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# Using Nonfiction to Motivate Reading and Writing, K-12

Sample Pages



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## Course Overview

*Using Nonfiction to Motivate Reading and Writing, K-12* is content-based graduate level course, exploring the genre of nonfiction and informational texts and how you can use nonfiction in your classroom to motivate student's reading and writing.

In this course you will explore the wealth of nonfiction and informational texts in trade literature written for all age groups and include picture books, informational texts, magazines, newspapers, and creative nonfiction. Expand your library and resources of nonfiction and informational texts in print and digital sources beyond the scope of texts in your curriculum guide. Investigate resources for finding well-crafted nonfiction texts. Choose informational texts from a wide variety of sources. Read nonfiction literature to pursue your interests and passions. (Please, no professional books about teaching! Save that for another class!) Read from a wide array of high-quality informational texts and literary nonfiction from history/social studies, science and technical subjects. Choose from award winning informational texts, and classic nonfiction. Document your reading in an annotated reading log that is useful and practical to you.

Motivate students to engage with informational texts through book talks and read-alouds. Encourage students to engage in expository writing and reading nonfiction using informational texts across the curriculum content areas, K-12. Prepare reading and writing curriculum applications to meet the rigors of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

Explore how much time students are engaged in informational texts, how to increase time for informational reading and ways to build collaboration among colleagues to build informational text skills. Evaluate the reading of nonfiction as an essential skill for critical thinking, research and skills necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> century student, K-12. Defend the use of a wide variety of nonfiction and informational texts, from functional texts to reference materials, arguments, persuasive and theoretical informational texts. Support the claims that using nonfiction to motivate reading and writing is a means for students to read widely and deeply across subject matter, to build strong content knowledge, to build a wide range of comprehension and analytical skills, and hone the ability to read and think critically.

Equally importantly, immerse yourself in this rich genre of nonfiction and informational texts. Read to satisfy your curiosities, to inspire your interests, to build your knowledge and skills, and to fill your soul. Read to energize you personal and professional well being! Enjoy reading nonfiction and informational texts.

Use the text, outside reading and writing activities to complete the course work. A syllabus is available on [www.collegecoursesonline.com](http://www.collegecoursesonline.com)

### **Text:**

#### **“Instructor’s Comments”**

The Text for *Using Nonfiction to Motivate Reading and Writing, K-12* is divided into four parts: **Part A** of the text will explore the genre of nonfiction and informational texts, defining what nonfiction is and what isn't; how is nonfiction related to informational

texts; a look at the key features of nonfiction and informational texts and how to and assess and classify nonfiction. **Part B** will guide you to explore resources for choosing quality nonfiction and informational texts to read and offer you ideas for designing a useful and practical annotated reading log. **Part C** focuses on classroom application. Choose 4 of the classroom applications to meet your grade level curriculum and implement standards. These activities are designed to meet your needs. You may have some different ideas for classroom applications using nonfiction and informational texts. Modifications and suggestions to better suit your personal and professional goals are welcomed. Please contact your instructor **Part D** will give you some instruction of completing the final Reflection Essay.

**Exercises:** After reading the instructor's comments and narrative, many units ask you to participate by responding to an exercise. Some exercises offer a choice in activity. Some units have several exercises. Each unit explores different aspects of using nonfiction and informational texts. You will be introduced to many nonfiction texts just doing the exercises for each unit. You will become familiar with some of the resources for choosing nonfiction that will help you choose what to read but also how to create curriculum applications using nonfiction. But the most important part of this course is to enjoy your reading. The more we immerse ourselves in the literature of nonfiction and share what we read with students in the classroom, we model authenticity and purpose for reading. Reading high-quality nonfiction allows us to make recommendations and discuss books and other informational texts with students. Students model the behavior they see in adults. I encourage you to read in front of your students; read what they read. Know your student's interests. Feed their interests with high quality nonfiction. We build meaningful relationships with our students and we motivate students to become independent and capable readers and writers when we offer them lots of high quality nonfiction in their daily diet at school. Reading nonfiction develops discerning minds and critical thinking, two necessary skills to meet and sustain the challenges of the ever-growing body of information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The text will also give you some instruction on the **Outside Reading and Writing Assignments**- Suggestions for ways to record your nonfiction reading in an annotated reading log; an activity to assess, analyze, evaluate and discuss classroom practices; a synthesis paper to connect using nonfiction to motivate reading and writing to implementing the Common Core State Standards or your state standards in literacy; and a final reflection paper. But the main activity in this course is to read and collect nonfiction and informational texts. If you are more of a fiction reader than a nonfiction reader, I encourage you to choose nonfiction and informational texts that feed an interest or a passion, to discover the wealth, depth and breadth of quality nonfiction and to fall in love with this genre so you can promote nonfiction in the classroom. Start with the genre of "creative nonfiction". If you are an avid reader of nonfiction, this is your time to indulge in reading more good nonfiction. Enjoy!

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## **Part A: Learning about Nonfiction**

### **Instructor's Comments:**

Before choosing nonfiction and informational texts to read, take some time to investigate some questions: “Why read nonfiction?” “What is nonfiction?” “What is the process and criteria a book or informational text goes through to become nonfiction?” Complete the “Inventory”, and the exercises throughout Part A will offer you some insights about nonfiction. When you are done with this section, culminate your thoughts in “Time for Reflection”.

### **Part A: Learning about Nonfiction**

- Why Read Nonfiction?
- An Inventory
- Motivation
- What is “Nonfiction”? What is “Informational Text”?
- Determining “Nonfiction”
- A Quick Look at Classification Systems
- The Verso Page
- Determining Accuracy
- Time for Reflection

**Assignment:** Read and complete the exercises. Organize your work on a Word document or text documents. You may use one document or many. Please include the title of the course, the assignment and your name.

