortably embrace the nonfiction genre.

Purpose of the Study

Calkins (2001) states, “Nonfiction reading is the primary reading fare of every teacher, researcher and teacher-educator, and it will be the primary reading fare of each of our students” (p.437). In fact, “85 percent of the reading done by middle school, high

school, college, and postgraduate students is nonfiction (Routman, p. 440, 2000)."

Teachers should also be aware that this growing importance of nonfiction can be seen in state wide testing as well. Currently, "standardized tests across our country are now comprised of anywhere from 50-85 percent informational texts" (Hoyt, p. 3, 2002)!

Calkins (2001) goes on to describe nonfiction use in our nation's elementary schools by saying, "Today, this world of nonfiction reading is in a state of crisis in many of our schools, and that should be of concern to all of us...Our schools not only provide little time for nonfiction reading, they also provided few texts. Very few teachers have more than a shelf of nonfiction books in their classroom libraries" (p. 438). Calkins (2001) describes the classroom libraries as being hopeless and difficult with the text used being inaccessible to students as a result of the outdated features and difficult sentence structure and language.

Buss and Karnowski (2002) state, "Educators agree that in order to lead elementary students to competence in literacy, teachers need to expose them to a wide range of literary genres" (2002, p. 43). They continue to explain that, "Many educators, however, have not felt the same sense of success in teaching nonfiction texts that they do when teaching narrative texts." (p. 45)

The purpose of this project was to provide primary teachers with a better understanding and "sense of success" in teaching nonfiction text through the creation of a teacher handbook. Cited research will show how nonfiction text has historically been underused in classrooms and the value nonfiction text will have when used in a variety of manners.

Included in the handbook are research based definitions, common forms and features of nonfiction text, Washington State grade level expectations, text recommendations and teacher resources. Literacy instruction varies greatly from one classroom to another. As a result, the generic lesson plans which are included are intended to be used as a guideline which is flexible enough to fit the needs of students and teachers. The final product can be implemented in primary classrooms by providing resources and ideas supporting research based nonfiction text use.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project includes resources and lesson plans for primary classroom use. Grade level expectations for the state of Washington have been considered. This project may present limitations in its application in some classroom settings. The suggested materials and nonfiction books may be unavailable in particular classrooms or schools. Lesson plans may not be applicable to all primary grades or state learning requirements. All of the resource materials have been created as a guide for primary grades K-3 and are intended to be altered by teachers to meet the needs of their classrooms and students. The research and materials are based on current research-based best practices and resources in literacy.

Definition of Terms

Assessment- Collecting data and gathering evidence regarding the appropriation of knowledge; not useful unless evaluation is included (Routman, 2003).

Genre- Term used to classify literary and informational works into categories (e.g., biography, mystery, historical fiction) (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2004).

Grade Level Expectations (GLEs)- Documents created by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction addressing the Washington State's Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in reading, writing and communication (2006).

Guided Reading- A teaching technique in which a student or students read- mostly silently- a carefully chosen book at their reading level, and the teacher supports, teaches, and evaluates as necessary (Routman, 2003).

Independent Reading- On their own, readers choose and read books they enjoy and understand; usually involves daily sustained silent reading in school along with careful teacher monitoring (Routman, 2003).

Nonfiction Text- Nonfiction is an account or representation of a subject which is presented as fact. This presentation may be accurate or not; that is, it can give either a true or false account of the subject in question. However, it is generally assumed that the authors of such accounts believe them to be truthful at the time of their composition. Nonfiction is one of the two main divisions in writing, particularly used in libraries, the other being fiction (Nonfiction, 2010).

Shared Reading- Students and teacher read a text together, the teacher taking the lead and the students following along and actively participating; in the early grades, mostly involves lots of repeated reading of poems, stories, enlarged texts; with younger and older students, shared reading may also involve introduction to and demonstration of new genres and strategies (Routman, 2003).

Text Forms and Features- Taken from the Text Forms and Features: A Resource for Intentional Teaching created by Dr. Terry Bergeson, State Superintendent of Public

Instruction, which identifies the needs of K-12 students in learning the attributes and characteristics of text (Office of the Superintendent, 2004).

Text Features- A prominent characteristic of a particular type of text such as chapter titles, sub-headings and bold faced words in a history text. (OSPI, 2004).

Text Organizational Structures- Expository text structured in certain ways. The five text structures that students are most likely to encounter are cause-effect, compare/contrast, description, problem/solution, and chronological or time order. (OSPI, 2004).

Text Structure- The way information is organized and presented. (For example: Fiction texts and biographies generally use a narrative structure and are meant to be read from beginning to end; nonfiction or informational texts are organized by topics or into sections, using text features such as headings, bold print, transitional words/phrases, etc.). (OSI, 2004).

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

“In this ‘Information Age’ the importance of being able to read and write informational texts critically and well cannot be overstated. Informational literacy is central to success, and even survival, in advanced school, the workplace, and the community”
(Duke, 2000, p. 202).

The Importance of Informational Text

Americans are living in the “information age”. The ability to read and understand information is becoming increasingly important. Studies have shown that the majority of reading and writing adults do is nonfiction. Approximately 96 percent of sites on the World Wide Web contain nonfiction, informational text. The academic achievement of students relies heavily on the ability to read and write in the informational genre (Duke, 2005).

Informational text is defined by Yopp and Yopp (2006) as being synonymous with the term nonfiction text. These terms will be used interchangeably in the context of this paper. “Informational texts are nonfiction texts that have as a primary purpose the conveyance of information about the natural or social world” (Yopp & Yopp, 2006, p. 40). The genre of informational, or nonfiction text, is compiled of many smaller subgenres that students may encounter. To further define informational text, Routman states (2000),

Nonfiction is a sprawling genre that encompasses informational narratives, textbooks and reference books, newspapers, and news magazines. Included in the

form are biographies and autobiographies, scientific findings and experiments, treatises on history and social studies, reports, directions and instructions, and much more. (p. 441)

Buss and Karnowski (2002) break down the nonfiction genre even further by categorizing its purposes into four categories: (1) to recount or share a personal experience; (2) procedural material which shows how something is done or how something works; (3) information which shares the importance of a topic and, (4) persuasive as in presenting an argument or opinion.

Informational text encompasses a large amount of text found in our literate world, yet many Americans are not fully prepared to read it. Duke (2005) cites Levy who states that nearly 44 million American adults cannot comprehend single pieces of information from written informational text. Student's academic achievement relies heavily on informational reading and writing in a range of school grades, subjects and fields (Duke, 2005). Harvey (2002) cites Zinsser who reports that adults outside of a school setting read nearly 80-90 percent of nonfiction materials, including newspapers, magazines, memos, manuals, directions and informational trade books.

In *The Case for Informational Text* (2004), Duke argues the need for additional instruction around nonfiction text: "We are surrounded by text whose primary purpose is to convey information about the natural or social world. Success in schooling, the workplace, and society depends on our ability to comprehend this material. Yet many children and adults struggle to comprehend informational text [sic]" (p. 40). She goes on to stress the importance of early inclusion of informational text before students reach late,

middle and high school where the demands become more prevalent in required curriculum.

The Scarcity of Nonfiction Text

Duke (2000) conducted some of the first research on nonfiction use in an observational study of 20 first-grade classrooms. The classrooms were of either high or low socio-economic status and among 10 different school districts. Duke (2000) visited each classrooms four times over the course of one school year. Her study focused on finding out how much and what kind exposure and experiences with informational text is offered to students in first grade.

Duke (2000) found that informational text only accounted for an average of 2.6 percent of displayed print (text on classroom walls or other surfaces, including items such as posted rules, lunch menus, calendars, labels, maps, etc.), and surprisingly, 4 classrooms showed no informational displayed print at all. Results also found that only 9.8 percent of the classroom library was dedicated to informational materials.

Additionally, in the 79 full days of observation it was found that only 282 minutes of activities involving informational print occurred, this is an average of 3.6 minutes per day. In low socio-economic districts the average was lower, at 1.4 minutes per day. Specifically, 7 out of 20 classrooms spent no time with informational texts during the observed days, 7 classrooms each spent an average of less than 5 minutes per day with informational texts, and the remaining 6 classrooms spent an average of no more than 10 minutes per day with informational texts. When young children miss opportunities to interact with nonfiction text; the students lack in preparation for future informational reading and writing encounters. This is a cause for concern (Duke, 2000).

