



SHELL  
EDUCATION

# TAMING THE

# WILD

# Text

**Literacy Strategies  
for Today's Reader**



**Reading Critically**

**PAM ALLYN AND MONICA BURNS**



**Reading Socially**



**Reading Closely**



**Reading Deeply**




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Literacy Strategies  
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 Reading Critically

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# Introduction

## Why Reading Feels Different Now

It is a new era for reading. Though the child in bed with a flashlight may seem like a quaint image from the past, the idea of illuminated reading under the covers can be as true today as it was yesterday. Today's child can become immersed in the world of reading, but the light of the story glowing in the late corners of the evening may come from a screen rather than a flashlight. The reader of today is reading but not always one book at a time. This reader is athletic: jumping from idea to idea, genre to genre. He or she is reading across many platforms, many types of text, from visual to print, from moving images to primary source photographs. However, the child with the flashlight is still within us and within our children. The print book is not gone, and the technology has not taken over. Rather, the world is becoming a truly blended one. Reading is a lasting innovation in many forms. It sustains us, guides us, and makes us whole.





Many books have proposed that reading on paper is out of style, that adults are the “digital immigrants” and students are the “digital natives,” that teachers and parents have to catch up to them, and that the only way kids will keep reading is if they are flooded with tablets and other technologies in classrooms.

But just when many thought the end of print was near, in 2016, sales of children’s books exceeded sales of adult books. Overall, sales of print books are climbing, and new independent bookstores are opening at a relatively steady clip. The American Booksellers Association (ABA) reported that 60 independent bookstores opened in 31 states and the District of Columbia in 2015, besting 2016’s total by one. And so, in the midst of the new era, readers are becoming more comfortable using many platforms, and students are growing up in a world that will have more options than ever. So it is not an “either/or” world of reading; it is a world of open possibility for countless kinds of reading to exist for children. Teachers and parents must strive to develop children who can tame the wild text anywhere, in any form.

### What Readers Need

Reading has become wilder than ever. The world now is full of many types of text emerging through new technologies. Grammar is changing, devices are changing—even fonts are changing and evolving. It is a very exciting time to be a reader. But a reader’s needs, like that child under the covers with the flashlight, don’t change that much. All readers need are:

- A choice in the text that they read
- Access to a wide variety of texts
- Time to read (and time specifically to peruse and choose what they read)
- Mentor readers who guide and inspire them
- An environment in which it feels safe to take risks
- Affirmative feedback regarding reading progress
- The opportunity to have an ever-changing identity as a reader (I am the kind of reader who...)
- A community of supportive and encouraging fellow readers

This book highlights key ways in which teachers can tame the wildness of all the texts children are reading. By providing structures and strategies that support the growing reader, teachers can launch their students into the world of 21st century reading.

This book is about teaching students to read on every platform and in every genre, to struggle with text, to break through to new ideas when reading text, and to become the kind of fearless reader who tames the wild text.



### Independent Reading Tips

When classroom libraries are organized with books categorized in meaningful ways, students begin to connect themes and find similar structures among texts. Whether using book baskets or e-reader “shelves,” you can help students make these connections by grouping books in engaging and exciting ways. For example, a survival-themed basket would contain fiction titles such as *Sign of the Beaver*, *Nature Girl*, and *Number the Stars* as well as informational text such as *Survival Kid: A Practical Guide to Wilderness Survival*. Storm-safety pamphlets, *Backpacker* or *National Geographic Kids* magazines, and articles from news sources would make great additions to this category as well. These engaging grouping techniques are more likely to pique the interest of a reader than a category simply titled “Lois Lowry” or “Gary Paulsen.”

# Features of This Book

This book is designed to help teachers help students tame the wild text, wherever they find it, from the print book they read in their science class to the online world of news. It is not specific to one device or one particular classroom setup. The big ideas and actionable lessons can be tailored to different grade levels, different types of devices, and different technology plans. Although some may feel like a one-to-one environment, where each student has a tablet or laptop in their hands is ideal, there is so much that can be done with just a few tablets or a weekly visit to the computer lab.

Key features embedded throughout the next chapters are designed to help support students as they tame the wild text. Callout boxes feature lesson ideas with steps to putting these ideas into action. Teachers are encouraged to read through these activities and individualize them, connecting learning goals and teaching style. Many activities have graphic organizers that can be

reproduced for students or used as inspiration to scaffold instruction. A full-sized version of each of these reproducible sheets can be found in Appendix C on pages 155–175. Over the course of this book, teachers will have access to recommendations for websites, mobile applications, books, and text sets that match each of the Five Habits for Reading that are introduced in this book. Each time you see the icon of a hand holding a smartphone<sup>®</sup>, you will know that the accompanying information has been included in Appendix D on pages 176–181.

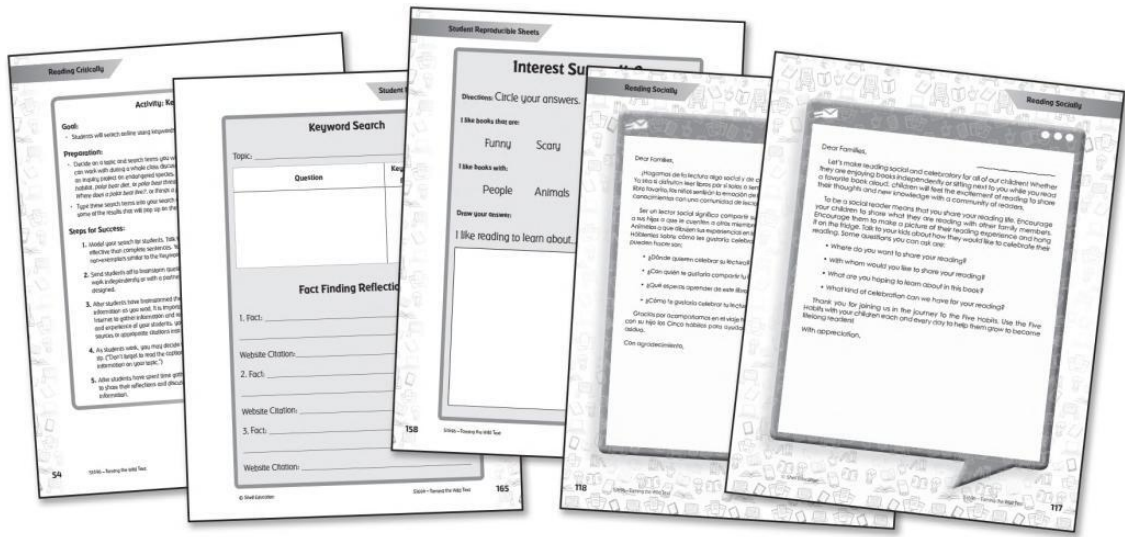
Throughout this book, you'll see references to the wonderful work that LitWorld is doing around the globe. Pam Allyn founded LitWorld in 2007 to bring a broader, more transformational approach to how literacy is shared and used by children in all its forms. In 2013, Monica joined the team as the edtech specialist, with a goal of inspiring communities across the world to be their own best literacy incubators. Pam, Monica, and the rest of the LitWorld team help communities identify and use all of their available resources—from children's own stories, to technologies, to books in hand—making sure every child in the community gets a chance to read.

