Books are familiar fixtures in classrooms. They are as much a part of the physical makeup of most classrooms as desks, tables, chairs, chalkboards, and bulletin boards. Although they are highly visible in a well-furnished classroom, books, as Henry Ward Beecher reminds us, are not made for furniture. Books are made to read for a variety of purposes, not the least of which is to learn. Textbooks, although they certainly have an important role in content area learning, have been scrutinized by educational critics who express concerns about their quality in terms of accuracy, readability, and appeal. These criticisms remind us that some textbooks may as well be made for furniture rather than learning.

In this chapter we explore the uses and limitations of textbooks. We make the case that in today’s rapidly changing classrooms, textbooks by themselves are not enough. Students
need access to a range of reading materials, and trade books provide a veritable mother lode of fiction and nonfiction works that connect to most curricular areas. Trade books, as distinguished from textbooks, are published for distribution to the general public through booksellers. Trade books are informative, entertaining, and have built-in appeal for people of all ages. Trade books, whether picture books, fiction, nonfiction, or poetry, have the potential to provide students with intense involvement in a subject and the power to develop in-depth understanding in ways not imagined a few years ago. Furthermore, by engaging students in active response to trade books, we heighten their interest and understanding of text content.

Should textbooks be abandoned? Certainly not. Our point in this chapter (and the next chapter on the use of electronic texts in content areas) is to underscore the value of integrating a variety of print and multimedia environments into the curriculum. The organizing principle for this chapter looks beyond the oft-times limiting role of textbooks in content areas: **Instructional practices involving the use of trade books in content areas help to extend and enrich the curriculum.**
Frame of Mind

1. What are some problems associated with textbook use?
2. Why use trade books to learn subject matter?
3. How can teachers create classroom libraries in content area classrooms?
4. What should the roles of self-selected reading and teacher read-alouds be in the content area classroom?
5. What are some ways that teachers can engage students in responding to the trade books they read?
6. How can teachers involve students in inquiry-related activities?

In the beginning of his book *The Winter Room*, Gary Paulsen, the author of popular fiction books for adolescents, appeals to readers to engage actively in the reading of his book. *The Winter Room* is the story of two brothers, Eldon and Wayne, growing up on a farm in northern Minnesota. In the prologue to the story, Paulsen makes it clear to his readers that the book they are about to read can’t have the smells of old farms or cooking in the kitchen. It can’t have the sounds of farm life. Finally, books can’t have light to create the images that readers will construct in their heads. As Paulsen (1989) puts it:

> If books could have more, give more, show more, they would still need readers, who bring to them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can’t be in books. The book needs you. (p. 3)

Just as books need readers, readers need books, and they need them in their content area classrooms. Readers need books that take them different places, let them live different lives, and be different people. They need books that captivate them, that nurture their souls and capitalize on their interests. Readers need books that let them see themselves and satisfy their need to know about the world around them.

In many ways, the content area classroom is the perfect place for students to connect with books because it affords students opportunities to build webs of meaning about a topic through a variety of sources. Through these experiences, students engage in meaning making by evaluating information, connecting ideas across sources, comparing and contrasting information, and reflecting on meaning. In this chapter, we explore the complementary roles of textbooks and trade books in the classroom as well as the unique ways in which responses to trade books can enhance and extend content learning experiences.
CHAPTER 5: LEARNING WITH TRADE BOOKS

What about . . . Content Standards and Assessment?

The ability to read literary and informational texts is an important component of all statewide proficiency assessments in reading and language arts. In addition, most proficiency assessments outside of reading are in actuality assessments of literacy. In order to respond to content-specific assessment questions, students need to be able to read and write effectively. No wonder, then, that the first two content standards of the Standards for the English Language Arts (IRA/NCTE 1996) have broad implications for the use of literary and informational texts in all content areas:

- Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

- Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

As you read this chapter on learning with trade books, also analyze national and state standards, where they exist, in your content area. What are the implications of these standards for reading “a wide range of literature” in your content area?

Textbook Use in Today’s Classrooms

A familiar ritual occurs in classrooms practically everywhere at the beginning of each school year. The ritual, of course, is the “distribution of textbooks” captured brilliantly in the accompanying Funky Winkerbean cartoon.

Source: © NAS. Reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate.
Textbooks are more the rule than the exception in most classrooms. Estimates suggest that 75 to 90 percent of classrooms in the United States use textbooks almost exclusively (Palmer & Stewart 1997). Les Moore, the teacher in the cartoon, mouths the words that many teachers have either spoken aloud or thought about as part of the “distribution of textbooks” ritual. Textbooks, after all, are expensive. School districts, depending on their size, invest hundreds of thousands of dollars on a textbook adoption. Textbooks are purchased to last several years or more before the next adoption period. Mr. Moore expects his course textbooks to be returned at the end of the year in the same condition as the beginning of the year: “Although,” he says somewhat wryly, “some signs of use would be nice!”

The cartoon hits home. Textbooks remain unread by too many students, even though teachers attempt to use textbooks with the best of intentions. Often we have heard teachers note with regret that students “simply don’t read assigned textbook material anymore.” Yet, it’s not that the majority of students can’t read. Most choose not to, primarily because they have never been shown how to think and learn with textbooks.

**Reasons Teachers Use Textbooks**

Textbooks are, for most teachers, essential classroom tools. They act as blueprints for learning in particular content areas. And in today’s standards-driven environment, they provide coverage of content in particular disciplines that may well appear on high-stakes tests of some kind. Time constraints in a standards-driven curriculum are real. Teachers feel enormous pressure to cover a certain amount of content in a specified amount of time before students move on to the next chapter or unit of study. Teachers who operate under time constraints often view textbooks as efficient informational resources that support what students are studying in a particular subject at a particular time. Textbook-driven instruction relies on lecturing and other means of information giving when content coverage is the primary purpose. For these reasons and others, content area teaching often involves the use of one type of text—the textbook, often at the exclusion of other types of texts.

**Problems with Using Textbooks**

Textbooks are not without problems, though. Because of their comprehensive and encyclopedic nature, most textbooks do not treat subject matter with the breadth and depth necessary to fully develop ideas and concepts. The very nature of textbooks may often restrict their use in content area classrooms.

The textbook, *History of the United States*, for example, tells the U.S. story in two volumes (DiBacco, Mason, & Appy 1992). The first volume is more than 700 pages long; the second is more than 800 pages. The design of the two volumes is attractive and the texts are full of eye-catching and instructionally helpful features, including black and white and color photos; colorful visual aids such as maps, tables, graphs, and
cartoons; and a wide variety of instructional aides, such as key terms, questions, objectives, and a capsule main idea statement for each chapter section. All of these design features serve several purposes: to support students’ reading, to make learning more visual and appealing, and to break up written text into manageable chunks of writing that won’t overwhelm students. The authors of History of the United States write in an appealing manner to capture students’ interest and hold their attention. Take, for example, a passage from a subsection of text describing the Holocaust:

People had known all along that the war was taking a terrible toll, still the full agony only became apparent when Allied forces entered Nazi territory and liberated dozens of concentration camps. Soldiers could not believe their eyes. They found prisoners so emaciated that they resembled living corpses. The found gas chambers, crematoriums (ovens in which bodies were burned), and thousands of corpses stacked like cordwood in boxcars and open pits. One soldier recalled:

The odors, well there is no way to describe the odors. Many of the boys I am talking about now—these were tough soldiers, there were combat men who had been all the way through the invasion—were ill and vomiting, throwing up, just at the sight of this. (DiBacco, Mason, & Appy 1992, p. 433)

This passage is graphic in its description and creates a sense of horror for the atrocities that are described. Yet despite the magnitude of the Holocaust as a historical event and its profound human and moral implications, the authors’ coverage of the Holocaust is limited to eight brief paragraphs as part of a comprehensive chapter on World War II. Eight paragraphs! Even though coverage of the Holocaust is cursory at best, the authors accomplish their purposes for the chapter: to chronicle events and people and to describe the major political, economic, and social forces underlying World War II.

This example illustrates a major problem with textbooks in general. They aren’t designed to provide in-depth coverage. A textbook conveys a body of knowledge and casts a wide net in an effort to cover as much information as possible. No wonder textbooks are often described as being “a mile wide and an inch deep.”

As state standards require even more content coverage, textbooks must include an even greater number of topics. Space limitations require that textbooks merely mention people or topics, often omitting important background information on particular topics. This can result in students with superficial knowledge of many topics, but little in-depth knowledge of any.

Experts have identified at least four other concerns with textbooks: (1) They are often “inconsiderate” of their readers, (2) they may contain inaccuracies, (3) they are often written at high levels of difficulty, and (4) they lack appeal for students.

**Inconsiderate Texts**

“Inconsiderate texts” contain writing that may be confusing and lack clear organization. Textbooks tend to jump from topic to topic, rather than using generally
accepted patterns of exposition, such as cause–effect, sequence, or comparison contrast. Many of these texts are often written in a descriptive mode—which makes retention of material more difficult.

Inaccuracy
A second concern about textbooks is that of accuracy. A recent edition of the television news show 20/20 focused on this issue. It reported that today’s textbooks are rife with errors. In fact, it featured a concerned parent who found 113 errors in a recent edition of a best-selling science textbook! Further concerns about accuracy relate to the fact that students in many schools are using outdated textbooks because of budget constraints.

