

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Teaching Content Through Literacy Video Transcript

Lynn Gilbert:

First of all, what's fiction? Okay, Ethan, what's fiction?

Ethan:

Text that is made up and not true.

Gilbert:

Text that is made up and not true, good. What is nonfiction? Jenna.

Jenna:

Text that is based off of, like, true information, like, real, true facts.

Gilbert:

Okay. So you have a science book in front of you, yes? Is that fiction or nonfiction?

Students:

Nonfiction.

Gilbert:

Nonfiction, good. I want you to find an example of nonfiction text in your science book, please. Go.

Kids opened different pages that had pictures and graphs and timelines, and that's the rich piece that they remember from the first lesson. Yes, I have nonfiction text all over all the time.

Does somebody want to share? What did you find that's nonfiction text? Wyatt.

Wyatt:

Precambrian time is the time from the formation of Earth 4.6 billion years ago.

Gilbert:

Okay, I'm going to stop you there. So you're nonfiction text is actually words, correct? Awesome. Does somebody have another example of nonfiction text other than words? Jerclayton?

Jerclayton:

Graphic organizers and tables like this.

Student:

Ooh, you have a graphic organizer of geologic time scale.

Gilbert:

So you actually have a timeline. That's nonfiction text. Good, what else?

I think it's important for them to realize that they don't just use the written word, that they have to use all these different forms of nonfiction text, because science lends itself to that.

Matt.

Matt:

My book has a graphic organizer of how we see light.

Gilbert:

You have a diagram of the eye and how it sees. Is a diagram nonfiction text? It doesn't have any words to it, but it's still nonfiction text. You can still get meaning from it.

It's not just the words on a page, it's the diagram, it's the map, it's the graph. And I can use all those pieces of text to find out information, use it for evidence, use it then for my claim, my evidence, and my reasoning.

What are those things that you need to do when you read nonfiction text?

Student:

We can find bold words.

Gilbert:

Very good, we can find bold words. Are there bolded parts of this text? Not really. This one's not bold words, except for the title. What else, Mr. Isaiah?

Isaiah:

Main ideas.

Gilbert:

Okay, how do I know it's a main idea?

Isaiah:

First sentence. It tells you what it's going to talk about.

Gilbert:

Okay, I might read the first sentence of each paragraph. It tells me what's going to be in that paragraph. Jenna?

Jenna:

You can read the questions before?

Gilbert:

Very good. If I've got questions, I can read those questions before and know what I'm looking for in the text.

Student:

You could look at the captions and pictures.

Gilbert:

Oh, pictures and captions, all those nonfiction text pictures.

When we start to look at the difference between literacy, the big picture, and scientific literacy, which is a more content-specific thing, what it looks like in language arts is a little bit different than what it looks like in science because we're dealing more with hypothesis, evidence, conclusion.

If I'm looking at this article here -- let me pull this back up -- I've got oceans and weather. I've got oceans and animals. Hmm, and I've got oceans and the air. I know I'm making connection to photosynthesis. What does photosynthesis use and produce?

Students:

Oxygen.

Gilbert:

Oxygen and?

Students:

C02.

Gilbert:

C02. So if I'm looking for photosynthesis, I'm looking at this paragraph. I don't really have to read anything else, although you made some really great connections. I was honing in right here. Carbon dioxide. The word "photosynthesis." So when you're reading nonfiction text, you're actually looking for those key words to make those connections to whatever your main idea or your essential question is. Essential question today about photosynthesis.

Teaching the kids how to communicate, whether it's speaking communication, it's written communication, those are really important skills for them to learn. When I first started teaching science, it was just, teach the content. I can teach that, I've got an education, and I know science. And then the principal comes and says, "You need to teach literacy." And I was a little afraid of that, because how do you teach that? What does that look like? So I used my resources. I went to my language arts teacher and we collaborated on a few things. But then I realized that, actually, the teaching of the literacy piece is probably more beneficial for me because they'll learn the content better, so I'm killing two birds with one stone. I'm making literacy a rich piece of that science content.

Bingo, bingo. Good, good, good.