**LitWorld**  
**Be the Story.**



This book is really for all of the people who surround a child's life with the opportunity to read. For this reason, a shareable letter, in both English and Spanish, has been included at the end of every chapter. This will help parents,

caregivers, and teachers work together to develop a child who is unafraid to tackle the texts of the world.



In order to tame the wild text in the new era, students must develop five habits for Reading. Students who read widely, critically, deeply, closely, and socially will be ready to tackle texts across all genres and platforms. Welcome to a journey that will transform teaching and learning in today's classrooms!

## Introducing the Five Habits for Reading

### Chapter 1: Reading Widely

Students of all ages should interact with a range of text. Teachers must inspire this generation of readers to become voracious consumers of language and to strike a balance between literature and informational text in order to achieve an understanding of text structure in the new era. These readers leapfrog between genres, platforms, pages, and screens with the dexterity and fearlessness of pole-vaulters. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to be born during a time when literacy instruction in school and beyond requires such cognitive athleticism, but students are up to the challenge. This chapter presents strategies for introducing new text types, from infographics to social media posts, in addition to honoring favorite traditional texts.

### Chapter 2: Reading Critically

Successful students think critically about what they read. Never has this been more important than in a world where anyone can instantly publish their writing online. In this chapter, readers find lesson ideas and activities that help students evaluate text and question the accuracy and authenticity of the materials in front of them. Reading critically means having opinions and taking a stance on one's reading perspective. This chapter gives online and off-line tips for how to help students really activate their minds for critical thinking.

### Chapter 3: Reading Deeply

Everyone has had the feeling of getting lost in a book, reading deeply and attentively, all while exploring new stories and falling in love with the characters. Students should be able to respond to their reading, share their feelings about a book, and think beyond the text. Reading deeply means immersing oneself in the magic of the reading experience, asking questions, and delighting in the findings while reading between the lines. This chapter helps teachers guide students in that direction, reading for pleasure, and reading for the pursuit of greater understandings not only in the text but also in oneself. This chapter includes lessons that highlight the many ways technology can energize traditional reading activities and honor student passions.

### Chapter 4: Reading Closely

Close reading is a joyful experience of attending to text, conversing about author choices, and discussing a reading with text in hand while perusing the contents. Students need to support their thinking about a text with evidence by reading literature and informational text closely. In this chapter, readers learn how technology tools can help build background knowledge and alter traditional interactions with text. Protocols for close reading on any platform are shared, as are ways to help students exercise and flex their reading muscles one sentence or phrase at a time.

## Chapter 5: Reading Socially

Reading socially means that students are reading in order to be a part of a community. They may want to share new knowledge with a classmate or travel with a friend through a fantasy novel. Both teachers and students should see their work as readers and reading instructors as a social activity. This chapter explains how to use technology tools to connect with authentic audiences and set a purpose for reading socially.

## Chapter 6: Assessment in the New Era

In this chapter, readers have access to helpful rubrics for the Five Habits. These can be used to track students' progress and to inspire one-to-one and small group work. Readers also learn about the amazing ways in which technology is fueling the power to really know and understand students. Here, readers receive new tech solutions for how to follow students as they learn and grow as readers. Formative and performance-based assessments are addressed in this chapter as two valuable ways to see students evolve throughout the school year: no surprises at the end! Minute by minute, day by day, students flourish and grow. This chapter helps teachers track students' progress and use that data to inform instruction.

## Chapter 7: Next Steps

In order to help teachers jump right into the work of taming the wild text, this chapter provides easy-to-follow action steps. From working alongside colleagues to learning more about today's technology, there are immediate things teachers can do to make the transitions to the new era feel comfortable and exciting. These action steps should provide readers with an easy-to-follow way to bring this book to life!

## A Note for Teachers

In *Taming the Wild Text*, we'll explore the Five Habits of readers in the digital age and bring them together to paint a picture of a full reading life. Whether reading a paperback or on an e-book reader, the practical tips and techniques woven into our discussion of digital and print reading experiences can serve as inspiration for the entire school year. We hope that you will jot down notes in the margin, add a sticky note to a page, or highlight a favorite passage. We encourage you to bring this book to professional learning communities or your grade-level team. Read it together, try out lesson ideas in partners, and strategize ways to connect students' interests and passions with their needs in the digital age.

Beyond the walls of the classroom, after the school day ends, parents and caregivers are essential components of the reading lives of our students. They anchor the work that happens in classroom by demonstrating their own reading lives, sharing reading time with their children, and building their understanding of what reading looks like when students have devices in their hands. At the end of each chapter, you'll find a letter that we've written for families. You can read this book alongside your students' parents or send home these notes to foster a home/school conversation around how we can help our children tame the wild text together.

## A Note for Caregivers

We are so excited to have you along on this reading journey! Your support in balancing print and digital text is an essential piece of the puzzle for growing strong readers. This book was designed to provide an overview of big ideas in literacy instruction as well as a window into the world of thoughtful use of technology integration. There is information within these pages that can help you as you support your children outside school hours.

Digging into this text with a reading partner can elevate your reading experience. The PTA at your school may have a monthly or quarterly book club to discuss innovations in education where *Taming the Wild Text* can provide a framework for your conversations. A school-sponsored event or an afternoon spent sharing favorite reading apps can introduce fellow parents to the ways digital text is changing the world.

We hope this book will inspire you to think about the reading experiences you engage in with your children. From celebrating a range of genres, introducing children to your own favorite books (now available on a tablet), or trying out a virtual-reality experience for the first time, you have the power to inspire your children.

One of our favorite stories to share in this vein comes from a parent. While she and her child were reading a book together, they came across the word *plains*, a word the mother was sure her daughter didn't know. Instead of simply telling her the meaning of the word, they went to YouTube on their tablet to watch a video together. Her daughter had a clear picture of the setting of the book thanks to a few simple clicks on their screen. We hope you are inspired to use technology with your family of readers, too!



### A Note for Administrators

We invite you to use this book as a catalyst for connection between the teachers and administrative teams in your school or district. It will take all of you working together to prepare your students for reading in the 21st century. Your teachers may feel overwhelmed by the many different platforms of reading in which your students are engaged. They may feel overwhelmed by the “either/or” nature of the conversation around literacy up to this point. But this book is designed to relieve some of those tensions.

Please consider using this book in the following ways:

- Read one chapter at a time over the course of consecutive faculty meetings.
- Read one chapter at a time over the course of a parent/teacher study group.
- Pull out activities to try as a whole faculty, and then report success and challenge across grade levels.
- Assign chapters to a specific group of teachers across grade levels and then invite them to present their reflections to the larger faculty group.

