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## SUMMARY

In *Text Sets in Action: Pathways through Content Area Literacy*, Mary Ann Cappiello and Erika Thulin Dawes reveal how text sets can prompt serious thinking far more effectively than a textbook or any single text. As the authors explain, exploring many texts leads teachers and learners to “think more deeply, empathize more fully, and take action more deliberately.” Teachers who adopt this approach find that the texts’ various lenses enable students to not only meet curriculum standards but to experience lasting engagement and a spirit of inquiry across the disciplines.

This book will

- move beyond what is merely required and inspire integrated, customized curriculum;
- demonstrate how teachers can build on students’ interests and questions,
- provide resources and suggestions for designing text sets: books, news articles, websites, YouTube videos, primary source documents, and works of art,
- offer logical and creative ways to sequence texts,
- demonstrate how text sets can scaffold, differentiate, and extend students’ learning,
- present specific invitations for designing, curating, and juxtaposing multi-genre, multimodal texts, accessible for at-home learning as well as in classrooms, and
- share a panoply of student work in response to learning with text sets.

When texts are intentionally sequenced and juxtaposed with one another, readers discover different ways to see and explain the world around them. Immersion into text sets fosters critical thinking and appreciation for different points of view, which is crucial in nurturing a respect for diversity and preserving democracy.

The book is written in three parts. Part 1 defines text sets and provides an overview on how to design them. In Part 2, the authors provide examples of the planning processes, decision making, and student learning in four units of study co-created with teachers. Part 3 is similarly organized to Part 2, in

that you will read about sample text sets that serve as invitations. They are models for you to implement and try out on your own.

This guide is designed as an invitation to reflect, examine, and explore new thinking. The following are suggestions to help groups of educators read, discuss, and extend the ideas from *Text Sets in Action* into their classrooms. These ideas will come to life as teachers are given opportunities to put them into practice with students. With that in mind, we have pulled conversational quotes, developed discussion questions, and included ideas for next steps from each chapter.

This study guide could be used with a group of teachers as part of a professional study group or could be used individually as a reflective tool for those reading the book alone. Our hope is that the guide will foster collaboration, spark new thinking, and support the transfer of new ideas into the classroom.



# PART 1

## Defining and Designing Text Sets

# INTRODUCTION

## Why Teach with Text Sets?

### Selected Quotes

*“Text sets create structures and contexts in which required learning can take place. It is also aspirational because a text set approach takes you and your students beyond what is merely required and allows you to integrate curriculum to work smarter, to take advantage of students’ interests, and to customize curriculum to take advantage of contemporary issues, values, and contexts.”*—page 6

*“Teaching with text sets allows you to meet your state and local standards for content and literacy and allows for an integrated approach whenever possible.”*—page 6

*“As students read across texts, they engage in critical literacy practices, developing an understanding that all texts are ideological; each text represents the author’s worldview. When we use more than one text about the same theme or topic, students understand that there are multiple angles to consider.”*—page 8

### Discussion/Invitations

This book is an invitation to consider how teaching with carefully curated collections of multigenre texts can transform the learning experience for you and your students. What role do you see interests and passions playing in learning and instruction? What experiences have you had working with text sets? What do you hope to get out of this book?

## CHAPTER 1

### Text Sets as Tools to Dig Deeper and to Consider Content

#### Selected Quotes

*“A text set approach puts students in the driver’s seat to create meaning, sift through evidence, make connections, and then share what they have to say with the world.”*—page 12

*“The power of this approach lies in the careful juxtaposition of texts. We like to describe this aspect of the approach as placing the texts ‘in conversation’ with one another. As students read across the texts in a text set, the multiple voices of the authors of those texts surface. Reading critically means considering all the voices in this conversation.”*—page 15

*“You don’t teach a text set, you teach with a text set.”*—page 16

#### Putting Text Sets into Action

Think about a unit that you would like to teach with a text set. Establish your goals for the unit. What are you teaching and why? What do you want students to know and be able to do? Refer to guiding questions on pages 17–18 as you work through to establish goals for the unit. Read through the discussion questions/invitations below as you consider texts for your unit.

