Teaching Nonfiction with Confidence: Learning to Love Inquiry
by Marc Aronson and Myra Zarnowski

The two authors writing this chapter come from different professional backgrounds and have different though complementary perspectives on nonfiction. Marc is a Children's and YA nonfiction author, editor, and college instructor. Myra is a former classroom teacher (grades 3, 5, 6, and 7) and is currently a college instructor in elementary and early childhood education. We both work a lot with teachers, librarians and students, and we are both enthusiastic readers of nonfiction. In this chapter, we weigh in on what we think are two important questions for everyone teaching with nonfiction: What do we mean when we describe nonfiction as the "literature of inquiry," and how can we use this material in the classroom? What are some recommended nonfiction books to use in the elementary school classroom, and how can we find more titles like these?

What is the Literature of Inquiry?

If we were to play word association with "nonfiction" I am certain that many of you would say "true," "factual," "reliable" – though sadly I know some would really first think "boring," "dull," "textbook." Whether you told me what you guessed I wanted to hear, or what you secretly thought, I would disagree. Nonfiction is not "true," nor is it limited to facts nor is its highest value in being "reliable." All of those terms used as absolutes are the heritage of era of scarcity – when a school had quite limited resources. As was often said in those days, "what if this is the only book a student reads on X?" Thus each book needed to cover its bases.

Today we live in the age of information glut. Our students are a keystroke away from contrary evidence, new approaches, and dissenting views. Our job, then, is to prepare them to inquire, research, and to think.

Wait, I hear you say. If I show my elementary school children two views on something, how am I to know which is right? What if they "get it wrong?" Don't worry. Your job is not to make sure your students "get it right" – after all experts are, daily, changing their views. Think of Pluto: you memorized a mnemonic to name 9 planets, now we are not sure if there 9, 11, 13 – latest is 14. Your job is to teach your students the rules of evidence, argument, and comparing points of view.

If an author makes a claim, what is that claim based on? What evidence is there to be found – in the text or notes? If there is an opposing view, what evidence does it put forward? How does each author select and present the evidence? How can their views be tested and compared? That is what you are teaching – starting from preschool where you might read/perform a traditional version of The Three Little Pigs, then read Jon Sciezcka and Lane Smith's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1989) needs to be in your reference section, and then ask your young detectives to compare the evidence and reach a conclusion.

Wait, wait, I now hear you ask, does this mean all arguments are equal? Are we to tell students that the Earth might be flat? No, once we shift our focus from "true," "factual," "reliable," to evidence and argument, we are in a position to judge authors. Do their books model the processes we need our students to learn? Or do their books say, Trust Me, I am an Adult, I Know More Than You Do? Books that invite the reader into the quest to know are what we call "the literature of inquiry." Such books aim to foster a

classroom of detectives, doctors, historians, engineers: problem solvers. A classroom abuzz with students pursuing evidence, comparing theories, (respectfully) debating conclusions is nonfiction heaven.

Which leads me to the one term you should memorize: "Moore's Law." Gordon Moore was a computer scientist who became the head of Intel, the chip manufacturer. In 1965 he predicted that the processing power of computers (actually, the number of transistors that could be fit onto a microchip) would double every 18 to 24 months. He has been proven right. Thus roughly every two years, the amount of data computers can process doubles. We see that in products: tablets, smartphones, soon totally networked homes. But it also means that the amount of data we can gather – and the tools for analyzing that data – keeps doubling. A great deal of what seems "reliable" today will, inherently, be passe tomorrow.

See why your classroom filled with explorers makes sense? By looking for nonfiction books that feature inquiry, you are giving your students the tools to think with whatever comes their way. You ground them in information, even as you continually expose them to exploration. If reading nonfiction as inquiry is challenging to you because it is not how you were taught to read nonfiction– well that is the Moore's Law moment we are all in together. To teach, we need to learn differently ourselves, just as to learn, children need to be ready to make sense of new discoveries. We are all, as they say in hockey, changing on the fly.