Inappropriate Reading Level
Another critical concern is that textbooks are often written well above the reading level of their intended audiences. Of today’s students, 25 to 40 percent are reading, or attempting to read, textbooks that are well beyond their reading levels (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz 1999). For struggling readers or English language learners, the gap between reader and textbook can be as great as three to five years. This coupled with students’ lack of prior knowledge for text content can create a situation where the textbook becomes little more than furniture.

Negative Student Reactions
Finally, students themselves express reservations about their textbooks. When eleventh- and twelfth-grade students in physics classes were queried about the use of their textbooks, one student in the course said flatly, “I don’t mess with the textbook. It’s confusing.” Another responded, “I should be telling you that the text is the best way to learn information. I would tell you that for all my other classes. I learn by reading, and I read a lot. But I just can’t understand this textbook. It’s way above my head.” These revealing comments came from interviews that were part of a study on the use of texts in science classes (Hynd, McNish, Guzzetti, Lay, & Flower 1994). The researchers, who interviewed a mix of students in general and college prep science classes, were struck by the similarities in the students’ comments, despite assumed differences in ability, motivation, and background. Various student comments revealed insightful perspectives, including the beliefs that textbooks assume too much student knowledge, that textbooks need fuller explanations and more relevant examples, and that textbooks should be better organized.

As these examples illustrate, when reading merely chronicles events, students dismiss (and miss) the power of text to inform and transform their lives. When the textbook is the only source of information in a particular content area class, students come to connect the content of a particular subject with what are sometimes dull, lifeless textbooks. When the textbook becomes the curriculum, students are denied the range of perspectives and opportunities for critical think-
ing that multiple texts can provide. Rather than viewing the body of knowledge of a discipline like a scientist or a historian, for example, students simply see facts to be memorized.

Increasing numbers of teachers, however, are moving beyond the exclusive use of textbooks to incorporate trade books, electronic texts, and other authentic alternatives to textbooks. In order to motivate students and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, they are filling their classrooms with magazines, newspapers, films, and any number of other print and nonprint learning tools.

**Rationale for Using Trade Books**

Trade books, rich in narrative and informational content, can provide a valuable complement to most textbooks. Trade books can take students to different places and times in ways that textbooks can’t. Learning with trade books involves exposure to many different genres, all of which are potential sources of information for the active learner. A nonfiction or fiction trade book has the potential to act as a magnifying glass that enlarges and enhances the reader’s personal interactions with a subject. When teachers use textbooks and trade books in tandem, they help learners think critically about content.

Today’s trade books can provide an effective complement to textbooks in virtually any subject. The best trade books overcome many of the limitations of content area texts discussed in the previous section. They provide depth, considerate and accurate information, material at a variety of reading levels, and motivation for learning. High-quality trade books can, for example, provide depth of information that space limitations prevent textbooks from providing. Consider the earlier example of the textbook treatment of the Holocaust. Many outstanding trade books provide in-depth personal accounts of that terrible event in history. Titles such as *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* (Bitton-Jackson 1997) or *Number the Stars* (Lowry 1989) not only help students develop understanding of the events of the Holocaust and World War II but also help them connect emotionally with the sufferings of victims who were themselves young at the time. Trade books can fill the need for story and provide the emotional dimension so lacking in textbooks. Unlike textbooks, they can move not only students’ minds but also their hearts.

In addition, trade books, nonfiction titles in particular, are written and organized in ways that make information interesting and accessible. The best nonfiction authors are more than “baskets of facts”; they speak to young readers personally through informal, engaging writing styles. Their clear, reader-friendly explanations of scientific principles or processes can be extremely helpful to students. In addition, authors of trade books take enormous pains to ensure accuracy. In a speech in Columbus, Ohio, Jim Murphy explained that each fact in his award-winning nonfiction title *The Great Fire* (Murphy 1998) was checked for accuracy at least three times.
Trade books can help teachers meet the range of reading levels in their classrooms. By using a variety of trade books in a range of reading levels, teachers can match students with books they can read. Instead of having all students read the same textbooks, students can read a variety of trade books about a particular topic. This allows teachers the opportunity to give students books at their independent reading levels, a practice that has been associated with gains in achievement.

Furthermore, exposure to nonfiction literature gives students much needed practice reading expository text, which unlike narrative, does not typically involve characters, plots, or settings. This type of text is typically less familiar to students than narrative and more difficult for them to read. The reality is that many students do not know how to read to learn with informational texts because their school experiences have been limited to textbook-only reading. For some students the only historical, mathematics, or science materials they will ever read in a lifetime are in textbooks.

Trade books help readers at all levels develop greater understanding of content-related concepts. Historical fiction titles, for example, provide a framework for remembering and understanding historical content. The same holds for content in science and in other subject areas. Popular science books, both fact and fiction, provide background knowledge for science concepts covered in class and help students relate these concepts to their everyday lives.

Finally, trade books have the power to motivate students to read more. The compelling visual qualities of today’s nonfiction books make them many students’ favorite out-of-school reading. Authors of nonfiction not only provide information but also entertain. Consider, for example, Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story about Brain Science (Fleischman 2002). In 1848, Phineas Gage had a three-and-a-half-foot long iron rod blasted through his head and survived. Despite his recovery, Gage’s personality underwent a drastic transformation. He changed from a reliable, respected supervisor to an unpredictable and temperamental man who eventually lost his job. The focus of the book is not only on what happened to Gage but also what neurologists learned and continue to learn today about the workings of the human brain. This amazing book, because of its lively writing and extraordinary visuals, provides background information about the human brain in a format sure to motivate even those students who have little initial interest in the topic.

Authors of fiction engage students through characters that remind them of themselves and their peers. Many titles address students’ emotional needs because they are written from the viewpoint of students. People of all ages are attracted to books that reflect themselves in some personal way. For many female students, for example, Ann Brashares’s (2001) best-selling Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants considers the powerful bonds of friendship and its power to transform lives.

The primary motivation for including trade books in any classroom should be to capture students’ attention and engagement in learning. When students are given opportunities to interact with quality trade books, they have a better
chance of becoming lifelong readers. Textbooks alone cannot motivate students to continue their learning, particularly in the case of reluctant or academically diverse readers, who are often frustrated and defeated by textbooks in the first place.

**Learning through Literature**

When students have opportunities to learn with trade books, they can explore and interact with many kinds of texts, both fiction and nonfiction. Today’s trade books are better than ever. They are written by authors who relate to the emotions and experiences of today’s young people and address an enormous range of themes and genres. They present characters and events from virtually every ethnic and cultural group in accurate and meaningful circumstances and settings.

The variety of genres available in today’s trade books offers teachers a vast array of titles from which to choose, ranging from easy-to-read titles using engaging formats to extremely sophisticated treatments of complex topics. Trade books are available to serve the needs of every student in every academic area. The greatest challenge for teachers is deciding which books to choose from the enormous possibilities available. Figure 5.1 provides a list of references to help teachers select good books for their classrooms.

**Nonfiction Books**

Nonfiction trade books have, in recent years, moved from the shadows into the spotlight of literary excellence. Nonfiction books, which include informational books and biographies, are no longer glorified textbooks; they connect with readers through writing that is not strictly objective in tone and literal in content but that provides entertainment to contemporary readers. They contain elements of fiction that flesh out details and provide a component of entertainment. This “new journalism” (Donelson & Nelson 1997) represents the kind of meaty material that entertains students at the same time as it informs.

For many students, nonfiction is the literature of choice for out-of-school reading. Many students report a fascination with facts and a “need to know” about information that drives their reading choices. Despite its popularity, nonfiction seldom makes its way into content area classrooms. Because of this, nonfiction trade books are a largely untapped resource with great potential for motivating readers. By using nonfiction trade books in the classroom, teachers can bridge the gap between students’ in- and out-of-school reading and capitalize on their interest in this genre.

The endless array of nonfiction books available for the classroom can help teachers enliven classroom instruction in every content area, including art, music, science, health, and mathematics. No single book will satisfy all readers, but teachers will find many titles that can spark student learning in these content
### Trade Book Selection Guide for Children and Adolescents

*The Alan Review* (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents, National Council of Teachers of English). Published three times a year; articles and “Clip and File” reviews. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

**Appraisal:** *Children’s Science Books for Young People.* Published quarterly by Children’s Science Book Review Committee. Reviews written by children’s librarians and subject specialists.


**Book Links:** *Connecting Books, Libraries, and Classrooms.* Published six times a year by the American Library Association to help teachers integrate literature into the curriculum; bibliographies in different genres and subjects; suggestions for innovative use in the classroom.

*Booklist.* Published twice monthly by the American Library Association. Reviews of children’s trade books and nonprint materials (video, audio, and computer software). Approximate grade levels are given; separate listing for nonfiction books.

*Books for the Teen Age.* Published annually by the Office of Young Adult Services, New York Public Library. Recommendations from young adult librarians in the various branches of the New York Public Library.

*Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books.* Published monthly by the University of Chicago Press; detailed reviews and possible curriculum uses are noted.

**Children’s books: Awards and prizes.** New York: Children’s Book Council. Award-winning titles as well as state “Children’s Choice” awards for exemplary trade books.


