

It's A Fact!

Developing Non-Fiction Comprehension Skills

Grades 4-6

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Illustrated by S&S Learning Materials

About the author:

Eleanor Summers is a retired elementary teacher who continues to be involved in various levels of education. Her goal is to write creative and practical resources for teachers to use in their literacy programs.


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At Glance

Learning Expectations	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Vocabulary, Word Usage:			
• Identify word meanings	•	•	•
• Compound words, synonyms, antonyms		•	•
• Dictionary and thesaurus skills		•	•
• Write complete sentences	•	•	•
• Write complete paragraphs	•	•	•
Reading Comprehension:			
• Understands words and phrases in context	•	•	•
• Identify and describe main text elements	•	•	•
• Summarize main facts and provide supporting details	•	•	•
• Use knowledge and experience to understand what is read	•	•	•
• Identify and describe implied ideas	•	•	•
Reasoning and Critical Thinking:			
• Organize information (graphs, T-charts, lists)	•	•	•
• Compare and contrast facts	•	•	•
• Distinguish between facts and opinions	•	•	•
• Analyze importance of information	•	•	•
• Predict future outcomes by using implied ideas	•	•	•
• Evaluate facts in text	•	•	•
• Identify and describe cause and effect	•	•	•
• Relate text to personal experiences and knowledge	•	•	•
• Extend text message to personal actions and behaviors	•	•	•
• Creative writing	•	•	•
• Research skills: including use of Internet	•	•	•
Creativity and Design:			
• Create a visual product from facts gained from the text	•	•	•
• Use illustrations to confirm understanding of text	•	•	•
• Express own interpretation of facts in a visual form	•	•	•
• Extend ideas to future situations	•	•	•

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Introduction and Teacher Suggestions

The Importance of Non-fiction Reading:

Most of the reading that we do in real life is non-fiction. However, most classroom reading programs focus mainly on reading fiction materials. To help to correct this imbalance, we need to incorporate non-fiction reading and comprehension strategies into the daily reading program. The ability to read and understand non-fiction is a vital skill for all children as they progress toward inquiry skills and research.

Purposes for Reading Non-fiction Materials:

We read non-fiction materials to learn and to connect what we have learned to our own life. Some specific purposes include:

- To acquire information and to find answers to specific questions.
- To satisfy our curiosity.
- To understand new ideas and to develop a greater vocabulary.
- To have a better understanding of our world and to make real life connections.

Teacher Suggestions

This resource is organized so that the passages and their activities can be made into booklets or stored in folders. The content is written to assist students to recognize indicators of non-fiction: captions and subheadings, diagrams and charts and point form notation. These indicators will help students to derive meaning from the text they read.

The passages focus on a wide range of non-fiction topics. Each story contains the following activities:

- Before I read:** reasoning and critical thinking skills; vocabulary development skills to be used prior to reading the passage; relation of prior knowledge.
- While I read:** comprehension, analysis and application skills, critical thinking.
- After I read:** comprehension, summary, synthesis and evaluation skills, creativity and design

Student stories are written to grade level, however, that grade level is not indicated on the student copy. Therefore, it is possible to interchange grade level stories to accommodate student performance levels.

Pre-Reading Activities:

- Read aloud a piece of non-fiction to the whole class. Point out the features of non-fiction materials: it is true, it makes us curious, it tells us new facts.
- These selections may be used in conjunction with some ongoing classroom themes.
- Discuss types of “real” stories that are of interest to your class.





Feeding Our Feathered Friends



Name: _____

1. **Word Meanings:** Match these words from the story to their meanings. Write the letter beside the word in front of the correct meaning.

Word	#	Meaning
a) croutons		to lace, tie or put together
b) mesh		a net made of laced threads or wires
c) photograph		a kind of fat from cattle and sheep
d) source		small cubes of crisply toasted bread
e) suet		where something begins or comes from
f) weave		to take a picture of something

2. Birds are creatures that can find their own food most of the time. Why do you think some people like to provide food for birds?

3. What are some situations where it would be very difficult for birds to find their own food? Try to think of at least three answers.

4. What dangers might birds face in their search for food? Try to think of at least three answers.





Feeding Our Feathered Friends

Many birds live year round in some of the colder countries like Canada. During the long, cold winter, they have to work very hard to find enough food. They spend almost the entire day searching for seeds, dried berries and anything else that they can eat. We can help out these winter birds by setting up feeders in our yards.

5. What are some foods that humans like to feed to birds? Try to think of as many answers as you can.

Making a simple feeder can be easy to do. Here are some ideas for you to try.

Pine Cone Feeder

- Collect some big pine cones.
- Tie a piece of string about 12 inches (30 cm) around the biggest end. Weave it around the cone pieces so you can hang the cone.
- Spread peanut butter around the top of the cone (evenly over the top of the string)
- Sprinkle some bird seed on the peanut butter. Press the seeds in with your fingers.
- Hang the cones from a branch or hooks where the birds will find them.



Mesh Bag Feeder

- Find a mesh plastic bag. They are used to package onions and some fruits.
- Fill the bag with suet. Suet is a kind of fat that you can get from your butcher.
- Tie off the end and then tie a string around that end so you can hang up the feeder.
- You can try other foods in the mesh bag feeder: stale cookies, doughnuts and bread, fruit, dried cereals.
- Hang your feeder where the bird will visit and eat.





Feeding Our Feathered Friends

Milk Carton Feeder

- Make a hole through the top part of the carton that stands up. Put a piece of string through the hole and tie it tightly.
- Near the bottom of the carton, cut out an opening. Ask an adult to help you. Make the opening large enough for the bird to feed there.
- Put in some birdseed, dried cereal or croutons.
- Hang your feeder where the birds will see it and feed there.



As soon as the birds discover your feeders, they will be regular visitors! However, there are some points you need to keep in mind when placing your feeders.

Points to Remember	Why This Point is Important
1. Keep the feeders filled with food.	
2. Be sure to place your feeders where they are out of the reach of cats and squirrels.	
3. Check your feeders to see if they need repairs.	

You will be rewarded by watching different species feed each day. Maybe if you are careful and quiet, you will be able to photograph these feathered friends!