Introducing the Literature of Inquiry in the Classroom

Why Read the *Literature of Inquiry* in the Elementary School Classroom*?*

Reading the literature of inquiry—seeing *real* people solve *real* problems—reveals problem solving in action. It shows how scientists and historians work by taking us to sites where people are actively researching and lets us see them and hear from them. In *The Elephant Scientist:* (O'Connnell & Jackson, 2011), we meet scientist Caitlin O'Connell who is investigating how elephants communicate. In *Plastic Ahoy!: Investigating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch* (Newman, 2014), we meet Miriam Goldstein, Chelsea Rochman, and Darcy Taniguchi, scientists who are investigating the impact of large amounts of plastic dumped in the ocean. In *Searching for Sarah Rector: The Richest Black Girl in America* (2014), author Tonya Bolden talks directly to us about her own inquiry into Sarah's life--how she made sense of the evidence she uncovered. Bolden tells us about gaps in the information, raises questions about Sarah that she wants to answer, speculates about some possible answers, and tells us about "facts" she originally thought were true and later found out were not. Books like these show readers how knowledge is constructed.

These books are excellent choices for classroom inquiries because students join researchers as they attempt to solve mysteries and understand the world better—its past and its present. It is easy, too, to connect these books to standards in science, mathematics, and social studies. That's because the literature of inquiry delivers both content and the process of discovering that content. It's a total package.

Reading for the Mystery: How to Do It. A number of science and history books can be read as mystery stories. In these books, scientists and historians are like detectives searching for answers to pressing questions like these: What causes yellow fever? How can it be treated? How can we learn what dinosaurs looked like? How can the world's strangest parrot, the kakapo, be saved? These books are often called *medical mysteries* or *history mysteries* and they are page-turners. Readers want to see the case unfolding.

Using three science mysteries by Sandra Markle as an example, let's look at how to focus students' attention on reading for the mystery. The first book, *The Case of the Vanishing Golden Frogs: A Scientific Mystery* (Markle, 2012) describes how scientists searched for clues about what was killing the Panamanian golden frogs, a national symbol of Panama. This book begins with a shocking discovery: A scientist visiting a forest reserve in Panama realizes that most of the frogs have vanished.

The second book, *The Case of the Vanishing Honeybees: A Scientific Mystery* (Markle, 2014) describes scientists' on-going search for what is killing the honeybees, essential partners in producing our food supply. Now known as *colony collapse disorder*, the problem of vanishing honeybees still puzzles scientists. The third book, *The Case of the Vanishing Little Brown Bats* (Markle, 2015) describes how researchers learned what was killing the little brown bats, animals that eat insects that destroy crops and spread disease. Once again, scientists were shocked to find them dying in large numbers. In each case, there is an animal in serious danger of extinction and the cause is a mystery.

When reading these books and others like them, if you and your students complete a data chart like the one below, you will see a number of similarities about the way scientists approach a problem. I have listed some sample answers to complete the chart in Table 1.

Reading only one of these books and answering the questions would be a worthwhile experience, but reading all three is even better. That way certain consistencies emerge that you can emphasize:

- The excitement of inquiry: An author's note in each book points out the excitement of solving a mystery. Here's what the author says about honeybees: "No movie about tracking down killers could be more exciting than this true story" (p. 44). Check out the other author's notes. Look for evidence in each book that the scientists are also excited about inquiry.
- Teamwork is required: Scientists do not work alone in a lab. They consult one another and work together as teams. For example, biologist Karen Lips consulted pathologist Joyce Longore about sacs she saw on the skin of the golden frogs. Look for evidence of teamwork in each of the books.
- Unanswered questions: Sometimes the scientists do not discover a definitive answer to a mystery. Markle refers to the case of the honeybees as "case open." There are several possible causes of what is destroying the honeybees, all possibly working together.
- Remaining questions: Even when a case is solved, it usually raises other questions. In the case of both the golden frogs and the little brown bats, scientists still want

answers. Can the virus that is killing these animals be stopped? Can they survive long enough for this to happen?

