

Jessica Jay

May 12, 2015

ENGL 112B

Warner

### **Unit of Study: Information & Literary Nonfiction**

The purpose of incorporating literature into a classroom curriculum is to allow students to expand their understanding of a subject. As someone who is focused on multiple-subject teaching, it is crucial to create curriculums with interdisciplinary relations. Combining theater and literature or math with physical education are just some of the combinations imaginable. It is also important to be sure that lessons have opportunities to cater to the strengths of each student. In this unit, I wanted to compare the usual History and Science textbooks of the average 6<sup>th</sup> grade student. While these books fall under the “informational” category, they are not the kinds of books many students enjoy reading. By using literary nonfiction, students will have the chance to learn relevant terms or accurate events by using a source that flows the same as a novel.

To introduce the subject unit, a K-W-L chart allows the students to brainstorm details of the subject. Riddles, puzzles, and multimedia sources can also be used to draw the students in. For these subjects, riddles can involve Earth Science related artifacts or items that were present in a specific ancient civilization. While the students will learn about the facts and details in their subject courses, they can pick nonfiction novels or biographies to go in-depth in one area of the subject to broaden their understanding and analyze detailed events.

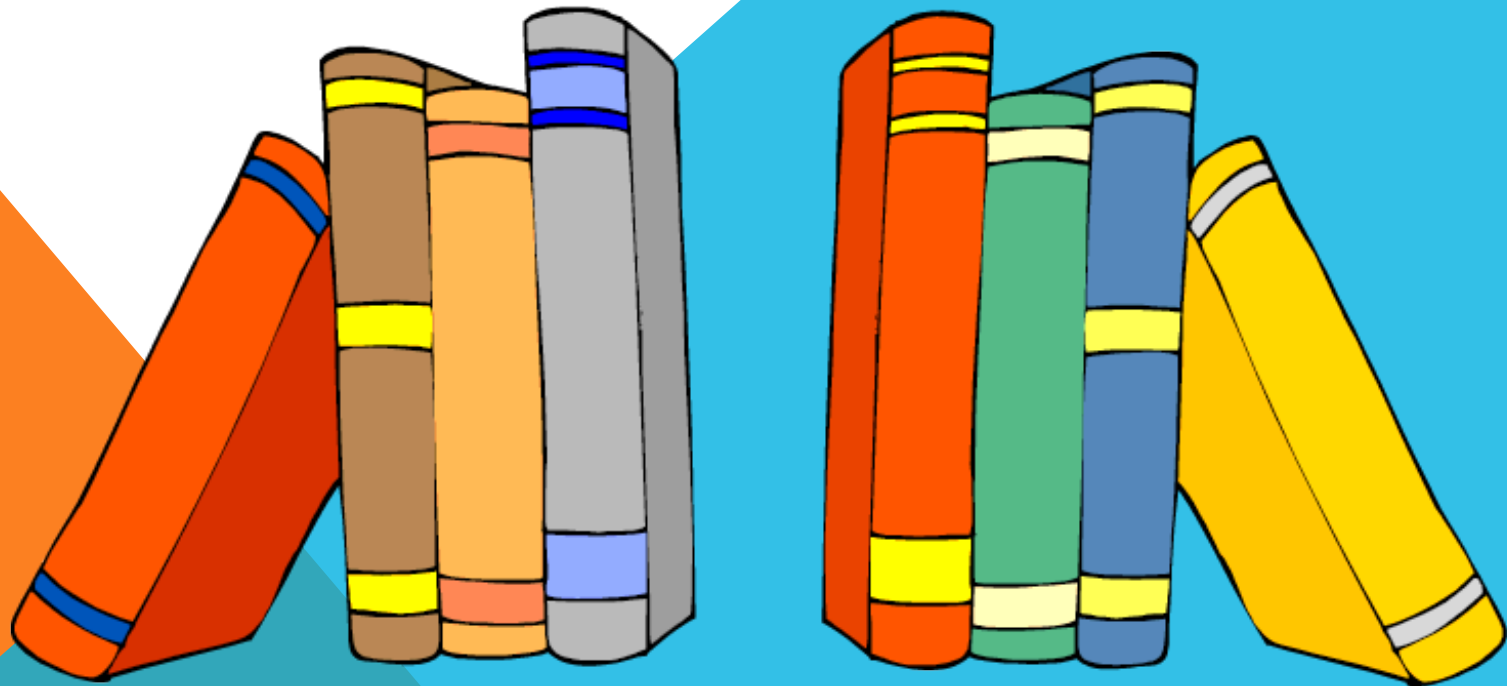
Following the completion of a subject unit, there are several options teachers can use to assess how well their students searched for more information. Individual book reports or oral presentations are always a good way to share their findings, this way the rest of the students gain

new knowledge as well. Students can also work in groups to create large-scaled K-W-L charts that can be posted to the classroom wall to compile their collaborative information and demonstrate what they have learned since the unit commenced. There can also be visual art activities where students create their own replicas or dioramas of significant events, people, buildings, or traditions.

