Unit Eight – Nonfiction Book Clubs: Author Studies

Mid May to late June (Level 3 Reading Benchmark: S/T)

Welcome to the Unit

By now, your students probably think of themselves as having certain identities as fiction readers. When you ask them what kind of reader they are, they might say they are fantasy readers or mystery readers, or they might say they love Walter Dean Myers’ books or books about survival. They know where to find their favorite authors and genres, and they are somewhat expert in them. In this unit of study, you’ll help your students develop the same sense of expertise about nonfiction so that they’ll be able to answer that question with a “I’m more of a Seymour Simon reader” or “I like Gail Gibbons type books.” Besides developing an identity as a nonfiction reader (necessary if they are ever to choose nonfiction to read outside of school), students will also deepen their skills at comparing and contrasting, analyzing authors’ patterns and choices in style and structure, and deepening their familiarity with the literary techniques that are used in high-quality nonfiction.

This unit builds on the work of Units Three and Four. In those units, readers focused on reading to learn and becoming more alert to how nonfiction text structures--such as cause and effect, problem and solution, and compare/contrast--help readers organize information and create meaning. Here, you’ll teach students to apply their knowledge to texts by particular nonfiction authors while in their clubs. This work will give them a boost into the DOK level four arena, where they are applying their skills to fresh texts and new situations. You’ll also be able to focus on student engagement and independence as book club members make decisions about which texts they most want to study, and in what ways.

If you are also following our writing units of study, your students will be engaged in journalism during this unit. You should be able to carry some of what students notice in the nonfiction books they are reading over to writing work they might employ in journalism.
Overview

**Essential Question:** How can I read nonfiction like a fan, getting to know a nonfiction author well enough that I recognize his or her distinctive moves?

- **Bend I: Investigating nonfiction identities and setting out to make those more powerful**
  
  *How can I author a life as an avid reader of nonfiction, developing tastes and habits?*
  
  *(a short bend, 3-4 days)*

- **Bend II: Deepening Understanding of Nonfiction Techniques and Investigating Authors’ Styles**
  
  *How can I investigate authors I love and deepen my understanding of nonfiction craft moves? (approx.. 2-3 weeks)*

- **Bend III: Expanding our nonfiction experiences**
  
  *How can I broaden my tastes as a nonfiction reader and try to outgrow myself? (approx.. 1 week)*

This unit highlights the work of comparing and contrasting as one method of teaching students to read closely, analyze, and express ideas. In a short Bend One, you’ll channel readers to gather favorite nonfiction and to organize themselves to ratchet up their nonfiction reading by focusing on series and authors they particularly enjoy. In a several-week-long Bend Two you’ll teach readers the ways to notice and the language to describe techniques they see these favorite nonfiction authors employ. Readers will zoom in on a favorite author or two and investigate the style of those authors, comparing and contrasting, noticing patterns, and analyzing how authors use certain techniques to create particularly compelling nonfiction. (The work of this bend will serve your writing unit as well, since students will undoubtedly find parts of their texts to serve as mentors for the journalism pieces they are writing.) In Bend Three, the final week of the unit, you’ll help your readers take their reading work up a notch by inspiring them to expand their nonfiction tastes and experiences, leading them to read authors who publish in a variety of styles and media.

**CCSS/LS Standards Addressed in this Unit**

The below standards are the major reading informational standards addressed in this unit. However, the unit will also include work with other standards (e.g. Speaking and Listening standards and Foundational Standards.)
CCSS: Grade 4 Reading: Informational Text:

- **RI.4.5.** Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.
- **RI.4.6.** Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.
- **RI.4.7.** Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
- **RI.4.8.** Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

**Getting Ready**

**Gather nonfiction**

To prepare for this unit, gather or be prepared for students to gather, nonfiction by authors and series publishers (such as DK Readers). Chances are there are a lot of books from Unit Three by Gail Gibbons, Seymour Simon, Jean Fritz, Bobbie Kalman and Matt Christopher in your room. You may also include the series/sets of DK Readers and National Geographic Kids titles (as these exist at multiple levels and they tend to be very similar to each other). If you have multiple copies of texts, you might create more than one club that is studying the same author, or you might also put more than one copy into each club, so that clubs can read the same text at the same time, although this is not essential. Seymour Simon, Gail Gibbons, and National Geographic Kids also have many titles on the same topic.