#### Discussion/Invitations

- On page 15, the authors unpack the components of a multimodal, multigenre text set. Take some time to consider your use of texts in the classroom. What kinds of texts do you use for literacy instruction? For content area instruction? What kinds of texts compose your classroom library? Do the texts that you use vary in modality? In genre? What types of texts do you want to bring into your classroom for daily use?

- As you consider a text for a text set, consider the role of the text. On page 23, the authors provide a list of questions to ask when considering texts. What are some of the opportunities that these texts provide? Is there a diverse range of experiences represented? Which ones could be used as scaffolds, immersions, and extensions?
- Different instructional models position learners in specific and intentional ways that allow them to make meaning across a range of texts. These models (Duet, Sunburst, Tree Ring, Solar System, and Mountain) are described on pages 25–27. Think of an instructional model that you feel the most comfortable starting with: are your selected texts ideal for that model? What are some of the opportunities these texts might provide?



## CHAPTER 2

### How Do Text Sets Cultivate Disciplinary Literacy and Critical Thinking?

#### Selected Quotes

*“Teaching with a disciplinary literacy lens allows us to support students’ thinking and decision making as scientists, historians, writers, and mathematicians. ‘We should teach students the way reading in various fields differs rather than only expecting students to apply the same general lens across everything they read’ (Shanahan and Shanahan 2014, 637).”*—page 34

*“In language arts, a focus on disciplinary literacy emerges organically, as students are positioned to explore texts as writers. In language arts, we examine genre, voice, and theme within and across fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. Students read, listen, and view texts with an eye for composition. They unpack themes as independent human beings, experienced with the world around them.”*—page 38

*“To teach with a disciplinary lens in social studies at the elementary level is to invite students into this conversation about source material and the process of interpretation, giving them introductory access to primary sources, and engaging in conversations about how secondary sources are constructed and composed.”*—page 42

*“An inquiry orientation and hands-on learning are primary in science, but well-written texts and text sets play an important role. In their excellent resource on science and literacy in elementary classrooms, Worth and her colleagues (2009) describe instruction that provides a ‘balance of open interaction with phenomena, carefully designed hands-on experiences, and the structured and intentional use of oral and written language (xi).’”*  
—page 49

*“But applied mathematics opens up venues for students to use mathematics to solve real-world problems or to consider and compute real-world information. All of this requires students to be in conversation with one another, comparing and contrasting information, identifying strategies, and doing close reading of words, sentences, numbers, and symbols.”*—page 54

## Putting Text Sets into Action

Think about one particular unit to teach (language arts, science, social studies, or math). Perhaps it is one that is challenging you. Read through the invitations and select the content area that you are interested in tackling.

## Discussion/Invitations

- Think about your language arts curriculum. What are some of the ways in which the organization of your units foster authentic reading and writing experiences for students? What are some ways that you would like to deepen students' agency as readers and writers of authentic texts?
- Think about your social studies curriculum. What are some of the ways in which it is designed to focus on multiple perspectives in the present and the past? To what extent do you ask students to consider how various perspectives are represented? In thinking of a unit, what are some ways that you would like to deepen students' agency and their ability to sift through evidence and to come to their own conclusions?
- How do you incorporate both primary and secondary research in your science curriculum? How are students encouraged to use inquiry processes and to find evidence for their emergent scientific understandings? Does your science curriculum present scientific knowledge as fixed or ever evolving? Consider the balance of experiential learning and learning through texts within the unit. What are some ways that you would heighten your emphasis on inquiry and evidence, encouraging your students to think like a scientist?
- To what extent does your math curriculum remain isolated from other content areas? To what extent do you already build upon real-world application of mathematics? What role does visual literacy have in your math curriculum? Consider the balance of experiential learning and learning through texts within the unit. What are some ways that you could heighten your emphasis on visual representation, encouraging your students to think like mathematicians or other professionals who use math in their daily works?