While the literary nonfiction novels are rarely part of the canonical book selections, there are ways to incorporate them into a classroom by including them as options for outside research reading. Some students will find a literature-type story easier to digest, while others enjoy the hard facts presented in textbooks or biographies; either way, it's good to know that there is something for everyone to enjoy reading.

# UNIT OF STUDY:

## INFORMATION & LITERARY NONFICTION



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# COMMON CORE ELA STANDARDS: GRADE 6

## For reading informational text:

1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what text says as well as inferences from text.
2. Determine central idea of text & how it's conveyed through particular details; provide summary of text distinct from personal opinion.
3. Analyze how key individual/event/idea is introduced, illustrated, & elaborated in text.
4. Determine meaning of words & phrases as they are used in text, including figurative, connotative, & technical meanings.
7. Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually) to further develop understanding of topic.
8. Trace & evaluate argument in text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons & evidence from those that aren't.
9. Compare & contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., memoir written by & biography on same person).

# CROSS-SUBJECT COMPARISON

## HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

*Students analyze* geographic, political, economic, religious, & social structures of these early civilizations:

- Mesopotamia
- Egypt
- Kush
- Ancient Hebrews
- India
- Ancient Greece
- China
- Rome

CDE 2000

## SCIENCE

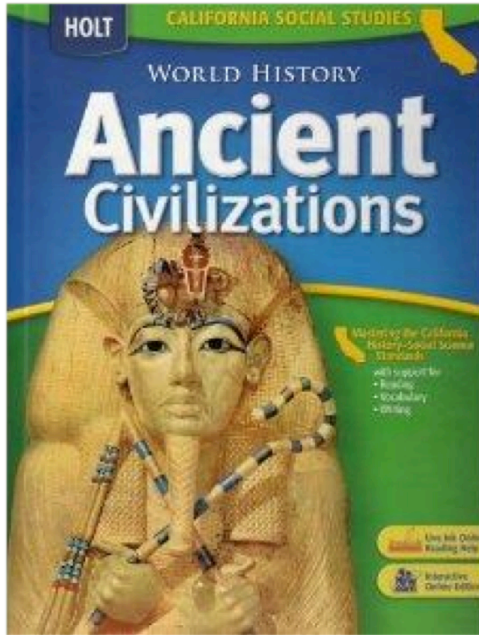
**1.e.** *Students know* major geologic events (e.g., earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, mountain building) result from plate motions.

**4.a.** *Students know* sun is major source of energy for phenomena on Earth's surface & powers winds, currents, & water cycle.

**6.a.** *Students know* utility of energy sources is determined by factors that are involved in converting these sources to useful forms & consequences of conversion process.

CDE 2000

# UNIT CENTERPIECES

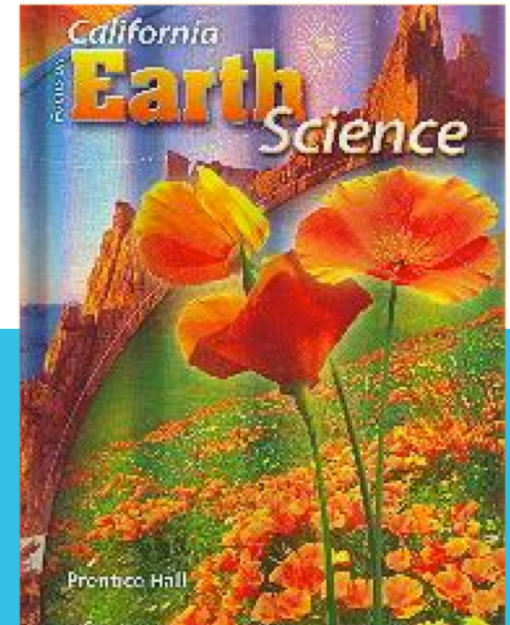


Burstein, Stanley M., & Richard Shek. *World History: Ancient Civilizations*. Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 2006.

It's a textbook... whoop-dee-doo...