Yopp and Yopp (2006) examined the use of informational text used as read-alouds in preschool through third grade classrooms; their findings also show a scarcity of informational text use. Participants included 1,144 teachers who submitted the titles they read aloud to their class on any given day. Results of this study showed that narrative texts were used far more than any other genre, ranging in use from 68 percent to 89 percent of material read aloud (Yopp & Yopp, 2006).

A third study conducted by Moss and Newton (2002) looked into the inclusion of informational text in basal readers. The amount of informational text in basal readers (textbook used to teach reading) is of importance because, "Basal readers are used in 95 percent of American classrooms; in many classrooms they are children's chief source of exposure to the printed word" (Moss & Newton, 2002, p. 2). While basal readers have such a large place in literacy instruction, Moss and Newton (2002) show that informational text does not hold a significant place in them. After analyzing basal readers from six major publishing companies across three different grade levels they found that basal readers are largely comprised of fiction, with only 18 percent of pages being informational text. The authors also concluded that basal publishers lacked awareness for the importance of a range of text types and in selecting quality informational material to be included in text books (Moss & Newton, 2002).

Misconceptions of Nonfiction Use

After understanding the importance of nonfiction in the lives of literate adults, educators must ask themselves: why there is such a scarcity of informational text in classrooms. Duke, Bennett-Armistead and Roberts (2003) delve into three outdated beliefs held by educators that explain this lack of informational text present in

classrooms. These include the belief that young children cannot handle informational text, young children do not like informational text, or at least prefer other forms of text, and that young children should first learn to read and then read to learn (Duke, Bennett-Armistead & Roberts, 2003).

The first belief, that young children cannot handle informational text is unfounded. Very little research is available to support this theory (Duke, 2003; Pappas, 2003; Yopp & Yopp, 2006). In fact, Duke (2003) states, "Informational text is developmentally appropriate for young children" and informational text can be successfully used when children are given the opportunity to interact with it (p. 14). The idea that young children can utilize nonfiction text is supported by Pappas (1993), who examined the reading behaviors of kindergarten students. The study found that kindergartners could read storybooks with as much ease as they could read informational text and showed a strong interest in both literary forms.

The belief that informational text cannot be found at appropriate reading levels is often cited as a reason for the scarcity of informational instruction (Duke, 2003; Palmer & Stewart, 2003). The availability of quality informational text, however, is rapidly changing, "In recent years there has been a virtual explosion in the nonfiction trade book field" (Palmer & Stewart, 2003, p. 38). Excellent informational texts, workshops and resources are becoming available and accessible for all primary classrooms (Palmer & Stewart, 2003).

The third belief is that young children do not like informational text, or at least prefer fiction or other types of reading materials. Mohr (2006) investigated the text selection preferences and processes of 190 first grade students. Students were asked to

select one book they would like to own out of a selection of nine books of varied genres. The results were unmistakably in favor of informational text. Of the 190 students, 84 percent of them selected an informational book. Additionally, no students interviewed about their text selection process referred to text difficulty as playing a role in selecting the book. “These students chose books that gave them insight into the world and seemed less concerned with books that mirrored their own experiences” (Mohr, 2006, p. 92). Mohr suggests that student preference to read informational materials is an indicator that the informational age has truly taken hold of our youngest learners (Mohr, 2006).

The third misconception as described by Duke, Bennett-Armistead and Roberts (2003) is that young children must first learn to read, then read to learn, a process many educators believe does not begin until around fourth grade. As children progress in their education, the amount of informational text they are exposed to increases as well. By the sixth grade more than 75 percent of reading and writing is in the informational genre (Hall & Sabey, 2007, p. 261). Many studies suggest that the lack of informational text taught at an early age may factor into what educators call the “fourth grade slump”, wherein students show a decline in reading progress or a classroom shows a decrease in the number of students meeting reading expectations. This “slump” occurs because of the significant shift in materials students are expected to read at the fourth grade level (Yopp and Yopp, 2000).

Increased teaching of informational text is thought to aid in curbing this problem, “Reading and writing nonfiction in the primary grades will help prepare them [students] for content-area studies in later grades and for informational passages on standardized

tests” (Taberski, 2001, p. 24). Therefore, educators must teach children to read while they are simultaneously learning from what they have read.

Explicit Teaching with Informational Text

“Practitioners and scholars today are calling for the inclusion of nonfiction in primary-grade classrooms; where in the past fiction has dominated. With the increasing availability of age appropriate nonfiction texts, this request can now become a reality” (Palmer & Stewart, 2005, p. 426). Explicit teaching of informational text will achieve student success, guiding them through their later years of education and adulthood.

“Explicit instruction means that we explain the strategy to be taught and show learners how we think when we read and write. For too long in education, we told students what to do without showing them how” (Harvey, 2002, p. 20). Explicit instruction is broken down into four basic steps: direct instruction, modeling, guided practice and application (Granowsky, 2005).

Harvey (1998) uses this analogy to describe the need for explicit teaching with informational text: “A coach wouldn’t ask a young athlete to dribble a soccer ball without teaching footwork. A master chef wouldn’t ask an aspiring gourmet to make an omelet without first demonstrating how to crack an egg” (Harvey, 1998, p. 53). Yet teachers are asking students to frequently read, write and research with informational text, before having taught the techniques of how to do so.

Educators can change the role informational text plays in classrooms. Calkins (2001) states, “The good news is that we can quickly, easily and decisively alter our students’ relationship with nonfiction reading” (p. 440). The inclusion of informational text and explicit teaching can be done in many ways, beginning with the amount of

quality informational material available in classrooms. “A well stocked classroom library is an essential feature for promoting reading in and out of the classroom” (Moss, 2003, p. 62). Though the number of nonfiction books suggested for classroom libraries differs greatly, it is consistently agreed upon that educators should work towards building and maintaining a varied selection of current informational materials (Moss, 2003; Routman, 2000).

The frequency in which a teacher reads aloud, models and discusses informational text is also of vital importance. Before students can be expected to read and write nonfiction competently on their own, multiple opportunities to listen to it being read aloud, observe, demonstrate and discuss the techniques of reading it and time to browse through a wide range of informational materials must be provided. (Routman, 2000) Many students do not understand the differences between reading fiction and nonfiction, they must be given the opportunity to hear and see the way nonfiction is read and structured (Routman, 2000). When teachers of young children primarily read aloud narratives, students are denied the important opportunity to hear and learn about other text structures (Yopp & Yopp, 2006).

Children in primary grades are aware of narrative story structures. Informational text presents itself in contrasting forms such as cause-effect, problem-solution, or description and in many cases may not be read cover to cover. Reading aloud various forms of text will allow students to naturally progress into independent reading of all types of text with more comprehension and ease (Moss, p. 57). One way to bridge the gap from fiction to nonfiction is by including the use of informational books which are written with a fictional “voice”. Because of the increasing amount of informational trade

books available to educators over the past few years, many books in this style are now available. These types of text provide teachers with a more familiar story structure and greater ease in including informational text in their classrooms (Camp, 2000).

Also recommended is pairing both fiction and nonfiction reading around a topic of study or a subject of student interest (Camp, 2000; Moss, 2003; Harvey, 2002). “By reading both a fiction and nonfiction book on a common topic, children can draw comparisons between the genres and learn the different purposes for which they’re written: fiction, primarily, to entertain and transport; and nonfiction, to explain and inform” (Taberski, 2001, p. 25). Providing a varied collection of books around a theme or topic may also stimulate students to ask questions about the world around them (Camp, 2000). Children are inherently curious, informational text engages students while expanding knowledge and vocabulary development. Providing quality literature in classrooms will encourage a reader’s curiosity and promote inquiry with the aim of inspiring additional reading of informational text (Nevett, 2003).

Successful reading and comprehension of informational text also requires the specific teaching and understanding of vocabulary and language specific to informational text. “Exposure to and understanding of new vocabulary is one reason for reading informational texts as it exposes the reader to new content and opportunities to gain new knowledge” (Hall & Sabey, 2007, p. 262). While primary aged students may not have the ability to decode difficult vocabulary, they are still able to comprehend and make meaning from informational text. Studies have shown that providing early teaching of ideas, vocabulary, syntax and text structures of informational text will provide support for

students as instruction shifts to from learning to read to reading to learn (Smolkin & Donovan, 2003).