And as for you, we invite you to become an instructional leader in mobilizing your school community. Use the Five Habits as a call to action in your districtwide strategy plan. Encourage your teachers to mark progress and success through the Five Habits rather than just through an end-of-year test score. In your addresses to the faculty, challenge them to embrace the struggle, the newness of the reading experience in this new era. Finally, take time to savor the successes as you work together with teachers, parents, and students.

# Reading Widely

*Pablo, a third-grader, explores his passion for tigers in the first 10 minutes of his independent reading time and then skips over to his tablet to see real photos of them in the wild. In the second 10 minutes, he enjoys a joke book with his friend, and then they compile their own jokes in Google Docs™. In the final 10 minutes of independent reading, Pablo makes a list on his tablet of the books he needs from the library for his social studies project. This is reading widely.*

*First-grader Kareem moves effortlessly from a picture book with magical bears to an informational text on butterflies. Fifth-grader Jessica can shift her thinking from a current-events article on her tablet to a favorite chapter book. These students have the skills that help them dive into a sea of reading and make their way through uncharted waters. They understand how to read widely as they work to tame the wild text.*

The ability to read across genres for a variety of purposes is a characteristic of strong, independent learners. Although most students have favorite books, authors, and genres, it's essential for young readers to develop skills that allow them to explore a wide variety of genres. Strong readers should be able to move from an informational text in the morning to a classic piece of literature in the afternoon, changing their purpose for reading over the course of the day. Reading widely includes an understanding and appreciation of what different types of texts have to offer.

For English language learners, reading widely poses both an opportunity and a challenge. Discovering new genres is exciting, but the reader must also get the “trick” of the text: how does this text “go”? English language learners are potentially overwhelmed by the decoding and comprehension work they're doing, and so the switch in genre may be problematic for them. On the other hand, there is an opportunity here. For the English language learner, reading a fictional text set during the civil rights movement may be very challenging with new vocabulary and character names. But when that text is paired with a nonfiction text on the same subject, the English language learner is able to break through some of the hard parts of reading with help from the photos, graphs, and charts that provide visual supports.

For below-level learners, there are often times when, because of the ways students have been identified as “struggling,” they miss some of the dynamic energy of the wide reading that other students in the same class can enjoy. Their intervention time includes specific texts designed to instruct. But below level learners benefit so greatly from abundant opportunities to read widely. Provide struggling readers with time to explore a variety of text with their peers. They should not be spending all of their time decoding texts or even doing comprehension strategy work. Reading widely means they are browsing, scanning, skimming, enjoying, viewing pictures, not finishing a book, or skipping to something new. Let below level learners be as much a part of this as their peers. It will make a world of difference.

## Accessing Texts of Many Genres

Students who read widely interact with a range of genres. From narrative nonfiction to fantasy, they are consistently engaging with a wide variety of texts. When children read across genres, they are exposed to stories and information from all walks of life. They begin to experience the world from different points

of view while learning about new topics and discovering answers to their questions.

The shift from a classroom library of picture books to an ample supply of diverse texts demonstrates the value of preparing students to read widely. Children in kindergarten can distinguish among genres in simple forms. Older students can explore the characteristics of genres in more detailed forms as they categorize different types of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Although units of study taught during a school year may focus on a specific genre, make it a point to highlight student favorites across genres and subgenres to encourage independent readers to read widely.

### Cultural Representation

Classroom texts should reflect ideas that represent the classroom, the community, and the world; building this type of library is a chance to create an equal opportunity vehicle that contains interests for all. The collection should be both worldly and intimate. A broad range of texts invites students to become citizens of the world as they travel to faraway places and climb into the lives of people unlike themselves. A broad classroom collection sends a clear message that a world of discovery is awaiting students, while a limited collection sends the opposite message. In short, access to well-curated resources is nothing less than a students'-rights issue.

## Examples of Genres

### Fiction

- fantasy
- historical fiction
- science fiction
- fairy tale
- myth
- fable
- folktale
- mystery
- realistic fiction
- graphic novel
- short story

### Nonfiction

- memoir
- news article
- reference book
- textbook
- encyclopedia
- biography
- autobiography
- essay
- report
- blog
- journal article
- informative picture books
- infographic
- functional text
- scientific text
- mathematical text
- website
- historical text
- map


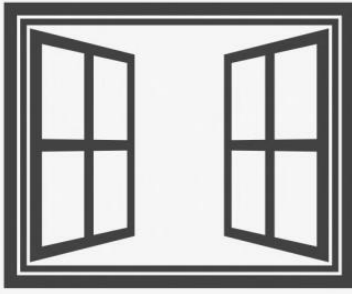
### Poetry

- haiku
- sonnet
- cinquain
- blank verse
- free verse
- spoken word
- rap

### Argument/Opinion

- editorial
- review/recommendation: product, music, film, book, etc.
- blog
- social media post
- letter to the editor
- advertisement
- public service announcement

Rudine Sims Bishop distills the rights issues in the most eloquent terms. Bishop (1990) described the ways in which literature can serve as windows, sliding glass doors, and mirrors. Books can become windows, offering a “view of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange.” Readers can then treat these windows as sliding glass doors by walking through them and into the world created by the author. These same windows can also serve as mirrors, reflecting the readers’ lives and experiences back to them “as part of the larger human experience.” Literature, particularly multicultural literature, can provide both self-affirmation and a way to learn about and appreciate various cultures, dialects, and ways of being in the world. Literature has the power to teach about and honor readers’ differences and similarities.

mirror	window
	
<p>reminds me of myself</p>	<p>different- see and learn new things</p>
<p>_____ is like a mirror to me because _____.</p>	

It's encouraging to see a significant improvement in the number of books representing different cultures. A 2015 study by the Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin showed more diversity presented in trade books published in the United States. However, educators still have miles to go before all children can find a mirror in their classroom libraries.

Whether at home or in the classroom, prioritize the mirrors-and-windows library, the mirrors-and-windows world, the mirrors-and-windows conversations. Every child deserves an opportunity for self-discovery while peering out into the larger world.

## Cross-Curricular Connections

National expectations for literacy encourage incorporating informational text into every aspect of the curriculum, starting in kindergarten: "A variety of studies suggest young children can interact successfully with informational text when given the opportunity to do so" (Duke 2003). The implications of this shift are vast; the very texture of the classroom reading collection will take on a fresh look and a new purpose, and the ELA texts on hand will be enriched by more media-based and modern informational sources.

As teachers develop essential questions that align with reading goals, they must pause to evaluate goals in content-area instruction.

*"Can you connect your lesson on key details to a reading passage on the rock cycle during a science lesson? Can you guide students in a word-choice close reading of a primary source document in a social studies lesson?"*

Making cross-curricular connections is more than killing two birds with one stone. Connecting content in multiple subject areas helps students see an application for reading skills outside a chapter book or a read-aloud. The texts used in a reading lesson could be based on content area goals in social studies and science. For example, a book like *A Train to Somewhere* by Eve Bunting could be used to teach a reading strategy during a Social Studies unit on Westward Expansion. Teachers should examine curriculum maps for social studies and science when choosing texts to share with students. These lessons and activities show students that reading does not have to be experienced in isolation but can open doors to new learning.

