Non-fiction Text Selection

Embedding non-fiction is the practice of pairing fiction texts with 4-5 non-fiction supplementary materials, such as articles or other documents that help illuminate the novel or short story being studied. This practice can help students absorb the information in the text more quickly than if they were reading the novel without the non-fiction articles.

But choosing the right non-fiction text to embed, the kind that will fascinate students while bringing a greater understanding of historical, cultural, or other relevant context to the fiction selection, can be tricky. We've developed this handy checklist to provide some support for your classroom.

Embedding inside the bull's-eye. These are non-fiction texts that support the primary source — in this case, the primary source means the novel, and not necessarily a primary source document such as the Declaration of Independence. These are articles that support understanding of the primary text, but which are also in turn better absorbed by students through the reading of the fiction primary source. Consider the following important pieces to creating the most synergy of learning between your non-fiction and your fiction texts.

❏ **Context.** What cultural or historical background would be helpful for students to understand, and what's a specific way for that information to be delivered?

❏ **Order matters.** Reading the non-fiction text *after* starting the primary text has better results for synergy of knowledge comprehension and retention.

Embedding outside the bull's-eye. For non-fiction texts that embed knowledge outside the bull's-eye, look for texts that help students better analyze text by modeling how to apply an analytical framework. For example, Colleen Driggs used a video on a scientific study of bull elephants from the *Smithsonian*, specifically how and why the animals use hierarchies, to illustrate male hierarchies amongst communities in the novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton.[1]

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[1] http://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/elephants-outsiders-watch-colleen-driggs-embed-non-fiction/

Planning Tool for Embedding Non-fiction: Examples

Example: *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park[2]

Content	How it applies to text	Sources	*Stop and Jot* questions
Article on the economics of rice in Korea	Tree-ear is focused on rice as nourishment and currency	https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=79793	How does the acquisition of rice affect Tree-ear's motivations throughout the novel?
Article on the Tree-ear mushroom	The rootless mushroom is an analogy to the homeless narrator	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auricularia_auricula-judae	What does Tree-ear's name tell us about him as a character?
Article on the causes and manifestation of depression	Min suffers from depression	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2395346/	What are some possible causes for Min's state of mind? How does it affect how he treats other characters?
Article on homelessness	Tree-ear is homeless for much of the novel	https://talkpoverty.org/2018/01/24/homeless-youth-statistics-reality-miles-apart/	What is the psychological toll of homelessness on Tree-ear?
Orphans in literature	Tree-ear is an orphan	https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-astor/orphans-in-literature_b_3535503.html	Why is there such a prevalent literary trope of orphans in youth fiction?

Example: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

Content	How it applies to text	Sources	*Stop and Jot* questions
Article on British colonization of the Caribbean	Bertha comes from the Caribbean	http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828358	How do British attitudes towards the Caribbean impact the depiction of Bertha?
Article on *bildungsroman* narratives	The novel is working in the tradition of the *bildungsroman*	https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f9f7/f59602c7b6201c9a0b3092f4d217f76b4399.pdf	How is *Jane Eyre* like or unlike a typical *bildungsroman*?
Article on hallmarks of Gothic literature	The novel adopts elements of the Gothic literary tradition	https://www.virtualsalt.com/gothic.htm	What Gothic elements do you see in *Jane Eyre*?
Article on the expected etiquette of women during the 1840's	*Jane Eyre* is firmly rooted in the mores of the time	https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/gender-in-19th-century-britain	How do societal expectations shape interactions between Jane and Rochester?

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[2] Examples gleaned from ideas published here:
http://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/reading-reconsidered-embeding-non-fiction/

Planning Tool for Embedding Non-fiction[3]

Directions:

1. **In column 1:** With grade level/content team colleagues, brainstorm and list in the content column possible topics.
2. **In column 2:** Independently or together articulate how the topic applies to the text.
3. **In column 3:** Use or locate sources for the 3-4 most compelling content topics. Consider balancing content needed to help students establish meaning (inside the bullseye) and content that pushes students to analyze meaning in new ways (outside the bullseye). **Note:** Before using the sources with students you may need to adapt/modify the embedded texts.
4. **In column 4:** For the sourced content, draft *Stop and Jot* questions—individually, then share and refine as a group.

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Content	How it applies to text	Sources	*Stop and Jot* questions

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[3] This is from *Teach Like a Champion* but feel free to modify as long as you credit us.

Additional Resources:

Reading Reconsidered Reading Spine: Text Selector for Primary Schools — An overview of the Five Plagues of the Developing Reader, along with suggestions for texts, by grade level, that deal with the Five Plagues, can be found at:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/13-1iD28a0LUHFiUk-qOzu-9vDHYa1dYp/view

Supplementary resources from *Reading Reconsidered* — A selection of videos and downloadable short ebooks that include resources on the importance of Text Selection along with the Text Selection Tool:
http://teachlikeachampion.com/championreaders/