Pre-teaching vocabulary and activating a student's prior knowledge of a subject will aid in language and vocabulary development. This is important for both non-readers and emerging readers (Granowsky, 2005). Pre-teaching and activation of prior knowledge could come in the form of a demonstration, sharing of a related artifact, discussion of previous experience with the subject, conducting an experiment or the completion of a graphic organizers (Doiron, 1994).

Part of explicit teaching is guiding students to apply their knowledge of informational text independently. It is important that teachers supply students with appropriately leveled text. "Experience with content area readers should challenge children to grow, but the challenge must lead the children to feel successful" (Granowsky, 2005, p. 7). Teachers must consider several things when selecting text to be used in guided or independent settings: sentence structure and predictability, familiarity of content, picture and text support, use of high-frequency words, and presentation of nonfiction text features (Granowsky, 2005).

Using nonfiction text in primary classrooms is not a new idea in education but it is one that deserves more attention. As students progress through elementary school and into adulthood, they will be barraged by information. Increased time and awareness on the part of educators can better prepare students to obtain skills necessary to succeed in this information age. "Nonfiction comprises the majority of reading that most of us do. Indeed, it's nothing short of a 'life genre'- one we'll want to make sure our students understand, use, and enjoy to the fullest" (Routman, 2000, p. 462).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Inspiration

The project began in 2004 as the author began to see a trend in her primary classroom within the Highline School District. Primary students showed great engagement and curiosity when working with informational texts but lacked the skills and strategies to fully access the reading material and obtain comprehension. Several lesson plans and activities were created to support these students. In developing these lessons the author found it difficult to locate accessible and teacher-friendly sources of lessons plans specific to primary learners. Much of the available teacher resources focused predominately on intermediate grade levels. In researching this topic as a possible graduate thesis study, the author was struck by research showing the infrequency in which informational text was being used and its lack of prevalence in district mandated curriculums. Therefore, the author saw a need to focus on the development of lesson plans that could be easily implemented into this setting.

Development

The development of this project has spanned over several years. Initial research began in 2004, followed by the creation of lesson plans and activities to be used in my primary classroom. Research was mainly conducted online and was two-pronged. First, research focused on the current use of informational text in classrooms: to what extent informational text was explicitly taught and presented to primary aged students as well as the amount and quality of informational text found in classrooms, libraries and basal series. The author found that a majority of the initial studies and published research was

conducted by one main researcher who showed a glaring need for additional instruction around the use and inclusion of informational text in primary classrooms. Following this research other literacy researchers and experts to look further into this subject area.

The second avenue my research took focused on how informational text could be successfully implemented in primary classrooms and what research addressed the best practices for doing so. A majority of this research was done through professional textbooks and articles, though most available professional materials focused on upper elementary classrooms.

Relocation to the Central Valley School District and into an intermediate teaching position in 2006 challenged the research and project development progress. When continuing its development in 2009, additional research was conducted to find more current studies and resources. Updated trade book selections and teacher resources were added to the handbook. More current best-practices for teaching with informational text were considered and the handbook was updated accordingly.

Implementation

This resource is intended for primary teacher use and can be adapted for upper grades. The handbook is currently available in the “book room” of my current Central Valley School District building at Greenacres Elementary. The resource has been used across several grade levels with varying degrees of implementation, from isolated lessons taught to in-depth genre studies of informational text. Current educators using the resource have found it to be helpful in providing them with quick, easy to use lesson plans that can be implemented in their classrooms. As a current intermediate teacher this

resource has also been applicable in the author's classroom setting. Hopefully this handbook will continue to be used across a larger number of classrooms.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

In this “information age”, literate adults and students throughout grade levels, advanced schooling and into the work place are asked to read, write and comprehend informational text. Introducing informational text at an early age is vital to student success. Research shows that early teaching of this informational genre can be very beneficial in literacy development, vocabulary and concept development, and late elementary, middle and high school academic achievement. The inclusion of nonfiction text and its usage in primary classrooms has proven to be minimal and in some cases nonexistent.

The handbook, *Using Nonfiction Text: Grades 1-3*, is an accumulation of current best practices for the use of informational text with our youngest learners. Lesson plans, activities and text recommendations are provided for primary classroom use. Implementation of the project by teachers will aid in the development of knowledge crucial to student success.

Using Nonfiction Text Grades 1-3 A Handbook for Teachers

By Shanna Carlson
Greenacres Elementary School
Central Valley School District

Welcome Readers,

As teachers of literacy, we know what an enormous task we face: the world of literature is vast and our time is minimal; there are more books than we can read and lessons we can teach. It is my hope that this handbook will allow you to incorporate the use of nonfiction materials into your classroom and to provide instruction your students will use with ease.

Included are current materials to familiarize your students with the large genre of nonfiction text and its features, as well as lesson plans, book suggestions, and much more. These lessons and ideas are meant for you to alter to fit the individual needs of your classroom and the newest literature available. Enjoy!

Sincerely,
Shanna Carlson

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SECTION ONE

Nonfiction Text Forms

Nonfiction literature is presented in a variety of forms; the purposes of these forms are to help the reader to...

- Inform and explain
- describe or report
- instruct
- persuade
- recount

In this section you will see the large genre of nonfiction broken into the smaller forms you will encounter in your teaching. An explanation of each is provided along with elements that you will typically see to help identify the form and specific examples of each.

Informational/Explanatory

Informational text is used to share information; this is a very broad category, overlapping some of the other forms of nonfiction text

Typically Contain these Elements

- Incorporates aspects of other genre types (explanatory, descriptive, recount, etc.)

Common Forms

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| • Announcements | • Explanations |
| • Book Jackets | • Guidebooks |
| • Book Reports | • Historical plaques |
| • Brochures | • Interviews |
| • Catalogs | • Lab reports |
| • Cereal boxes | • Lists |
| • Charts | • Maps |
| • Constitutions | • Menus |
| • Contracts | • Problem/solution books |
| • Definitions | • Question-and-answer books |
| • Descriptions | • Questionnaires |
| • Diagrams | • Reports |
| • Documents | • Weather reports |
-

Describe/Report

Reports are typically written to describe the way things are or were. They can describe a wide range of natural, cultural or social topics.

Typically Contain these Elements

- An opening statement, introduction and conclusion
- References and a bibliography
- Facts, opinions, quotes
- Summarized, generalized, or paraphrased information
- Detailed descriptions
- Language in the present tense
- Non-chronological order
- Focus on generic participants or objects

Common Forms

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| • Magazine articles | • Consumer reports |
| • Newspaper articles | • Diaries |
| • Research papers | • Journals |
| • Biographies | • Technical reports |
| • Travel books | |
-

Instruct/Procedural

Procedural text is used to show how to do something, how something works or to give directions

Typically Contain these Elements

- Introduction or Opening
- A statement of what is to be achieved or the desired goal
- A list of materials or tools
- Easy to understand, sequenced instructions
- Numbered steps, diagrams, illustrations or photos, and headings
- Present tense language (do this, do that)
- Linking words (first, when, then)
- Action verbs
- Detailed factual descriptions

Common Forms

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| • How-To | • Recipes |
| • Instructions | • Rules |
| • Directions | • Scientific Experiments |
| • Manuals | |

Persuasive

Persuasive text takes many forms; it is used to present a certain opinion or an argument

Typically Contain these Elements

- An opening statement of position
- A summary of the opening statement
- Simple present tense style of writing
- Often focuses on generic topic or participant
- Reasoning words used (therefore, so, because of)

Common Forms

- Advertising
 - Editorials
 - Essays
 - Letters
 - Pamphlets
 - Thesis
-

Recount

Recounts are written to retell events, often of personal experiences, with the purpose of informing or entertaining an audience. This can also be thought of as a nonfiction narrative.