If you are ordering books, choose parallel topics so your students can compare and contrast more easily (Hurricanes by Gail Gibbons, Hurricanes by Seymour Simon). We’ve chosen: Tornadoes by Seymour Simon - Lexile 1020, Planet Earth by Gail Gibbons – Lexile 800, and Tornadoes! by Gail Gibbons – Lexile 970 as anchor texts for this unit, so you will probably want to access those books, perhaps getting multiple copies of them so that small huddles of students will be able to cluster around one copy or another during minilessons.

The most important books, however, will be the single or double copies of books that students will read throughout the unit. Ensure there are enough books to support a high
volume of reading (and also maintain students’ fiction independent reading life at the same time.)

On the TCRWP website, you will find a leveled bibliography of information texts (see the Appendix of this unit for a sample of some recommended titles). Some of these texts are on the list of grade band text that is offered by the Common Core State Standards. The books on that list are all available from Booksourcesimply ask for the TCRWP collection as you receive an added cost reduction by mentioning TCRWP. Please contact us with more book suggestions!

A word of advice: Especially if you do not have enough just-right texts for students to maintain their volume of reading during this unit, we strongly suggest that you reserve time every day (at least fifteen to twenty minutes in school and more time at home) for students to continue reading literature at their instructional reading levels. And in any case, be sure readers continue to maintain their reading logs so that you monitor the total volume of reading they do during these two upcoming units (as you have been doing all along). You should expect that while participating in this unit on nonfiction reading, your readers will also an appropriate number of chapter books each week—probably anywhere from one to four, more for the readers who are reading lower level and therefore shorter books. That volume of fiction reading will be in addition to the reading they do of information texts. The single most important way to accelerate students’ progress up the ladder of text complexity is to be sure they are reading a high volume of texts they can read with high levels of comprehension and engagement.

As you are gathering materials for students to read, you’ll also need to choose your read aloud books. For this unit we’ve chosen: Tornadoes by Seymour Simon - Lexile 1020, Planet Earth by Gail Gibbons – Lexile 800, and Tornadoes! by Gail Gibbons – Lexile 970.

**Establish reading clubs during the first week of the unit**

Generally in a unit of study that features clubs, we suggest that you organize the clubs at the very start of the unit so that children have maximum time in the clubs. In this unit, we suggest you proceed a bit differently. Before you even launch the unit, we hope you can start recruiting some of your readers to help you sort and organize and revisit favorite nonfiction authors and series. This will then continue throughout the first week of the unit, as children sort out and re-imagine their nonfiction reading identities. They’ll do this by diving into baskets of books that have already been sorted by author and series. By the end of the first week, children will need to have read enough of the books in their classroom that they are able to sort themselves into clubs that form around authors and/or series.
To form the clubs, as students voice their interests in the various authors, pay attention to which students will work well together, probably keeping groups small, even if this means that more than one group shares an author. You may also channel some groups towards authors who have more texts at lower levels (National Geographic, Gail Gibbons), and some towards authors who have more texts at higher levels (DK Readers, Seymour Simon, Jean Fritz).

As you approach the specific series/author studies in the second bend, you’ll be talking up the upcoming work, inviting students to share their passions, to bring in favorite books, and ultimately to form reading groups that based on students’ preferences, even if you have been doing some behind the scenes engineering of these groups.

Assessment

As in previous units, the informal assessments in informational reading aligned to informational reading standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 on the CCSS are available to schools who work with the Project closely. These assessments allow for students to read a text (or two) independently, answering questions designed to address particular standards in the CCSS. The important thing about these assessments is that they also enable teachers to assess students’ abilities to address grade-specific standards even if the student reads at a level which is considered below grade-level. You might also choose to show students two sections of a book by an author (perhaps Bobbie Kalman) and ask them some questions about the similarities and differences between the two texts:

- For what purposes has Bobbie Kalman developed the different texts? How are the purposes similar/different?
- What structures has Bobbie Kalman chosen to use in each of the texts? How are they similar or different? How do the structures help to show the purposes?
- What are some ways that Bobbie Kalman has used language which seem similar across the texts?
- If you were going to say one thing about Bobbie Kalman as an author, what would it be?