## Interest Surveys

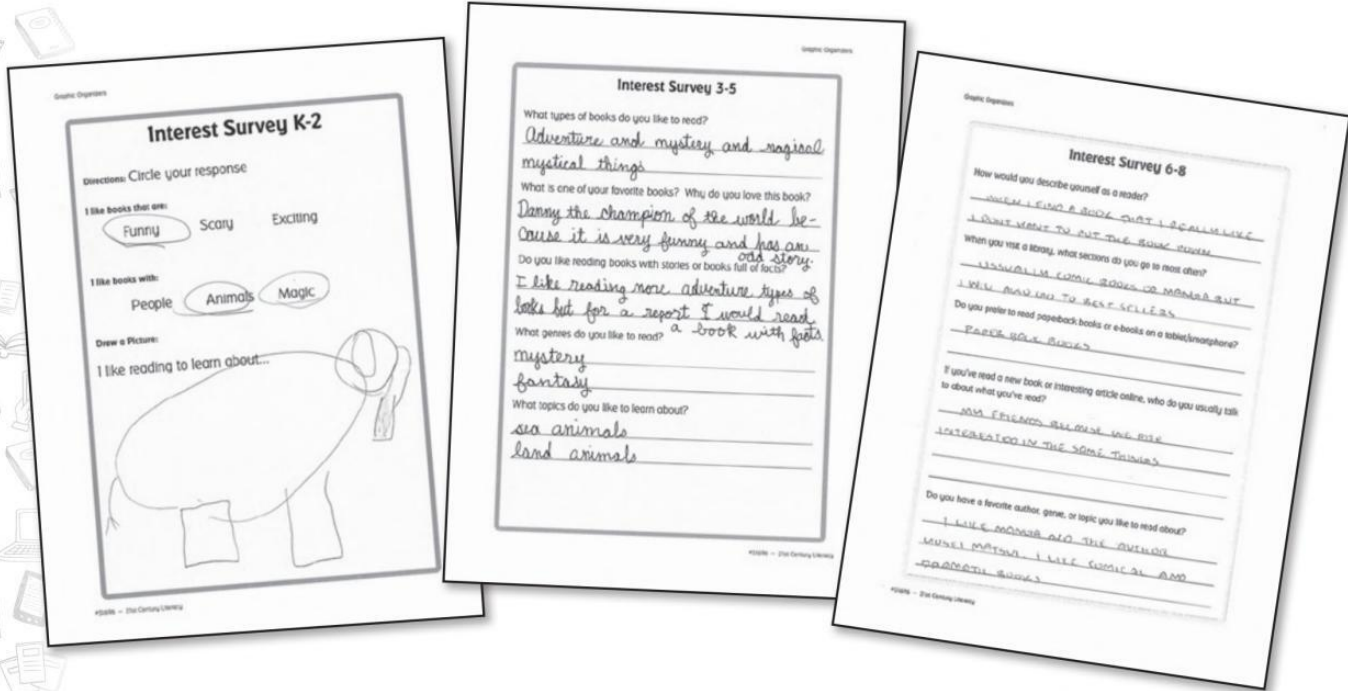
Interest surveys give a glimpse into student thinking and can help identify texts, topics, and themes that will grab their attention. An interest survey may take place during the first week of school to help a teacher determine how to best organize her classroom library. Student interests change over the course of the year, and periodic interest surveys can aid a teacher on her quest to provide students with new books that will grab—and hold—their attention.

### Digital Options for Interest Surveys:

- Google Form
- Socrative
- Kahoot



For the youngest of students, interest surveys can be as simple as having students color a smiley face on a page or tap a screen of pictures to show what they like to learn about. Older students may respond to an open-ended question and list their favorite authors and genres. Interest surveys provide children with a voice. A teacher’s genuine interest in learning about the passions of her students becomes evident when she honors the choices of the children in the classroom.



## Digital Genres

Readers today have access to an endless amount of content. Students who read widely can cultivate the tools necessary for making meaning of digital genres. The readers of digital text must be critical thinkers who can skim, digest, and learn while adding in an extra layer of evaluation.

This section examines these new digital genres to define their meaning and explain their significance. Incorporating these text types into instruction is a must in 21st century classrooms. An understanding of how to tame the wild text and navigate new text types is an essential component of college and career readiness.

### Blog Posts

A blog post is a special kind of website that features content posted in chronological order. A single blog post can range in length from a few hundred to a few thousand words. Many blogs have one focus, such as a collection of posts featuring favorite recipes or fitness tips. Other blogs feature posts on a range of topics, usually posted by one person or a single organization.

Just like traditional print texts, there are common features to blog posts found on different websites. Every blog post has a title, an author, and a body of text. Most include an image and subheadings to organize the information in the post. Most blogs contain links to take the reader to more information about a topic. These links could connect to other content on that particular website or to information published somewhere else on the Internet. One unique feature of blogs is that they often have a comments section at the bottom of the page. These comments give readers an opportunity to share their opinions and ask the author questions while also viewing and analyzing the opinions of other readers.



### 21st Century Reading Tip

When sharing blog posts with students, be mindful of any advertisements, pop-ups, or links embedded in the text, and remind students how you expect them to navigate the page.



## Activity: Reading a Blog Post

### Goals:

- Make connections to what children have accomplished as readers.
- Acknowledge the differences in digital text.
- Show students how to use a blog to share content on a topic.
- Discuss author bias or media literacy.

### Preparation:

- Decide ahead of time what type of blog post features you plan on sharing with students. If you decide to share a blog post that is printed on paper, the experience will be different from a blog post in which students interact with a digital tool.
- Decide on the blog features you want to highlight with students, such as: author bio, hyperlinks, or the comments section. Choose a blog post that contains these features.

### Procedure:

- Display the blog post so that all students can see the page by projecting it on the board or having a copy in front of each student.
- Before reading the text aloud to your class, have them scroll or skim through the page. Ask students to share with a partner some of the things they notice about the blog post, such as the way the text is organized or special features they see. Bring the class back together and highlight some of the important features that make a blog post similar to or different from other pieces of text that students have explored.
- Share with students that the purpose of a blog is for someone to post updates about their life, how they feel about an issue, or to give information on a topic, and that most blogs have a specific focus.
- Ask students to read the blog post you have picked with a partner. You may guide them with specific focus questions, such as *What have we already learned about this topic? Who is the author, and why did he or she write this post?* or *Where else can I go to get more information on this topic?*



## Feature Articles

Students who read widely are able to gather information, learn about a special event or notable person, and explore new worlds through feature articles. Feature articles can be found in print magazines and online publications. Many favorite print publications also have an online presence, so you can find articles by searching their website. There are also several online-only resources for feature articles that give teachers and students easy access to quality content.

When introducing feature articles to students, teachers should discuss text features and author bias in the same way they would address these topics in print text. As feature articles often examine historical or scientific topics, they can be used to complement social studies or science units of study.

