

# THE POWER OF NON-FICTION

## A resources pack for LKS2/UKS2/LKS3

This resource pack contains all you need to deliver five activities designed to get pupils excited about reading non-fiction! Whilst it's not always the first port of call for engaging literacy lessons, non-fiction is a great way to open new worlds of curiosity, discovery and critical thinking for young minds.

Through these activities – which can be delivered as a complete unit of work, or sprinkled throughout your planning – children will be able to deepen their understanding of the features of various non-fiction text types, whilst developing their enjoyment of reading.



### Activities included:

1. Class fact files
2. Fact vs fiction challenge
3. Non-fiction hunt and match
4. Create a cover
5. Classic captions



## Activity 1: Class fact files

Your pupils are probably familiar with creating fact files; this activity will encourage them to think more deeply about what should be included, and how it can be more effectively presented. It will develop their ability to locate reliable information, summarise key points, and organise their ideas using appropriate text devices.

### You will need:

- Fact file planning sheet (in the pack)
- Large sheets of plain or coloured paper
- Access to books and/or the internet, for research
- Art supplies

### Introduction

Remind pupils what we mean by a 'fact file': a collection of interesting, well-organised pieces of information about a particular topic, which can be very focused or quite broad. Share examples, such as magazine features, encyclopedia entries, or pages from reference books, such as the Guinness World Records series. Tell the children that they are going to create a class fact file, with each pupil contributing a page or section.

### Creating the fact file

#### 1. Choose a topic

Have a class discussion about potential 'umbrella' topics, which would allow all the children to contribute a section (for example, 'famous landmarks', 'space', 'endangered animals', 'national dishes'). Ask for suggestions, and talk about the pros and cons of each one. Add all the ideas to the IWB, and hold a vote to choose one.

Once you have chosen an umbrella topic, each pupil should select an aspect of the topic to research for their section of the fact file.

#### 2. Plan and research

Children can research using books and/or the internet. They should use the **fact file planning sheet** to organise their ideas.

#### 3. Write and create

Using their planning sheets, pupils can write their final fact file entries on individual, large sheets of paper. Encourage them to think carefully about how they will present the information, including pictures, diagrams, bullet points, captions etc. Provide art materials, so that children can make their entries as colourful and engaging as possible.

#### 4. Compile

When all the pages are complete, put them together and bind using a hole punch and ribbon or treasury tags. Set 'design a cover for the fact file' as a homework task, and hold another class vote to decide which to use.

### Conclusion and reflection

Once the fact file is complete, it can be shared with other classes. What did pupils enjoy most about creating the fact file? Did they learn anything new and/or surprising? How did they feel the collaboration worked?

### Extension activities

- Use pupils' fact files to create a quiz that can be used to test their knowledge of each other's topics.
- Hold a 'fact file fair', where pupils build table displays around their fact files, to be shared with parents, who can be invited to visit.
- Ask pupils to interview a friend or relative who knows a lot about the area in which they live, using their answers to create a local fact file.



## Activity 2: Fact vs. fiction challenge

This activity is designed to encourage pupils to explore and enjoy non-fiction by contrasting it with fiction. As they identify the true statements, they will discover how surprising and engaging real-life information can be, while honing their critical thinking and research skills.

### You will need:

- Fact/fiction card pairs (in pack)
- Research materials (reference books and/or access to the internet)

### Introduction

Briefly discuss the difference between fiction and non-fiction with the class. Divide the IWB into two columns, headed 'fiction' and 'non-fiction', and invite pupils to suggest adjectives that might be used to describe each kind of writing. Leave the lists on the board as you continue the activity.

Explain the purpose of the lesson: to explore just how fascinating and unexpected non-fiction can be, by separating real information from fictional statements. Tell students they'll be working in pairs or small groups to decide which statements are fact and which are fiction, and they'll need to explain their reasoning.

### Fact vs. fiction sorting

Have enough of the **fact/fiction card pairs** printed and cut out so that each pair or small group has at least one.

Ask the pupils to read each of the statements with their partner or group and decide which is a fact, and which is fiction. Allow them time to discuss and make decisions together, encouraging them to use prior knowledge, make inferences, and question their assumptions. Go over each pair of statements with the class, asking students to share their answers and reasoning. Then, reveal the correct answers and discuss the factual information behind each one.

### Conclusion and reflection

Reflect on how non-fiction can be as surprising and engaging as fiction. Ask students if they were surprised by any facts, and if so, why.

Encourage students to explore more non-fiction on their own to uncover other surprising truths about the world.

### Extension activities

- If there is time, pupils could use the blank fact/fiction cards to write out one true and one false statement about themselves for a classmate to try and identify correctly.
- Create a "Did You Know?" board, where pupils can add interesting facts they encounter in their reading over the next few weeks.



## Activity 3: Create a cover

This activity aims to get pupils excited about non-fiction, by encouraging them to design their own book cover, thinking about what might make a reader want to dive in.

### You will need:

- Examples of non-fiction book covers
- Book cover template (in pack)
- Art supplies (coloured pencils/felt-tips)

### Introduction

Share examples of non-fiction book covers with pupils (either displayed on the IWB, or using actual books from the library). What do they notice? Explain that covers should tell readers what a book is about; but also give them a reason to pick it up and explore further.