*The Horn Book Magazine.* Published six times a year by Horn Book, Inc.; articles by noted children’s authors, illustrators, and critics on aspects of children’s literature, including its use in the classroom. Nonfiction books are reviewed in a separate section.

*International Reading Association.* “Children’s Choices,” a list of exemplary, “reader-friendly” children’s literature, is published every October in *The Reading Teacher.*

areas as well as others. Using nonfiction in the classroom has further advantages. It can

- **deepen student knowledge** of real people, places, and phenomena of the present and the past;
- **provide in-depth, up-to-date information**;
- **help students see how knowledge in different domains is organized, used, and related**;

### Figure 5.1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Notable children’s trade books in the field of social studies.</strong> National Council for the Social Studies. Published yearly in the spring issue of <em>Social Education</em>; annotates notable fiction and nonfiction books, primarily for children in grades K–8.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children.</strong> National Science Teachers Association. Published each year in the spring issue of <em>Science and Children</em>; contains information consistent with current scientific knowledge; is pleasing in format; illustrated; and is nonsexist, nonracist, and nonviolent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Library Journal.</strong> Published by R. R. Bowker; articles on all aspects of children’s literature, including its use in content areas; reviews by school and public librarians.</td>
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</table>
develop student familiarity with the language and vocabulary of a discipline;

improve student comprehension of expository text, a skill required for survival in the information age; and

provide insights into contemporary issues of interest to teens that get little attention in textbooks.

The range of topics available, the variety of formats, and the varying levels of difficulty make these books indispensable resources for content area classrooms. Topics addressed in nonfiction trade books range from art museums to zoology. Formats range from encyclopedic treatments of topics, such as David Macaulay’s (1998) *The New Way Things Work*, to tightly focused, narrowly defined topics, such as Beil’s (1999) *Fire in Their Eyes: Wildfires and the People Who Fight Them*.

There are outstanding biographies and autobiographies of all sorts of people, including rock stars, writers (Jack London, *A Biography*, Dyer 1997), athletes such as Lance Armstrong and Sally Jenkins’ (2001) *It’s Not about the Bike: My Journey Back to Life*, composers (*This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie*, Partridge 2002), scientists (*Carl Sagan: Superstar Scientist*, Cohen 1987), artists (*Chuck Close, Up Close*, Greenberg & Jordan 1998), and ordinary and not-so-ordinary teens (*Rocket Boys*, Hickam 1998). There are books that recount real-life adventures such as *Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance* (Armstrong 1998) and *Exploring the Titanic* (Ballard 1998). Other titles address contemporary issues of concern to everyone the world over, including AIDS, global warming, and homelessness. There are collections of essays written with young readers in mind, such as *New Kids in Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* (Bode 1989), which presents the voices of teen immigrants from places such as Afghanistan, El Salvador, India, Cuba, and China; or *Busted Lives: Dialogues with Kids in Jail* (1982), by Ann Zane Shanks, which offers first-person perspectives of prison life. Figure 5.2 lists additional nonfiction titles useful for various content areas.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty teachers face when selecting nonfiction for the classroom is deciding which books to choose from the large number available. An important thing to keep in mind is that variety is truly the spice of life where reading and learning are concerned. No one book will satisfy all readers. The point of using nonfiction trade books in the classroom is to expose students to more than one point of view in a form that is both informational and readable. Although many nonfiction books sound like textbooks packaged in pretty covers, teachers can select quality books by considering the five As (Moss 1995).

1. The *authority* of the author
2. The *accuracy* of text content
3. The *appropriateness* of the book for its audience
4. The literary *artistry*
5. The *appearance* of the book (pp. 123–124)
CHAPTER 5: LEARNING WITH TRADE BOOKS

FIGURE 5.2  Nonfiction Trade Books for Content Area Classrooms

Science


Social Studies


Art and Music


Table 5.1 suggests questions teachers can consider in relationship to each of the five As as they select nonfiction books.

Classroom uses for nonfiction are limitless but are most often thought of in reference to student report writing or inquiry projects. Nonfiction trade books have many other excellent uses as well. Nonfiction trade books can help students consider multiple perspectives related to a particular issue. One interesting way to use nonfiction involves pairing fiction with nonfiction. For example, teacher Judy Hendershot involved her middle graders in reading the historical fiction novel *Out of the Dust* (Hesse 1997) as part of a social studies unit on the depression. During this time she read aloud the nonfiction title *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp* (Stanley 1992). Through this pairing of fiction with nonfiction, students developed deeper understanding of the experiences of the Okies who came to California during the era of the Dust Bowl. The first title exposed students to the harsh experiences of the female narrator during this time. The second provided a somewhat wider view; it described factual information about the enormous prejudice against the Okie children and a man who was determined to provide them with a school of their own.

### Table 5.1 The Five As for Evaluating Nonfiction Trade Books (Moss 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Questions to Ask</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Does the author identify and credit experts consulted during the research process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Is text content accurate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are maps, graphs, charts, and other visual aids presented clearly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the author distinguish between facts and theories?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>Is information presented in ways appropriate to the intended audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the author show respect for the reader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is information effectively organized?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary artistry</td>
<td>Does the book have literary artistry?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the author use literary devices to make information come alive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the author’s style engaging?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>Is the appearance and layout of the book likely to entice readers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Picture Books

All too often, middle and high school teachers think picture books are suitable only for the primary grades. The picture book format is, however, an elastic one, that has, particularly recently, been adapted for students of all ages and in various ways. Picture books encompass every genre and cover a wide range of subject matter. They can be used to enhance instruction in every content area.

Picture books are books where pictures and texts work together to tell a story. They typically average about thirty-two pages in length, and their illustrations represent a wide range of media from collage to cut paper. These books are works of art that can represent an area of study in and of themselves. Picture books are more than visual feasts though; they contain the rich vocabulary and lyrical language characteristic of the finest literature. Picture books fall into four general categories: wordless books, picture storybooks, picture books with minimal text, and illustrated books.

- Wordless books carry the story completely; no text is involved. Tom Feelings’s *The Middle Passage: White Ships Black Cargo* (1995) portrays the cruel experience of slavery through powerful illustrations that transcend the need for words.
• **Picture storybooks** provide interdependent story and illustrations; both are central to the telling of the tale. *Pink and Say* (Polacco 1994) is an excellent example of a picture storybook where illustration and text work together to create a seamless whole.

• **Picture books with minimal text** have illustrations that carry the story, but a few words are used to enhance the pictures. *Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Van Allsburg 1984) is an example of a book with minimal text.

• **Illustrated books** have more words than pictures, but the illustrations are still important to the text. An example is *Kashtanka* (1991) by Anton Chekhov, illustrated by Barry Moser.

Many picture books suitable for middle and high school students are written to appeal to all age groups. Increasingly, however, picture books are written specifically with older readers in mind. Walter Dean Myers’s (2002) *Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam* is a vivid example of this trend. This unusual and gripping book combines mixed-media collages with a riveting poem about a young soldier’s fear, confusion, and fatigue. Its in-depth focus on its topic and emotional content help readers connect with the realities of war for the typical foot soldier.

Picture books can scaffold student understanding of a range of topics through formats that intrigue rather than intimidate. Picture books provide students with background knowledge about people, places, events, and experiences. They can ground students in cognitive concepts critical for understanding a variety of content area subjects. In addition, they can provide rich opportunities for promoting cultural diversity because picture books with a multicultural focus are increasing in availability.

Picture books can be a particularly rich resource for struggling readers or English language learners. The rich support provided by the illustrations serves as an aid to comprehension. Their manageable length and limited amounts of print enhances their appeal to students for whom reading is a challenge. Because of their accessible format, picture books can provide motivation and enjoyment for reading. This independent reading can lead to reading that continues after the bell has rung, an important correlate to increased reading achievement.

Picture books lend themselves to use in virtually every content area. Math and science concepts can come alive through nonfiction picture books such as *G is for Googol* (Schwartz 1998), an engaging math alphabet book that uses cartoons to explain complex concepts such as network theory and probability. *Anno’s Math Games II* (Anno 1989) inspires critical analysis of the notion of sets and logical possibilities presented in the detailed illustrations. Science-related biographies such as *The Man Who Made Time Travel* (Lasky 2003), for example, relate the story of John Harrison, who devoted thirty-five years of his life to solving the problem of tracking longitude in shipboard navigation.

Picture books can also build bridges between the past and present. Many excellent titles focus on events surrounding World War II. *Rose Blanche* (Innocenti 1985) uses realistic drawings of the Nazi occupation to portray a young girl
caught up in the horrors of the Holocaust. *Home of the Brave* (Say 2002) presents an enigmatic, haunting view of the internment of the Japanese during World War II. In *The Butter Battle Book* (1984), Dr. Seuss explores the illogical nature of war and poses the question, Which country will “push the button” first?

Picture books have many uses in the English classroom as well. Bruce Coville’s (1997) *William Shakespeare’s Macbeth* provides an easy-to-read picture book complement to Shakespeare’s original work. A similar picture book adaptation of *The Necklace* is also available. Picture book versions of poems are increasingly popular and combine traditional texts with dramatic illustrations. The vivid illustrations in *Cremation of Sam McGee* (Service 1986), for example, provide an interesting visual counterpart to this tale of the Yukon during the gold rush.