Typically Contain these Elements

- Introduction or Opening
- Retelling of events in the order in which they occurred
- Chronological Words: then, next, first, after that, immediately following, prior to, finally
- Author's Opinion
- Past Tense Language
- Specific participants

Common Forms

- Diaries
- Journals
- Autobiographies
- Biographies
- Letters
- Historical retellings

Adapted from Harvey, S. (1998). *Nonfiction matters: Reading, writing, and research in grades 3-8*. Portland, MA: Stenhouse Publishers. Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it read: Strategies for success with informational texts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

SECTION TWO

The Structure of Nonfiction

Nonfiction text frequently contains signal words and unique structures when information is being presented. Students will benefit from recognizing these clues in the text and use them to better comprehend what is being read. The most common structures found in nonfiction materials will be those that present material...

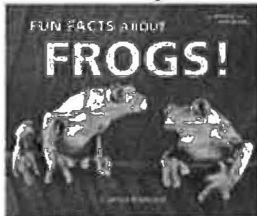
- In a sequence,
- Compare and contrast subject matter
- Illustrate a cause and effect relationship
- Have a problem and a solution
- Are in a question and answer format
- Describe a topic in depth

Use the next section for lesson ideas to help teach your students these structures and text clues.

Language used to identify: Sequence

- until
- before
- after
- next
- finally
- lastly
- first/last
- then
- on (date)
- at (time)

Teaching Idea...

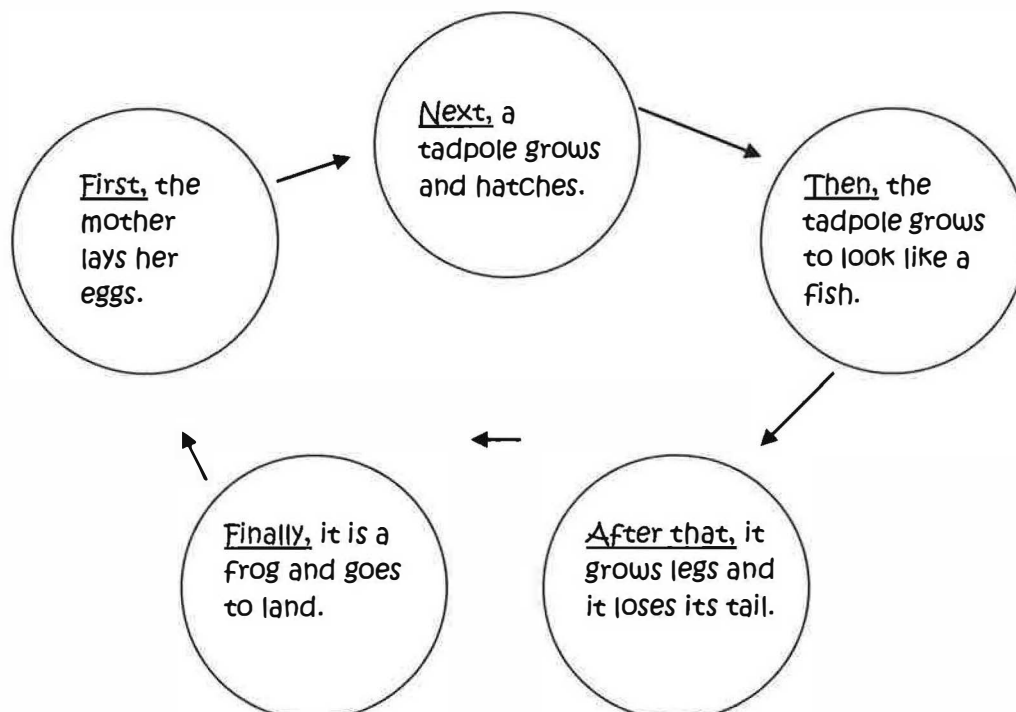


Also try...

The Pottery Place by Gail Gibbons, which is organized in a sequential manner and *The President's Cabinet and How it Grew* by Nancy Winslow Parker, which illustrates a chronological structure.

***Fun Facts About Frogs* by Carmen Bredeson 2008**

Using page 20 and 21 read the section titled *What is the Life Cycle of a Frog?* Teach your students to see how an author shows events that happen in a certain order or sequence. Read the text aloud to them. Point out the section heading, guide students to answer to the question posed in the heading. Reread the passage, have students locate the words used that indicate a events occurring in a sequence. Using these words create the life cycle of a frog as a Class.



Language Used to Identify: Comparison/Contrast

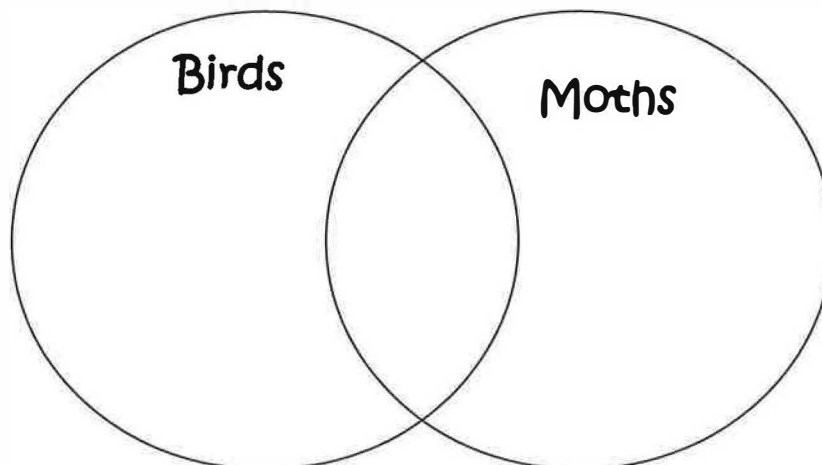
- in this manner
- likewise
- similar or different
- the difference between
- as opposed to
- after all
- however
- and yet
- but
- nevertheless

Teaching Idea...



Is it the Same or Different? by Bobbie Kalman 2008

Use this book to model a book written with a compare and contrast structure. Point out the language used by the author on page 4, "How are all cats the same? How are they different?" Using a venn diagram, select one of the animals featured on the following pages to show how the author compares two animals. This book also has several text features appropriate for kindergarten or first grade that should be pointed out as you read, as well as the table of contents, headings, bold print and index.



Language Used to Identify: Cause/Effect

- since
- because
- this led to
- on account of
- due to
- for this reason
- consequently
- then, so
- therefore
- thus

Language Used to Identify: Problem/Solution

- one reason for that
- a solution
- a problem

Teaching Idea...

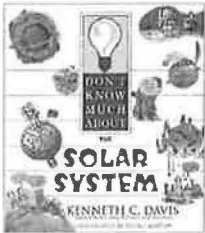


Once a Wolf: How Wildlife Biologists Fought to Bring Back the Gray Wolf by Stephen R. Swinburne & Jim Brandenburg

Language Used to Identify: Question/Answer

- How
- When
- What
- Where
- Why
- Who
- How many
- The best estimate
- It could be that
- One may conclude

Teaching Idea ...



Don't Know Much About the Solar System by Kenneth C. Davis

2001

To introduce the structure of question and answer nonfiction text use the popular series of books by Kenneth C. Davis. Select a book based on a subject you are studying with your class or a topic of interest. Brainstorm questions students have about that topic and record them on sticky notes or chart paper. Using the headings and subheadings in the text show the students how their questions can be easily answered with this type of book. Record the answers as you uncover them in the text. Clarify to students that books such as these do not need to be read from cover to cover but can be read out of order to find answers to their questions on a particular subject.



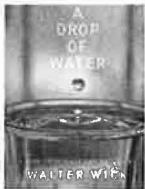
Also try...

Why?: The Best Ever Question and Answer Book about Nature, Science and the World Around You by Catherine Ripley and Scot Ritchie

Language Used to Identify: Description

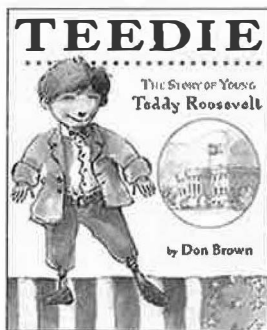
- on
- over
- beyond
- within

Try...



A Drop of Water by Walter Wick

This is a unique book filled with beautiful photographs of water in all its stages, includes experiments the young and old would enjoy.



Teedie: The Story of Young Teddy Roosevelt by Don Brown 2009
The life of Theodore “Teedie” Roosevelt is described, well written and illustrated

Key language for text structures adapted from Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding* (pp.285). Ontario, Canada: Stenhouse Publishers.