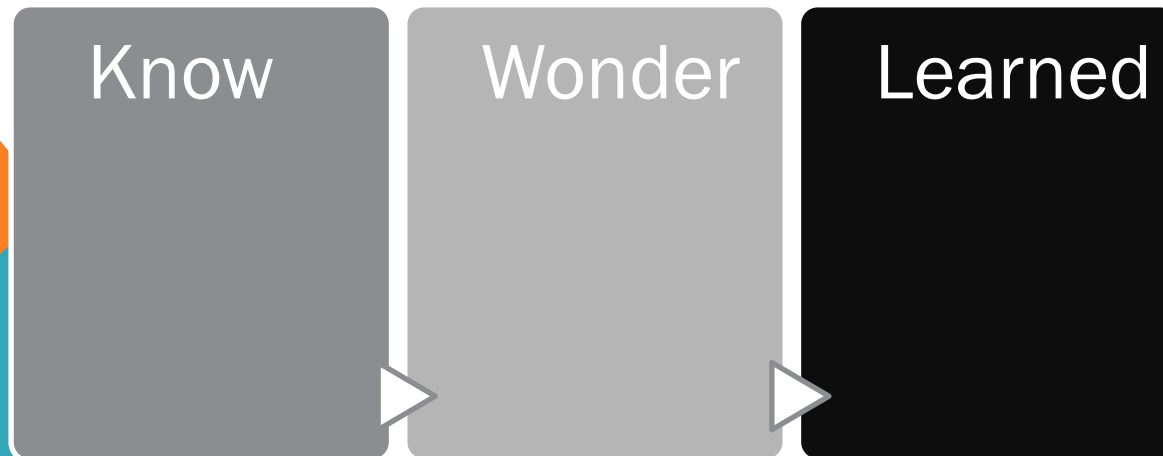
Padilla, Michael J. *Prentice Hall: Focus on California Earth Science*.  
Boston, MA: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

Another textbook... yippee...



# Starting the Unit: K-W-L CHARTS

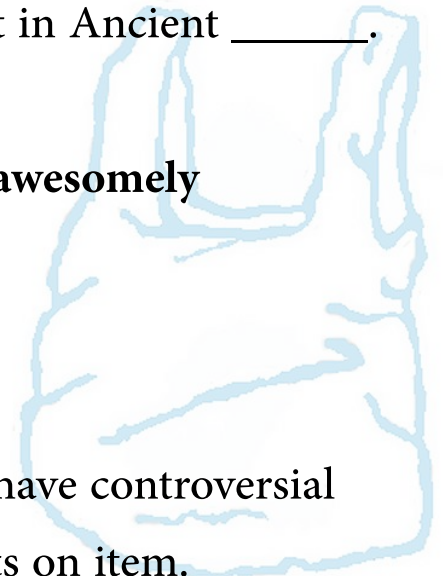
- What do the students KNOW about the subject?
- What do the students WONDER about the subject?
- At the end of the unit, what have the students LEARNED about the subject?



# CREATING an INTRIGUING LITERARY ATMOSPHERE

**Make students work for it! Offer them riddles & puzzles to begin pondering the unit topic:**

- **For 6<sup>th</sup> grade science:** are modern humans part of nature or separate? Explain.
- **For 6<sup>th</sup> grade history:** List 10 things you have today that you would not have had in Ancient \_\_\_\_\_. List another 10 things you believe DID exist in Ancient \_\_\_\_\_.
- Use multimedia introductory resources (**which many of you awesomely demonstrated!**).
- Play artifact guessing games: **What's in the bag?**
  - Students allowed allotted number of guesses; item must have controversial significance. Follow up with journal entry about thoughts on item.

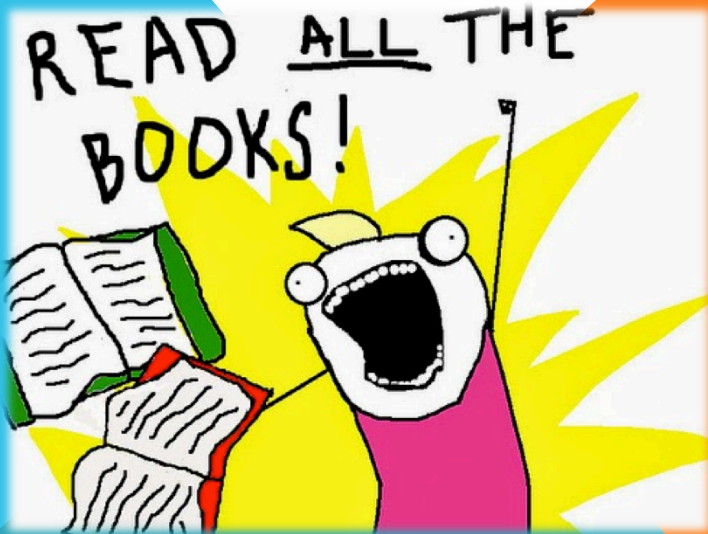




# CREATING INTERDISCIPLINARY UNITS with NONFICTION LITERATURE

Bridging students' understanding of a topic by using multiple instruction formats.