### Resources for Kid-Friendly Feature Articles

- Newsela
- News-O-Matic
- Smithsonian Tween Tribune
- TIME For Kids

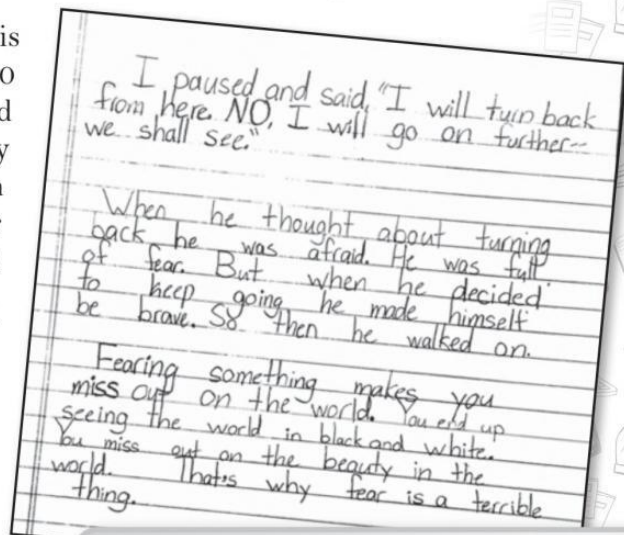


## Reading “Short”

Readers in the 21st century need to navigate digital genres of all forms. Social media platforms feature concise messages and require a special set of reading skills. Students who are scrolling through short text must understand how to read between the lines and search for meaning behind just a sentence or two. This medium offers ample opportunity to practice critical thinking skills.

One medium for short-text mentors is Twitter®. Twitter limits writers to 140 characters, so posts must be concise and to the point. Readers of a tweet have only a sentence or two to digest. Students can analyze a deceptively simple tweet for author’s purpose, bias, and text-to-world connections with the same level of effort as a close read of a passage from a piece of classic literature.

The action of reading short helps students to think beyond the seemingly simple characters or a single sentence in a book.



### Lifting a Line (see page 26)

### Activity: Lifting a Line

**Goals:**

- Students will identify a short line that moves them, surprises them, or makes them wonder.

**Procedure:**

- Ask students to put a star next to a line that:
  - Jumps out at them
  - Makes them think differently
  - Makes them wonder
  - Makes them want to laugh
  - Shocks them
  - Makes them want to talk to someone
  - Makes them want to cry
- Invite them to “lift that line” and write it at the top of the screen or page. Then, have students reflect and write for two minutes. Use that thinking to explore what kind of talking and reading may come next. For example, in “The Wood Pile” by Robert Frost, one student selects the line: “. . . I will turn back from here. / No, I will go farther—and we shall see.” Inspired by this line, the student reflects on the author’s purpose as well as how the words act as a mirror, allowing her to look inward at herself (See page 25).
- After the initial reflection, challenge students to read widely, connecting this text with others. Students could:
  - Read the news and discuss how this line resonates.
  - Read another poem written later by Frost and see if his thoughts on the quirks of human nature change.
  - Read a poem written by a classmate and see if there are common themes.
  - Students can also lift a line from a text and locate an image that connects to the mood or tone of the selection. Graphic design and poster-making tools make it easy to layer text on top of an image. Some of our favorites are Spark Post (web, iOS), Canva (web, iOS) and PicCollage (iPad).

Readers must read between the lines. Teachers and students can converse about context and word choice while unpacking lines lifted from a text. Whether this analysis takes place with a tweet from a notable writer or an excerpt from a favorite book, reading short is a skill that students need when interacting with traditional and digital text. Students can find much to discuss in a quote, such as this example from *Pride and Prejudice*: “Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously.”

## Balancing the Genres

As teachers prepare students for the rigors of real-world reading, there is an expectation that today’s English language arts classrooms blend instruction of fiction with informational and persuasive texts. This balance builds on young children’s natural curiosity about the world, supports their vocabulary development and word knowledge in organic ways, and works to develop their growing concepts of reading and writing. Considering the fact that around 90 percent of daily reading outside school falls under the category of informational text, incorporating focused study of these genres into lesson set objectives begins to sound not only beneficial but also necessary.

Some great ways to balance the use of literature and informational text:

- Make sure weekly read alouds include examples that represent the variety of the genre. Traditionally, teachers tend to gravitate toward fiction for read alouds, but blog posts, a nonfiction retelling of a baseball game, or a news report can all be used. All may be examples of wonderful writing and can be riveting to students of all ages.
- Use text sets as features in the classroom library. Pair a book about lions with *The Lion and the Mouse* by Jerry Pinkney. Pair a nonfiction text about world cultures with *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis. Search for an article hosted online by an organization like Newsela or Smithsonian Tween Tribune that connects to a theme in a favorite read-aloud book. If students are reading the realistic fiction book *Redwoods* by Jason Chin, teachers can introduce them to a news article on conservation initiatives in California.
- Have students match up a theme to texts across genres. Students choose a theme, and then others in the class add titles either to an online forum or to a bulletin board in the classroom.

- Add QR codes to literature books in the classroom library that connect students to a related piece of informational text. This QR code could link students to a short biography of the author or an online encyclopedia entry that shares information about a topic featured in the book.

## Evolving Text Structures

Children who read widely should notice text structure and organization as they explore digital and print text. Active readers attend to patterns in a text, notice how text is presented, and gather information from this organization. Traditional lessons on text structure can be tailored to digital text, and digital text experiences can be leveraged to help children understand the organization of print text.

The term *text structure* refers to how a text is formed and built and the student's awareness of its grammar, punctuation, form, and style. Text structures also relate to the way words lay out on a page, which is different depending on genre. Nonfiction text will show more lists and unique uses of white space to feature charts and graphs. Narrative text tends to use imagery and painting in a more artistic manner, either in a picture book or as starters for chapters in novels. Text structures belong to each genre, and each genre is made dynamic by text structures. The student as a tamer of text is highly aware of what it means to read actively—to say, “I wonder what the author was doing here, and why.” Students will notice that authors tend to repeat favorite text structures. They may vary sentence length or use grammar in interesting yet specific ways to highlight their style.

As readers, students breathe in the words and imagery that the author breathes out. In the midst of this give-and-take, students are tuned into the following types of thinking:

- How is this author using grammar to convey a point of view or a big idea?
- How is this author selecting a specific genre to help us best understand his or her theme or idea?
- What role do white space, punctuation, and word choice play in this sentence or paragraph?