SECTION THREE

Text Access Features

The nonfiction genre is full of unique features. Students need to be taught how to use these features and how they help them to become better readers. This section includes a list of these features, Washington State grade level expectations, lesson plans and materials for use in your classroom.

Text Access Features

Text access features are found in most nonfiction text. This is a list of the most common features. Use them to introduce these concepts to your classroom through reading aloud, shared reading or guided reading.

- Abbreviations
- Acknowledgments
- Appendices
- Bibliographies
- Blurbs
- Captions
- Chapter Headings
- Chapter Summaries
- Charts
- Checklists
- Diagrams
- Footnotes or Endnotes
- Foreword
- Glossaries
- Graphs
- Indexes
- Introductions
- Labels
- Maps
- Page
- Paragraphs
- Parentheses
- Preface
- Quotation Marks
- References
- Subheadings
- Subtitles
- Symbols
- Tables
- Table of Contents
- Timetables
- Title

Washington State Grade Level Expectations

According to the 2004 Reading Grade Level Expectations

Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalogues • Diaries • Expository Texts • Lists • Narratives • Page Numbers • Poems • Rhymes • Songs • Symbols • Titles • Words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charts • Computer Menus • Graphs • Icon • Labels • Letters, Personal • Pull-down menus • Schedules • Sentences • Speech Bubble • Story Maps • Table of Contents • Thought Cloud • Title Page • Toolbars • Traditional Tales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blurbs • Boldface • Captions • Chapter Headings • Dialogue • Dictionaries • Directions • Fables • Glossaries • Indexes • Italics • Informational Posters • Magazines • Paragraphs • Plays • Procedural Text
Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements • Biographies • Brochures • Checklists • Diagrams • Encyclopedias • Essays • Folk Tales • Graphic Organizers • Introductions • Key Word Search • Legends • Magazine Articles • Novels • Parentheses • Pie Graphs • Subheadings • Tables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbreviations • Asterisks • Atlases • Autobiographies • Book Reviews • Chapter Summaries • Comics • Idioms • Letters, Business • Maps (also see Atlases) • Proverbs • Quotation Marks • References • Short Stories • Tall Tales • Thesaurus • Timetables • Transition Words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acronyms • Acknowledgements • Almanacs • Appendices • Bar Graph • Cartoons • Forward • Haiku • Memoirs • Newspaper Articles • Preface • Reports
Grade 6		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibliographies • Classics • Cross-references • Editorials • Memos • Myths • Newspapers • Prose 		

Text Access Feature Activity

Directions: Enlarge and cut out each rectangle, find the appropriate text access feature in a nonfiction book then Use the rectangle as a "tab" marking the place that feature can be found, glue or tape the tab into the book. Model this activity as a whole group using a big book; discuss each text feature and its purpose. Depending on your grade level introduce the text features a few at a time. Allow time for students to find and share these features in books they are reading independently. Follow up with the Text Feature Scavenger Hunt Activity.

Bibliography

A list of sources used in the text

Blurb

Brief description of the text, usually found on the back of book or on the dust jacket

Heading

Shows a subject division within the text

Graphs

Shows data, includes pie, line, bar and pictorial charts

Subtitles

Index

An expanded table of contents of topics covered in text

Table of Contents

Maps

Italics

Glossary

List of defined terms used in the text

Bold Print

Labels

Charts

Records information or ideas

Diagram

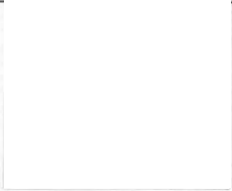

A sketch, plan or outline showing the form or workings of something

Captions

Statement accompanying a illustration or picture

Text Feature Card Match Activity

Using a topic your class is studying or a nonfiction book you are reading, create cards for the students to match allowing them to practice identifying the text features you are focusing on. In this example I used the book Fun Facts about Frogs! By Carmen Bredeson.

Table of Contents	Words to know.....3 Where do Frogs Live?.....4 What do Frogs Eat?.....6
Captions	 This frog has air in its throat.
Heading & Subheading	How Do Frogs Jump So High? Frogs have long back legs that fold up. When a frog wants to jump, its legs unfold and shoot straight out.
Index	Eggs, 20 Food, 6 Habitat, 5, 9
Bold Print	Many frogs are the same color as their habitat where they live.
Bullets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood Frog • Green Frog • American Bullfrog
Diagram	
Glossary	Amphibians: can live on land or in water
Pronunciation Key	Lungs (LŪHNGZ) Habitat (HA bit tat) Tadpole (TAD pohl)
Colored Print	In each egg, a tiny tadpole begins to grow.
URL's	www.allaboutfrogs.org

Nonfiction Text Feature Scavenger Hunt

Name _____ Date _____

Directions

1. Choose two or three nonfiction books you would like to investigate.
2. Look through the book and find as many features as you can, cross them off once you have found them.

Table of Contents	Maps	Time Line	Captions
Glossary	Blurb	Chart	Heading
Index	Bold Print	Diagram	Labels

3. Record what you learned on the chart

Text Feature	How it helped my Learning	Page Number
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Adapted for primary classrooms from Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it real: Strategies for success with informational texts*. (pp. 168). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using the Table of Contents

This lesson should be modeled with the whole class before students explore using a table of contents on their own or with a partner.

Name _____ Partner's Name _____

With a partner, pick a nonfiction book you are interested in reading that has a table of contents. Write the title here.

Look over the table of contents; pick a chapter that looks interesting.

I picked chapter _____ because _____

Write four words you predict you will see in your chapter.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Write a question you hope will be answered in the chapter.

After reading the chapter:

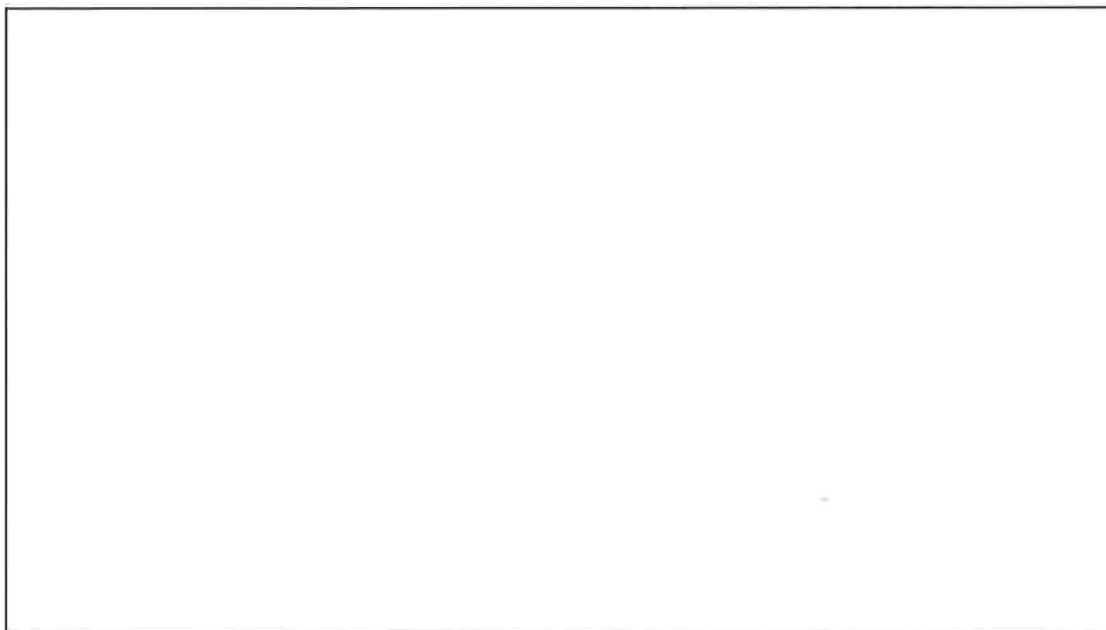
Was your question answered? What was the answer?

Could you find your words in your chapter? What page number did you find it on? _____

What were some other words that you thought were important?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Draw and label a picture of something you learned



How did the table of contents help you be a better reader?

Adapted for primary grades from Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it real: Strategies for success with informational texts*. (pp. 169 170). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Retelling

Have your students practice using photographs and illustrations to retell what they read in their informational book. Ask students to practice drawing and labeling a picture of their own about the topic they selected.