Picture books also address those individuals who have made significant contributions to the arts. Kathleen Krull’s (1993) *Lives of the Musicians: Good Times, Bad Times (and What the Neighbors Thought)* and *Lives of the Artists: Masterpieces, Messes (and What the Neighbors Thought)* (1995) give lighthearted, amusing glimpses of well-known musicians and artists. Each thumbnail sketch is only a few pages long, making them ideal for short read-alouds in music and art classes respectively.

These picture books and countless others can be integrated into your curricular area. They can be used with older students as interesting schema builders, anticipatory sets to begin lessons, models for quality writing, motivators for learning, read-alouds, and springboards into discussion and writing. Figure 5.3 provides examples of picture books useful for content area classrooms at all grade levels.

**Fiction Books**

Fiction entices readers to interact with texts from a number of perspectives that are impossible to achieve in nonfiction alone. Fantasy and traditional works (e.g., folktales and myths) and historical and realistic fiction, for example, help readers step outside their everyday world for a while to consider a subject from a different point of view. By doing so, they learn something about what it means to be a human being on this planet of ours.

Ray Bradbury (1989), an acclaimed contemporary author, likens the ability to fantasize to the ability to survive. Although fantasy seems an unlikely addition to the required reading list in a content area classroom, consider the possibilities for a moment. Robert C. O’Brien’s *Z for Zachariah* (1975) and Louise Lawrence’s *Children of the Dust* (1985) contemplate the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust and the fate of the people who are left alive. Can students really know enough about nuclear issues without considering the crises described in these books? Probably not. The facts concerning the effects of nuclear war are too large and too disconnected from our present reality to understand. Only by focusing on the possible experiences of a small group of people can readers begin to understand the ramifications of such an event.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aliki</td>
<td><em>A Medieval Feast</em></td>
<td>New York: HarperCollins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anno</td>
<td><em>Anno’s Math Games II</em></td>
<td>New York: Philomel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burleigh</td>
<td><em>Hoops</em></td>
<td>Ill. S. T. Johnson. San Diego: Silver Whistle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td><em>The Middle Passage: White Ships, Black Cargo</em></td>
<td>New York: Dial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox</td>
<td><em>Feathers and Fools</em></td>
<td>Ill. N. Wilton. San Diego: Voyager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodall</td>
<td><em>The Story of an English Village</em></td>
<td>New York: Athenium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innocenti</td>
<td><em>Rose Blanche</em></td>
<td>San Diego: Creative Editions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauber</td>
<td><em>Hurricanes: Earth’s Mightiest Storms</em></td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindbergh</td>
<td><em>A View from the Air: Charles Lindbergh’s Earth and Sky</em></td>
<td>New York: Viking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowe</td>
<td><em>Walden</em></td>
<td>Ill. R. Sabuda. New York: Philomel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macauley</td>
<td><em>The New Way Things Work</em></td>
<td>Boston: Houghton Mifflin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maruki</td>
<td><em>Hiroshima No Pika</em></td>
<td>New York: Lothrop, Lee &amp; Shepard</td>
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Jane Yolen’s fantasy series, which takes place on a planet called Austar IV, has much to offer readers about social conditions of modern life that need to be examined and changed. We can see ourselves more objectively when we consider our lives from the distance of these stories.

Perhaps even more unlikely in a middle or high school curriculum would be the inclusion of traditional or folk literature because of its associations with younger children; however, the protagonists of most folktales are adolescents who have much to say to today’s young adults. Robin McKinley’s *Beauty* (1978) and Robert Nye’s *Beowulf* (1968) continue to teach readers that strength of character is the crucial ingredient in changing the world. The human dimension of slavery is powerfully told in *The People Could Fly* (1985), by Virginia Hamilton.
and true multicultural understanding is enhanced by her compilation of creation myths, *In the Beginning* (1988). Also, John Langstaff’s *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder* (1991), a compendium of African American spirituals richly illustrated by Ashley Bryan, offers young people a further understanding of African American history. A host of folktale collections from around the world is also readily available to add insight to the study of history, social studies, and geography. Folk literature is the "cement" or "mirror" of society (Sutherland & Arbuthnot 1986, p. 163) and thus gives readers an insider’s view of a culture’s beliefs and attitudes that is not found in the study of population density and manufacturing trends.

Poetry and drama provide fascinating insights into a myriad of topics. From Mel Glenn’s (1991) classic work of poetry about the lives of students in *Class Dismissed! High School Poems* to Naomi Sihab Nye’s (2002) *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*, this genre provides personal glimpses into the human experience of everyday life.

Using drama in the classroom can be particularly engaging for teens. Gary Soto’s (1997) *Novio Boy: A Play* is a lighthearted story about young love in a Mexican American community. It describes realistic characters and familiar situations with which students will identify. For teachers who don’t want to tackle group plays, Chamber Stephens’s (2002) *Magnificent Monologues for Teens* provides single-character sketches covering a range of topics of interest to teens.

Fiction books run the gamut from problem realism to sports stories, mysteries, adventures, romance, and historical fiction. Books of any and all of these types can be related to classroom content. Historical fiction can be associated with history in ways that textbooks can’t. Through vicarious involvement in the lives of characters who never actually existed, but who are placed in times and places that actually did, teens can participate in the most triumphant or the most terrible moments in history. Laurie Anderson’s (2000) *Fever 1793* is a dramatic account of a little known historical event—the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia; it demonstrates how a young woman’s strength of character helps her survive events that turn her world upside down.

Although many fiction books have formulized plots, stereotypical characters, and overly sentimental themes, a large body of quality literature is also available. Many worthy works are found on the annual *Young Adults’ Choices List*, established with research sponsored by the International Reading Association. This list reflects the diversity of young adult literature, including titles dealing with social and political issues, such as drunk driving, women’s rights, death, and war. The host of fiction books available can do much to enhance and clarify the content curriculum. An author’s ability to bring lifelike characters into sharp focus against a setting that smacks of real places results in compelling reading.

**Multicultural Books**

Multicultural books provide today’s diverse students with rich opportunities to associate with the books they read. Multicultural books portray members of a wide variety of cultures, including African and African American, Asian and
Asian American, Native American, and Latino. They include picture books, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Multicultural books can help all students learn about the unique cultures in today’s classrooms. Through literature they can develop understanding of cultural norms related to family, morality, sex roles, dress, and values. Most importantly, however, multicultural literature brings the people of a particular group into focus and can help students realize that in spite of our differences all people share many common emotions, dreams, and hopes for the future. Through interactions with characters representing a variety of cultures, young people begin to view members of parallel cultures as individuals who are unique and yet have universal feelings and experiences.

### RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

**Box 5.3 Exploring Different Points of View toward Historical Events**

The use of trade books can help expose students to a variety of perspectives in relationship to particular historical events. Students typically study world explorers as part of social studies at both the middle and high school levels. The use of trade books can offer perspectives about historical events beyond those provided in the textbook. By providing students with a wide variety of texts, they can reflect on the ways in which history is not only reported but also interpreted by writers. Consider, for example, the events surrounding Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the New World. Trade books from the historical fiction, nonfiction, and picture book genres provide dramatically different portrayals of that event.

Social studies teacher Robert Wells involves his students in examining these different points of view. He uses six different biographies and historical fiction titles for this lesson. Two of these are *Pedro’s Journal* (Conrad 1991), a fictionalized account of Columbus’s voyage, narrated by Pedro, a ship’s boy who accompanied Columbus on his journey, and Jane Yolen’s *Encounter* (1992), an account of Columbus’s arrival told from the point of view of a Taino Indian boy.

Robert divides students into groups based on the books they are reading and directs students to look at each book’s account of the events of October 12, 1492. He focuses groups’ reading, asking them to think about the following questions as they read: What are the events that take place as Columbus lands? What is the author’s point of view toward Columbus? How does the author describe the native people Columbus meets? What is Columbus’s attitude toward the natives?

After students have read their books, Robert leads the whole class in completing a data chart that compares the answers to the questions found in each of the books. The students then engage in a discussion about why the accounts of the same events are different. They reflect on the sources each author used to create the account, as well as the reasons authors who consulted the same sources might provide different accounts. Through this discussion, students gain understanding of the idea of history as interpretation, rather than fact.
Fiction titles, such as Suzanne Fisher Staples’s (1991) *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* draw the reader into the life of a girl growing up among camel-dealing nomads in modern Pakistan. Pam Munoz Ryan’s (2000) *Esperanza Rising* is a wonderful coming-of-age novel focused on a “riches-to-rags” story of a wealthy young Mexican girl and her mother who end up becoming migrant workers in the fields of California. The book is based on the real-life experiences of the author’s grandmother.

Nonfiction titles realistically address the struggles encountered by people of color. Walter Dean Myers’s (1991) *Now Is Your Time: The African-American Struggle for Freedom* profiles African Americans who have made important contributions to the development of the United States. Loung Ung’s (2000) *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers* graphically portrays one family’s struggle to survive the horrors of the Khmer Rough in Cambodia. In *Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farm Workers Tell Their Stories* (Atkin 1993), ten Mexican American children of migrant farm workers describe their lives in their own words. One of the young people featured is a gang member, one is an unmarried teenage mother, and another is making plans to attend college to become a physician. The author portrays the uncertainty of their lives, at the same time recognizing the strong bonds that bind them to their families.