Narrative non-fiction is non-fiction ("not fake") writing that "reads like a story." In good narrative non-fiction, the facts are accurate, but the author uses many of the same "writing tricks" that fiction writers use. This is a way for the author to create an interesting book that "flows well" and tells one or more true stories.



[Http://mtpl.Org/?Q=node/1454](http://mtpl.Org/?Q=node/1454)

Here's a tip to ensure your literature choices relate to your students' other subjects:

Your future coworkers are your **BEST RESOURCE.**

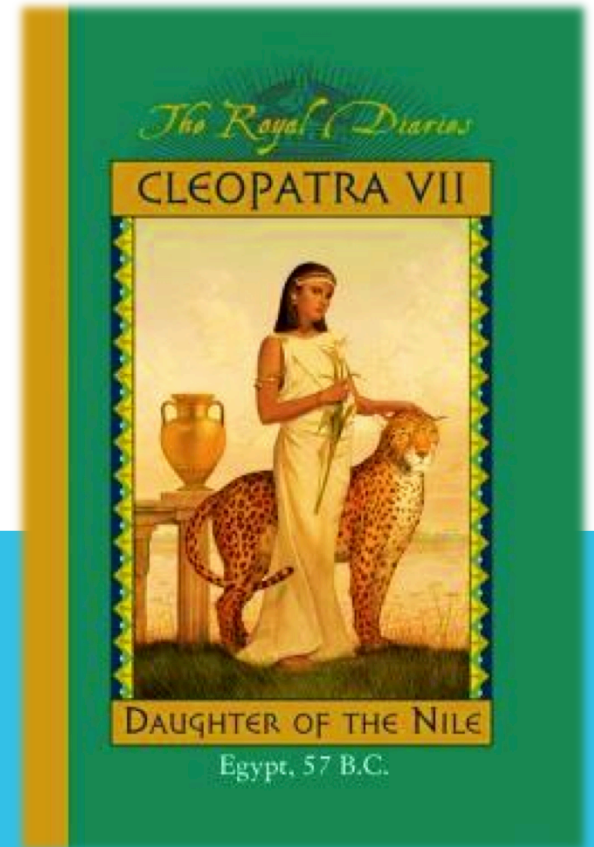
By collaborating with several faculty members who teach the same grade level as you, together, you will be able to create cross-disciplinary units & connect multiple subjects!

# Luckily, the LITERARY NONFICTION options are ENDLESS!

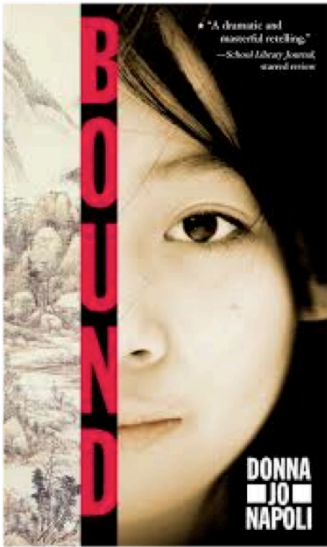
## The Royal Diaries Series:

Gregory, Kristiana. *Cleopatra, Daughter of the Nile*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.

- A novel in the form of a diary kept by 12-year-old Cleopatra after her father goes into hiding because of threats against his life, which may also endanger her. Recommended for ages 9-13.
- This novel details the daily life of female royalty in Ancient Egypt, which pairs with **CC History Standard 6.2**. Similar novels bridge between “biographical” & “historical fiction,” as the major events, people, & time frames are accurate.



# ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL NOVELS:



Napoli, Donna Jo. *Bound*. New York: Atheneum for Young Readers, 2004.

Young Xing Xing is bound to life of servitude for her stepmother & half-sister. In Ancient China, the life of a woman is valued less than livestock. Xing Xing spends her days taking care of her half-sister, who cannot walk because of her foot bindings. Even so, Xing Xing is content, for now, to practice her arts, & to dream of a life unbound of family & society.