Name _____ Title of Book _____

My book was about _____

Draw an illustration that shows what you learned in this book. Remember to label the important parts; you may want to add a caption too.

Share your illustration with a partner. Tell your partner what you learned.

My partner's name is _____

Write what you learned about in your informational book. Be sure to include some important facts.

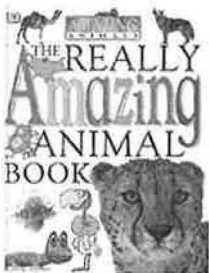
Adapted for primary students from Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it real: Strategies for success with informational texts*. (pp. 197). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Recommended Books for teaching Nonfiction Text Features



Kidbits by Kathleen Rocheleau

Includes more than 1,500 interesting maps, charts, and graphics. Very helpful when teaching nonfiction text layout!



The Really Amazing Animal Book by Dorling Kindersley

Publishing Staff Informational animal book with features including dialogue bubbles, bold print, and labels. Headings are catchy and require the reader to infer about the possible topics, great shared reading or read aloud lessons to focus on this feature.



Scholastic Book of Lists: Fun Facts, Weird Trivia and Amazing lists on Nearly Everything you Need to Know by James Buckley Jr. and Robert Stremme High interest humorous nonfiction book, each page features various nonfiction text feature with kid friendly illustrations.

SECTION FOUR

Selecting & Reading Nonfiction

There are many different things to consider as you select the nonfiction materials you want to include in your classroom. Use the resources in this section to help guide you in creating a classroom library full of valuable materials.

Things to Consider When Selecting Nonfiction Text

Visual Appeal

High-quality photographs and illustrations that appeal to children
 May include: drawings, headings, highlighting, color, foldouts, flaps,
 etc.

Accessible

Text at appropriate readability and interest levels
 Text that closely matches the content of the pictures and
 illustrations. Includes common nonfiction text features such as table of
 contents, labels, pictures, captions, headings, titles, an index or glossary.

Accuracy & Credibility of Author

Text should include a bibliography and cite references
 Current information and materials
 Look for information about the author and illustrator's
 expertise.



The *Let's Read and Find Out Series*, the *First Look at...Series* and the *Eyewitness Books* have achieved a reputation for carefully researched and written work.

Style and Language

Natural language patterns appropriate for grade level
 Careful placement of punctuation (not at the end of every line)

Vocabulary

Cross curricular links to other subject matters
 Words may be introduced in bold or italic print, in labels, captions or
 glossaries.

Organization of Text Structures and Features

Common conventions for informational text such as table of
 contents, labels on pictures, captions, headings, titles, an index or

glossary.

TIPS for Reading Informational Texts

Before You Read

- Think about what you already know on this topic
- Activate prior knowledge by using a KWL chart or through brainstorming questions about the topic
- Preview the text before reading: Look at table of contents, illustrations, charts, headings, bold words, etc.
- Predict vocabulary words you think will appear in the text

While You Are Reading

- As you read, read slowly. Nonfiction reading is reading to learn something
- Consciously think about what you are learning and what parts are important
- Use the pictures
- Look at the charts, maps, illustrations, why are they important?
- Use reading strategies when you come to difficult words, look at the pictures and text features for help
- Notice important vocabulary and bold words
- Find the BIG ideas
- Make connections while you read (text to self, text to text, text to world)
- Stop often and THINK: What have I learned? What am I still wondering?
- When you don't understand, STOP and reread

After You Read

- When you are finished, think about what you read: What did you learn? What was most important? What are you still wondering about? Do you need to reread any confusing parts?
- Talk to a partner. Tell each other what you have learned.

Adapted from Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it real: Strategies for success with informational texts*. (pp.4). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Evaluating Classroom Reference Materials

Questions to ask yourself when evaluating your Classroom library...

	Yes	Need More
Do I have adequate nonfiction materials In my classroom and school library to support the curriculum?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have in my classroom at least:		
▪ An encyclopedia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ An almanac	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ An atlas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Six dictionaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Six thesauruses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Content-based magazines: Sports Illustrated, Ranger Rick, etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Daily newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Museum publications, brochures, etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outdated material is replaced with current material as needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author accuracy and credibility is considered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A variety of nonfiction trade books are presented in an appealing way to students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I survey my class to determine students' Interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student and class made work is present in classroom library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from Burke, E. M., & Glazer, S. M. (1994). *Using nonfiction in the classroom* (pp. 39). New York: Scholastic Inc.

SECTION FIVE

Additional Lesson Plan Ideas

Mini Lesson Ideas

Use these mini lesson ideas to create your own lessons for your classroom. These lessons can be taught to differing degrees depending on your grade level and the needs of your students.

-
- Accessing text through the table of contents
 - Accessing text through the index
 - Taking a “picture walk” to predict what the text is about
 - Not reading nonfiction text in order
 - Using chapter titles, headings and sub headings to locate information
 - Using pictures and captions
 - Activating prior knowledge by asking questions
 - Finding the BIG idea in the text
 - Determining what is important and what to ignore
 - Summarizing what was read
 - Stopping to clarify and rereading
 - Noticing text structure and organization
 - Skimming & scanning text
 - Noticing the author’s style
 - Considering the author’s purpose for writing
 - Taking notes
 - Nonfiction vs. fiction: similarities and differences
 - Recognizing the difference between fact and opinion
-

Summarize Your Reading

Name _____ Date _____

Book Title _____

Good readers often stop to think about what they have just read and learned. Today, stop at the end of each page and write down the most important part of what you read.

On page _____ the most important thing I learned was _____

On page _____ the most important thing I learned was _____

On page _____ the most important thing I learned was _____

On page _____ the most important thing I learned was _____

Now tell a partner what you read about.

My partner's name is _____.

Adapted for primary grades from Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it real: Strategies for success with informational texts*. (pp. 196). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sample Guided Reading Lesson Plan

This guided reading lesson is designed for a small group of primary aged students. This lesson should be adapted to fit the text being used and the needs of your students, for this reason the lesson is generic.

Objectives: Expose students to nonfiction text, compare fiction and nonfiction, and introduce new vocabulary

Materials: Guided reading text: one copy for each student, KWL chart, chart paper

Before the Reading

1. Introduce the book, hand each students a copy of the book and ask them to take a "picture walk" to decide if the text is fiction or nonfiction.
2. Ask students, "Is this book nonfiction or fiction?" "What features in the book help you decide?" Briefly point out nonfiction features such as photographs, captions, timelines, maps, charts, etc. using the correct terminology. If needed, show the students a fiction book and compare the two side by side.
3. Create a T-Chart chart illustrating the differences between fiction and nonfiction books.

Fiction	Nonfiction
Pictures	photographs
Pretend	Real life
No Glossary	Glossary

4. Brainstorm words that may be in the book, then introduce vocabulary words. These words should be selected based on the needs of the students and to assist ELL students. Introduce the vocabulary words, point out each word in the text, discuss and define, if applicable ask students to find the word and definition in the glossary.

During the Reading

1. Depending on the level of your students, either read the text aloud while the students follow along or ask students to read the first few pages. Stop to ensure student understanding and summarize the information read. Point out nonfiction features as you read.
2. Ask questions as you move through the text to monitor student understanding.
3. Depending on the specific needs of students model and guide students in the use of nonfiction reading strategies.

After the Reading

Revisit the KWL chart; ask students if their wonderings or questions have been answered. Ask students if they have any new things to add to the chart. Return to this text during your next guided reading group with these students, review the features of nonfiction and build on these concepts with another nonfiction book.

Teaching with Biographies

This is a sample lesson plan for introducing the genre of biographies. This lesson should be adapted to fit the text being used and the needs of your students.

Objectives: Introduce the structure of biographies

Materials: Copy of a biography to read to the class, chart paper. For this example I will use the book titled *Barack* by Jonah Winter, 2008



Before the Reading

1. Gather the class in your reading area. Show your students the cover of the book and then if they recognize the man on the cover. Tell your students that today they will hear the life story of Barack Obama and when a book is written about another person's life it is called a biography.

