



Foreword

I used to teach first grade. It was a long time ago, but my memories of it are pretty vivid. Many of the kids I worked with weren't as interested in reading as they were in knowing about their world. It wasn't that they didn't care about reading; they just didn't see it as an end in itself. They wanted to read—or, perhaps, they were *willing* to learn to read—but they really wanted to know about ventriloquism, ice skating, horses, basketball, rockets, dinosaurs, and dozens of other real-world subjects that they assumed reading would open up to them.

The problem was that the basal readers that I taught from were little more than collections of fanciful stories. Again, it wasn't that my charges didn't like stories (they loved when I read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* to them). It's just that they wanted more from books than that. As young as they were, they somehow grasped the potential power and value of reading . . . they were just underwhelmed by what I was serving up.

Boy, have times changed.

Publishers have upped their game when it comes to making informational texts available to young children. There are now children's magazines on science, nature, sports, and history, and there are library offerings on a wide range of topics for young kids. Reading textbooks ("anthologies") are even managing to find a place for these kinds of selections, too.

Why the big change?

One reason was that my teaching experiences weren't all that unique. Teachers everywhere were meeting six- and seven-year-olds who were more interested in the *Guinness Book of World Records* than in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Why not respond to their interests?

Also, there has been a growing awareness of how poorly served such children have been with regard to informational text. Studies have shown that American classrooms have offered very little informational text in the primary grades, and they have revealed that our children tend to read stories somewhat better than they read science or other informational text.

Finally, we now have the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Previous educational standards did mention both informational and literary texts, but the relative coverage of these was left up to each teacher to decide. CCSS changed all that. It requires that teachers emphasize informational text to the same degree that they do literature—50–50—even in kindergarten, first, and second grade. And that change has opened the floodgates. Finally.

There was a time when a book like this would have set out to try to persuade teachers that they should teach with informational text. But that's not the issue anymore. Teachers are now well aware that they must teach such text, and they also usually recognize that their students are interested.

Consequently, teachers everywhere are asking themselves, "*How* do I teach with informational text?" This volume provides a rich collection of practical answers to that question. It can, through its practical lessons, advice, and guidance, show teachers how to make informational text a joyful reality in the lives of our youngest scholars.

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