➤ **Relates to CC History Standard 6.6**

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Barrett, Tracy. *King of Ithaka*. New York: Henry Holt, 2010.

A retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*, narrated by Telemachos, the son of Odysseus. Ages 12+

➤ **Relates to CC History Standard 6.4**

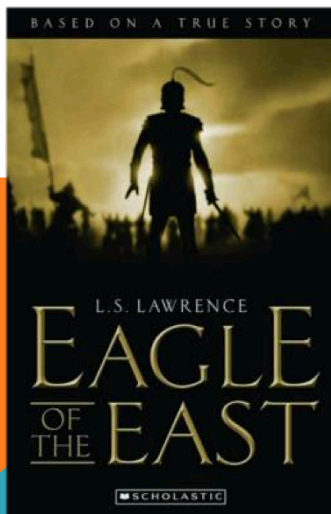
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Lawrence, L. S. *Eagle of the East*. Malvern, S. Australia: Omnibus, 2007.

A young Roman tribune who survives the disastrous Battle of Carrhae, 53 B.C. as a captive of the Parthians. Ages 10+

➤ **Relates to CC History Standard 6.7**

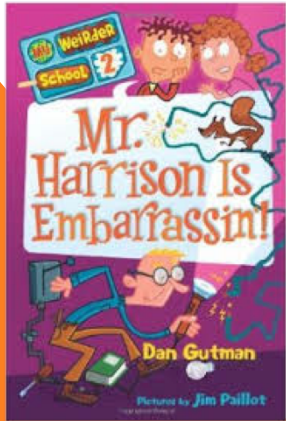
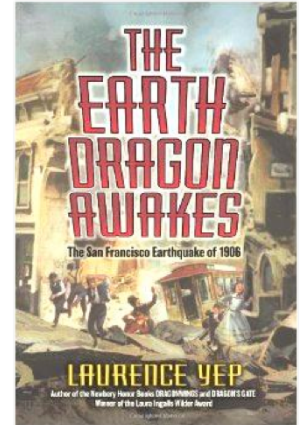


# SCIENCE RELATED LITERARY NONFICTION:

Yep, Laurence. *The Earth Dragon Awakes: The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Based on events of 1906 San Francisco earthquake & told from perspectives of 2 young friends; chronicles story of destruction & heroes that emerge in its wake.

➤ CC Science Standard 1.e.



Gutman, Dan. *My Weirder School #2: Mr. Harrison Is Embarrassin'!* New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

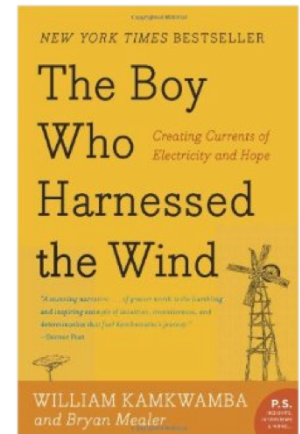
Mr. Harrison, the school tech guy, can fix & build anything. But when the power goes out in the school, everyone is freaking out in the dark. Can Mr. Harrison save the day?

➤ CC Science Standard 4.a.

Kamkwamba, William, & Mealer, Bryan. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity & Hope*. New York, NY: William Morrow, 2009.

William Kamkwamba was born in Malawi, a country where modern science was mystery. But William had read about windmills & dreamed of building 1 to bring electricity & running water to his village. With a small pile of science textbooks; some scrap metal, tractor parts, & bicycle halves; & determination, he embarked to forge a small miracle that would change lives.

➤ CC Science Standard 6.a.



# Activities “beyond” the centerpiece(s): ideas for how your students can use nonfiction novels & biographies to expand their subject knowledge

- Individual book reports: each student chooses a different novel/subject/person of interest to research
- Oral presentations: students present their findings from previous book reports
- Large scale K-W-L charts: students work in groups to research an area of a subject or person of interest & then create poster-sized K-W-L chart for other students to read. This helps break-up the information so not every student much research each aspect of a topic.
- Art projects: Students can create models/replicas of significant buildings/people/events/structures found in their chosen novel.

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**What subjects can you think of that would pair well with a CANONICAL/YA NOVEL?**

**JOT SOME IDEAS HERE!**



# SOURCES:

Education, California Department of. *California Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects; Standards for: 6-12; Reading Standards for Literature*. Sacramento, CA. California Department of Education. 2013.

Education, California Department of. *California Common Core State Standards: Science for: 6-12*. Sacramento, CA. California Department of Education. 2000.

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Illustration by Allie Brosh. <http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com>. 2009-2013.

Thank you for reading 😊