You might then repeat this assessment again at the end of this unit.

As in previous units, the TCRWP's Informational Reading Learning Progression is available to Project schools to help teachers to evaluate student work in informational reading. This tool can also serve as a teaching tool throughout the year.
In this bend you will lead students to investigate their nonfiction reading lives, and deepen their understanding of nonfiction techniques. To get started, we suggest that you invite students to investigate their nonfiction lives. “All of you,” you might say, “know for sure what kind of books you like in fiction. You know the genres you like, the series you like, and the authors you like. You are Erin Hunter readers and Beverly Cleary readers and Harry Potter readers. You have fiction identities – people know who you are as a fiction reader. It’s time for people to know you as a nonfiction reader as well.” Then, you might send your readers off to gather the artifacts that will let them study their nonfiction habits: their reading logs, their book baggie books, their favorites from home. Teach your readers by saying, “Today I want to teach you that readers often pause and take stock of their reading lives. One way to do this is to investigate what they’ve been doing as readers.” To do this, they often turn to tools like reading records or book baskets to recall what they’ve read, and remember how they liked it.

As your readers recall and research the nonfiction they’ve read so far this year, next you might invite them to apply the skills they know how to do as fiction readers – have them consider how their nonfiction reading life is going. You might say something like “Today I want to teach you that readers often pose predictable questions to push themselves as readers.” Questions nonfiction readers might ask themselves, for instance, include:

- What kind of nonfiction have I been tending to read?
- When has nonfiction reading gone particularly well for me?
- How much nonfiction reading am I getting done?
- What could I do to read more or be more smart about my reading?

Chances are good that some of your readers read avidly during a unit of study, but then their reading fell off. Others will be secret, at-home readers, who have collections of books or passions for a topic. Celebrate and publicize that kind of reading as a goal for everyone. On this same day, you might set students up with nonfiction reading goals, perhaps a goal to read more, or to make more purposeful choices, or to share their nonfiction reading passions.
In a next lesson, you might teach students by saying, “Today I want to teach you that readers often think about what they really like about certain books, so they can find other books like those, and then do more and more reading, and become more and more powerful as readers! One way readers begin this work is to sort books into the kinds of books they love.” So just as a reader who realizes that she loves the Judy Blume books with the character of Fudge in them will know to find other books like these, nonfiction readers can sort out the kinds of books they love so they know what to look for more of. You might send students off to sort some stacks of nonfiction in the room into some categories that make sense based on what they love about them. You might do some coaching here, saying "I can tell you’re already thinking about favorite authors! I’m curious too – will the Gail Gibbons books tend to go together? Are there things about those that make them favorites?” and even, “Let’s outgrow our thinking that nonfiction only goes together if it’s on the same topic! Let’s put some books together because they’re by the same author, or because they are in a series.” After the books are re-sorted in new ways that transcend topic clusters, you might set children to reading and revisiting favorites. They might make labels such as ‘If you loved The Moon Book, you’ll love these other Gail Gibbons books!’

In your read aloud this first week, you might invite students to nominate another book that they would love as much as they loved Wolves by Seymour Simon, which you read in Unit Three. Be thrilled at their initiative when they hand you another Seymour Simon that you have carefully planted--or any book they hand you! As you read Tornadoes, for instance, you’ll want to reinforce the reading skills you taught in the fall, including reading for main ideas and details, summarizing, and noticing internal structures that organize information. Add in, with a light touch, how this book feels so much like the Wolves book that you all loved, and occasionally open up Wolves to compare the gorgeous full page photographs, the expert voice, the attention to big issues. That is, read expressing aloud a new alertness to the parts of the text you all really enjoyed. Talk aloud to teach the skills children need to use whenever they read nonfiction, but also add in some extra analysis of how you are becoming Seymour Simon fans.

As your students sort and weigh books that go together, let them in on the fact that this work--of re-sorting a library so that we think about it differently--is work that avid readers do their whole lives. How many of us have arranged our books first by author, then by genre, then by hard cover and soft, then by what we’re reading now, then by fiction and nonfiction, and so on? The truth is that when we sort books, what we’re really doing is thinking about our reading lives in different ways, and organizing our books the way we want to read. Encourage children to move from one book to another in their baskets, as
they reorganize and bring in favorites from home and from the library to add to your classroom collections.