# PART 2

## Examples

## CHAPTER 3

### Genre and Theme in Language Arts: Examining Life Story Through Picture Book Biography

How do student readers deepen their understanding of the art and craft of biography and influence their own writing biographies when they glimpse into the research and artistic processes related to picture book biographies? This question is explored in this chapter and shaped a six-week genre study of biography that was implemented in a third-grade classroom.

#### Selected Quotes

*“Characterization is at the heart of biography. Betty Carter (2003) writes that ‘as a reviewer, I look for books that present individuals as people readers might want to know rather than those they should know’ (170) and that ‘the best children’s biographies inspire curiosity’ (171).”*—page 71

*“Historical context plays an important part in bringing the past to life in biography. ‘Many children may find life in another era as strange and foreign as life on Mars. Consequently, biographers must help them understand the historical contents that sets the stage for the story’ (Carter 2003).”*—page 74

*“Theme emerges from the synthesis of the book in its totality: words, images, front and back matter, and book design. Although theme can be very abstract for young readers to label, they are often able to understand the theme of a text intuitively.”*—page 76

*“Throughout the unit, we drew students’ attention explicitly to the back matter of the texts that they were exploring in reading workshop. We asked them to notice the kinds of information that the back matter provided and to think about how this information was related to the primary text of the book.”*—pages 76–77

## Putting Text Sets into Action

- Sketch out your own unit exploring life story or take another language arts unit that you already teach.
- Work through the process of constructing a text set for the unit and plan for implementation. Use the process mapped out in Chapter 1.
  - Find and locate new texts to use.
  - Consider the order of how you will want to sequence them (scaffold, immersion, extension).
  - Practice reading the texts for your unit with a disciplinary lens for the content area.
  - What do you notice? What possibilities do the texts offer for modeling disciplinary thinking?

## Discussion/Invitations

- Talk about the process the authors used to construct the text set examining life story through picture book biography. Reflect on the building and the implementation of the unit. Use a two-column note (what do you notice and what do you wonder?) to jot down your thinking.
  - How do the texts support student learning of the genre?
  - Sequence matters. What do you notice about the order in which the texts were introduced?
  - How does the sequence and complexity of texts build meaning for students over the course of the unit (scaffold, immersion, extension)?
- How does the student work reflect the mentor texts that students were exposed to throughout the unit?
- Find the books used in the chapter and read them. What do you notice about the ways in which the books reflect an understanding of disciplinary thinking as discussed in Chapter 2?

## CHAPTER 4

### Perspectives and Representations in Social Studies: Stories of the American Revolution

This chapter explores the ways a fifth-grade team used text sets to layer their students' understanding of different perspectives during the American Revolution. It is a unit of study in which students examined a range of multimodal and multigenre texts and engaged in conversations about various points of view.

#### Selected Quotes

*“As students read, listened to, and viewed the various primary and secondary sources that they were exposed to throughout the unit, they participated in a process of extracting evidence from texts. In applying the disciplinary literacies of a historian, they compared and contrasted different representations of events, and they began to understand that perspective always shapes how information gets shared.”*—page 99

*“This is a great reminder that a text set approach allows you to see texts for themselves from multiple angles: it’s not just what the single text offers in terms of content that’s important, it’s how the text fits together with others to create meaning.”*—page 99

*“Hearing the voices of the people of the American Revolution, through letters, broadsides, and newspapers could also engage students as scaffolds. More complex documents such as correspondence, were easy to see as extensions, texts that the students could only explore after learning a bit about the conflicts of the time.”*—page 102

#### Putting Text Sets into Action

- Sketch out your own unit exploring stories of the American Revolution or take another social studies unit that you already teach.
- Work through the process of constructing a text set for the unit and plan for implementation. Use the process mapped out in Chapter 1.
  - Find and locate new texts to use.