The literature of inquiry is a great way to spark enthusiasm for nonfiction. Table 2 lists additional books that you can use with confidence:

Sharing nonfiction that includes the Literature of Inquiry can begin in the early grades. A list of recommended titles is included at the end of this chapter.

How to Shop in the Nonfiction Aisle: Keys to Picking and Sharing Great Books

Typically, nonfiction books are described by their subject: a biography of Jackie Robinson, a book about World War II, or sharks, or The Titanic. We consider that a mistake. After all, in talking about novels, you wouldn't say books about a girl, a dog, or a couple: you would be able to define many different genres: romance, mystery, science fiction, YA realism, fantasy, etc. Does nonfiction have genres? Yes indeed it does.

Think of an event that took place yesterday and had a winner and a loser: a game, an election, a court decision. In our view there are seven ways a nonfiction text could describe what took place: data; expository; narrative; disciplinary thinking; inquiry; interpretation; action. You could have who, what, where, when as facts; you could use those four plus "why" to write more broadly about a subject; you can use the event to show how a professional thinks and works; you can model the actual process of gathering and sharing information; you can proffer a compelling interpretation of the event; you can use the instance to stir the reader and inspire him or her to take action. A book need

not be limited to one category – it could be, for example, an interpretive call to action, or an inquiry that models disciplinary thinking. But once you look at nonfiction by what it does rather than merely what it is about, the world of nonfiction blooms.

None of these kinds of books is necessarily more "true" than another – rather each uses a different mode of engaging with the event. Once we begin to recognize distinct styles or genres of nonfiction, we can match types of books with individual students, and help student to compare and contrast different approaches. At the same time, we want to look at quality – how well has each book fulfilled the task of seeking truth and engaging readers.

At the risk of being seen as a pitchman, I will use three of my own books to highlight different nonfiction approaches and genres. The first book is an example of nonfiction as inquiry and disciplinary thinking.

Ain't Nothing But a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry (Reynolds & Aronson, 2008) [*figure 1 here*]

Scott is a professional historian who teaches at William & Mary. We used his effort to find out if there was a real John Henry of song and story to model what a historian does, and to demonstrate, step by step, how Scott examined evidence and solved the mystery. The book thus offers his interpretation of the legend.

Here are the six steps Scott followed, as we outlined in the book:

1. He read carefully through previous interpretations. This is similar to what we ask students to do when we tell them to use more than one source.

2. *He checked to see where those previous authors found their information* – much as we caution students who use Wikipedia to check all of the links in the article.

3. *Comparing and contrasting the accounts, he looked for gaps and disagreements* – just as a detective probes an alibi.

4. *With this clear map of what is already known, what is not known, and where there are contradictions he sought out new evidence.* This is like asking students to look at a primary source, or a museum exhibit, only after they have background knowledge.

5. *When the trail of new evidence turned cold, he asked new questions and sought out new sources.* My favorite moment in presenting this book to students comes when I ask "have you ever been stuck doing a homework assignment?" Many scream "yes," and add that they prayed, slept, bothered their sister, or "tried harder." I then tell them what Scott did, to their great relief.

6. *When he reached his own conclusions, he shared them with peers to get their insights.* This is what any good team does, from the youngest students to most senior professionals.

In sharing a book like *Ain't Nothing But a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry* with students you are offering them a model of how knowledge is constructed. The book is not there to end inquiry but to begin it.

The second book I'll share focuses on narrative and exposition.

Trapped: How the World Rescued 33 Miners From 2,000 Feet Below the Chilean Desert (Aronson, 2011) [*figure 2 here*]

This book presented a very different challenge from the one I wrote with Scott. In this case I crafted the book on my own, and so close in time to the rescue of the miners that there were no other books or authorities to consult. As I explained in an afterword, I was in the position of so many students, who rush out to the internet to do their research.

I had no choice: understandably enough, the miners wanted to be paid for their stories, so I had to rely on whatever reports I could find. Rather than following one expert in his search for answers, I needed to find a format that would both engage readers and give them enough background to understand the events. This book, then, combined "expository" and "narrative."