## Why Read Nonfiction and Informational Texts?

Reading to learn and reading to think are the main tasks in education. And what better way to learn and think than reading quality nonfiction and informational texts. By nature people are curious and want to know and understand. Knowledge is power and empowerment. Reading nonfiction and informational texts is a way to spark interests, to generate wonder, to inspire questions and research. Reading nonfiction develops an inquiring mind and critical thinking.

Bowker, a leading publisher of bibliographic information, studies the publishing and buying habits of print and digital materials. Tables of numbers of new titles published by year and subject matter show consistent increases in nonfiction and informational texts published from 2002 to 2012. Bowker estimated that 75% of the books published in 2004 were nonfiction titles. Yearly reports of trends in the publishing business show what readers are buying. 2012 marks a decline in print books and an increase in ebooks. For a current report, see [www.bowker.com/](http://www.bowker.com/)

There is a growing demand for quality nonfiction trade books in the public market place as well as in schools. Over 60% of books catalogued at the Library of Congress are nonfiction titles (Kristo and Bamford, 2004). Competing with visual forms of literacy, such as movies, and TV, today's publishers produce nonfiction books that are written and illustrated in engaging and stimulating ways inviting readers into the world of nonfiction, through print or in digital format. Contrary to popular belief, TV documentaries, movies of substance that stimulate inquiry result in a run on informational texts at the library or bookstore on that topic (Moss, 2003). Quality nonfiction is noted for engaging writing style that stimulates inquiry and wonder in the reader without sacrificing authenticity. Authors of quality nonfiction and informational texts create connections, build background knowledge and use descriptive and content specific vocabulary and images to create visualizations. Authors of quality nonfiction show their expertise through their bibliography and biography. Providing quality nonfiction helps students to be able to identify authority, high quality nonfiction texts, where they can exercise critical thinking skills to sort fact from fiction and experts from charlatans.

The history of instructional practices show that many English Language Arts curriculums use more fiction texts than nonfiction or informational texts. In order to provide authentic educational experiences that prepare students for life long reading and writing, it is important to provide a balanced approach to reading and writing in our classrooms offering students as much opportunity and encouragement to read and write nonfiction as fiction. From research about boys and literacy, boys prefer nonfiction and informational texts to fiction. Finding ways to pair fiction with nonfiction texts and expand the use of nonfiction in the classroom is essential to motivating students in reading and writing.

The Common Core State Standards introduced in 2010 and adopted by 45 states, places a greater emphasis on reading and using nonfiction informational texts in the classroom. "The Standards demand that a significant amount of reading of informational texts take place in and outside of the ELA classroom." (2010, p.5)

Preparing students to be ready for college and career skills, the Common Core has patterned a distribution table of expectations for reading and writing. 4<sup>th</sup> grade students are expected to be actively engaged in reading informational texts 50% of the school day across the curriculum (ELA and content areas), 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 55% and by 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 70 %. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/key-design-consideration>

Equally significant are the CCSS distribution guidelines for writing framework with a heavy emphasis on expository writing: argument, persuasion, critical thinking and supporting claims with evidence.

The call is clear. Reading and finding ways to include more high-quality nonfiction and informational texts across the curriculum and content areas will help you implement the standards and motivate reading and writing.

Reading well-crafted and well-researched nonfiction and informational texts is inspiring, exciting and stimulating. Reading nonfiction creates interests, which creates motivation to read more and know more. Reading quality nonfiction is a way to learn from authors who spend time gathering primary and secondary source material on a topic. Reading and using quality nonfiction informational texts in the classroom is like having an expert in your classroom. Quality nonfiction texts are the co-teachers and mentors of information about a subject, and provide mentor-texts or models for writing in this genre. For the reader, well-documented nonfiction is a resource to be read and used over and over. Using the bibliography of a well-written nonfiction text leads to examining claims and verifying evidence. Reading nonfiction is a way to be an active learner; to engage in authentic research; generate high interest and motivation; develop expertise; expand vocabulary; challenge old ideas and encourage the scientific method. Reading nonfiction creates active engagement with text through questions, research and critical thinking. Reading several informational texts on the same topic develops expertise and competence. And when you know a lot about a topic, you develop mastery on that topic which leads to writing about that topic. Reading texts sets on a topic creates the basis for debate and argument writing.

In this course, *Using Nonfiction to Motivate Readers and Writers, K-12*, the focus is on choosing and reading quality nonfiction informational texts; trade books and magazines, journals, newspapers, and Internet articles on topics of interest. You are encouraged to balance your current curricular practices with well-written, accurate nonfiction and informational texts, print or digital. You are encouraged to read newly published material as well as nonfiction and informational text of historical value or with “older” copyright dates. Many “older” informational texts offer insights to the progressions in science or social studies or validate current research.

Learning how to choose, read and use nonfiction to gather information about an interest or to spark interests is essential to helping students become critical readers and contributing writers. Nonfiction inquiry invites participation. Learning to read with a discerning mind, questioning, researching encourages students to participate in the

learning process. One day we are reading a book to them about weather, and encouraging their inquiry, and the next day they are writing about new information on the earth's climate. It all starts with an inquiring mind that wonders and asks questions like, "Is it true?" and a teacher who feeds that inquiry with resources and skills.

**Exercise 1:** Why read nonfiction and informational texts? Please share your thoughts. Write informally.

END OF SAMPLE PAGES.

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