Collect a class list of features that can help to make a book cover appealing, for example:

- Memorable, snappy title
- Bright, colourful images
- Subtitles or taglines giving extra information
- Devices such as bullet points, flashes, fun fonts etc to highlight key points.

Tell pupils that in this activity, they will be designing their own non-fiction book cover, based on a topic of their choice – perhaps something they've learnt in school, a personal interest or hobby, or a surprising fact.

### Designing the cover

Ask pupils to decide on a topic for their non-fiction book cover. Remind them what we mean by 'non-fiction'. Their topic could be based on something they have learnt in school recently, a personal hobby or interest, or a subject they would like to know more about.

When designing their cover, pupils can use blank paper, computers/tablets, or one of the **templates** provided in the pack. Have the class list of features discussed earlier on display to help children with their planning.

Give children time to plan and create their book covers, using art materials or digital tools.

### Conclusion and reflection

Invite pupils to share their finished covers with the class, explaining their topic choice, and how they have brought it to life for readers.

### Key questions:

- how did they make the cover eye-catching?
- how did they decide what information to include?
- did they enjoy thinking like a designer?

### Extension activities

- Ask pupils to write a blurb for the back cover of their book.
- Tell pupils that you are the buyer for a large chain of bookshops, and they are going to role play 'pitching' their book to you. How will they explain why it's worth reading?
- Use the covers to create a striking wall display: 'the power of non-fiction'.



## Activity 4: Non-fiction hunt and match

In this lesson, children will deepen their understanding of the features commonly found in non-fiction texts, through a fun matching activity, which will also help develop their collaboration and communication skills.

### You will need:

- A selection of numbered extracts from non-fiction texts (books, magazines, articles – a selection of First News articles is included in the pack)
- Non-fiction feature cards (in pack)
- Worksheet (in pack)

### Introduction

Start the activity by asking pupils what they think makes a non-fiction text different from a story or a poem. Talk about the purpose of non-fiction (to inform, explain or describe), and discuss what kinds of features help make information accessible.

Show children the **non-fiction feature cards**, and go through each of the features, explaining what it does and how it helps readers.

Tell children they are going to be finding examples of these features in extracts from real texts.

### Non-fiction hunt and match

Divide children into tables or small groups. Give each group a set of the **non-fiction feature cards**, a copy of each of the **printed extracts** from non-fiction texts, and a non-fiction hunt and match **worksheet**.

Challenge children to find examples for as many of the feature types as they can, filling in the worksheet as they go. They can add multiple examples for each feature type if they find them.

### Conclusion and reflection

Discuss the groups' findings as a class. Did they find different examples from their classmates? Which feature was easiest/hardest to find? Did they spot any features that weren't listed on a card?

### Extension activities

- Have pupils create a 'non-fiction features checklist', which they can use to assess pieces they read, as well as their own writing.
- Each group could create an illustrated poster, showing the features they found.
- Challenge pupils to write a short non-fiction piece, including at least three of the features explored in this activity.



## Activity 5: Classic captions

Through this activity, children will explore how captions can add value to images, giving readers more information about what is happening, and linking illustrations more closely to text. They will also develop their own caption-writing skills, focusing on conciseness and clarity.

### You will need:

- A selection of intriguing images (in the pack)
- Large sheets of paper
- Caption slips (A4 sheets of paper cut lengthways into six strips)
- Glue sticks
- Sticky dots

### Preparation:

Print out enough copies of each of the images in the pack for one to be placed on each table, with one left over. Glue each last copy to a large sheet of paper, and display the sheets on walls around the classroom.

### Introduction

To start the activity, have a class discussion about captions. Do pupils know what they are? Where might they have seen them? Show examples from non-fiction books, newspapers or magazines (you can use the **First News pages** from activity 4. Talk about the role the captions play in helping us understand more about the images.

Create a class list of features which pupils feel make for an effective caption. Prompt them to think about such things as conciseness, clarity, relevance, and appropriate language choices. Explain that in this lesson, children will be writing their own captions for a variety of images, trying to make their captions as informative and engaging as possible.

### Caption writing

Place a set of the **images** from the pack on each table, along with a pile of blank caption slips. Ask children to choose an image and note down: what it shows, any details that stand out, what it makes them think of, and what they think would help a viewer understand more about it. Using their notes, children should draft a caption for their chosen image. When they are happy, they can write the final version on a caption slip, and glue it to the relevant wall display image. Repeat for as many images as time allows.

### Caption gallery

When all the captions have been written, encourage children to move around the room, looking at the images, reading the captions and adding sticky dots to their favourites.

### Conclusion and reflection

After the activity, have a class discussion about the experience. Which captions got the most sticky dots? Why might they have been chosen? What did the children find especially challenging or enjoyable about writing the captions? How much did different captions change how they looked at the pictures?

### Extension activities

- Create a captioned timeline – using several images from a single topic the class has studied recently, such as a historical event, or the stages of a scientific process, ask pupils to create captions that briefly explain what is happening in each picture, creating a coherent narrative.
- Again, using a topic studied recently, ask children to draw their own images before adding captions, allowing them to decide which elements they feel need highlighting in order to explain the full story.
- Have a weekly 'caption competition'. Allocate some wall space, and put up a new image each Monday. Children can drop suggestions into a box, and a vote could be held for everyone's favourite each Friday.