



Brenda has 35 years of classroom experience. She has presented workshops on literature based themes and literacy strategies, and has written a number of resources for teachers. She remains passionate about matching up kids with books.

# AN ASSORTMENT OF NON-FICTION TEXT

by Brenda Boreham

**M**agazines. Newspapers. Application forms. Recipes. E-mails. Text messages. Bus schedules. These are just a few examples of the non-fiction text from which we glean knowledge of the world around us. For many of us, non-fiction text accounts for a very high percentage of our daily reading. Being able to distinguish between the various forms of this genre is a skill that will assist you, and your students, to select the one that is most suited to the needs of the moment. The following is a list of new children's titles that represent five different forms of non-fiction text.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NON-FICTION

Gives the reader instructions on how to make or do something (recipe books, craft books, instruction booklets, etc.)



### *I Can Make That!*

by Mary Wallace  
Owlkids Books, 2014  
ISBN 978-1-926973-97-5  
\$18.95, 149 pp, ages 7 – 11  
owlkidsbooks.com

The author provides clear and fully illustrated step-by-step instructions for over 50 craft projects.

## EXPLANATORY NON-FICTION

Tells the reader how or why something happens or works (science and nature books, etc.)



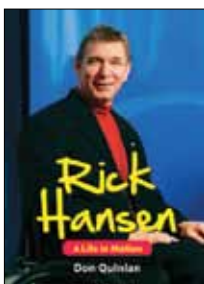
### *Simple Machines*

by Sandy Szeto  
Rubicon Books, 2014  
ISBN 978-1-77058-737-3  
32 pp, ages 9 – 11  
rubiconpublishing.com

This book is part of the Big Ideas series of content area books designed for grades 4 to 6 students and written at the grade 1 to 3 level. Teacher Guides are available.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NON-FICTION

Tells the reader about the events in the life of a real person.



### *Rick Hansen: A Life in Motion*

by Don Quinlan  
Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2013  
ISBN 978-1-55455-195-8 (hc)  
ISBN 978-1-55455-196-5 (pb)  
\$22.95 hc / \$9.95 pb, 72 pp, ages 10+  
fitzhenry.ca

The author provides the reader with the story of Rick Hansen's life, his accomplishments and the awareness his foundation brings to spinal cord injury research.

## PERSUASIVE NON-FICTION

Presents an opinion about a particular topic (newspaper editorials, advertising, letters to the editor, billboards, etc.)



### *Food*

by Erika Boas, Fiona Luray Wilhelm and Jeffrey David Wilhelm  
Rubicon Books, 2014  
Scholastic Canada  
ISBN 978-1-77058-074-9  
40 pp, ages 11 – 13  
scholastic.ca/education

This book is part of the Issues 21 series of books that cover content area for Grades 6 to 8 and are written at a Grade 6 level. This title introduces the reader to the important role that good nutrition plays in our lives, people and organizations that are game changers in the food industry, and ways for students to make changes in dietary habits (personal, local and global).

## DESCRIPTIVE NON-FICTION

Describes something (an animal, bird, vehicle, country, ecosystem, etc.)



### *The Slug*

by Elise Gravel  
Tundra Books, 2014  
ISBN 978-1-77049-655-2  
\$12.99 (hc), 32 pp, ages 6 – 9  
tundrabooks.com

*The Slug* is part of the Disgusting Critter Series. It presents a variety of facts about the land slug in a humorous way.

## A SEQUENCE OF LESSONS

**Step 1:** By the time students reach the late primary grades they are learning to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction text. To view a series of lessons that suggest ways to help students to develop this skill, please go to the article "The Power of Non-fiction Text" in the Winter 2008 issue, at CanadianTeacherMagazine.com (click on "Literacy" under "Articles" in the nav bar and go to the Archives).

**Step 2:** When students are easily able to identify non-fiction books it is time to introduce the common text features for this genre: bold words, italics, bullets, captions, maps, charts, section headings, cutaways, sidebars, glossaries, graphs, symbols, illustrations, photographs, table of contents, indexes, titles, etc. Two lessons that can be used to teach students the purpose of these non-fiction text features are available to view in the article "The Power of Non-fiction Text" in the Spring 2008 issue, at CanadianTeacherMagazine.com (click on "Literacy" under "Articles" on the nav bar and go to the Archives).

**Step 3:** The various forms of non-fiction text can be introduced to students over a period of time (Descriptive Non-fiction, Persuasive Non-fiction, Biographical Non-fiction, Explanatory Non-fiction, Instructional Non-fiction, etc.). Once students are familiar with the different forms they can practise identifying and sorting them. A classroom book collection or the school library should provide enough titles for them to work with.

**Step 4:** Engaging in guided and independent reading and writing activities will help students to practise identifying the various forms of non-fiction text and the text features. The following lesson is just one activity that could be used for that purpose.

### LESSON: FIVE FORMS OF NON-FICTION TEXT

#### Note

- This lesson could be done independently, with a partner, or with the whole group.
- Depending on the age and ability of the students, the lesson could be broken up over several days.

#### Goal

To distinguish between Descriptive Non-fiction, Persuasive Non-fiction, Biographical Non-fiction, Explanatory Non-fiction, and Instructional Non-fiction text.

#### Materials

- sticky notes
- a copy of a magazine for each pair of students (Owl, Chirp, and Chickadee magazines feature a wide variety of non-fiction text forms in each issue.)
- one copy of the “Non-Fiction Text” form per student (see example)
- a pencil for each student

#### Part 1

1. Determine that the students can name the five forms of non-fiction text.
2. Determine that the students can recognize the learning intention for each of the forms.
3. Distribute one magazine to each student.
4. Distribute sticky notes to each student.

#### Part 2

1. Ask the students to look through the magazines and search for an example of descriptive non-fiction.
2. Ask the students to mark the examples that they find with the sticky notes.
3. Have each student talk to a predetermined partner. Ask them to share their findings and justify their decisions (“I think that this is descriptive non-fiction because...”)
4. Have several students share their findings with the whole group.
5. Continue this process until the students have looked for examples of all five of the forms of non-fiction text.

#### Part 3

1. Ask each student to choose one of their examples and read the text in its entirety.
2. Have each student talk to their partner and tell them what their chosen non-fiction text was about.

#### Part 4

1. Distribute one copy of the “Non-Fiction Text” form per student.
2. Have each student complete the form.
3. Have each student share their thinking with the same partner.

#### Part 5

1. Ask each student to talk to their partner and tell them what they know about the five forms of non-fiction text.
2. Have several students share their thinking with the whole group.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Non-Fiction Text

1. I have checked the forms of non-fiction text that I found in the magazine:

- Descriptive Non-fiction
- Persuasive Non-fiction
- Biographical Non-fiction
- Instructional Non-fiction
- Explanatory Non-fiction

2. The form that I chose to read was \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Something that I know about this form of non-fiction is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Here is something that I learned from my reading:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. One text feature that I found was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.