



Top Tips for Teaching with **TEXT SETS**

Text sets are a great way to help students learn to read with purpose, grow their critical thinking skills, and expand their knowledge across a wide range of disciplines.



Why teach with Text Sets?

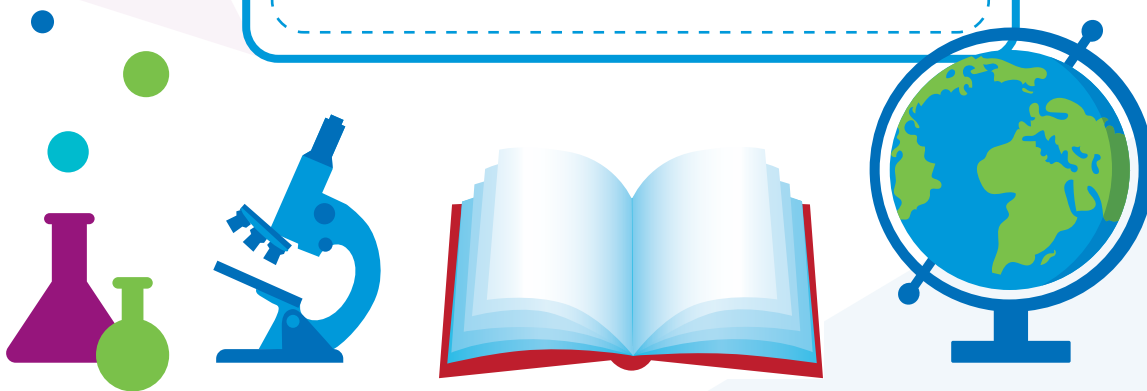
All students need to build stronger vocabularies, expand their background knowledge, and strengthen their reading comprehension skills—especially when it comes to reading in content areas such as science and social studies.

How can educators help students build the essential reading skills they need to succeed across all subject areas?

Text sets are a great way to help students learn to read with purpose, grow their critical thinking skills, and expand their knowledge across a wide range of disciplines. By incorporating text sets into your language arts curriculum, you can help set your students up for success with all types of reading tasks!

Top Benefits of Text Sets:

- Improve comprehension skills
- Grow critical thinking skills
- Build academic and content-area vocabulary
- Increase background knowledge
- Make cross-curricular connections between language arts, science, and social studies
- Learn text structures and text features



AN INTRODUCTION TO TEXT SETS

What is a text set?

A text set is a collection of resources about a single topic, theme, or question. Text sets help students broaden their knowledge by exploring a topic from multiple angles, while also deepening their knowledge by focusing on a single topic for an extended period of learning.

It's important to remember that not every text in your text set has to be a book. Videos, infographics, diagrams, instruction manuals, graphs, charts, tables, and other formats can all help enrich students' knowledge of a topic—plus variety can make learning more fun!



Why use a text set?

Text sets are a great way to build students' vocabulary, background knowledge, and content-area knowledge. Informational text sets can also help students form cross-curricular connections between language arts and other content areas, such as science and social studies, and can lead to improved performance in all subject areas.

What is an anchor text?

An anchor text is a grade-level text that is used to introduce the topic and key vocabulary terms. As students explore the other resources in a text set, they should work to connect new information and ideas back to the knowledge they gained from the anchor text. This will help students learn to study a topic as a whole, rather than study individual texts in isolation from one another.



HOW TO TEACH TEXT SETS

STEP 1

Select your texts.

This is one of the most challenging steps of the process, because you will need to find multiple high-quality, grade-appropriate texts that focus on the same topic. Strong text sets will repeat key themes and vocabulary across texts, while also allowing students to progressively build knowledge and vocabulary as they move from text to text.

★ TIP

It can be helpful to establish a “Big Question” that gives students a clear purpose for reading the text set. For example, if students are studying the weather, your “Big Question” may be “How do people solve weather-related issues?” By making sure each text in the set helps to answer this question, you can build a more cohesive text set for your students.

At this point, you may also want to identify two or three “hooks”—short videos, photographs, illustrations, maps, etc.—that can be used to spark students’ interest in the topic.

**Need high-quality,
ready-to-teach text sets?**

SAVVAS·NOW™
L I T E R A C Y

Start your free trial of *Savvas Now™ Literacy* to get access to thousands of instructional resources, including informational text sets for Grades 1-5. Each text set includes age-appropriate texts, multimedia resources, and step-by-step lesson plans.

Sign up today:
learning.savvas.com/SavvasNowLiteracyTrial

STEP 2

Identify content vocabulary and academic vocabulary

Once you've selected the texts in your text set, it will be helpful to review and analyze each text.

