

Introduction

Reading, writing, talking, listening, and investigating are the hallmarks of active literacy. Throughout the school day and across the curriculum, kids are actively questioning, inferring, discussing, debating, inquiring, and generating new ideas. An active literacy classroom fairly bursts with joyful, enthusiastic learning.

This kind of literacy requires tons of great text for kids to read. *Toolkit Texts* is a compilation of engaging nonfiction articles, in both English and Spanish, on a variety of topics and at a range of reading levels. If you are currently using *The Comprehension Toolkit*, you already have an extensive amount of text at your fingertips. *Toolkit Texts* will give you even more. Additionally, you can use these short text articles in *any* of your literacy and content instruction, for science reading, for social studies reading, and as models for nonfiction writing across the curriculum.

Nonfiction is potentially the most accessible genre. You don't even have to read the words to get information from it. The photographs, illustrations, maps, and other features hook kids and reel them in. Nonfiction varies in quality, however, so we have searched long and hard to find the very best texts to include in this resource. We were delighted to discover that the Cobblestone family of children's magazines—*Appleseeds*, *Ask, Click, Cobblestone*, *Odyssey*, and *Faces*—provided just what we were looking for.

We are pleased to offer both English and Spanish versions of every article in this volume on the enclosed CD-ROM. After the translations were completed, they were reviewed by bilingual teachers who read them with their students in mind. You can search the CD-ROM for an article by topic or by comprehension strategy, then print out either the English or Spanish version.

Wings in Water



A huge, flat creature leaps out of the sea. It skims over the waves and flips backward with a splash. Could this be a fish? Yes. It is a **manta ray**.

These diamond-shaped giants live in warm oceans. They can be 22 feet wide and weigh as much as a small car—up to 3,000 pounds.

Speed Swimmer

Their skeletons are made of soft bone called **cartilage**. This flexible cartilage skeleton helps to make the manta a graceful, powerful swimmer.

Slowly flapping their two large fins like wings, mantas “fly” under the water.

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Alas en el agua



Una inmensa y plana criatura salta fuera del mar flota sobre las olas y da una voltereta salpicando el agua. Puede esto ser un pez? Sí. Es una **manta raya**. Este gigante, en forma de diamante vive en océanos tibios.

Pueden medir 22 pies de ancho y pesar tanto como un pequeño carro, hasta 3000 libras.

Nadador rápido

Sus esqueletos están hechos de huesos blandos llamados **cartílagos** flexibles, lo cual ayuda a la manta a ser un gracioso y poderoso nadador.

Despacio batiendo sus dos grandes aletas como alas, la manta “vuela” debajo del agua.

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We have chosen and carefully edited articles that lend themselves to active reading, giving kids a great opportunity to annotate and work out their thinking as they read. Active literacy means you stop, think, and react to information as you read. We teach kids to code the text with their thinking: to underline important information, to star key ideas or points of interest, and to jot thoughts in the margins or on Post-its. When readers merge their thinking with the information, they learn, understand, and remember it.

We considered four primary factors in choosing these selections:

CONTENT. We looked for clear, engaging, well-presented information that kids can easily access and enjoy and we searched for articles with interesting themes and compelling topics to capture young, inquisitive minds.

FEATURES. We chose text that contains a variety of visual and text features including photographs, maps, charts, graphs, diagrams, titles, subheads, and more.

WRITING QUALITY. Frankly, we come across a lot of nonfiction for kids that is dull, mechanical, and voiceless. It doesn't have to be! For this collection, we searched for and found well-written selections that burst with vibrant language and active voice. Kids deserve good writing, too, so they can read and write engaging text.

READING LEVEL. For this resource, we chose texts of different lengths that cover a range of reading levels. *Toolkit Texts* includes three volumes designated for grades 2–3, 4–5, or 6–7. However, assigning a grade level to a particular text is arbitrary, particularly in nonfiction with all of its supportive features. So we suggest that you look carefully at all three volumes of *Toolkit Texts* and choose from them based on your kids' interest and taste, as well as their reading level. To differentiate text and reach the widest range of readers in your classroom, you may want to have two or three volumes at your fingertips.

These *Toolkit Texts* collections are full of text that kids can sink their teeth into including:

- a broad array of kid-friendly topics from dinosaurs to hip-hop music that appeal to the many diverse readers out there;
- topically related articles grouped together;
- a sampling of different nonfiction genres—feature articles, profiles, poems, letters, and more;
- a variety of science and social studies curricular topics, from space exploration to American history, common to American classrooms;
- a rich assortment of classic nonfiction text and visual features; and
- even some articles that build on topics introduced in *The Comprehension Toolkit*.

In addition, we have chosen some topics and themes that appear in all three volumes, making it easy for you to differentiate instruction with a variety of texts on similar themes. For example, there are articles about animals, ecology, sports, and Native Americans in all three volumes; paleontology, the ocean, and children with disabilities in Grades 2–3 and 4–5; and social and environmental change, education, American history, and ancient civilizations in both Grades 4–5 and 6–7.