**Books for Struggling Readers**

Meeting the needs of reluctant readers is a perennial challenge for all teachers. Now more than ever before, however, there are easy-to-read titles on a range of topics relevant to today’s content area classrooms. In addition to picture book titles, reluctant readers often respond positively to short books (books fewer than 100 pages), series books, and comic books or cartoons.

Short but intriguing fiction titles, such as *Stuck in Neutral* (Trueman 2001) are sure to captivate those readers who simply will not connect to books. Shawn McDaniel, the main character and narrator of the story, has cerebral palsy and can neither walk, talk, nor focus his eyes. As the story progresses, the reader comes to understand the strange world that Shawn inhabits; a world rich with experiences that he is unable to communicate to others. As the story progresses, Shawn becomes increasingly concerned about his father’s attitude toward him, and he panics when he begins to think that his father is considering killing him to stop his suffering. This moving book raises a number of issues related to euthanasia and is sure to provoke interesting discussions.

Series books continue to have great appeal for reluctant readers. Popular series for students include historical fictional series, such as the *Dear America* books, which describe young people’s experiences from America’s past. Gary Paulsen’s *World of Adventure* series books are short and easy to read, and draw students into dramatic adventures ranging from forest fires to Iditarod dogsled races across Alaska. Series books, such as the Dorling Kinder-
sley Eyewitness Books, are extremely appealing for students whose favorite reading is informational.

Even cartoons have their place in the classroom, particularly when they are as well written as is Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (1986). In this book, the story of the Holocaust is vividly told with the Nazis depicted as cats and the Jewish people as mice. Rather than detracting from the seriousness of the subject, the cartoon format lends force to the Nazi victims’ plight.

### Using Trade Books in the Classroom

A recent study of exemplary content area instruction found a key commonality among effective teachers: All of them used multiple texts with a range of formats and difficulty levels (Allington & Johnston 2002). These teachers capitalized on the myriad uses for trade books in the content area classroom and used them to enhance and extend students’ content area literacy learning. This section addresses uses for trade books, including creating classroom libraries, developing text sets, student self-selected reading, and teacher read-alouds. In addition, it identifies how teachers can organize students for literature study. Virtually all of these ways of using literature can enhance objectives for student learning in every content area.

There are several key components necessary to creating a multitext content area classroom. First, and foremost, content area teachers need to acquire books related to their content area. These books can be used to stock classroom libraries for large- and small-group reading of trade books and for individual inquiry. Locating books for these purposes is always challenging, but resourceful teachers have found that library book sales, garage sales, and book clubs, such as Scholastic and Trumpet, are good resources for obtaining inexpensive books.

### Creating Classroom Libraries and Text Sets

A classroom library is a critical component of a multitext classroom. By creating a classroom library of books in a range of reading levels and in a variety of genres, including picture books, poetry, historical fiction, biography, and information, teachers increase student access to books and contribute to their motivation for learning. Other resources, such as magazines and newspapers, are equally appropriate for inclusion in a content area classroom library. To meet the diverse reading needs and interests of today’s students, as well as the variety of ways that trade books can be used in content area classrooms, classroom libraries should include a wide range of titles, addressing a variety of topics and reading levels.

What kinds of books might be found in a classroom library in a U.S. history class, for example? Good choices might include survey books about history such...
as *A History of Us* (Hakim 1999), the highly acclaimed series by Joy Hakim that speaks directly to adolescents about historical events using a conversational style. Historical fiction titles by authors such as Ann Rinaldi and biographies by authors such as Russell Freedman could enhance this collection. Easy-to-read picture book biographies by James Cross Giblin, such as *The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin* (Giblin 2000), can also be added to the classroom library. Hundreds of informational titles could round out such a collection, including books by renowned young adult authors such as Jim Murphy and many others.

However, these titles, as excellent as they are, might not be terribly appealing to less-motivated students. Middle and high school students enjoy books with humor and comic books. For that reason, titles such as *Cartoon History of the United States* (Gonick 1991), a satirical vision of U.S. history, might be included. Other amusing titles, such as *So You Want to Be President?* (St. George 2000) or *Explorers Who Got Lost* (Sansevere-Dreher, Dreher, & Renfro 1994), debunk some of the myths about U.S. presidents and famous explorers of the past. Magazines, such as *National Geographic World*, *Cobblestone*, or *Time for Kids*, could complement such a collection.

In addition to a range of titles broadly related to a content area discipline, teachers will want to create text sets related more specifically to particular units of study within a content area. Text sets are a variety of titles that span a range of difficulty levels and a range of resources, including books as well as magazines, Internet sources, newspaper articles, and so on. A sample text set related to the Civil War appears in Figure 5.4. These text sets can be used in myriad ways: for independent reading, self-selected reading, individual inquiry, or idea circles.

**Student Self-Selected Reading**

The more time students spend reading, the higher their reading achievement. To encourage reading and demonstrate its importance, many schools provide uninterrupted sustained silent reading time, sometimes referred to as USSR time or DEAR (drop everything and read). At one San Diego high school, a separate twenty-five minute period is allocated each day for sustained silent reading time. During this time, everyone—teachers, students, and even construction workers at the school site—reads. Uninterrupted sustained silent reading time lets students practice reading and read for their own purposes and pleasure. Students self-select materials other than their textbooks. They can read books or magazines from home or obtain books from the school or classroom library that relate to personal interests.

Providing students with opportunities to choose their own books and time to read during content area classes allows students to engage with interesting texts that they themselves have chosen. This has a number of benefits:

- **It increases the amount of time students spend reading during the school day.**
- **It helps students develop interest in a subject.**
### Text Set on the Civil War

#### Picture Books
  - This picture book describes the effect of the Civil War on the friendship of two young girls who live on opposite sides of the Mason–Dixon line.
  - Picture book that describes the apprehensions of a young boy whose father may need to leave home to serve in the Civil War.
  - A young girl travels south during the 1850s and discovers the horrors of slavery firsthand.

#### Play
  - This compelling play exposes young readers to the incredible life of Frederick Douglass.

#### Folktales
  - A collection of African American folktales narrated in authentic dialect.

#### Historical Fiction
  - This novel describes the experiences of a young drummer boy for the Union Army during the American Civil War.
  - Describes the life of an escaped slave who serves in the Civil War.
  - Describes how the Creighton family of southern Illinois struggles with the impact of the Civil War.
  - Twelve-year-old Will Page, the orphaned son of a Confederate soldier, must live with his Uncle Jed, who refused to fight for the Confederacy.

#### Nonfiction
  - Describes men who were friends and classmates at West Point and later served in the Civil War, often fighting against one another.
  - Using the actual words of his subjects, Lester presents life as it existed for slaves in the United States.
- **Murphy, J. (1990).** *The Boys’ War.* New York: Clarion.
  - Diaries, letters, and original photographs tell the stories of young boys who participated in the Civil War.

#### Websites
- American Memory–Primary Source Photographs of the Civil War: [http://memory.loc.gov/](http://memory.loc.gov/)
- The Civil War Home Page–Comprehensive Web Site Related to the Civil War: [www.civilwar.com](http://www.civilwar.com)
It builds knowledge that helps students read and learn more about a topic.

It can provide a basis for researching a particular topic.

It familiarizes students with different formats and genres used to report information, that can be models for their own research and writing. (Worthy, Broaddus, & Ivey 2001)

**Teacher Read-Alouds**

Students in teacher Maria Prieto’s ninth-grade English class read excerpts from *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Frank 1967) in their literature anthology every year. This year Maria decided to enrich her students’ study of the diary by reading aloud the informational *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary* (van der Rol & Verhoeven 1993). The text contains background on the Frank family, including their move from Germany to Amsterdam, photographs of the diary itself and other artifacts, maps of the “secret annex,” and a copy of a primary source document—the Nazi’s typewritten list of Frank family members targeted for arrest.

Maria described her use of the book in the following way:

Before my students start reading the diary, I read aloud Chapters 1 and 2. These chapters provide important background about Anne’s life and information about Hitler’s rise to power. I put the map of the “secret annex” that appears in the book on the document camera to give students a spatial understanding of the place where the Franks and the van Dams lived. Then my students read the diary. After they’ve completed their reading of the diary, I read chapters which describe how the Frank family was arrested and the later discovery of the diary. Finally, I read the section of the book that describes Anne’s life after the arrest at the concentration camp at Bergen Belsen. After each reading, I passed the book around so that students could more closely examine the photographs. They were very interested in the book, and several of them read it on their own after reading the diary.

This example demonstrates a number of purposes that content area read-alouds can accomplish. First, read-alouds can provide important background information that will enhance student understanding of assigned readings. Maria’s use of the map of the secret annex, for example, helped students visualize the setting for Anne Frank’s experiences. In addition, the read-aloud extended and enhanced the content in the diary itself by describing the rest of Anne Frank’s tragic story. Finally, reading aloud can generate student interest in a topic. After hearing books read aloud, students are much more likely to pick them up on their own.