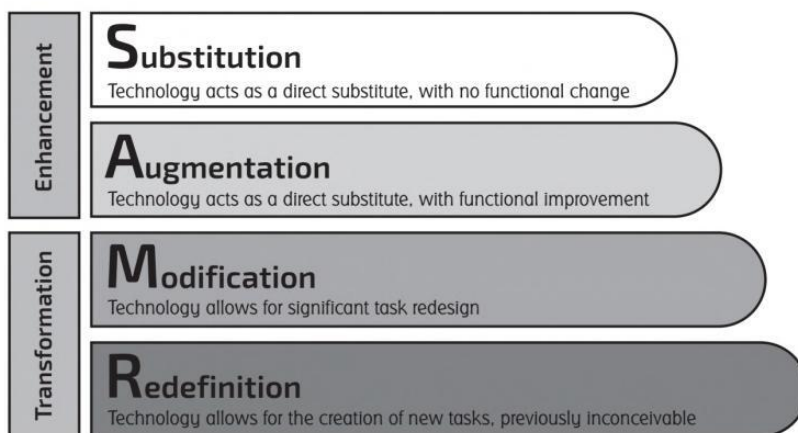
## Digital Text Structures

Teachers know that they must show students how to make their way through the structure of a print text and how to navigate digital pathways. Encourage students to think of this skill as a kind of X-ray vision that allows them to better understand the author's intent behind a piece of sophisticated writing. This superpower can even help them *anticipate* the next move an author will make based on the type of structure in place.

Text structure in digital text varies significantly in quality. Some digital text can feel like a substitution for print text—the only difference in reading behavior is how students consume the content. Other digital text provides a completely redefined reading experience in which students can tap on the screen to access a three-dimensional model or press a button for a virtual reality experience. Ruben Puentedura explains this idea of substitution vs. redefinition in the SAMR model. It is important to understand that the quality of digital texts will vary and therefore the ability to have an interactive experience with completely new text structures will vary as well.

### SAMR Model

The SAMR model, developed by Ruben Puentedura, introduces a way in which educators can examine technology integration. Substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition are the four levels of the model. These levels indicate the depth of technology integration in different learning experiences. The SAMR model is often used by teachers to reflect on their use of technology in the classroom.



One well established text structure sleuthing method to try out is to have students read similar information that is presented using different text structures. Scaffold this type of lesson by providing students with a comprehensive list or table of signal words associated with each type of text structure. (A helpful example can be found on the National Education Association's "Using Text Structure" web page: [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org).) With these signal words in hand, students can build a repository of textual cues that will help them navigate the wilds of an expository text that may present a top-level structure of problem and solution and then begin to veer between comparison and sequence structures in order to explain why the planet is heating up. Consider utilizing interest survey results to help guide mentor text choices for students to review in order to become structure sleuths capable of understanding hybrid texts online and off-line.

In addition to the tried-and-true aid of using customized graphic organizers to analyze different types of text, students may benefit from using the SQRW method when tasked with making sense of digital expository texts rife with hybrid text structures and hyperlinks. Begin by surveying the passage (S), formulating a question (Q), reading for information (R), and finally writing down the results of the search (W) (Wolpert and Vacca-Rizopoulos 2012; Bos and Vaughn 2005). Using these notes as a foundation, model what it means to understand the value of a hyperlink. Make a judgment about the value, safety, and relevance of the link (Hodgson 2010). Ask students to be vigilant screeners of the sea of information at their fingertips and to refer back to the purpose set for reading at the beginning of the exercise. If they do decide to click on a link, ask them to chart their path from the original source in their notes, providing tangible evidence of the nonlinear structure found in the majority of online expository texts. The frequency of this type of exercise is key: when students take on the role of structure sleuths, they experience the power of having a plan.

### Tools for Locating Infographics

Although a Google image search for *kid-friendly infographics* will turn up great results, you may want to check out these resources:

- Kids Discover
- *Infographics: Human Body* by Peter Grundy
- Reading Rocket's Infographic Board



### Infographics

In a world of varied media, teachers must model for students how to gather information from the visuals they see on a web page: captions, diagrams, and the ever popular infographics.

Infographics provide a visual representation of information. Instead of reading a paragraph full of survey data, an infographic is a picture that shows the information. It is a snapshot that helps a reader comprehend numerical data. Just like a caption on a photograph, infographics provide essential information. Although infographics are printed in traditional reading materials like newspapers, this type of medium is especially common in blog posts and news articles published online. Since an infographic is a visual representation of data, it can be tweaked to place emphasis on a certain set of conclusions. The inherent bias in infographics make them important tools to use in a conversation on author bias.

### Activity: Reading an Infographic

#### Goals:

- Teach students to linger on the caption underneath a photo, or pause to think about the relevance of a map or a graph.
- Guide students in making meaning of this digital media.

#### Preparation:

- Locate a handful of infographics that are appropriate in level your readers. We have included one in Appendix C on page 160.
- Prepare a few noticings and questions before you lead the class lesson.

#### Procedure:

- Model how to notice the information that an infographic provides. Make sure to point out how you learned or wondered about a topic based on the information provided. You may pose questions like *What is the big idea of this infographic?* *What does the creator of this infographic want me to know?* *Why may an author include this infographic in his or her article?* *How else could the creator of this infographic represent this information?*
- Independently or in pairs, have students examine a new infographic, discussing and responding to the same questions you modeled. You may decide to have all students look at the same infographic or differentiate this task by having students look at leveled content.
- When students are finished, show them how to notice and analyze an infographic when it is embedded in an article.





## Tools for Creating Infographics

- Keynote
- Canva
- Pages



## Activity: Creating an Infographic

### Goals:

- Create an infographic using authentic data.

### Procedure:

- Have students collect a set of data around a topic (or provide a data set). They may want to create an infographic around a big idea, such as *What kind of books do students at our elementary school like to read?*, or they may want to gather information and create an infographic that connects to a topic they are reading about, such as *What do fourth graders think about global warming?*
- Once students have collected their data, show a handful of examples of what an infographic can look like. Depending on your group of students, you may want to provide a template for them to work with.
- Give students time to brainstorm images or icons they would like to include in their infographic. Talk about the way that color and fonts can convey a mood or set a tone.
- Working in pairs or individually, have students sketch out their ideas with pencil and paper. Then, introduce them to an online tool for creating infographics.
- Model how to use this tool to create an infographic in order to clarify the expectations, and explain how to use the tool in the context of this project.
- After students have finished, let them jigsaw into small groups to share their work. This conversation can include reflection and peer feedback.

**Student Reproducible Sheets**

**Creating an Infographic**

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Survey questions: \_\_\_\_\_

Survey results: \_\_\_\_\_

What big message would you like your infographic to get across? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of icons or images could you use? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of colors or fonts could you use? \_\_\_\_\_

162 © Shell Education

## Digital or Print?

### Research on Digital Text

Powerful research in the field of education clarifies the impact of digital text. Myriad studies examining the ways in which readers interact with the stories on screen provide a guide for thinking about digital text while navigating different ways to gather information and hear stories as readers. Cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Maryanne Wolf, an expert on the reading brain, is dedicated to this critical line of inquiry and is currently developing apps that will help students engage with digital text. She is aware that educators cannot afford to ignore the rich possibilities that lie within the realm of digital literacy.

