

Lesson Skill: Nonfiction text features

Strand Reading — Nonfiction

SOL 3.6
4.6
5.6

Materials

- Social studies or science textbooks (student-provided)
- Text Features worksheet (attached)

Lesson

1. Prior to this lesson, identify chapters from the science and/or social studies textbook focusing on current areas of study.
2. Introduce the lesson by defining *text features*—i.e., bold font, italics, sidebar, map, chart, heading, subheading, color. Then have students find examples of these features throughout their textbooks.
3. Have students work independently or in groups and use the Text Features worksheet to list the examples they found and explain in the second column each feature’s purpose. When students have completed the worksheet, display their responses and allow them to add information to their worksheets as necessary.
4. Divide students into groups, and assign each group a different chapter of the textbook. Have each group write five questions whose answers can be easily found by noticing and using the text features found in that chapter. If necessary, give students a few examples of such questions, based on the features they found. For example, the answer to the question, “What is the definition of *cell wall*?” should be easy to find by noticing italics.
5. When groups have finished writing their questions, distribute each group’s questions to an alternate group and have students race to find the answers, working either as groups, pairs, or individuals.
6. Close the lesson by reminding students that noticing and taking advantage of text features will help them better understand informational text and locate information quickly.
7. EXTENSION: Assign students a section from a nonfiction text. Have them identify text features that they used to help them to understand the information they read about.

Strategies for Differentiation

- Text feature walk—Provide examples of text features, enlarged and displayed around the room; have students match the type of text feature to the examples.
- Text features four corners—Display one text feature in each corner of the room, and assign students examples of each text feature. Have students stand beneath their text feature and explain their decision.