

Book Links

UNPACKING A STANDARD:
CONNECTING SCIENCE AND THE STANDARDS
BY JULIE GREEN

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It's an exciting time for children's nonfiction, as evidenced by the recent publication of so many new, rich informational texts that beg to be questioned, analyzed, and further investigated. Luckily, the Common Core State Standards guide students and teachers to do just that. Below are suggestions for connecting recent science titles with CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.5–6.5. You'll find an expanded version of this article posted on our new Common Core resources home page.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.5. Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.

Bird Talk: What Birds Are Saying and Why. By Lita Judge. Illus. by the author. 2012. 40p. Roaring Brook/Flash Point, \$17.99 (9781596436466). 598.159. Gr. 1–3.

Design elements help identify significant words in this engaging title about avian communication. Each spread employs creative font styles, colors, and placement on the page to help readers determine the importance and meaning of terms. Look through the book together as a class, and discuss why words look the way they do. What do the italicized words tell the reader? What does the color mean? Why would these words look different from the rest? What are the author and illustrator trying to tell us?

How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food. By Chris Butterworth. Illus. by Lucia Gaggiotti. 2011. 32p. Candlewick, \$12.99 (9780763650056). 641.3. K–Gr. 3.

On each packed spread in this intriguing look at the origin of common foods, text features such as numbers, arrows, and headings help to focus readers' attention. Read a few pages aloud to the class, and discuss where they would begin to read on the page, where they would go next, and how design elements have helped to determine that progression.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

Caterpillars. By Marilyn Singer. 2011. 40p. illus. Charlesbridge, \$14.95 (9780979745577). 595.78. Gr. 2–4.

Singer begins this informative volume with an original poem about caterpillars. At the bottom of each subsequent page, a single line from the poem is paired with corresponding information. Discuss how Singer crafts the poem to give the reader information. Why did she structure the poem as she did? Does the order of the lines help the reader understand the subject matter better? Does the information help the reader understand the poem better?

Ocean Sunlight: How Tiny Plants Feed the Seas. By Molly Bang and Penny Chisholm. Illus. by Molly Bang. 2012. 48p. Scholastic/Blue Sky, \$18.99 (9780545273220). 571.4. K–Gr. 3.

The sun narrates this richly illustrated, densely informative picture book that shows how solar energy supports life on earth, including the ocean's food chain. Read the book aloud together as a class, and then reread the text, making an anchor chart that traces the ocean's food chain, beginning with the sun.

Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World. By Laurie Lawlor. Illus. by Laura Beingsner. 2012. 32p. Holiday, \$16.95 (9780823423705). 570.92. Gr. 2–4.

Before reading this title with the class, go through the biography of the groundbreaking scientist and pull out important cause-and-effect events in Rachel Carson's life. For example, "Because Rachel Carson took a biology class taught by Mary Scott Skinner, she decided to become a biologist." Or, "Because Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*, many people learned about insecticides." After sharing the title aloud with the students, pair students up, and give them the "causes." Have them investigate the book to come up with the "effects." Then have students write their own causes and effects from Carson's life.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.5. Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

A Black Hole Is Not a Hole. By Carolyn Cinami DeCristofano. Illus. by Michael Carroll. 2012. 80p. Charlesbridge, \$18.95 (9781570917837). 523.8. Gr. 4–6.

This title tackles a hard-to-grasp concept with entertaining, clear language. In an appended author's note, DeCristofano reminds readers to consider where an author gets his or her information. Discuss with the students why the author decided to add this portion to her book. She has already included a bibliography. What is the reasoning for including this addition?

Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard. By Loree Griffin Burns. Illus. by Ellen Harasimowicz. 2012. 80p. Holt, \$19.99 (9780805090628); paper, \$12.99 (9780805095173). 590.72. Gr. 3–6.

In this volume, the author writes a chapter about the importance of children becoming what she terms “citizen scientists.” Have students read this title in pairs, and discuss why they think that the author wrote this section and placed it at the beginning of the book. What does the author want the reader to think about? How would the book be different if it began, instead, with the first chapter, about butterflies?

The Mighty Mars Rovers: The Incredible Adventures of Spirit and Opportunity. By Elizabeth Rusch. 2012. 80p. illus. Houghton, \$18.99 (9780547478814). 523.43. Gr. 5–8.

This fascinating entry in the Scientists in the Field series introduces astronomy professor Steven Squyers and his mission to learn more about Mars. Start by examining Squyers' childhood pictures, with their accompanying captions, as well as related information about the scientist as a child. After each chapter, revisit those pictures, and analyze why they were included and how they might connect to Squyers' choices and interests throughout his adult life. Why would the author choose to include those pictures when Squyers started working on the Mars project many years later?

Julie Green is a school librarian at Pembroke Elementary School in Birmingham, Michigan.