Of course, every day, you don’t want kids just looking at logs and sorting books – They need to be reading! Don’t wait for children to have perfect piles of authors lined up to start them reading and rereading. “You might say to them, “Today I want to teach you that readers work a little bit at ways to ratchet up their reading life, and they meanwhile read a lot, hoping to read more purposefully because of new thinking work, but knowing they can carry along with the strategies they already know as well.” You will likely want to spend a day helping your students reflect on all they have already learned about reading informational texts, including determining main ideas and key details, summarizing, and describing the structures of texts. If needed, you will probably want to remind your readers that as they set out to first read some of the books in their growing text sets, they know how to orient themselves to the different sections and subsections, how to synthesize the main ideas and key details, how to teach someone what they've learned.

A note of caution when doing this work: You will want to give students time to soak in these books and to teach each other some of the information they learned. That is, the primary purpose of reading nonfiction is, in fact, to learn. So your readers should read with increased attention to stamina and pace, thinking about which books, authors, and series, are making them powerful nonfiction readers because they are getting a lot of reading done and they should be excited about what they read and ready to teach someone else in their club. You could say, “Today I want to teach you that when nonfiction readers set out to study their nonfiction reading lives, they actively try to improve it while studying it! One way to do this is to get a lot of reading done. Another way to do this is to really synthesize information and teach others.”

By the end of this bend, your readers should have organized their books into some baskets of authors or series they realize they really enjoy, have shared with others by teaching some of the content to partners, and have zoomed in on books that help them get a lot of reading done. They should have an increased awareness of their identities as nonfiction readers, and they should be stirred up to make those identities more powerful.
Bend II: Investigating Authors We Love and Deepening Understanding of Nonfiction Techniques

In Bend Two of the unit, you'll deepen students understanding of nonfiction techniques. Set your students up to investigate what it is about these particular nonfiction books that they've chosen that makes them so compelling. As they begin, you might phrase your teaching point like this, “Today I want to teach you that like anything else, reading has its own words, its expert vocabulary, so that when you describe a book, you can use this vocabulary to describe the techniques authors use.” That way, rather than sending student on treasure hunts for “compare and contrast structures,” or “similes,” you suggest that readers will be noticing many techniques, and as they do so, there are some expert words that make their conversations more specific. To begin, you might recall with children some of the vocabulary they know for the structural choices that authors make to organize information in memorable ways—such as “problem-solution,” “compare-contrast,” and “cause and effect” – and alert them that these can be combined. In your read aloud, you might read with the lens of these text structures at first, so that student employ the technical vocabulary they have already learned to describe parts of this book that are especially clear and engaging, or that explain tricky content well.

Make sure clubs make some plans for how they are going to read – will they divide up different titles by an author or in a series and read distinct books, then come back to compare what they've noticed? Do they have some shared copies they will read in sync? Will they bring books home? How will they organize their jotted notes to be ready to share? You may decide to explicitly teach some ways that nonfiction clubs read and talk, or you may choose to observe children as they get started, and then tailor your instruction as they show you how successful—and problematic— their choices are. In any case, make sure that clubs get some plans going, and that readers set out to describe to each other what it is that they love about these particular books.

The next day, you might invite students to name some other of the nonfiction techniques that they already know and can use expert vocabulary for – they'll know a lot from your information writing units, and from their experience with nonfiction. With their nonfiction books in hand, you might chart what we call some of these nonfiction techniques. Then you might go back to your read aloud text and teach students that readers not only use expert vocabulary to describe what nonfiction writers do, they also think about when and how authors use these – how they make new information really interesting and understandable. After modeling a couple of techniques, send clubs off to investigate their own books. If you
use *Tornadoes* or a book like this as your demonstration text, chances are that your chart might end up looking something like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonfiction Technique/Author’s Craft</th>
<th>What We Notice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>Teach us expert words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting pictures</td>
<td>Get us interested/explain things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagrams</td>
<td>Let us see inside things or see parts or show cause and effect or sequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True stories</td>
<td>Introduce important people, tell about exciting events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subheadings</td>
<td>Let us know when something new is introduced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You might put some reproductions of pages from the book alongside your chart as examples. Of course, the important work is not how you notice techniques, but how your readers begin to analyze the books their reading for authors’ craft. Part of becoming more expert in anything is being able to talk the talk – to describe and explain and express ideas with language that is detailed and precise. You might, for some students, compare the words that they would use to talk about baseball, or ballet, or music, as examples of how experts describe things with technical vocabulary.