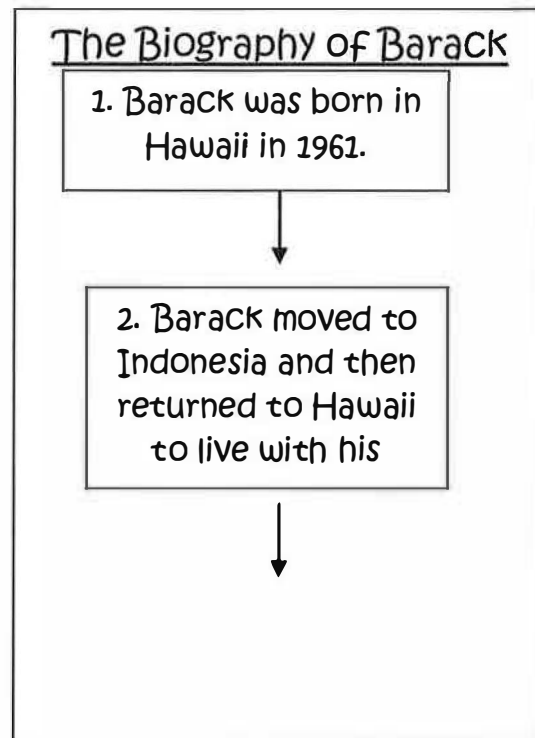
During the Reading

1. Read aloud until you get to page 4. Stop and ask the class what the first event in Barack's life was and where it happened. Using chart paper record that event at the top of the paper. Ask your students to listen as you read for the next important part of his life.
2. Continue reading aloud and stopping frequently to complete the events in Barack's life. Point out that a biography is written in a sequential manner. Encourage students to select only the significant events to record on the chart paper. Discuss why these events were important.

After the Reading

Summarize the book with your class. Review how the book was ordered to follow the life of Barack Obama and that this type of book is called a biography.

Follow up by reading additional biographies and charting the their format.



Follow up ideas for exploring nonfiction further...

- Have students record Barack Obama's life in a time line
- Read additional nonfiction material about him
- Have student create presidential campaign signs
- Guide students in writing their own biographies

Graphic organizer adapted from Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). *Guided readers and writers: Grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy* (pp. Appendix 32). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Teaching Cause and Effect

This is a sample lesson plan for introducing the concept of cause and effect. Text should be previewed to make sure it lends itself to this objective.

Objectives: Introduce the concept of cause and effect

Materials: A copy of a book that lends itself to teaching cause and effect, chart paper. For this example I will use the book titled *Dinosaur Discoveries* by Gail Gibbons, 2005



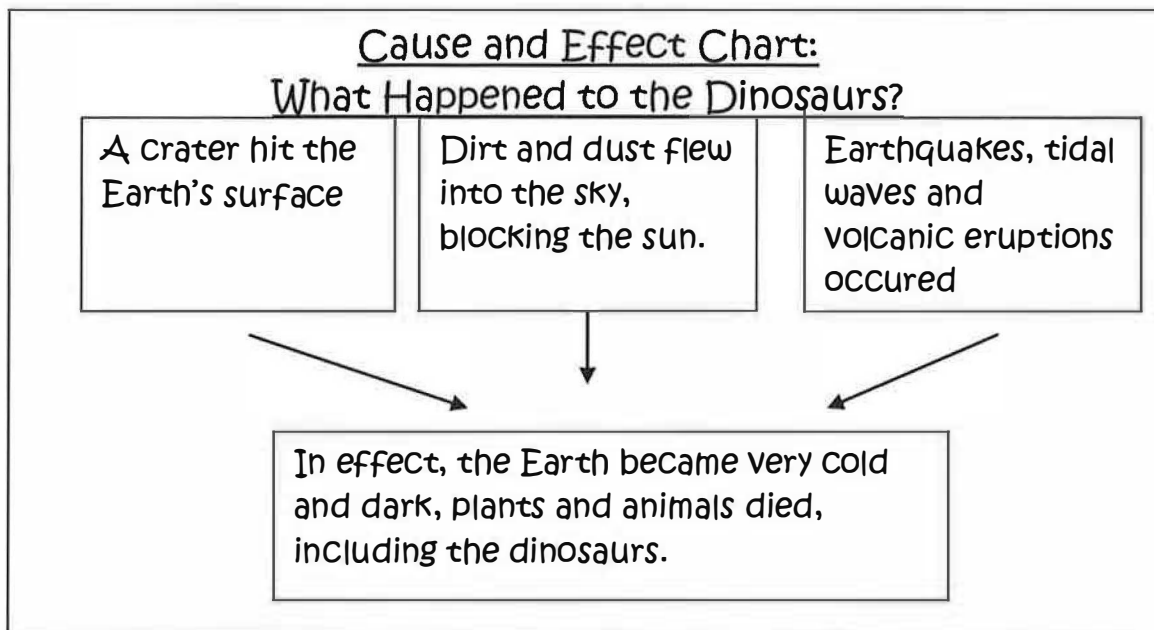
Before the Reading

1. Gather the class in your reading area. Show your students the cover of the book, take a “picture walk” through the text, and explain to students that this is a nonfiction book about dinosaurs. Briefly brainstorm what your students know about this subject. (The majority of the book is dedicated to information about specific dinosaurs, for this lesson we will only be reading the first few pages.)
2. Ask students if they have heard of the term cause and effect. Explain that today we will be reading about an event most scientists believe happened millions of years ago that caused the dinosaurs to become extinct. To further explain, use examples the students can understand, such as if you don't tie your shoe it could cause you to fall down.

During the Reading

1. Begin by reading page 2 aloud to the students. Depending on the grade level and prior knowledge your students have on this topic

you may need to stop and reread to clarify the event. Have students assist in completing the cause and effect chart as a class.



2. If desired, continue with page 6 and the cause and effect process that occurs when fossils are made.

After the Reading

Follow up with additional reading and charting of the structure of cause and effect.

Follow up ideas for exploring nonfiction further...

- Have students draw and label the process of fossilization
- Allow students to read the remainder of the book, learning about specific dinosaurs
- Make a class cause and effect book using the school and classroom rules

Graphic Organizer adapted from Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001).
*Guided readers and writers: Grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre,
and content literacy (pp. Appendix 42)*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Tracking Comprehension When Working with Nonfiction

Student name _____ Grade _____

Independent Reading Level _____

Instructional Reading Level _____

- | |
|--|
| <p>1: Learning not evident
 2: Beginning Understanding
 3: Developing Understanding
 4: Strong Understanding</p> |
|--|

	Date			
Student recognizes the purpose of the selected text				
Makes predictions as to the content of the text				
Understands the information presented by the author				
Student verbally summarizes information read in the text				
Understands information presented in text features: graphs, diagrams, photographs, and tables				
Infers from the information presented				
Raises questions from information read				
Makes connections				
Understands the difference between fact and opinion				
Uses text features such as table of contents, index, and glossary				

Adapted from Hoyt, L. (2005). *Spotlight on comprehension: Building a literacy of thoughtfulness*. (pp. 272). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

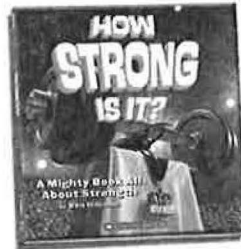
SECTION SIX

Resources for Educators

Book, Series & Author Recommendations

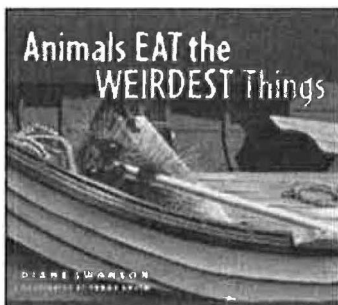
Book Title

Author



How Big is it? How Strong is it? How Fast is it? Bill Hillman 2007

These oversized, high interest books are a hit in any classroom! Each two-page layout focuses on how big, strong or fast something is, these books have excellent photographs and will hold the interest of all students.



Animals Eat the Weirdest Things Diane Swanson

A fun filled book full of animal eating habits, includes lots of bulleted information, sidebars, captions and even directions for making your own tarantula treat.



Stand Tall, Abe Lincoln, 2008

Judith St. George

Mark Your Mark, Franklin Roosevelt, 2006

Take Your Lead, George Washington, 2005

You're on Your Way, Teddy Roosevelt, 2004

These books depict the early life of former presidents. Written to include interesting vocabulary and very witty. A good read for grades 1-4.

