Look Through a Writer’s Eyes

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, teachers will:

- Launch the informational report unit of study.
- Establish themselves as informational report writing mentors by sharing facts they know about nonfiction topics they are interested in, have read about, or watched documentaries about.
- Model how to talk about real-life topics that are of interest.

Students will:

- Use photographs, books, and magazine articles about a nonfiction topic they are interested in to make connections to that topic.
- Share facts about a topic with a partner and discuss the process with the whole class.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Magazine article, book, and/or other resources (preferably with photos or illustrations) about an interesting nonfiction topic
- Self-stick notes
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

During the practice portion of this lesson, students will need a book, picture, poster, magazine, or real object about a topic they are interested in. Before the lesson, ask students to bring in a resource they can use.

1. Focus

Introduce Informational Report Writing

Display a book or magazine article (preferably with photos or illustrations) about a topic that interests you. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about the topic and the facts you learned from reading about it. You may wish to share with students other resources that you’ve used to find information about the topic.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I want to share something I’m really interested in. I have always liked dogs and have had many dogs throughout my life. Recently I learned about something special that some people do with their dogs. They train them as therapy dogs. This means they train their dogs so they can take them to visit people in hospitals or retirement communities where people can’t have pets anymore. The people get to visit with the dogs and pet them, and it helps these people feel better. When I heard about therapy dogs, I began looking for more information about them. I had a lot of questions: When did people first begin training therapy dogs? Can anyone do it? Are any other pets used as therapy animals? I began to look for books, magazine articles, and on the Internet for information.

Say: The topic I’ve just shared is something I am interested in. I have a lot of other interests, and I imagine that you are interested in different things, too. I got my idea from a magazine article, but we can get our ideas for topics from many places: books, magazines, television programs, and the Internet. When we write about a nonfiction topic, it is called an informational report. In an informational report, we share information, or facts, about a real-life topic. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share informational reports with each other.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Informational Reports

Say: Informational reports help people learn more about nonfiction topics. They also give writers a chance to share information with others. When I write an informational report, I think about who will read my report. I try to remember that my audience might not know anything about the topic, so I want to explain the facts clearly and in an organized way. You may not realize it, but you probably see informational reports all the time. Many magazine, newspaper, and Internet articles are informational reports. We write informational reports to share facts about topics we are interested in.
2. Rehearse

Practice Talking About Nonfiction Topics

Invite students to work with a partner. Students should tell their partner facts they know about a topic they are interested in. Encourage students to refer to the sources they have, such as a magazine, article, or book about the topic. The partner listening to the information should be prepared to retell some facts about the topic to the class. Students should explain to their partners what they learned from the sources.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Nonfiction Topics with the Class

Invite volunteers to retell information about the topic their partners shared with them. Ask them to tell how their partners used their sources to learn about their topics. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in a discussion about the exercise.

**Storyteller**
- How did you feel as you shared information about your topic?
- Why did you choose the topic you chose?
- How did the sources you had (magazine, book, etc.) help you tell about the topic?

**Listener**
- How did you feel as you listened to your partner talk about the topic?
- What did you learn about the topic?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** There are many things in the world that we are interested in and can write about. We can get our ideas from things we have read or seen on TV or on the Internet. In the next several weeks, we will look at how to research topics and how to write interesting informational reports.

Encourage students to think about informational report topics during independent writing time, as appropriate.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share the informational report topics they have come up with so far.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**
Meet with beginning ELs one on one while other students work with partners. Encourage them to describe their topics of interest in any way they can—with words or gestures or by pointing to pictures. Use self-stick notes to label the images in their sources.

**Intermediate**
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice. Display simple sentence frames on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources and model how students can use them to talk about their topics. For example:

*I know something about ______.*
*This picture shows ______.*

**Advanced**
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

**All Levels**
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: *photographs/las fotografías; real/real; topic/el tópico.*

Use the images provided on the interactive whiteboard resources or images that you have brought in as additional visual prompts for telling about nonfiction topics.