Reading aloud is considered by many experts to be the single most important activity in developing student literacy ability, regardless of age. Reading aloud provides literary experiences in a supportive context and exposure to the various forms of written language, both narrative and expository. As students listen to literature, they subconsciously absorb its rhythms, structures, and cadences. Read-alouds give struggling readers access to information in the more difficult texts commonly used in content area classrooms.
In addition, read-alouds provide a format whereby teachers can demonstrate for students the mental processes used to make sense of what they are reading. These processes can become evident to students through many of the strategies described in this book, including think-alouds, directed reading–listening activities, and many others. Some read-aloud experiences should go beyond brief isolated experiences during which the teacher reads and students listen. These “bigger” read-aloud experiences should be interactive; with students actively engaged in thinking, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing texts (Ivey 2002). Finally, read-alouds provide opportunities for responses to literature that can lead to engagement and further understanding of content. These are described in the following section.

Based on her experiences with hundreds of read-aloud experiences, Erickson (1996) offers guidelines for middle and high school teachers who wish to incorporate reading aloud in their classes:

She recommends selecting books that

hold students interest;
stimulate discussion;
reflect authors from many cultures; and
match the social and emotional levels of the listeners.

She suggests that teachers prepare for read-alouds carefully by first practicing the work. Initially, she recommends that read-alouds last no longer than fifteen minutes. She also suggests using pictures and props that can heighten student interest and increase understanding of text content.

Read-alouds can include books from a variety of genres, including poetry, short stories, fiction, nonfiction, magazine articles, or even plays. Short stories such as Chris Crutcher’s (1989) Athletic Shorts, for example, are perfect read-alouds for physical education classes.

At the beginning of a science lesson, an excerpt from a book read aloud to the class or a picture book can serve as an enjoyable preview of the lesson’s contents. Trade books, thus, play a supporting role by introducing a part of or a perspective on the lesson that may entice students to want to know more. The verbal imagery of a text and the visual stimuli of picture books appeal to all age groups and help to activate schemata that are crucial to further learning. For example, an excellent introduction to a study of the building instincts of animals and birds would be Kitchen’s And So They Build (1993). Students might look at the detailed drawings before starting the unit and predict how each type of shelter is constructed. They might speculate on comparisons of the animals’ and birds’ building strategies to those of people. In addition, the teacher might read several of the examples in the book to the class and conduct a discussion of how they will be used in the forthcoming unit.

Every read-aloud need not be cover to cover. Reading excerpts from books, magazines, or newspaper articles can sometimes be more effective than longer

Response Journal
Identify a read-aloud book that you might use to introduce a unit or topic of study. Plan a lesson around the book, identifying follow-up discussion questions that you might use after you have read the book aloud.
read alouds. “Bits and pieces” read alouds could include reading picture captions from nonfiction titles to provide “sneak previews” of books or brief profiles from any of the Kathleen Krull “Lives of . . .” books mentioned earlier.

**Literature Study in Content Areas**

As teachers become increasingly convinced of the value of using literature in the content area classrooms, they will want students to experience literature in increasingly varied ways. They may decide that students can benefit from “breaking out” of the textbook to engage in reading trade books, or they may use literature in connection with units of study. Many teachers use the additional time provided by block scheduling to engage students in reading and discussing trade books.

One of the most challenging aspects of using literature in the classroom—whether fiction or nonfiction—is grouping students for instruction. The grouping pattern of choice depends on teacher and students’ goals and purposes for using the literature. The following section explains three different grouping models that teachers might wish to use as they involve students in studying content-related literature.

**Whole-Group/Single-Book Model**

Sometimes teachers want all students in a class to have a common reading experience centered on the same book. On these occasions they may use a whole-group model where all students read the same book. Science teacher Ken Blake wanted to extend his textbook’s treatment of outer space and space travel. He decided to involve his students in reading Sally Ride and Susan Okie’s (1986) *To Space and Back*, a wonderful account of Ride’s experiences on the space shuttle.

Because this was the first time he had used literature to supplement the textbook, he decided to use the whole-group/single-book model. He purchased twenty-five paperback copies of the book. Each student read the book and participated in large- and small-group discussions about a variety of topics, including everyday life in a space capsule. Students also compared and contrasted information in their textbook to that found in Ride and Okie’s book. They considered the challenges posed by life in a space capsule and debated the importance of sending astronauts into space.

**Small-Groups/Multiple-Books Model**

A second model for using literature is the small-groups/multiple-books model. With this model, students work in small groups reading different books related to a common theme. Alan Trent, for example, used multiple copies of several nonfiction titles to supplement textbook content and enrich his students’ study of the
Civil War. Students formed groups based on their selection of one of four different books: *The Long Road to Gettysburg* (Murphy 1992), *A Separate Battle: Women and the Civil War* (Chang 1991), *A Nation Torn* (Ray 1990), and *Boy's War: Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk about the Civil War* (Murphy 1990). Students read and discussed each title in their small groups over a two-week period. Using the jigsaw strategy, students then formed new groups in which they shared their information. They then shared the information obtained from one another.
with the larger group through creative extensions including projects, dramatic presentations, and debates.

**Individual Inquiry**

As we discuss in Chapter 7, inquiry involves students in conducting research on a variety of topics. As part of inquiry experiences, students generate ideas and questions and pose problems. They gather information from a variety of sources and communicate this information in a variety of ways. Individual inquiry is an increasingly popular way to involve students in research by letting students explore issues of personal interest. Through these research projects students investigate topics and collect, analyze, and organize information. Students later present this information as a project or report. By using several sources about the same topic, students can examine multiple points of view and evaluate the accuracy of information.

Inquiry projects can combine fiction with nonfiction. In an inquiry project with high school students, English teacher Joan Kaywell (1994) linked fiction and nonfiction books. Her class first generated a list of problems affecting today’s teens such as anorexia nervosa, stress, suicide, pregnancy, sexual abuse, and so on. The class narrowed the number of topics to five and formed inquiry groups based on each topic. At this point, each student in a group selected and read a different young adult novel related to the identified problem.

After reading their novels, students used nonfiction materials to conduct research about the problem posed in their novel. Each student found at least one nonfiction source and cited a minimum of ten facts related to the topic. At this point, students reconvened in small groups where they pooled these facts. They then selected the best twenty-five facts to be included in an information sheet about the problem. They discussed source credibility, recency, and relevancy of information as they narrowed down their lists. They then presented this information to the larger group.

**Promoting Response to Literature**

As discussed in Chapter 1, reader response refers to the way a person reacts to hearing or reading a piece of literature. It describes the unique interaction that occurs between a reader’s mind and heart and a particular literary text (Hancock 2000). You may recall from Chapter 1 that readers seek to construct meaning from the text and these responses are dynamic, fluid, and varied. Different readers construct different meanings from texts; no two readers may interpret the same work in the same way.

Why should content area teachers be interested in response to literature? Research suggests that students grow in several different areas when engaged in response-based activities:
They develop ownership of their reading and their responses.

They make personal connections with literature.

They gain appreciation for multiple interpretations and tolerance for ambiguity.

They become more critical readers and attain higher levels of thinking and richer understandings of literature.

They increase their repertoire of responses to literature.

They begin to view themselves as successful readers.

They develop greater awareness of the literary quality of a work. (Speigel 1998)

Involving students in response to literature can help content area teachers meet many important goals they have in terms of developing students’ thinking skills. Responsive activities can help to develop critical thinkers, students who can examine different sides of an argument, respond thoughtfully to texts, and heighten their understandings of the ways texts work.

Response-centered classrooms can help students grow in their understanding and appreciation of nonfiction just as surely as fiction. Teachers often assume that nonfiction literature will elicit only efferent responses, but studies have found that readers do respond aesthetically to nonfiction (Vardell & Copeland 1992). Effective teachers guide students’ responses to both biography and informational books in ways that encourage both efferent and aesthetic responses. By providing a supportive context and engaging activities that promote both oral and written responses, teachers can extend and deepen students’ literary experiences with both nonfiction and fiction.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to examples of instructional strategies teachers can use to promote responses to literature. Strategies for promoting responses range from writing to drama to inquiry-driven idea circles. All of the strategies described are designed to help teachers encourage meaningful student responses, both aesthetic and efferent, to the excellent literature available today. Through these experiences, students can make personal connections between these texts and their lives and reflect on what these texts have to teach them. In this way students deepen their involvement with literature and become more aware of its possibilities.

**Making Connections: Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, Text-to-World**

Writing in response to literature, whether fiction or nonfiction, allows learners to share their thoughts and feelings about a text. It can help students construct meanings of texts at the same time it improves writing fluency. Writing in response to nonfiction literature can both involve the evocation of feelings and enhance learning of text content. As we explained in the previous chapter,
“writing to learn” can help students think about what they will be reading or reflect on what has been read. It can improve understanding of difficult concepts, increase retention of information, prompt learners to elaborate on and manipulate ideas, and help them gain insight into the author’s craft. Several of the response activities described in this section help students connect personally to texts, whereas others help them process information or record what they have learned. Some of the activities are formal, whereas others are informal in nature.

