What Are Informational Texts?

Informational texts include the following media examples: news; magazines; advertisements/commercials; documentaries; and movies. Are you up-to-speed on how to teach with and about them? Having your students analyze and deconstruct these types of texts is increasingly important and relevant in a 21st century classroom. In addition, you will find more resources on my Close Reading of Media Texts web page. Contact me for information about professional development workshops.

Here are the pages on the Media Literacy Clearinghouse which deal with informational texts:
Journalism/News; Advertising; Commercials; Visual literacy; Motion Pictures; Documentaries

Informational Text Features

Informational text features help the reader more easily navigate the text and often provide additional information to help students comprehend the content.

Print Features
Guide readers through the patterns of organization

Feature	Helps the Reader...
Table of Contents	Identify key topics in the book and the order they are presented in
Index	See everything in the text listed alphabetically, with page numbers
Glossary	Define words contained in the text
Preface	Set a purpose for reading, get an overview of the content
Pronunciation Guide	Say the words
Appendix	By offering additional information

Illustrations
Expand the meaning of the text

Feature	Helps the Reader...
Photos	Understand exactly what something looks like
Drawings	Understand what something could or might have looked like
Magnification	See details in something small

Organizational Aids
Help readers find important information

Feature	Helps the Reader...
Bold Print	By signaling the word is important and/or found in the glossary
Colored Print	Understand the word is important
Italics	Understand the word is important
Bullets	Emphasize key points/ concepts
Titles	Locate different categories in the text
Headings	Identify topics throughout the book as they skim and scan
Subheadings	Navigate through sections of text
Captions	Understand a picture or photograph
Labels	Identify a picture or photograph and/or its parts
Sidebars	Gather additional or explanatory information.

Graphic Aids
Represent information in some specific way

Feature	Helps the Reader...
Diagrams	Understand a more detailed or simplified view of information.
Flow Diagram	Understand a complex sequence of movements or actions
Sketches	Visualize an important concept
Comparisons	Understand the size of one thing by comparing it to the size of something familiar
Graphs	Understand relativity between elements
Figures	Combine text information with graphical aids
Maps	Understand where things are in the world
Charts/Tables	Summarize/Compare information
Cross-Sections	Understand something by looking at it from the inside
Overlays	Understand additional information
Time-lines	Understand the sequence of time

Source: http://t4.jordan.k12.ut.us/cbl/images/litfac/binfo.pdf

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“Informational Texts” by Dr. Brenda Parkes,

(Note: hyperlink embedded below added by media educator Frank Baker)

To become effective readers of informational texts, students need to understand:

• the features that identify nonfiction writing;

• the selective way nonfiction is read according to the reader’s purpose;

• the ways organizational features such as indexes, content pages, glossaries and headings help the reader access the text;

• the specialized language and language structures used to convey information;

• how visual literacy such as photographs, diagrams, maps and charts combine with written text to convey information;

• how information in captions and labels combines with running text to convey information; and

• strategies for using prior knowledge and experience to engage in inquiry.

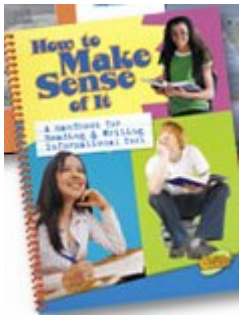
Source: http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/parents/resources/makingthegrade/2004fall.pdf

Other recommendations:

Features of Informational Texts
Using Text Features to Locate Essential Information from Texts
Informational Text Features
Talking About Visual Texts With Students

Exploring Informational Texts
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE
MARGARET MOONEY
LINDA HOFF
BRENDA PARKES

Jim Burke
ILLUMINATING TEXTS


How to Make Sense of It