

Informational Texts in the Reading Workshop
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Fiction or Non-Fiction

Non-Fiction vs. Fiction is based on the relationship between reality and representation. However, fiction may contain factual information and non-fiction often contains narrative features.

Narrative or Expository

Narrative or Expository is based on the intent and structures of the text, not necessarily the “truth-value” of the information provided.

Narrative Texts

Characters / plot / setting
Tells a story
Creates suspense / tension
Paragraphs and chapters
Story language (narrative)
Illustrations add meaning to the story

Expository / Informational Texts

Designed to inform, report, describe - not necessarily to tell a story
Not based on plot, sequence of events
Chapters end with summaries, not suspense
Includes variety of structures and textual elements
Turn page because of interest in topic, not suspense in story
Specialized vocabulary and writing
Illustrations present information

Reasons for Reading Expository Texts in the Classroom

Awakens curiosity
Varies in complexity
Better writing than textbooks
Majority of standardized test passages are informational texts
More in-depth information
More up-to-date than textbooks
Can be used as a model for research
Majority of adult reading
Improvements in Quality of Texts

Selecting Expository Texts

Accuracy of Content
Authority of Authors
Appropriateness
Quality of Written Language
Quality of Illustrations
Well Organized - Accessible
Multiplicity of Sources

What Makes Expository Texts Challenging?

Lack of Prior Knowledge with Concepts and Information
Unfamiliar Text Structures & Organization
Specialized Vocabulary
Different Expectations for Reading Expository Texts

How to Make Expository Texts Accessible

Read aloud expository texts
Provide time for students to explore expository texts
Help students solve vocabulary challenges
Understand the structures and components of expository texts
Offer Lessons in Comprehending expository texts

Exposing Readers to Expository Texts: Reading Aloud

Review text before reading to understand possible challenges
Connect readings to one another to build upon ideas and concepts
Introduce necessary vocabulary
Keep sessions short and focused
Read Aloud as Advertisement
Should always include opportunities for discussion

Unit of Study: Expository Texts as a Genre

Possible Objectives:

Help students read expository texts for information (Understand Genre)
Help students gather information for inquiry project (Understand Topic)

Focus Units of Study Framework

Exposure
Exploration
Experimentation

Expository Texts – Exposure:

Read, Share and discuss expository texts on a wide variety of subjects
List things we Notice about Expository Texts and how we read them
Make list of all the Types of Expository Texts we are reading

Types of Expository Texts

Concept Books

Magazines, brochures, etc.

Reference materials / Activity / Experiment Books

Primary Source- Logs, Diaries

Photo Essays

Craft / Manuals / Recipes / How To

Informational Storybooks / Biographies / Autobiographies

Exploration: What Components Should We Call Readers' Attention to?

Cover - Title

Author's Notes - Introduction

Sidebars - Information Boxes

Headings, Italicized words

Reading Guides

Labels - Captions

Diagrams - Maps - Graphs, etc

Illustrations, Photography, Artwork

Glossary

Table of Contents / Index

Exploration: Expository Text Structures

(Ways of Organization Information)

Descriptive

Sequential

Compare - Contrast

Cause & Effect

Question & Answer

Blended Structures

Descriptive Language

Experimentation: Creating Expository Texts

Experimentation:

What inquiry projects can students engage in with expository texts?

What types of texts can students use as mentor texts?

What "modes of representation" can students use to share information?

Sharing Inquiry Projects

Student Published Reports

Classroom Museum

Science Fairs

Picture Books for Reading Buddies

Multi-Genre Writing Projects

Multi-Media Presentations

Informational Texts: Professional Resources

Bamford, R. & Kristo, J (2000) Checking out non-fiction K-8

Hoyt, L. (1999) Revisit, Reflect, Retell. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Hoyt, L. (2002) Make it Real: Strategies for Success with Informational texts. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Hoyt, L., Mooney, M. & Parkes, B. (2003) Exploring informational texts: From theory to practice. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Hoyt, L. Snapshots: Literacy Mini-lessons up Close. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Moss, B. Teaching the Literature of Fact

Harvey, S. Non-Fiction Matters. York, ME: Stenhouse

Favorite Informational Text Authors

Aliki - George Ancona - Seymour Simon - Gail Gibbons - Lois Ehlert - B. Barton

David Adler - Jerry Palotta - Jean Craighead George - Ruth Heller - David

Macauley - Patricia Lauber - Jim Arnosky - Jean Fritz - B. Maestro - Peter Sis

Leonard Everett Fisher - B. McMillan - P. Patent - Diane Stanley - S. Tanaka

James Cross Giblin - Joanna Cole - Joseph Bruchac - Russell Freedman

Criteria for Analyzing Expository Texts

Content:

- up to date information
- accurate
- relevant to the reader
- authentic sources
- details
- what research was used
- author's qualifications for writing "facts"

Writing / Style:

- language used
- "readability"
- avoidance of stereotypes
- multiple points of view / perspectives

Organization:

- table of contents
- headings
- index / glossary
- sidebars
- structural layout