Text Connections

One of the many excellent ideas presented in Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis’s (2000) Strategies That Work is the idea of asking students to use writing to reflect on the personal connections they make between the texts they are reading and their own lives. As students grow in sophistication, they develop the ability to recognize the connections they make between the texts they read and other texts, as well as between the texts they are reading and the wider world. Harvey and Goudvis refer to these connections as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections respectively. It is possible for students to make these connections with books from any genre.

Text-to-self connections involve instances when readers feel personal connections with text events or character’s emotions. Harvey recommends using memoirs or realistic fiction to help students develop skills in making text-to-self connections because reader identification with characters can be particularly strong in these types of texts. “It reminds me of . . .” can help students reflect on these types of connections.

Text-to-text connections involve connecting ideas across texts. The concept of texts can be a broad one here; students might connect text content to a movie or song for example. These can include comparing characters’ personalities and actions; story events and plot lines; lessons, themes, or messages in stories; finding common themes, writing styles, or perspectives in an author’s work; or comparing the treatment of common themes by different authors.

Text-to-world connections are the most sophisticated connections students can make. With these types of connections, students reflect on the relationship between the content of the text and the wider world. This could include connections related to world events, issues, or concerns.

Post-It Notes

Harvey recommends that teachers use think-alouds and other text demonstrations to model for students how readers naturally create these connections. After this modeling occurs, students can begin to record the various kinds of connections on Post-it notes as they read. On the notes, they will want to record a word or phrase that explains the thought or feeling that occurs to them as they read. As they read and record these connections, students can code text-to-self connec-
tions as T–S, text-to-text connections as T–T, or text-to-world connections as T–W. Students should focus not only on recording and categorizing their connections but also should reflect on how the connection has led them to a greater understanding of the text. These Post-it notes can serve as the basis for rich post-reading discussions about the kinds of thinking students have done as they read. In addition, these notes can often evolve into longer written pieces in response journals or essays.

**Expository Texts as Models for Writing**

Students need a variety of writing experiences in the classroom, including experience in writing nonnarrative types of texts. One way to involve students in informational-type writing is by having them use information trade books as models for their own writing. These books can serve as models for brief, short-term writing experiences, or extended, long-term experiences.

*The Important Book* (Brown 1949), although not a nonfiction book, can serve as a model for information writing in many content areas. Each paragraph of this book states an important characteristic, or main idea, about a common object. This trait is followed by supporting details that further enhance the description of the object, and each paragraph concludes with a restatement of the main idea. Leslie Hughes, a middle school science teacher, used this text structure during a review of a unit on oceans. The teacher read the model to the class and provided students with the text frame “the important thing about ________ is ________.” Students formed writing groups and were assigned particular topics related to oceans. They identified the main ideas related to their topic and inserted it into the text frame. They provided supporting details and concluded the writing with a restatement of the main idea. An example of one students’ effort follows:

The important thing about a tide pool is that it contains a community of plants and animals. Tidepools are left in rocky basins and shallow hollows as low tide causes ocean water to go back out to sea. These basins of sea water contain plants, crabs, periwinkles and other plant and animal life. But the important thing about tide pools is that they contain a community of plants and animals.

As we show in Chapter 11, many different types of text frames can be used to scaffold expository and narrative writing experiences. Moreover, dozens of nonfiction books can provide models for inquiry-related writing. A book such as *My Season with Penguins: An Antarctic Journal* (Webb 2000) is, in actuality, a field journal maintained by biologist Sophie Webb. This title could serve as a model for students’ own field journals to be used in a science class. Examples of books that model the use of interviews and oral history abound. One of the finest is *Oh Freedom: Kids Talk about the Civil Rights Movement* (King & Osborne 1997). This book was actually created by young people; the students interviewed thirty-one friends, family members, and neighbors who each told the story of the
civil rights movement from their own perspective. The result is an amazing oral history of that turbulent time. Teachers could involve students in conducting their own oral history interviews related to topics of study in a social studies class.

**Process Drama as a Heuristic Response**

Responding to literature through drama provides a wealth of opportunities for enhancing student engagement in learning. *Process drama* experiences allow students to establish an imaginary world in which students experience fictional roles and situations. Process drama differs from other forms of drama in that it does not involve the use of scripts, but it includes episodes that students themselves compose and rehearse, it continues over time, and audience is integral (O'Neill 1995). Like reading, drama requires that students make meaning based on the reading that they have done. However, with drama, meaning-making takes on a visual component. That is, students externalize the visual images they create from a text and incorporate thought, language, and movement to demonstrate their learning. Through drama they enter the world of the text, whether fiction or nonfiction, which lets them observe and reflect on that world.

Many struggling readers have difficulty creating mental images as they read. Dramatic activities scaffold this image-making in a motivating and meaningful way. These activities can generate interest at the same time they help students enter a text, seeing and feeling the emotions of the characters or experiencing the events described. By combining reading with dramatic experiences, teachers help students enhance their oral language skills through listening and speaking, thereby developing vocabulary and reading fluency. Dramatic activities encourage learners to listen for cues and learn to use their voices to convey emotion. In addition, they help students develop self-confidence and cooperative learning skills. These activities also offer a natural entry point into the world of writing; students can move from simply dramatizing the words of others to creating their own scripts that can be performed.

For many students, drama can heighten understanding of the often dense and complex expository material found in today’s nonfiction. It can enhance student understanding of both technical vocabulary and specific content-related concepts. It can motivate students to explore the content of these books more deeply. Most of all, it can bring abstract information to life, making it concrete and, therefore, comprehensible, which can be particularly helpful for struggling readers or second-language learners.

Dramatic responses to literature have other benefits as well. Responses of this type require in-depth familiarity with the text to be dramatized. Generally, learners need repeated exposure to a text before they can formulate a response to it. This repeated exposure could be particularly beneficial for struggling readers.
Spontaneous Drama

Spontaneous drama involves students in active response to literature and allows them to invoke their imaginations. It can be very beneficial for students of all ages, many of whom often find dramatic play extremely motivating. Spontaneous responses to nonfiction can help students mediate texts in ways that make them interesting, memorable, and comprehensible. For example, students can create spontaneous dramatizations in response to fiction and nonfiction read-alouds. Students not only enjoy these activities but also appear to retain much of the information presented as a result of the dramatizations.

Other more structured forms of dramatic response can sensitize students to expository text organization. For example, after reading The Heart and Blood (How Our Bodies Work) (Burgess 1988) a middle grade teacher involved her students in a dramatic activity designed to demonstrate the sequence by which blood flows through the heart. One-half of the class carried red sheets of construction paper (to represent oxygenated blood) and the other half carried blue to represent deoxygenated blood. Then eight students paired up to act as the valve gatekeepers. Student desks were arranged in the shape of the heart, and stations represented the lungs and other body parts. After that the students moved around the room, simulating the flow of blood through the heart and other organs. Then students wrote about the activity in their learning logs (Moss 2003).

Pantomime

Pantomime is another form of response useful with content-related texts. It requires learners to communicate through their bodies without relying on verbal communication. Students might enjoy creating pantomimes in response to Aliki’s (1983) A Medieval Feast. This particular book contains many scenes that students could pantomime, including depictions of turning boars on the spit, fencing in the fields, and sounding the trumpets (Stewig & Burge 1994). Nicholas Reeves’s (1992) Into the Mummy’s Tomb, for example, could stimulate dramatizations including the building of the pyramids, the burial of Tutankhamen, the process of mummification, or the purposes of the artifacts found in the tomb.

Tableau

Tableau, or snapshot drama, is another motivating dramatic response activity. Tableau is a dramatic activity that involves a still, silent performance that involves three-dimensional representations. A tableau typically involves no movement, talk, or props, only gestures. Students depict the freezing of moments in time and demonstrate physical or emotional relationships and character gestures or activities. Typically, teachers give students time to plan their tableau in small groups. Each group comes in front of the class and the teacher gives a “one, two, three, freeze” cue. The audience then discusses what they see in the tableau, offering interpretations of what they see.
This activity works extremely well with all kinds of texts, including poetry, fantasies, realistic fiction, biographies, or other informational books. Using Cynthia Rylant’s (1984) *Waiting to Waltz*, for example, small groups could create tableau related to selected poems from that work. Or, small groups of students could select and read a biography. After they have read the book, the teacher could distribute a three- or four-sentence scene from the story that could form the basis for a tableau. The biography *El Chino* (Say 1990), which describes the life of Billy Wong, the first Chinese matador, includes scenes that could be dramatized in this way. These could include Billy’s years as a basketball player, his efforts to become a matador, or his first bullfight. Each person in the group would assume a role in the drama. After practicing, students could create their “frozen moments.” The other students in the class could then attempt to identify the scene portrayed.

**Readers Theatre**

*Readers theatre* differs from process drama in that it involves oral presentation of a script by two or more readers. No props, costumes, or memorization of lines is required. Students must, however, read their parts fluently, with appropriate dramatic flair. Readers theatre is often used with folktales or narrative text, but it can be adapted easily to nonfiction as well.