Again, after some club inquiry, where kids might put Post-its on pages where they notice authors doing especially interesting things, or where kids make a club chart of an author’s or series’ techniques and talk about what works about them, you might send them off to read with these expert terms in their minds, alert to how their particular authors interest them. Remember that the point is not that young readers need to name techniques just to be obedient, rather it is the teaching point you might go back to, “As readers notice and share what they love about their books, they use specific language to describe what authors do.”

When next they gather to teach their partners about what they’ve been reading, you might teach students this: “It’s not just nonfiction authors who explain information using effective techniques. Talk partners and clubs use these same techniques when they teach each other about what they’ve learned.” So children might organize what they say on their fingers, like subheadings, or they might jot a diagram to explain something tricky, or they might retell an exciting story.
And they might not only use these techniques when they talk, they might use them when they write, too!

By now you’ll be ready to read another book aloud, if you haven’t done so already. You might switch to the Seymour Simon book, *Tornadoes*, and notice the techniques he uses to teach about tornadoes – including similar structures to those used in *Wolves*. In your read aloud, you might teach about *style* - how writers often have a certain style. Simon tends, for instance, toward the sweeping and the dramatic, with large scale photographs and big historical and political issues. Jean Fritz tends towards the humorous, making historical events seem funny. DK Readers tend to teach by terrifying the reader, with an exaggerated and dramatic style. Club members might bring their own books to the read aloud, then try to describe their author’s style.

In your next lesson, we suggest you gather children for an inquiry about what techniques writers of literature (fiction and poetry) use that nonfiction writers use as well to make their nonfiction memorable and magical. It’s after your state exams and after your unit of study on interpretation, so there is no doubt that every fourth grader has some grounding in literary devices such as comparisons, symbolism, mood and tone, dialogue, and perhaps point of view. You might pull out some of your charts or short texts that students studied when they were analyzing literary techniques. You might pose an inquiry question to your students. It might sound like, “So the question you want to ask yourself is: What writerly moves did we see in poetry and fiction turn out to be important to nonfiction writers as well?” This inquiry might be important for your writing workshop as well as your reading workshop. You might have several copies of your read aloud text to hand out to clubs, so they can return to this text and read closely, investigating literary techniques.

In Seymour Simon’s *Tornadoes*, for instance, Simon employs:

- *Foreshadowing* “a few monster tornadoes are a mile wide and have the strongest winds ever measured in nature...”
- *Rising tension* “moving at a slow 20 miles per hour, the storm entered the town...”
- *Comparisons/similes* “It sounded like a thousand freight trains”
- *Personification* “the tornado...bounced it up and down like a ball.”
- *Poetic language* “a thunderstorm came rumbling out of the north”
- *Repetition* “killed 689 people, injured 2000, left 10,000 homeless”
- *Underlying themes* ‘the world isn’t always safe,’ ‘disaster can strike’

As your children go off to read, you might remind them of the repertoire of strategies they have learned. “You have some choices as you go off to read today,” you might say. “Will you be noticing particular nonfiction techniques, and maybe getting ready to use those to teach a partner what you’re learning? Are you striving to use your expert vocabulary, jotting
down what you notice with specific language? Are you fascinated by how nonfiction writers use literary devices? Or are you going to get a lot of reading done, and as you read, you’ll notice the style that unifies your book? What reading work will you be doing today?”

Over the next few days, you’ll want to continue to teach children strategies for reading closely and figuring out what it is they particularly think is amazing about these authors they admire. You might teach them that: readers often lay books by an author/in a series alongside each other and study patterns to see if they are particularly drawn to certain kinds of writing. You might begin a chart that looks like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gail Gibbons <em>Tornadoes</em> teaches with</th>
<th>Seymour Simon <em>Wolves</em> teaches with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawings and diagrams</td>
<td>Big photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps, charts</td>
<td>Close up photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headings, subheadings or TOC</td>
<td>No headings or subheadings or TOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions, sidebars</td>
<td>Lots of pages of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions on every page</td>
<td>Glossary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, you might teach that readers often compare and contrast books by different authors, by looking at two books that are quite different helps us to see more specifically how authors make different moves. You’ll probably have books in your collection on the same topic by the same author, as we tend to organize our nonfiction this way. Take this opportunity, then, to compare Seymour Simon’s *Tornadoes* to Gail Gibbon’s *Tornadoes*, or other books on the same topic by the same author. Comparing and contrasting helps readers to notice more.

