

SLLN Lesson Plans

Lesson Title: Introduction to the Five Types of Nonfiction

Lesson Summary:

Elementary students are introduced to Melissa Stewart's Five Types of Nonfiction. Through examples of nonfiction directly from the library shelves, students use a compare and contrast model to describe the way information is communicated and organized through the text and text features within the books.

Subject(s):

Nonfiction Reading and Writing

Grade Level(s): 2-5

Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand that nonfiction texts can be written in different ways for different reasons
- Analyze nonfiction texts to explore format
- Describe unique features of a type of nonfiction according to Melissa Stewart's model

Materials Needed:

Multiple sets of nonfiction books. Each set should contain one of the following types: Active Nonfiction, Browseable Nonfiction, Expository Literature, Narrative Nonfiction, Traditional Nonfiction

A place for collaborative groups to document their thinking (ex. butcher block paper or white board) and writing utensils

Tips: For a definition of each type of nonfiction, see Melissa Stewart's article listed in Additional Resources.

Be sure that each example is clearly structured as a specific type of nonfiction. Some nonfiction titles blend formats within one book.

Time Needed:

30-45 minutes

Instructional Procedure:

Before students arrive, place stacks of books at each table. There should be one type of nonfiction at each table, enough for every student to have their own book. Labeling every book of a certain type with a colored sticky or other marker will be helpful later in the activity.

When students arrive, sit them at tables in groups of four or five. Begin by asking students what types of nonfiction books they like to read. Take several responses. Share with the class that nonfiction books are often identified by topic (ex. dog books) or series (ex. Who Would Win) but that there is another way to categorize books that may help students describe what type of nonfiction they like to read.

Share that nonfiction author Melissa Stewart has come up with a way to describe five types of nonfiction based on how authors structure their nonfiction books. Inform students that there is one of each type of nonfiction book at their tables and that they will be working to describe every kind of nonfiction based on how the information is organized in the book.

Pass out books to students or invite them to select a book at their table. Give students 60 seconds to silently explore their book. Advise students not to try to read the book from cover to cover but instead to browse the book looking at how information is shared on the pages. Then give groups of students three to four minutes to talk within their groups focusing on the differences between how information is shared in the books. As students discuss, walk between groups paying special attention to assure that students are not focused on the topic of the book but the structure. Redirect students as necessary.

Next, tell students that they will talk with students that have the same type of nonfiction as they do. Remind them that their topics will be different, but how the author shared information will be similar. Reorganize students into new groups using the sticky notes or other organizational means. Give students three to four minutes to discuss similarities between their books. After those three to four minutes, give students the opportunity to begin writing their similarities on white boards or butcher paper for an additional four to five minutes. During the discussion and writing, circulate to check for student understanding. Redirect discussions and ask probing questions as necessary.

Transition back to a whole class discussion. Depending on available time, either allow students to share their findings or summarize the students findings to the class. Regardless of that step, take the opportunity to highlight unique features of each set of nonfiction titles as well as similarities across multiple types of nonfiction.

As each type of nonfiction is reviewed by students or the librarian, share the name of that type of nonfiction.

End the lesson by again asking students what their favorite type of nonfiction is using the five categories.

Differentiation: Differentiation can happen at multiple points in the lesson. Students may be seated strategically based on needs. Students may have specific nonfiction books selected for them based on engagement, topical interests, or readability. Also, as the librarian circulates, he or she may take time to check in on a student to address specific needs.

Assessment: students can be assessed using an exit slip asking them to share features of their favorite type of nonfiction.

Standards:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners -

III.A.2 Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group.

III.B.2 Establishing connections with other learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge.

III.D.1 Actively contributing to group discussions.

Common Core State Standards -

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

Additional Resources:

Stewart, Melissa. "The Five Kinds of Nonfiction." School Library Journal, May 2018.

About the Author:

Tom Bober is a school librarian, 2018 Library Journal Mover and Shaker, former Teacher in Residence at the Library of Congress, and author of two books, Building News Literacy as well as his earlier title Elementary Educator's Guide to Primary Sources. He writes the Picture Book and Primary Sources blog posts for AASL's KQ blog and hosts The Primary Source Podcast. Tom works with students and educators to promote the love of literacy, information literacy, and historical literacy.