The key to the narration actually came from the research: I read through the day-by-day news reports which described the mine collapse and then the rescue as it happened. But of course these reports could only begin to tell the miners' perspective of the story after they were rescued. I was able to supplement the articles by interviewing many of the drillers and rescuers. Still, I had to map out the chronology as it unfolded above ground first, then match those stages with what the men later reported they had experienced while they were underground. This dual approach gave me my structure: I would give background, then split chapters into "Above" and "Below", until, in at the moment of contact, in chapter 7, the two worlds touched.

Some readers might assume that a data book, one made up of names, dates, "facts," and figures is necessarily more "true" – more of an "informational text" than either interpretation or narrative. No. Stripping information down to bare bones may, in some cases, be more misleading if the author does not feel obliged to explain why s/he selected that version of that fact. For example, when I co-wrote *For Boys Only: The Biggest Baddest Book Ever* (Aronson & Newquist, 2007) with HP Newquist I wanted to list the world's deadliest snake. The problem is, the designation can mean two opposite things: the snake whose venom is most deadly (the Taipan, which turns out to be a solitary snake which almost never interacts with humans), or the snake responsible for the

most deaths (the Carpet Viper, which lives around people). What began as a list turned into a discussion. Many "facts" are the same – world's largest country? Depends on how you count. Baseball's greatest hitter? How do you measure Babe Ruth's astonishing accomplishments in his all-white era against modern athletes who play in an integrated league with stars from all over the globe?

How do you select nonfiction: first, get to know it. Take a stack of books off of the shelf and see if you can separate them by style or genre. Remember that nonfiction is not merely a stunted form of fiction: sometimes and for some readers pure data can be more satisfying than vivid narration. Look for authors you (and/or your students) like. There is as much variation in nonfiction writing as in fiction. And, finally, like Scott Nelson, pay attention to the evidence the authors present, where the evidence comes from, and where there might be gaps or opposing views. All nonfiction is a conversation with sources and readers – and as teachers we are inviting our students to participate in the discussion.

Becoming a Confident Reader of Nonfiction: Selecting Nonfiction for Your Classroom

(Use the APA Level Heading appropriate for this section)

Since Marc and I each took a different route into nonfiction, I'll begin by discussing how I became a more confident reader of nonfiction. I think that much of what I learned will be helpful to you, too. I learned about nonfiction by reading large quantities of it. First I served on the Notable Children's Trade Book Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies, and then I served on the Orbis Pictus Award Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. These are big jobs. Committee members

read hundreds of books. In the process of working with others to select award-winning books, I faced these questions every single day: Is this book good? How do I know? Here's what I learned about *good* nonfiction:

- It's true or as close to true as possible.

Sometimes what we assume is a "fact" we later find out is not true at all. Remember the story of Pluto, now no longer a planet? Or the idea that no life exists deep in the ocean, only to find out that it does? As one author put it, "Science doesn't always follow a clear-cut path. Sometimes discoveries happen that completely derail everything we thought we knew" (Hague, 2012, p. 10). The same is true for social studies. Thanks to newer research techniques—which you can read about in *The Many Faces of George Washington: Remaking a Presidential Icon* (2011) by Carla Killough McClafferty—we now know more about what George Washington looked like than our parents or grandparents did when they were our age. Our understanding of the world is subject to change.

Despite this, we can be reasonably sure that much of what we read is correct, *if* we are provided with evidence of accuracy. That is, the author explicitly tells us how the facts were derived. In *Coral Reefs* (2011) for example, author Jason Chin tells readers that he traveled to the Belize barrier reef as part of his research. He also lists books and websites that he used extensively. Look for information like this that can help you and your students build a case for accuracy. Did the author travel? Consult with experts? Do extensive research? If so, that can help you build your case.

- Style matters. Nonfiction should be interesting to read.

We all know what it's like to read books that we refer to as dull, dry, and boring. Good nonfiction is exactly the opposite. It's surprising, interesting, and stimulating.