- Consider the order of how you will want to sequence them (scaffold, immersion, extension).
- Practice reading the texts for your unit with a disciplinary lens for the content area.
- What do you notice? What possibilities do the texts offer for modeling disciplinary thinking?

### **Discussion/Invitations**

- Talk about the process the authors used to construct the text set examining stories of the American Revolution. Reflect on the building and implementation of the unit. Use a two-column note (what do you notice and what do you wonder?) to jot down your thinking.
  - How do the texts support student learning of the content standards?
  - Sequence matters. What do you notice about the order in which the texts were introduced?
  - How does the sequence and complexity of texts build meaning for students over the course of the unit (scaffold, immersion, extension)?
- How does the student work reflect the mentor texts that students were exposed to throughout the unit?
- Find the books used in the chapter and read them. What do you notice about the ways in which the books reflect an understanding of disciplinary thinking as discussed in Chapter 2?

## CHAPTER 5

### Evidence and Inquiry in Science: Adaptations and Biological Evolution

This chapter describes how texts can be layered to develop student understanding of science concepts and processes. Using the example of birds in their local region, teachers and students examined heredity, survival, and biological adaptation. The unit included experiential learning through direct observation of birds, via nature walks and online bird cameras. Students were asked to document observations with text and pictures, offering evidence for their evolving understandings about adaptation.

#### Selected Quotes

*“We were deliberate in our sequencing of the texts, hoping to layer students’ understandings, beginning with the more familiar and observable concept of life cycles and parent–offspring relationships and moving toward the more abstract concepts of adaptations and evolution.”*—page 134

*“As they read through the multimodal texts they were using as sources, students recorded notes on a graphic organizer (see Figure 5.50). We found that they needed time and some coaching to identify characteristics as an adaptation.”*—page 155

*“Once students completed their graphic organizers, having explored several sources, they met with a small group of classmates. Together, they considered each other’s organizers, discussed the information they had learned about their bird, and worked toward selecting one particular adaptation to feature in their writing (and on their slide). This peer support proved to be critical to the process as was some additional coaching for some students.”*  
—page 156

#### Putting Text Sets into Action

- Sketch out your own unit exploring adaptation or take another science unit that you already teach.



- Work through the process of constructing a text set for the unit and plan for implementation. Use the process mapped out in Chapter 1.
  - Find and locate new texts to use.
  - Consider the order of how you will want to sequence them (scaffold, immersion, extension).
  - Practice reading the texts for your unit with a disciplinary lens for the content area.
  - What do you notice? What possibilities do the texts offer for modeling disciplinary thinking?

### Discussion/Invitations

- Talk about the process the authors used to construct the text set exploring adaptations and biological evolution. Reflect on the building and the implementation of the unit. Use a two-column note (what do you notice and what do you wonder?) to jot down your thinking.
  - How do the texts support student learning of the content standards?
  - Sequence matters. What do you notice about the order in which the texts were introduced?
  - How does the sequence and complexity of texts build meaning for students over the course of the unit (scaffold, immersion, extension)?
- How does the student work reflect the mentor texts that students were exposed to throughout the unit?
- Find the books used in the chapter and read them. What do you notice about the ways the books reflect an understanding of disciplinary thinking as discussed in Chapter 2?

## CHAPTER 6

### Problem Solving and Visualizing Data in Mathematics: Representation in Multiplication and Nonfiction

This chapter focuses on a collaboration of creating a mathematics text set on multiplication, and explores a nonfiction language arts unit in a third-grade classroom. The authors explored how understanding of multiplication could help students think differently about their research and the original nonfiction they were writing.

