

Let's Work Together Teaching Guide

Dear Teacher,

The informational text genre feeds students' interests and curiosity while informing them about the natural world and specific topics. Students enjoy poring over and learning from these informational text features: photographs and captions, sidebars chock-full of intriguing details, diagrams, charts, excerpts from journals and interviews, and firsthand accounts by eyewitnesses. Authors of informational books breathe energy and excitement into the text when they include true stories about people and animals that survived shipwrecks, earthquakes, tornadoes, and fires. Stories forge powerful connections between readers and the information and motivate students to read on and learn more. When students read informational texts to learn, it's helpful to build their background knowledge so they can access the text. Tap into their enjoyment of all things visual and show video clips or share photographs from the internet. You can even take students on virtual tours of museums around the world if they're reading about ancient Greece, Rome, or Egypt, or about great thinkers like Sir Isaac Newton and Leonardo da Vinci!

Laura Robb

START WITH YOURSELF:

Show students the features in a few informational texts by placing the pages with the features under a document camera. Discuss what you learn from each type of feature and jot a list of the ones you shared and discussed with students on a large piece of chart paper headed "Informational Text Features." Your list might include photographs and captions, diagrams, maps, charts, sidebars, etc.

Inspire Teaching
and Learning with
Outstanding Books.

Informational Text

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GET TO KNOW STUDENTS' INTERESTS:

Could write in front of students and make a list of ten topics you'd like to learn about. Then, read the list out loud and number the items to reveal your top and bottom five interests. Discover your students' interests by giving them notebook paper, having them head it with their name and the date, and inviting them to make a list of ten things they want to learn about. Then, ask students to whisper read the list and prioritize items by numbering their topics from most to least interested.

Share students' interest lists with your school's librarian. Together, gather informational books that reflect your students' interests and reading levels. Showcase the books around the room: on the chalkboard tray, on windowsills, on top of bookcases, and on your desk. Advertise the books to your students and increase their desire to read by hosting a book-browsing class. Invite students to grab their readers' notebooks and a pencil and then form a large circle on a rug or the floor. Give each student a book to browse through (see fantasy guide, page 2). Ask students to write the title and author of the book in their notebooks *only* if they'd like to read it. Have students pass their book to the classmate on their right, browse again, note the title and author if interested, etc. Continue until students have browsed through every book. Make sure students understand that they should only jot down the title and author of books they really want to read. Next, invite students to select a "good fit" book and check it out (see guide on realistic fiction).

MOVE TO STUDENTS:

Once students have chosen a book, give them sticky notes and have them divide the book into three to five chunks. When chunking, students can place a sticky note at the end of a chapter and write "stop to think" on each note. Next, organize students into partners.

After students complete a chunk, have pairs select two to three questions/prompts from the list below to discuss. Remind them to offer text details and/or inferences to support their thinking.

- Why did you decide to read this book?
- What new information did you learn?
- Choose four different text features and identify the type of each one. For each feature explain what you learned and how it helped you understand information in the book.
- Did this book change how you think about the topic? Explain your answer.
- Did the book raise questions in your mind but didn't answer them? Use the internet to find answers to two of your questions.
- Choose a story the author told. What did you learn from the story?

NOTEBOOK WRITING

- Skim through your book and select a one- to three-sentence quote that made you pause and think.
- Head a page in your notebook, write the title and author of your book, and then copy the quote and its page number. Explain how the quote connects to the book's topic, theme, a specific chapter, or a text feature.
- Reflect on the book, discussing your thoughts with a partner. Use the questions that follow to stir your thinking, and then write your reflections.
 - Would you reread parts of the book? Which parts? Explain why or why not.
 - How did the book affect your feelings?
 - Why does this topic mean a lot to you? Did the author change your thoughts about the topic?
 - Do you want to read more about the topic? Explain why or why not.
- Design an advertisement for the book. Use pictures and words to convince classmates to read it.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

for Engaging Students in Informational Texts

- Plan and write a short article for a magazine about a topic in your book that you enjoyed learning about.
- Give a ninety-second elevator pitch to convince classmates to read your book.
 1. State the title and author.
 2. Get others interested by sharing an exciting photo that highlights an unusual fact you learned and describing that fact.
 3. State one thing you learned that was new to you.
 4. Explain why this book is a must-read.
- Present an artifact talk. Choose three to four items or artifacts that were part of your book. Draw each one or find images on the internet. Then, show and explain each one and tell how it is connected to your book's topic.
- Design an info-graphic and share three to four things you learned from your book. Include data and issues when appropriate.