Nonfiction authors can use the same techniques that fiction authors can use: interesting words and phrases, figurative language, descriptive words that appeal to the senses, varied types of sentences, and new and surprising information. The only thing they cannot do is "make up" information.

Here's how Sarah Albee piques the reader's interest as she begins chapter 1 of her book *Bugged: How Insects Changed History* (2014):

> Nearly everyone has a strong opinion about insects. But whether you love them or loathe them, you know they're impossible to avoid. *For every pound of us, there are three hundred pounds of insects.* And while most insects keep a pretty low profile, there are some that have a huge impact on our lives.

Three hundred pounds of insects to every pound of us! That is one surprising fact. I want to know more, don't you? Albee's headings and subheadings are also surprising, consisting of amusing puns. Here are a few examples: *Crawler ID, Survival of the Flittest,* and *East Meets Pest.* This style is appealing. When you and your students are reading nonfiction, look for language that makes you pause and wonder or makes you stop and smile. Consider these questions: What makes this language so appealing? What makes me want to continue reading? [*figure 3 here*]

- It's organized.

There are many formats for organizing a nonfiction book—chronological, cause-effect, comparison-contrast, problem-solution, descriptive, or enumerative. And, of

course, an author may use a mix of formats. The type of format used is less important than understanding that whatever organization the author selects, it should fit the content and help readers understand it.

A good example of a well-chosen organizational format is Brian Floca's *Locomotive* (2013), the 2014 Caldecott award-winning book. *Locomotive* informs readers about train travel in 1869, right after the completion of the transcontinental railroad. To understand this trip, readers join members of a family traveling from Omaha, Nebraska, to San Francisco, California. Here's how the author invites us on the trip: "Here your trip begins, /at the depot, on the platform" (Floca, n.p.). A chronological organization enables the author to introduce the sights and sounds that this family experienced along the way. As the trip unfolds, we get a rich presentation of descriptive details through both text and illustrations.

When you and your students are discussing how a nonfiction book is organized, consider the following questions: How did the author organize the information? How does this organization fit the content? How does this organization help you understand the content?

- The pages are well designed.

Do you ever feel like you need a magnifying glass to read the small print? Is the text all squished together, filling the entire page with no white space? Do you have to keep turning the pages to see the illustration being discussed? This is not good! Instead, the pages should be appealing and varied. They should be interesting to look at.

The 2014 Sibert Award winning title for informational books, *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* (Roth & Trumbore, 2013), is beautifully designed. The first page of this book immediately transports you to the forest of Puerto Rico where you are instructed to look up to find the parrots. Amidst a collage of greens and browns, you can spot these parrots. The book is held lengthwise, so that looking up really means looking up, up, up. There is a wonderful match between lush, inviting illustrations and descriptive text. Here's how the text directs the reader's gaze:

> Above the treetops of Puerto Rico flies a flock of parrots as green as their island home. If you look up from the forest, and you are very lucky, you might catch the bright blue flashes of their flight feathers and hear their harsh call. (n.p.)

[*figure 4 here*] As you discuss format with your students, consider the following questions: Is the book attractive and readable? Do illustrations complement and extend the text? Is the placement of the illustrations appropriate? Is the type appropriate?

- It's connected somehow to the school curriculum and to other nonfiction books**.**

As teachers, we are always looking for excellent nonfiction material to grab our students' interests and develop curriculum topics. Table 3 lists and briefly describes a number of websites to consult for suggestions. Finding the right book enables you to develop thought-provoking inquiries and lessons.

As you select nonfiction material for teaching, ask yourself the following questions: Is information in this book true? Is the writing interesting to read? Are the pages well designed? Does this book support my curriculum? If so, you can select this material with confidence. You will be using the criteria used by the Orbis Pictus Award Committee.

Respect for the Reader: My Sibert Secret

As Myra explained above, the Sibert Medal is awarded by the American Library Association for excellence in informational books for readers through 8th grade. I was thrilled when my own book, *Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado* (Aronson, 2001) won the very first medal.