Wolf is encouraged by a recent study that examined how a thoughtfully constructed digital annotation technique affected comprehension or the ability to “read deeply” among a group of fifth graders. After being taught how to use a collaborative reading annotation system, the digital experimental group “significantly outperformed” the paper-based annotation group in the areas of direct and explicit comprehension, inferential comprehension performance, and the use of reading strategies (Chen and Chen 2014). In her 2014 *New Yorker* article, “Being a Better Online Reader,” psychologist and author Maria Konnikova cites Wolf as stating that “the same plasticity that allows us to form a reading circuit to begin with, and short-circuit the development of deep reading if we allow it, also allows us to learn how to duplicate deep reading in a new environment” (Konnikova 2014).

This “go to the mountain” approach to digital literacy is shared by other leading researchers in the field, such as Lisa Guernsey and Michael Levine, the authors of *Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens*. Guernsey and Levine advocate blending media and reading literacies so that all students may gain access to “Readialand,” their playful term for “a place where reading and media are joined in service of each other and new literacy opportunities are accessible to all families” (Guernsey and Levine 2015). They make the crucial point that to downplay or even ignore the possibilities of technology in the classroom is to disenfranchise our most vulnerable students who may benefit from new content and teaching methods enhanced by technology as a means of narrowing the “digital divide.” Their perspective is grounded in the demonstrated benefits of “joint media engagement,” or JME, meaning that moments of engagement (e.g., dialogic questioning) between adults and children as young as infants

increases learning potential when consuming both print and digital texts. Another study cited by Guernsey and Levine showed the advantages of children learning from “nonverbal multimedia features...that match the story text” in electronic storybooks (2015). In other words, the study saw children benefiting from exposure to *multimedia* (e.g., animations and visual effects, sound effects, background music) as opposed to *hypermedia* features such as games and “hotspots” irrelevant to the text (Bus, Takacs, and Kegel 2015). This distinction between how the children reacted to the multimedia and hypermedia features in digital narratives underscores how advances in technology can also advance literacy as long as they are “consistent with the way the human processing system works” (Bus, Takacs, and Kegel 2015). More intrusive elements have the potential to overload young readers and impede their progress toward a deeper understanding of the story at hand, a possibility worth the consideration of teachers and parents alike.

And though some studies suggest that narrative-reading experiences on electronic devices may complicate a student’s sense of immersion in the text, many researchers agree that results are mixed and more research must be done before any definitive conclusions can be made.

Until then, teachers must thoughtfully consider the many exciting affordances of the digital technologies at their fingertips—including portability, built-in dictionaries, and customizable settings, just to name a few. These benefits must be weighed against the demonstrated perennial value of the printed page, and a customized learning experience must be crafted with the benefits and drawbacks of both mediums in mind.

### **Research on Print Text**

It’s important to understand the way that readers interact with the words on the page when looking closely at the differences between reading digital text and print text. There are technical terms like *haptic dissonance* (i.e., the conflict we feel when the act of reading an e-book challenges our expectations of how the physical or haptic act of reading a book should feel), used by some to explain why rumors of print’s death have been so greatly exaggerated. Others, like Abigail Sellen, a principal researcher at Microsoft Research Cambridge, suggest that readers don’t feel the same sense of ownership of an e-book as they do with a print book because the act of reading the former isn’t accompanied by the tangible expectations that come with reading the latter, e.g., feeling the pleasant friction of

the page's fibers, flipping through pages to quickly reference a favorite passage, or feeling the weight of the book like another presence in the room. Sellen says, "They [readers] think of using an e-book, not owning an e-book" (Jabr 2013). Participants in a study she conducted on this phenomenon admitted that if they enjoyed an electronic book, they would go out and buy the paper version. Perhaps that's why, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, 95 percent of sales for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid #10: Old School* were in print (Kellogg 2015).



### Independent Reading Tips

- Make sure your classroom library is stocked with all kinds of nonfiction texts, including magazines, video game manuals, and other fun stuff!
- Play Genre Bingo (see page 163)
- Have students interview friends and family to find out what genres they read every day.
- Reward students for trying a new genre or subgenre they've never read before.

It's heartening to see the viability of beloved print books validated. Study after study show the benefits of teaching from both the page *and* the screen, as long as that instruction thoughtfully incorporates the affordances of both media—affordance meaning the strengths and weaknesses of technologies with respect to the possibilities they offer to the people who might use them (Gaver 1991). Dr. Maryanne Wolf has authored several important studies and has written multiple books about the reading brain's encounters with print vs. digital text. She encourages educators to be aware of the pitfalls of an approach to literacy that privileges the digital over the printed form: "An early immersion in reading that is largely online tends to reward certain cognitive skills, such as multitasking, and habituate the learner to immediate information gathering and quick attention shifts, rather than to deep reflection and original thought" (Wolf and Barzillai 2009). This would suggest the critical importance of building a foundation of reading printed books while being mindful of the enormous potential benefits of the "interactivity and convenience" of multimodal e-books (Schugar, Smith, and Schugar 2013).



It's important, even critical, to acknowledge the power that teachers and caregivers hold over shaping the reading and writing habits of children, but it's also important to step back and observe where a child's intuition guides him or her, whether it be the subject matter of independent reading choices or the text's mode of delivery (which, in some cases, could be a text message). While continuing to enjoy and honor the print book, educators must also look at the evolution of reading and figure out ways to create confident explorers of students. Now is the time to empower students with the tools they need to tame the wild text.

### How Can We Help?

Technology may be in the forefront of education, but that does not mean that the best practices of traditional reading are being abandoned. Whether students are reading from paper or a tablet, the strategies teachers employ to develop strong readers grow out of the same foundation. As students begin to read widely, their interactions with text should include both traditional and digital forms, both literature and informational text. Preparing students for real world reading means ensuring that they get to experience all kinds of texts at all times of the day.

### Modeling

Modeling interactions with text is essential when building skills to help students read widely. A kindergarten teacher may model a picture walk with a print or digital text, asking students to draw a picture of what they've learned with a mobile app and record their voice to narrate their illustration. A fifth grade teacher may use an interactive whiteboard to model how to color-code a text when reading in order to gather facts about a topic. Fifth graders can then open up an e-book in a digital library and tap on the screen to add color-coding to different parts of the text. Alternatively, fifth graders working in print reading materials may use a tablet to snap a picture of the print page and annotate that image using digital tools. Modeling reading behaviors for students helps connect reading instruction to the real world. Taking a moment to make a connection to one's own reading life can be as simple as "You won't believe what I saw written on a sign this morning. As I was driving to school today, the supermarket displayed a funny riddle that made me laugh out loud!" Bringing students into their teacher's reading life can show them how classroom reading skills are transferred into the real world.

## Digital Reading At Home

Families understand the power of the smartphone in their pocket or the tablet in their children’s hands, but they appreciate the guidance on how to use these tools for learning.

Families can benefit from strategic recommendations from teachers on how to use digital text to support reading at home. We can leverage these interactions and provide resources for families with access to technology.

## Honoring Cultures

Families have different levels of comfort with technology and a varying degree of understanding when it comes to the power of educational technology as a learning tool. In order to navigate the school and home relationship successfully, it is essential for teachers and their schools to honor the traditions and cultures of families. This includes developing an understanding of the way families interact with reading materials at home.

