



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

SPOT: Accurate Author, Part #2

Examining Aspects of Accuracy



Why Read Nonfiction?

Elementary

Nonfiction allows children to experience the magic of the real world – of predators and their prey; of planets and oceans; of other lands, times, and people. Exposure to nonfiction has the ever-widening effect of a pebble thrown into a pond in the following ways:

- Nonfiction expands children's knowledge. It contributes to concept development, which is a critical factor in comprehension. Nonfiction teaches children concepts and terms associated with a variety of topics: people, places, things, and ideas they may never come upon in real life.
- Nonfiction familiarizes children to the common expository patterns such as cause and effect, sequence, explanation, description, and compare-contrast. With experience, children begin to internalize these structures. They develop expectations for the grammars of this writing and use these structures as models in their own writing.
- Nonfiction provides excellent connections to various curricular areas.
- Nonfiction can promote personal growth and move children to social response. For example, children read about how recycling helps to preserve the environment, and then they convince their school to collect and recycle printer ink cartridges.
- Nonfiction sparks children's curiosity for information. This often leads to silent, independent reading of this kind. The wide range of topics, formats, difficulty levels, and styles of today's nonfiction make it possible to locate books that will appeal to nearly everyone.

Reference:

Moss, B. (2003). *Exploring the literature of fact: Children's nonfiction trade books in the elementary classroom*. New York: Guilford Press.



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Why Read Nonfiction?

Secondary

How does nonfiction use fit into all this? We start with the readers' experiences, interests, and questions. We guide them in choosing texts that will confront their deepest concerns in ways that will potentially change them. Such texts can engage them and serve as a personal research tool that naturally integrates curriculum, and that challenges their knowledge of the world and their reading expertise. When this occurs, the magic called LEARNING can happen.

- What we know is almost always embedded in stories – real ones – constructed of an elaborate combination of real-life experiences and those told to us by distant teachers such as nonfiction authors.
- Nonfiction allows us to observe and enter into other worlds and experience these places, people, and times that are often at a distance from us.
- Nonfiction encourages us to imagine possibilities and ask “What if?” and to be action researchers investigating how to enact changes in the world.

Reference:

Wilhelm, J.D. (1998). Big stuff at the middle level: The real world, real reading, and right action. In R. A. Bamford & J. V. Kristo (Eds.), *Making facts come alive: Choosing quality nonfiction literature K-8*. (pp. 215-230). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.