Informational books and biographies with dialogue are easily adapted to this format, but picture books or excerpts from longer books can also be effective. The following guidelines can help teachers adapt nonfiction texts to a readers theatre script:

1. *Select an interesting section of text* containing the desired content.
2. *Reproduce the text.*
3. *Delete lines not critical to the content being emphasized,* including those that indicate that a character is speaking.
4. *Decide how to divide the parts for the readers.* Assign dialogue to appropriate characters. With some texts, it will be necessary to rewrite text as dialogue or with multiple narrators. Changing third-person point of view to first person (*I* or *we*) can create effective narration.
5. *Add a prologue to introduce the script in storylike fashion.* If needed, a postscript can be added to bring closure to the script.
6. *Label the readers’ parts* by placing the speaker’s name in the left-hand margin, followed by a colon.
7. *After the script is finished, ask others to read it aloud.* Students can then make revisions based on what they hear. Give students time to read and rehearse their parts. (Young & Vardell 1993)
An obvious next step is to involve students in selecting books from which they can develop their own readers theatre scripts. Through this activity, learners develop critical-thinking skills, make decisions, work cooperatively, and engage in the process of revision.

**Idea Circles**

Another excellent way for students to respond to literature is by using idea circles. Idea circles represent the small-group/multiple-books model of organizing the classroom for literature study. They involve students in small-group peer-led discussions of concepts fueled by reading experiences with multiple texts (Guthrie & McCann 1996). Idea circles are an ideal way to promote peer-directed conceptual understanding of virtually any aspect of content area learning. This conceptual learning involves three basic ingredients: facts, relationships between facts, and explanations.

Idea circles not only engage students in learning about science or social studies but they also require engagement in a variety of literacy activities, including locating information, evaluating the quality and relevance of information, summarizing information for their peers, and determining relationships among information found in a variety of sources. They require that students learn to integrate information, ideas, and viewpoints. In addition, they involve students in a variety of important collaborative processes, including turn-taking, maintaining group member participation, and coaching one another in the use of literacy strategies (Guthrie & McCann 1996).

Idea circles share some things in common with literature circles (Daniels 1994). Like literature circles, they involve three to six students in directed small-group discussions. Like literature circles, idea circles are peer led and involve student-generated rules. However, idea circles involve students in discussion surrounding the learning of a particular concept rather than a discussion centering on a single literary text. In literature circle discussions, students may have conflicting interpretations of a piece of literature. With idea circles, students work together to create a common understanding of a concept by constructing abstract understanding from facts and details. Another difference between literature circles and idea circles is in the use of texts. With literature circles, students all read and respond to a single text. With idea circles, every student may interact with a different text in preparation for the group discussion. Then during the discussion, students share the unique information that they have found. Furthermore, idea circle discussions require the use of informational, rather than literary, texts.

The teacher begins the idea circle experience by presenting students with a goal in the form of a topic or question. An example of a question might be “What is a desert?” Before the idea circle meets, students can either read extensively from relevant informational trade books or read and discuss their findings concurrently. Information that students bring to the group may come from prior experiences, discussions with others, as well as from their readings. In their groups, students exchange facts, discuss relationships among ideas, and offer explanations. As this
linking together of facts continues, students create a conceptual framework around a topic or question. Individuals offer information, check it against the information found by others, and discuss more deeply. Students continually challenge one another regarding the accuracy and relevance of their information. Through this checking, students are encouraged to search for information, comprehend the texts being used, and synthesize information from multiple sources. When discrepancies arise, students search their sources to clarify conflicting information. Ultimately, the group must weave together the important details that all students contribute. Try to keep the following tips in mind as you plan idea circle experiences:

1. **Decide whether to engage the entire class** in idea circles simultaneously or to start with a single team and gradually add more.

2. **Identify appropriate topics of study.** The topic should be interesting, explanatory, and expansive. In addition, the topic should contain natural categories or subtopics.

3. **Set clear goals** about what each group should accomplish during their discussions. Students may complete data charts, semantic maps, or other graphic organizers.

4. **Provide students with a rich array of trade books and other resources** at a variety of levels related to the topic under study.

5. **Students should have read and learned about the topic before participating in the idea circle.**

6. **Post student-generated interaction rules** so that students know how to function in their groups. When used as part of a unit of study, idea circles are most effective when placed at the middle or end of a unit.

During a social studies study of the mound-building tribes in Ohio, teacher Ann Craig involved her students in using idea circles for an inquiry project. She divided the students into three groups, and each was assigned to study a different mound-building tribe—the Hopewells, the Adenas, and the Fort Ancient. The teacher focused student inquiry through questions like these: “What were some of the purposes of the mounds?” “Where did each tribe live in Ohio?” and “Why are they no longer in existence?” Students consulted a variety of sources, including trade books, textbooks, Websites, and so on to locate answers to these questions. Finally, the groups were reconfigured so that each contained an Adena expert, a Hopewell expert, and a Fort Ancient expert. The final product for the idea circle was for each group to complete a data chart comparing and contrasting each of the three different tribes.

**Response Journal**

What are some of the challenges you might face as you involve students in using idea circles? How might you go about solving some of those problems?

**eResources**

For additional readings related to the major ideas in this chapter, go to Chapter 5 of the Companion Website and click on Suggested Readings.
Trade books in content area classrooms can extend and enrich information across the curriculum. Textbooks generally are unable to treat subject matter with the depth and breadth necessary to develop ideas and concepts fully and engage students in critical inquiry. Trade books have the potential to capture students’ interests and imaginations in people, places, events, and ideas.

Whereas textbooks compress information, trade books provide students with intensive and extensive involvement in a subject. Trade books offer students a variety of interesting, relevant, and comprehensible text experiences. With trade books, students are likely to develop an interest in and an emotional commitment to the subject. Trade books are schema builders. Reading books helps students generate background knowledge and provides them with vicarious experiences. Many kinds of trade books, both nonfiction and fiction, can be used in tandem with textbooks.

By giving students access to books within the content area classroom, teachers help to ensure that students gain exposure to content in a variety of formats. By creating classroom libraries, providing time for reading, and reading aloud to students, teachers increase the likelihood that students will become lifelong readers.

By involving students in reading and responding to trade books through writing, drama, and inquiry activities such as idea circles, teachers move students from the solitary act of reading to building community around texts through peer interaction. Through the sharing of their responses to literature, whether written or oral, students learn to reflect more deeply on the meanings of texts and connect more personally to the texts that they read. They begin to see that reactions to texts are as varied as the students in a particular classroom, and that by understanding each person’s response to a text we come to understand our humanity and ourselves more fully.

Whereas textbooks compress information, electronic texts, like trade books, provide students with intensive and extensive involvement in a subject.

Electronic texts, as you will study in the next chapter, are highly engaging and interactive. Hypertext and hypermedia make it possible to interact with text in ways not imaginable a short while ago. Text learning opportunities in electronic environments are interactive, enhance communication, engage students in multimedia, create opportunities for inquiry through information searches and retrieval, and support socially mediated learning. Whether students are navigating the Internet, interacting with innovative educational software, or, for that matter, popular media such as video games, an array of electronic text learning experiences await them.
faraway places, colorful and influential people, and life’s mysteries and processes and compressing them into a series of matter-of-fact statements.” Can you think of a book you have read that opened new or more perspectives on a topic of which you had previously had only textbook knowledge? What do you believe is the ideal balance between the use of textbooks and the use of fiction books, nonfiction books, and picture books in a content classroom?

2. To what extent do you believe students should participate in the selection of documents from Websites for use in a content course? Would you answer this question differently for students of various ages?

3. You are one of only a few content area teachers in your school that regularly reads aloud to their students. After observing you, your principal suggests that teacher read-alouds represent a waste of instructional time that might be used more profitably. Write a letter to the principal that provides a thoughtful response to this criticism.

4. Reflect on some of the response-to-literature activities you have experienced as a student, either in middle school, high school, or college. These could include discussions, dramatic activities, writing, or other types of activities. How did participation in these kinds of activities influence your understanding of or reaction to the text you were studying?

Hands On

1. Select two nonfiction trade books that you are considering for use in the classroom. The two titles should relate to the same topic—preferably one your students are actually studying. Read the two books, and analyze them in terms of their quality, using the criteria identified in Table 5.1. Which book do you think is most appropriate for use in the classroom and why? Then compare the two titles in terms of their treatment of the topic. How are they alike? How are they different? In what ways do they support or extend information provided in the textbook? Come to class prepared to share your analysis.

2. Select two picture books that you might coordinate with a particular unit you now teach or with a unit you have planned or observed. Explain why you chose these particular books and how you will use them with your students. Describe the activities that will follow the initial use or reading of the book.

3. Create a text set consisting of at least six titles related to a topic of study in your classroom. Select at least one of the books from the text set and plan a read-aloud lesson using the book. Then, decide how your students might respond to the book through discussion, writing, or drama. Come to class prepared to read the book and have your classmates participate in the response activity.
Go to Chapter 5 of the Companion Website (www.ablongman.com/vacca8e) and click on Activities to complete the following task:

Visit the Children’s Literature Web Guide (www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/index.html). Browse this site for useful information about children’s literature, including award-winning books. Share your findings in small groups and discuss the ways teachers might use the site.

Go to the Companion Website (www.ablongman.com/vacca8e) for suggested readings, interactive activities, multiple-choice questions, and additional Web links to help you learn more about learning with trade books.

Themes of the Times

Extend your knowledge of the concepts discussed in this chapter by reading current and historical articles from the New York Times. Go to the Companion Website and click on eThemes of the Times.