We writers are a competitive and envious lot, and I heard tell that some authors felt that I got the prize not for my writing but for my footnotes. Perhaps there is something to that – but in a way that I claim with pride. Part of my respect for young readers is reflected in my conviction that we must always give them a way to discover where we found our information. We must show that every sentence, every date, every claim in our book is based on specific research. This obligation is not because we need to prove that we have been diligent or have not plagiarized. Rather it is because when we show that everything we say comes from somewhere, we invite the reader to question, to check, to find other sources, to come up with other conclusions. Our books, then, do not lecture young people, browbeating them into submission because we are adults and Say So. Rather our books include an Ariadne's Thread – a trail of cookie crumbs – leading back to where and how we know what we know. That is the ultimate respect for the reader: 1) I respect you in sharing this knowledge 2) I respect you in showing how this

knowledge was built – since you may want to inquire, question, investigate further. You may be able to see what I have missed.

Final Thoughts

This chapter is your own personal invitation to the journey, the quest that is nonfiction in the 21st century. We hope that as you explore some of the books we have mentioned you will experience the same thrill, the same sense of expectancy that we do. We hope you and your students will open each nonfiction book not with the dread of the dull and dry but with a sense of a grand adventure about to start. That is what every good nonfiction book has an offer – one more step into the endless secrets, mysteries, and treasures of the universe.

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Scieszka, J., & Smith, L. (1989). The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs. New York, N.Y: Viking Kestrel.

Recommended Books

Arndt, I. (2013). *Best foot forward*. New York, NY: Holiday House.

Aronson. M. & Parker Pearson, M. (2010) *If Stones Could Speak: Unlocking the Secrets of Stonehenge.* Washington, DC: National Geographic Children's Books

Aronson. M. & Mayor, A. (2014) *The Griffin and the Dinosaur: How Adrienne Mayor Discovered a Fascinating Link Between Myth and Science*. (C. Muller, Illus.) Washington, DC: National Geographic Children's Books

Aronson. M. & Berger, L. (2012)The Skull in the Rock: How a Scientist, A Boy, and Google Earth Opened a New Window of Human Origins. Washington, DC: National Geographic Children's Books

Aronson, M. & Glenn, J. (2007)*The World Made New: Why the Age of Exploration Happened and How it Changed the World*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Children's Books

Burns, L. G. (2012). *Citizen scientists: Be a part of a scientific discovery from your own backyard.* (E. Harasimowicz, Photog.). New York, NY: Holt.

Gandhi, A., & Hegedus, B. (2014). *Grandfather Gandhi.* (E. Turk, Illus.). New York, NY: Atheneum.

Heiligman, D. (2013). *The boy who loved math: The improbable life of Paul Erdos.* (L. Pham, Illus.) New York, NY: Roaring Brook Press.

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Jenkins, S. (2013). *The animal book: A collection of the fastest, fiercest, toughest, cleverest, shyest—and most surprising—Animals on earth.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Markel, M. (2013). *Brave Girl: Clara and the shirtwaist makers' strike of 1909.* (M. Sweet, Illus.) New York, NY: Balzer + Bray.

Nivola, C. (2002). *Life in the ocean: The story of oceanographer Sylvia Earle.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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Table 1

Science Mysteries

Questions	***The Case of the Vanishing Golden Frogs***	***The Case of the Vanishing Honeybees***	***The Case of the Vanishing Little Brown Bats***
What is the mystery that scientists want to solve?	**What is killing the Panamanian golden frogs?**	**What is killing the honeybees?**	**What is killing the little brown bats?**
What possible	**Scientists ruled out**	**Scientists ruled out**	**Scientists ruled out**

causes of the problem did scientists rule out?	**these causes: (1) a change in habitat, (2) pollution, and (3) climate change**	**these causes: (1) a change in habitat, (2) overwork, (3) mites, (4) pesticides**	**these causes: (1) climate change, (2) pesticides, (3) a virus**
What did scientists learn by gathering and interpreting evidence?	**Scientists discovered that *Bd*, a type of fungus was killing the frogs.**	**The case is still open. According to scientists, a lot of different things could be killing the honeybees. No one yet knows what combination of causes is killing the honeybees,**	**Scientists learned that a deadly new fungus called *Pd* was killing the little brown bats.**
What questions do scientists still want to answer	**Could *Bd* be stopped from killing frogs? Could frogs survive long enough for this to happen?**	**What will the future be like for the honeybees? Will the killer be found?**	**Could *Pd* be stopped from killing bats? Could bats survive long enough for this to happen?**