Providing opportunities for students to take home print books should go hand in hand with sending lists of strong reading apps or online resources to families. In addition to finding a balance between print and digital text in the classroom, schools can support families as they begin to navigate the waters of traditional and digital text. Families should feel confident that their smartphones or tablets can be used to give their child easy access to high-quality text. Families should also feel comfortable continuing to read to their children the way they were read to and embracing home traditions of reading print.

## Screen Time

A long-anticipated revision of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations on screen time, first released in 1999, reflects a more nuanced view of technology’s influence on early childhood development. Instead of discouraging any access to screens for children under age two, the 2016 guidelines now include this caveat: “Avoid solo media use in this age group” (3).

### Resources for Reading at Home

- Newsela
- YouTube (search “read alouds”)
- StorylineOnline®
- OceanHouse Media
- News-O-Matic
- iBooks® Children Category



This recommendation acknowledges studies that show that very young children can benefit from educational videos or apps if a parent or caregiver interacts with the screen alongside the child, reinforcing vocabulary words or pointing out key details and events. Older children in the two-to-five age range should limit screen time to an hour per day and, once again, AAP recommends a shared experience between the child and parent or caregiver. It's possible for children at this age to transfer the knowledge they may gain from screens to the real world, but that possibility increases when another person capable of reinforcing what they are seeing and hearing is involved in the exchange.

The teachers of the world now face an even greater responsibility to facilitate the meaningful transfer of knowledge from screens to sponge-like learners as the number of devices multiply in our classrooms. A 2015 report issued by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reaffirmed what so many educators, parents, and students already know to be true: "Technology can amplify great teaching, but great technology cannot replace poor teaching." Dr. Kentaro Toyama of the University of Michigan School of Information adds his voice to the growing chorus of educators who caution against viewing an increase in screen time as a panacea for lackluster classroom performance and engagement: "Technology's primary effect is to amplify human forces, so in education, technologies amplify whatever pedagogical capacity is already there" (2015). All the more reason for us to embrace our adult learning in the intersection of technology and print-based reading experiences so that we can accompany our students on this great journey and not be left behind.



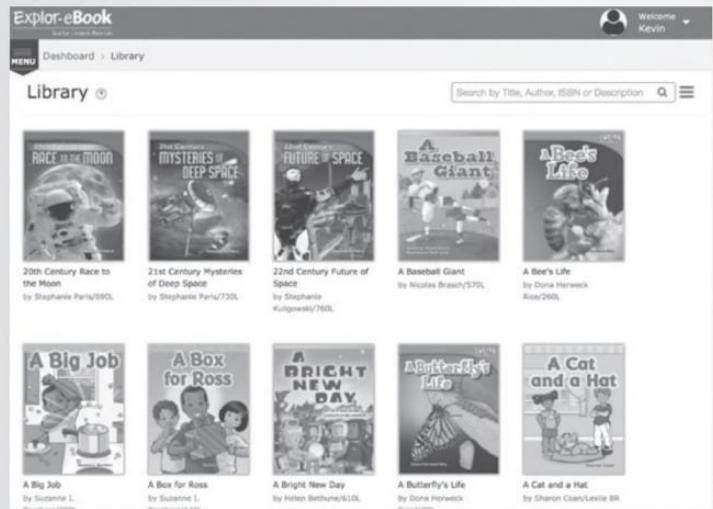
### Research Spotlight

Researchers Lee and Barron (2015) found that parents who often used digital technology for personal learning had children who used educational media more often, highlighting an important association between parents' and children's media use. This suggests that designing intergenerational learning opportunities can be especially powerful.



## Subscription-Based Digital Libraries:

- EPIC!
- News-O-Matic
- Reading Rainbow
- DK Readers
- Teacher Created Materials
- Explor-eBook



## A Blended World

Students with access to both traditional print materials and digital tools intuitively combine these mediums. In elementary school, a student may look up the definition of a new word in an online dictionary to hear the correct pronunciation or to better understand its meaning. In middle school, students may respond to reading by creating a video blog that shares their opinions of a book. In high school, students may flip through a textbook and pause to look up a definition using their smartphone. As students dive into this blended world, educators need to be comfortable with the notion that print and digital text can support each other.

So, how do educators make the most of this blended world? First, teachers must be observant of their students, reaching them where they are and using their noticings to take students to the next level. This could include placing QR codes on the backs of new print books, allowing students to scan and view a book trailer created by their peers. This digital and print connection can be used before deciding whether to commit to reading this new book. Students can still experience the joy of sitting on a rug in the corner of their classroom and hearing their

### Resources for Early Digital Readers

- **Website:** Joan Ganz Cooney Center
- **Book:** *Tap, Click, Read* by Lisa Guernsey and Michael H. Levine
- **Article:** "Screen Time" by Lisa Guernsey





teacher read a book aloud. In a blended world, students may respond to the read aloud by recording their thoughts in an interactive reading journal.

Students who read widely embrace both digital and print text and read across genres. They dive into books delightedly, with a sense of freedom and personal empowerment. Students of today and of the future know that flipping through pages of a book and tapping the screen of an interactive text are both ways in which active readers experience text. They also understand that they can tap a word on their tablet and hear it pronounced for them or get a vocabulary word explained quickly and clearly. Readers today are absorbing print in ways that make them more fully engaged with text. It is not an “either/or.” They don’t see reading online or off-line as separate or isolated interactions with text but part of their reading tool belt that can be used to tame the wild text in front of them. The same is true for their interaction with genre variety. A poem leads to a discovery of the poet’s life, which leads to a blog post about the poet’s love of music, which leads to a news article about the uses of poetry to sustain people during difficult times. Taming the wild text means that wide reading is accepted, understood, and embraced.



Dear Families,

Children who read widely are able to access different types of text during each day—both inside and outside the classroom. As parents and caregivers, you can help model a love of and an appreciation for a wide range of reading materials. You may gravitate toward a favorite genre in the same way your children do, but the conversations you can have with your children about your own reading life will help them understand their journeys as readers.

In your home, take a moment to talk about your favorites—how you love to read historical fiction but will try out a science fiction book if it is highly recommended by a special family member. After reading an interesting news article on your smartphone, pause to have a conversation with your children about how you love reading text that teaches you something new or makes you wonder. When you read aloud with your children each evening, introduce an unexpected text like a magazine article on a heroic figure or an interactive storybook on a topic they have never heard of before. You can even read a funny cartoon or a silly note from Grandma. If you love sports and always check the scores, refer to this as reading, too. You have the power to introduce a range of text to your children to help them read widely.

Keep a record on your refrigerator of all the different types of text your family reads: cereal boxes, game instructions, and text messages all count. Use the “Genre Bingo” board as a fun way to keep track. Ask your children questions such as the following:

- What new kinds of reading would you like to do together?
- What is a type of reading you haven't tried yet?
- What is your favorite genre?

It is important that we value all the many kinds of reading our children do and want to do. Reading Widely, the first of our Five Habits, will soon become something they do every day.

With appreciation,