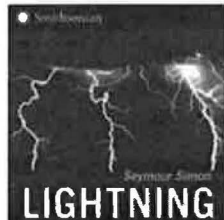
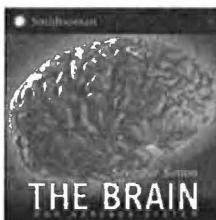


So You Want to Be President?, 2004 Judith St. George & David Small

So You Want to Be an Inventor?, 2005

So You Want to Be an Explorer?, 2005

Written by Caldecott winning authors, these books focus on the famous and some less famous presidents, inventor and explorers. Humorous books filled with anecdotes, comments and historical events.



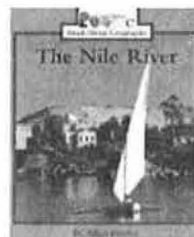
Seymour Simon

Seymour Simon, award-winning author, focuses on many aspects of science. Photographs are of very high quality and material is current and accurate. Student will love to look through the pages of his books! Simon also has many low level books for 1-2 grade students under See More Simon.



Dorling Kindersley Readers: DK Publishing

Fantastic nonfiction series by DK Publishing, readability ranges from kindergarten to adult.



Allan Fowler

Allan Fowler is the author of the Rookie Read-About Science and Rookie Read-About Geography series of nonfiction books. These books work well for younger students ages 4-8.

Pairing Nonfiction with Fiction



Pair *How Many Days to America?* by Eve Bunting with the nonfiction text *I Was Dreaming to Come to America* by Veronica Lawlor for a unit on immigration to the United States.



When studying the Amish community or during an author study of Patricia Polacco read the fictional tale *Just Plain Fancy* by Patricia Polacco with *Amish Home* by Raymond Bial



If reading the *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder or studying settlers tie this fictional series with the nonfiction texts *If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon* by Ellen Levine and *Daily Life in a Covered Wagon* by Paul Erickson

Some recommended by Barbara Moss in *Exploring the Literature of Fact: Children's nonfiction trade books in the elementary classroom*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Outstanding Nonfiction Authors

Aiki- Award winning author of fiction and nonfiction, books range from Greek mythology, dinosaurs, Egyptian mummies, biographies and folklore.

Lynne Cherry has many outstanding books. Her passion is bringing real world and environmental issues to children through her writing. She inspires children to see a problem and how they can play a part in the solution. Her books can easily be used in environmental unit studies and paired with additional nonfiction materials.

Joanna Cole is the author of over 250 books, she is most famously known for her Magic School Bus series and its well known character Ms. Frizzle (inspired by a real-life teacher she once had). She is a former teacher and librarian who says, "I write about ideas, not just facts."

Don Brown is the author of several historical and biographical nonfiction works for children; he presents history in beautiful watercolor pictures that are easily read aloud. He began writing children's books when his daughters were young and he saw a need for accurate and inspiring biographies, especially of women. He has several new books coming out in 2009 that are worth adding to your classroom library.

Gail Gibbons is a born “questioner”; she began writing at a young age by asking questions and seeking answers. She has more than 100 books on hundreds of nonfiction topics. Her books are a staple in my classroom!

Ruth Heller, author and illustrator, was unique in her writing of nonfiction; all her books are written in rhyme. Through rhyme she feels children are able to better relate and retain the content presented and are exposed to a colorful new vocabulary. She has numerous books on plants, animals and language.

Mary Pope Osborne, best known for her series *The Magic Tree House* has published over 50 children’s books. These books take children through the Ice Age, the Wild West, the Arctic, and even the Amazon on a journey with her two main characters, these books are historical fiction but have nonfiction companion guides. Osborne has journeyed around the world, her various experiences and love of travel is evident in her work.

Seymour Simon is the author of over 200 well known and accurate nonfiction children’s books, half of which have been named Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children by the National Science Teachers Association. He is a former teacher and still involves himself with schools and kids. He is known for his vast range of written works, everything from the human body to Mars. His new series called *Let’s Try it Out* is very hands on and great for early learners also a powerful series for primary students is the *See More Simon* series.

Magazines & Newspapers



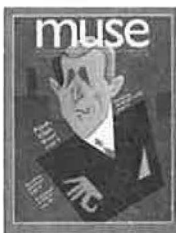
Click Magazine & Ladybug Magazine (Ages 3-7)

Click and Ladybug Magazines are theme based; they include history, the arts, science, and technology. Includes monthly activities and a Parent's Companion.



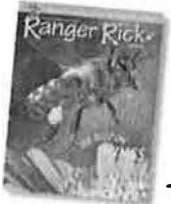
Ask Magazine (Ages 6-9)

Award winning magazine about science and history, includes historical and recent information about inventors, artists and scientists. It includes stories, interviews, activities, maps, puzzles, games and more.



Muse Magazine, Dig Magazine, Odyssey Magazine and Calliope Magazine (Ages 8-14)

These magazines are written for an older audience, they include nonfiction features such as maps, photos, art, timelines, interviews and book recommendations. Hands on activities are often included for teachers and students.



Ranger Rick (Ages 7-12)

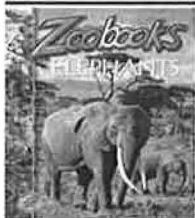
Ranger Rick is an award-winning magazine, produced by the National Wildlife Federation. Includes both fiction and nonfiction stories, news and articles about worldwide nature and wildlife. Available at www.nwf.org/rangerrick



National Geographic for Kids (Grades K-1, 2-3, & 4-6)

Young Explorer (Grades K-1), Pioneer (2-3), Pathfinder (4-6)

Three levels of magazines are available; each including articles about science and social studies topics. Pioneer and Pathfinder magazines have the same content, pictures, and text features; the reading level varies depending on the magazine. Subscriptions arrive monthly, each month the readability level increases in difficulty. Available at www.nationalgeographic.com/world



Zoo Books

Monthly magazine for elementary students that includes scientific articles, photographs and interesting facts. Available at www.zoobooks.com



Time for Kids

This weekly magazine is a child's version of Time magazine. Two editions are available: a four-page edition for primary students, grade 2-3 and an eight-page edition for intermediate grades 4-6. Includes a teacher's guide and supplemental material. Available at www.timeforkids.com



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More than 700 daily newspapers in the United States are available for elementary teachers to use in their classrooms. Contact the NIE (Newspapers in Education) at your local newspaper.

SECTION SEVEN

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECCOMENDATIONS

Summary

Research shows that introducing informational text to primary students is beneficial in many ways. Student success in later education and on into adulthood greatly relies on the ability to read, write and comprehend nonfiction material. Use of this genre has been extremely limited in the classrooms of our youngest learners. This handbook was created to be a teacher-friendly source of current best practices in lesson plans, activities and informational text selections primary teachers can implement in their classrooms.

Many hours were spent researching, reading and contemplating the best practices around teaching with informational text. There are a vast number of resources available to upper elementary teachers but very little to support primary classrooms. Much of the time spent on this project was in examining and simplifying the lesson plans available and making them applicable to primary aged children. Because the world of informational trade books and print materials continues to evolve and grow; many of the lessons and activities were created as a template that can be applied to new informational books as they become available.

Conclusions

Since beginning of this handbook I have moved out of the primary classroom setting and into the intermediate grades. I have used a majority of the lesson plans and activities in both settings and found the handbook materials to be successful in all grades

I have taught. I have found that the lesson plans can be used with the latest informational materials being published but at times requires some lesson adapting.

Recommendations

In hindsight, the inclusion of a technology component in this project may have been very beneficial to students and teachers. One addition may have been providing lesson plans and activities which teach young children to access and interact with informational websites and online materials. Also becoming popular in classrooms is the use of interactive white boards; the addition of interactive, hands-on technology lesson plans including this latest technology would have been a powerful addition. Providing the handbook materials in a computer accessible format would have further allowed teachers to alter the materials to fit the latest nonfiction text selections as they become available.

Another area to consider for further research is the level of interest and impact informational text has upon both boys and girls. Several sited research articles implied that boys had a greater interest in nonfiction text over that of fiction. Further research into the manner in which informational text is presented and used in classrooms and the impact it had on the different genders may prove to be beneficial.

This project can be implemented partially by using isolated lessons or completely as part of a larger genre study. It is my hope that teachers use these lesson plans as a spring board to learning in their classroom, continually searching for the latest informational materials being published and create a classroom of students intrigued and eager to learn about the world around them.

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