Table 2. The Literature of Inquiry: Science Mysteries

Book	**Annotation**
Aronson, M. (2010). *If stones could speak: Unlocking the secrets of Stonehenge*. Washington, DC: National Geographic.	Author Marc Aronson is on site with archaeologist Mike Parker Pearson and his project team in order to learn about their latest discoveries about Stonehenge.
Berger, L. R., & Aronson, M. (2012). *The skull in the rock: How a scientist, a boy, and Google Earth opened a new window on*	When 9-year-old Matthew Berger, son of scientist Lee Berger, finds a fossil, it stimulates a rethinking of the path of human evolution.

human origins. Washington, DC: National Geographic.	
Burns, L. G. (2010). *The hive detectives: Chronicle of a honey bee catastrophe.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	Scientists try to figure out what is causing honey bees to die—a phenomenon known as *colony collapse disorder.* An excellent book to use with Sandra Markle's *The Case of the Vanishing Honeybees.*
Crump, M. (2013). *The mystery of Darwin's frog.* (S. Jenkins & E. Rodriguez, Illus.). Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.	Join scientists as they continue to unravel the mystery of Darwin's frog, an animal discovered more than 175 years ago by Charles Darwin.
Kirkpatrick, K. (2011). *Mysterious bones: The story of Kennewick Man.* (E. Stevenson, Illus.). New York, NY: Holiday House.	A chance discovery of a human skull in the Columbia River in Kennewick, Washington, by two young college students sparks the beginning of a scientific investigation of what turns out to be one of the oldest and most complete skeletons ever found in America.
Montgomery, S. (2010). *Kakapo rescue: Saving the world's strangest parrot.* (N. Bishop, Photog.) Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	Learn how the National Kakapo Recovery Team is working to save the world's largest and heaviest parrot from extinction. Join scientists, technicians, and volunteers who are working together as a team on site in New Zealand.
Thimmesh, C. (2009). *Lucy long ago: Uncovering the mystery of where we came from.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	While working in Ethiopia, paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson and his team discover a 3.2 million year old skeleton that provides clues to the origins of life on Earth. How they raise and answer questions based on this evidence is fascinating and instructive.
Thimmesh, C. (2013). *Scaly spotted feathered frilled: How do we know what dinosaurs really looked like?* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	Since we have no photographs of dinosaurs to help us out, figuring out what dinosaurs looked like has become the work of paleoscientists and paleoartists. How they work together is detailed in this fascinating book.
Walker, S. M. (2002). *Fossil fish found alive: Discovering the coelacanth.* Minneapolis, MN. Carolrhoda.	When a coelacanth, a fish thought to have been extinct for 70 million years, is suddenly found to be alive, scientists, fisherman, and governments begin working together protect it and learn more about it.

Table 3. Websites for Finding Outstanding Nonfiction

Website	Contents of Website
NCTE Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children http://www.ncte.org/awards/orbispictus	A yearly list of the one award-winning title, up to five honor books, and several recommended titles. On the website you can get a list of titles for each year going back to 2000.

Robert F Sibert Informational Book Award http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/sibertmedal/sibertpast/sibertmedalpast	A list of winners and honor books from 2001 to the present
Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K-12 http://www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/	Yearly list of recommended science titles going back to 1996.
Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People http://www.socialstudies.org/notable	Yearly list of recommended social studies titles going back to 2000.
Reading Rockets http://www.readingrockets.org/books/awardwinners	Links to many award winning titles including Publishers Weekly's Best Children's Nonfiction