



Using Accelerated Reader 360™ to support primary students in their journey from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*



Accelerated™
Reader **360°**

What does research say about informational text and early literacy development?

The International Reading Association (IRA), now International Literacy Association (ILA), and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) consider the early childhood years (birth through age 8) the most important period for literacy developmentⁱ. This is when students establish a strong reading foundation that equips them in their journey from learning to read to reading to learn as they become older.

While narrative storybooks have historically been the most commonly used reading material for this age groupⁱⁱ, research suggests young children can interact successfully with informational text when given the opportunityⁱⁱⁱ.

In fact, young children often select informational texts when given a choice^{iv}. Because of the curious nature of children this age, books that explain the natural and social world are often highly appealing^v.

Research highlights the benefits of informational text for young readers, and supports a more balanced approach that provides young readers with experiences that draw from a variety of text types.

Using informational texts in read alouds.

The NAEYC recommends teachers use informational text when reading aloud, reading in groups, and to engage children in conversations about what they are learning^{vi}. The close rereading of texts is a powerful method common with this age group and facilitates explicitly teaching children how informational texts are organized to increase comprehension^{vii}.

Read alouds of informational text are appropriate as research indicates children exposed to informative text express interest, display competency^{viii}, absorb new information, and are capable of retelling^{ix} and making connections across books^x.

Torr and Clugston (1999) found that discussions related to informational picture books tended to be longer and more sophisticated than narrative ones, suggesting informational texts encourage reasoning and support the construction of new knowledge^{xi}.

Furthermore, exposure to new information contributes to background knowledge and promotes vocabulary development^{xiii}. Informational texts may also be useful for engaging young students who have short attention spans because brief excerpts can be used, as opposed to fictional stories that require reading from beginning to end^{xiii} (Gear, 2008).

In part, this research is reflected in the National Assessment of Educational Progress Distribution of Literary and Informational Passages by Grade⁹ released in 2009. This framework suggests that by fourth grade, students should be reading a 50/50 balance of literary and informational passages. This balance is seen in more rigorous standards across the country. To ensure students are equipped for this, it's critical that primary teachers give young students repeated exposure to informational texts to build their understanding and capacity.



Set the foundation for close reading.

In Accelerated Reader 360, each article comes with built-in instructional skills practice activities including a highlight and tag activity, a “show-you-know” writing prompt, and a comprehension quiz. Teachers can use these activities to model for students strategies for tackling informational texts.

Unique to articles for K–2 students, Accelerated Reader 360 provides teacher prompts within every nonfiction article. These close reading activities encourage students to listen actively and participate in read alouds. Teachers control the discussion and young students build essential close reading skills.

The screenshot shows the 'PREVIEW ASSIGNMENT' interface. At the top, there is a 'BACK' button and the title 'PREVIEW ASSIGNMENT'. Below this, the article title 'What's the Story of Chocolate?' is displayed, along with the 'Read Aloud: Compare and Contrast' activity. A 'Use Assignment' button is visible. The main content area is divided into sections: 'Instructions' (with a 'Read' button), 'Activity 1 - Highlight & Tag' (with a 'Read' button), 'Activity 2 - Highlight & Tag' (with a 'Read' button), 'Activity 3 - Show You Know' (with a 'Read' button), 'Discussions' (with a 'View' button), and 'AR Quiz Included' (with a 'View' button).

Each article includes a highlight and tag activity, a “show-you-know” writing prompt, and a comprehension quiz.

The screenshot shows the 'DISCUSSIONS' interface. At the top, there is a 'BACK' button and the title 'DISCUSSIONS'. Below this, the article title 'What's the Story of Chocolate?' is displayed, along with the 'Teacher Read-Aloud Activity: Ask students, based on what they've read so far, how the chocolate the Mayans drank is the same as and different from chocolate today. Highlight the similarities and differences.' The main content area is divided into sections: 'Teacher Read-Aloud Activity', 'Replies' (with a 'Share' button), and 'Replies' (with a 'REPLY NOW' button).

Through teacher modeling, students learn close reading skills and are exposed to complex nonfiction texts.

Teachers model close reading and skills practice.

Using these articles on an interactive whiteboard is an excellent way to expose students to complex nonfiction texts. Through teacher modeling, students learn to read for a specific purpose. They also learn the skills necessary to successfully read and dive deeply into nonfiction texts. After teacher modeling, students can take a short comprehension quiz.

Parental involvement made easy.

Research shows keeping parents involved in students' learning can make all the difference in a child's success. Renaissance Home Connect enables parents to see their child's progress toward goals. Parents can even sign up to receive an email with quiz results each time a comprehension quiz is taken.

With Renaissance Home Connect, parents can see progress toward reading goals.

For more information, visit www.renaissance.com, call (800) 338-4204, or contact your Renaissance Learning representative.

- ¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children, & International Reading Association. (1998). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSREAD98.PDF>.
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- ⁵ Duke, N., & Kays, J. (1998). "Can I say, Once upon a time?" Kindergarten children developing knowledge of information book language. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(2), 295–318.
- ⁶ Maduram, I. (2000). "Playing possum" A young child's responses to information books. *Language Arts*, 77, 391–397.
- ⁷ Correia, M. P. (2011). Fiction vs informational texts: Which will kindergartners choose? *Young Children*, 66(6), 100–104.
- ⁸ Reese, D. A., & Harris, V. J. (1997). "Look at this nest!" The beauty and power of using informational books with young children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 127(1), 217–231.
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- ¹⁰ Schickedanz, J. A., & Collins, M. F. (2013). *So much more than the ABCs: The early phases of reading and writing*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
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- ¹² Hall, K. M., Sabey, B. L., & McClellan, M. (2005). Expository text comprehension: Helping primary-grade teachers use expository texts to full advantage. *Reading Psychology International Quarterly*, 26(3), 211–234.
- ¹³ Pappas, C. C. (1993). Is narrative "primary"? Some insights from kindergartners pretend readings of stories and information books. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 24, 97–129.
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- ¹⁵ Oylar, C., & Barry, A. (1996). Intertextual connections in read-alouds of information books. *Language Arts*, 73, 324–329.
- ¹⁶ Torr, J., & Clugston L. (1999). A comparison between informational and narrative picture books as a context for reasoning between caregivers and 4-year-old children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 159, 25–41.
- ¹⁷ Bortnem, G. M. (2008). Teacher use of interactive read alouds: Using nonfiction in early childhood classrooms. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 5(12), 29–44.
- ¹⁸ Caswell, L. J., & Duke, N. K. (1998). Non-narrative as a catalyst for literacy development. *Language Arts*, 75(2), 108–117.
- ¹⁹ Hall, K. M., & Sabey, B. L. (2007). Focus on the facts: Using informational texts effectively in early elementary classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(2), 261–268.
- ²⁰ Gear, A. (2008). *Nonfiction reading power: Teaching students how to think while they read all kinds of information*. Portland, ME: Pembroke Publishers.
- ²¹ National Assessment Governing Board. (2008). *Reading framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.nagb.org/content/nagb/assets/documents/publications/frameworks/reading/2009-reading-framework.pdf>

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