#### Selected Quotes

*“At the heart of this experience was not that students ‘solve problems quickly in their heads or memorize facts,’ but rather, they ‘have a conceptual understanding of what it means to multiply two numbers.’ Supporting this conceptual understanding of multiplication and its function and application is at the heart of our work with text sets in mathematics, not just in how we asked the students to use the information in texts to consider the process of multiplication, but also in the texts that they would create to demonstrate their understandings of multiplication.”—page 172*

*“Graphics have the potential to be much more complex than text features, which are often simple and relatively obvious and don’t change much from book to book. Graphics are everywhere, in print, online, and in our world (doctor’s office, the grocery store, etc.). It is important that students know how to read them, and the best way to gain that understanding is by immersing them in infographics and reading them as designers.”—page 190*

*“We see infographics everywhere so creating their own allowed them to have firsthand experience with how infographics can be a powerful tool for communicating information.”—page 207*

#### Putting Text Sets into Action

- Sketch out your own math unit on multiplication, a language arts unit on nonfiction, or take another unit that you already teach.

- Work through the process of constructing a text set for the unit and plan for implementation. Use the process mapped out in Chapter 1.
  - Find and locate new texts to use.
  - Consider the order of how you will want to sequence them (scaffold, immersion, extension).
  - Practice reading the texts for your unit with a disciplinary lens for the content area.
  - What do you notice? What possibilities do the texts offer for modeling disciplinary thinking?

### Discussion/Invitations

- Talk about the process the authors used to construct the text set exploring multiplication and nonfiction. Reflect on the building and the implementation of the unit. Use a two-column note (what do you notice and what do you wonder?) to jot down your thinking.
  - How do the texts support student learning of the content standards?
  - Sequence matters. What do you notice about the order in which the texts were introduced?
  - How does the sequence and complexity of texts build meaning for students over the course of the unit (scaffold, immersion, extension)?
- How does the student work reflect the mentor texts that students were exposed to throughout the unit?
- Find the books used in the chapter and read them. What do you notice about the ways the books reflect an understanding of disciplinary thinking as discussed in Chapter 2?

# PART 3

## Invitations

## Chapters 7–10

For Part 3, rather than address each chapter individually, it may be more effective to read the introduction to Part 3 and then select one text model that is suggested across these four chapters to implement in the classroom.

### Discussion/Invitations

After you have tried out a unit from Part 3, discuss the successes and challenges of your experience.

- What did you notice about the sequence of the texts within the text set model?
- What observations did you make regarding student engagement and learning?
- What did you notice about the quality of products generated by students?
- What might you want to try next?

A summary of each unit is below.

### Chapter 7- Language Arts Invitations:

#### How Does Figurative Language Shape Our Reading and Writing?

This chapter explores the possibilities that figurative language provides in genres of all kinds: fiction, nonfiction, memoir, and poetry. The goal of the chapter is to provide you and your students with a way of seeing figurative language as an important tool to convey anything you want in your writing: mood, characterization, persuasion, and even scientific facts.

### Chapter 8- Social Studies Invitations:

#### How Does Activism Lead Us to a “More Perfect Union” in Our Democracy?

In this text set exploration, students have the opportunity to explore fundamental questions about the rights of the individual in our democracy, and the ways in which social justice activists have always been working for change throughout the history of the United States.

**Chapter 9- Science Invitations:**  
**Ocean Interdependencies— How Does the Health of the Ocean  
Relate to the Health of the Planet?**

The text sets in this chapter are designed to support students in understanding the delicate balance of ocean ecosystems. The chapter focuses on texts that model the disciplinary literacies of science and that offer content knowledge of ocean habitat.

**Chapter 10- Mathematics Invitations:**  
**Geometry and Design—How is an Architect an Artist?**

The text set exploration in this chapter invites you and your students to learn about geometry and design in architecture. Architects are artists who focus on creating spaces in which we live, play, and work. Using the elements of design, along with their knowledge of geometry and measurement, architects design spaces that inspire ideas, emotions, and contemplation.