You’ll also want to coach into clubs across this time. As they teach each other what they learn, assess if they are adding in a little bit of how the author taught them, or what the author did to make the information clear or memorable. Teach them to point to favorite parts of the text, to quote specific parts, to use that expert vocabulary. You might set kids up in clubs to debate which is the better book on a topic (Simon’s or Gibbons’, for example) and why. Watch for how they use text-evidence to support their ideas. Watch also for how they defend their favorite authors. You want to ensure that this close reading work makes them love these books even more. If you start to feel like it’s getting mechanical, set them to reading a lot, and stir up their excitement for the content. Ask them to act out important
parts, or invite them to carry their favorite books into writing workshop, and set them up to mentor themselves to their favorite authors.

At the end of this bend, you might invite your readers to nominate nonfiction authors for awards, or they might offer book talks or do podcasts where they talk about what’s hot in nonfiction.

Bend III: Expanding Our Nonfiction Experiences

As your clubs read and talk about the authors and series they love and become more detailed and sophisticated in describing these books, you’ll want to also remember that the point of this work is both to read more closely, and to hone a nonfiction reading identity. In this third bend of the unit, then, you’ll remind students that they began by thinking about their nonfiction identities. Then they studied books and authors they loved and set out to both read more of these and figure out what it is about them that they are so drawn to. Now you say something like this, “Today I want to teach you that as readers come to know more about the books they are drawn to, they also know more about themselves as readers, which helps them outgrow themselves and helps them set new goals.” That is, readers tend to enjoy certain kinds of nonfiction, and avoid others. We can, though, set out to expand our nonfiction experiences and expand what we feel comfortable reading. As students set themselves up to make new goals, you might send them back to studying their logs and looking at their reading baskets, now asking them to talk about where they are now as nonfiction readers, and how they might get even stronger. Chances are they’ve now read a lot, and they might be ready to read more different authors or more kinds of nonfiction, and even more complex nonfiction texts.

Next you might teach children ways to grow that they may not have considered. You might say, “Today I want to teach you that one way readers grow and expand their reading is by swapping favorite books or by introducing books for each other.” How often has a friend convinced you to read a book by talking about it? As a demonstration or even as a class, you might read some of the blurbs on the backs of books as examples of being introduced to a book, or you might listen to some book talks together, and then try offering up some book introductions that really interest other readers. Over the next few days, readers might step outside their comfort zone, to read authors or series that they haven’t been so quickly drawn to.

“Today I want to teach you that as readers come to know more about the books they are drawn to, they also know more about themselves as readers, which helps them outgrow themselves, and helps them set new goals.”

“Today I want to teach you that one way readers grow and expand their reading is by swapping favorite books or by introducing books to each other.”
You might also spend a few days investigating other kinds of nonfiction that make up a reading identity, including websites, videos, and magazines. Perhaps one club might read *Scope* and another might read *Junior Scholastic*, and another might revisit the nonfiction magazines *Appleseed* or *Ask* or *Click*, and then they can apply their skills at describing what makes these journals great, using their expert vocabulary, and teaching each other about the content as well. Clubs might investigate the BBC science videos, the Historychannel.com, or the National Geographic site. Your main goal is to stir up your children’s interest in reading nonfiction regularly for pleasure, and building up social energy around that endeavor. Perhaps to celebrate this bend, children might invent ways to share the great nonfiction they are finding--perhaps creating bookmarks for great sites, recommending videos, making a handout for parents or for local libraries on what nonfiction is great for kids.

Children who read outside of school do better, and this is true for nonfiction just as much as fiction. It’s not just that their reading levels will be higher and their rates stronger (thought that is true). If they read nonfiction, they’ll know more about the world. They’ll bring more information and experience to their other reading, to their writing, to all of school and really, to all of their relationships and decisions as a human and as a citizen. What could be more important?