Start by reviewing the vocabulary present in each text. Ideally, key terms will be repeated in two or more texts within the set, since students need to see a term multiple times before they learn and remember it.

You may find it helpful to separate the vocabulary into two categories:

- **Content vocabulary** that is specific to a subject area (for example, *microscope* and *bacteria* would be content vocabulary for science), and
- **Academic vocabulary** that is used across subject areas (examples would include *examine* and *predict*—these terms are used in science, but also in other content areas like social studies and language arts).

Create tables showing the content vocabulary and the academic vocabulary for the topic, and then mark each text in your text set that contains the term. This will let you easily see which terms are repeated across texts and which may be unique to a text.

Academic Vocabulary	TEXT 1	TEXT 2	TEXT 3	TEXT 4	TEXT 5
Examine	✓	✓			
Predict		✓		✓	
Report		✓	✓	✓	
Analyze	✓				✓
Interpret			✓		✓

Example table of academic vocabulary within a text set.

STEP 3

Identify text structures and text features

Now it's time to identify the text structures and text features in each text.

For example, make a table showing which text structure(s) are present in each text. Text structures include:

- Description
- Compare and contrast
- Time order/chronology
- Problem and solution
- Cause and effect

Next, determine which text feature(s) are present in each text.

Text features include:

- Captions
- Diagrams
- Headings
- Illustrations
- Photographs
- Maps

Introduce the text set to students

Before students start reading, set the stage by presenting the "Big Question" that the text set addresses.

★ TIP

At this time, you may also wish to use your "hooks" to capture students' interest. Hooks can be short videos, illustrations, photographs, maps, or even objects in the classroom that you can use to introduce the topic and kick-start student discussion. For example, if your text set focuses on the moon, you could display a 3D model of the moon, watch a short clip of the 1969 moon landing, or display an artistic depiction of the moon (such as Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*).

Next, lead the students in a discussion of the Big Question. This can be done with the entire class, in small groups, or in pairs. Encourage students to share what they already know about the topic, as well as any aspects of the topic that they'd like to learn more about.



STEP 5

Teach the anchor text

Before Reading: First, remind students of the Big Question that is the focus of the text set. This sets the purpose for their reading.

Next, preview the academic vocabulary and content vocabulary that students will encounter in the anchor text. The tables that you created earlier (in Step 2) will make it easy for you to check which terms appear in the anchor text.

If needed, use a class discussion, graphic organizer(s), or other activities to help students understand the new vocabulary terms.

During Reading: You may choose to have students read the anchor text as a class, in small groups, in pairs, or independently. During reading, point out the text structures and text features that appear in the anchor text. Explain the purpose of each text structure: for example, a compare and contrast structure will emphasize how two things are similar and how they are different.

When students encounter text features, be sure to point out the extra information each feature provides. For example, explain how captions can provide additional information about an image and show how it connects to the text.

After Reading: Once students have finished reading the anchor text, take time to review the vocabulary they encountered in the text. If you used a graphic organizer or other worksheet to preview the vocabulary, now is a good time to return to those materials and see if students would make any revisions to their work.

To close out the lesson, return to the Big Question. Lead a class discussion about the Big Question, and what information the anchor text provided to help students answer it. Encourage students to incorporate new vocabulary into their discussion.

As a final step, you may wish to have students write about their learnings.



STEP 6

Teach the other texts in the text set

For each additional text in the text set, follow the sequence in Step 5 with a few key changes:

- When previewing vocabulary, remind students if they have encountered specific vocabulary terms in other texts. (Use the vocabulary tables you made in Step 2 to keep track of which terms are repeated across texts.) Do the same with text structures and text features.
- During the after-reading discussion, encourage students to make connections between the different texts they have read. How does each text add to the information they learned in the anchor text? Has their thinking about the Big Question changed as a result of this new information?

STEP 7

Synthesize the readings

After students have read and discussed all of the texts in your text set, it's a great idea to give them an opportunity to synthesize all the information they've learned about the topic.

First, have students review all the academic vocabulary and content vocabulary they've learned. Encourage students to draw connections between vocabulary terms through word sorts, identifying synonyms and antonyms, creating T-charts or other graphic organizers, or writing sentences using the new vocabulary.

Next, have a final discussion about the Big Question. This is the perfect time for students to reflect and review all that they've learned. Have students think about what information they knew about the topic before they started reading the text set as well as what new information they have learned. Ask if students' opinions or feelings about the topic have changed and, if so, why. Have students share which text(s) they found most helpful. See if students still have outstanding questions about the topic, and share ways they can find answers.

What did you know?

Has your opinion changed?

What did you learn?

Why or why not?

Do you still have questions?





TIP

Digital libraries are a great way to provide students access to age-appropriate materials on a wide range of topics.

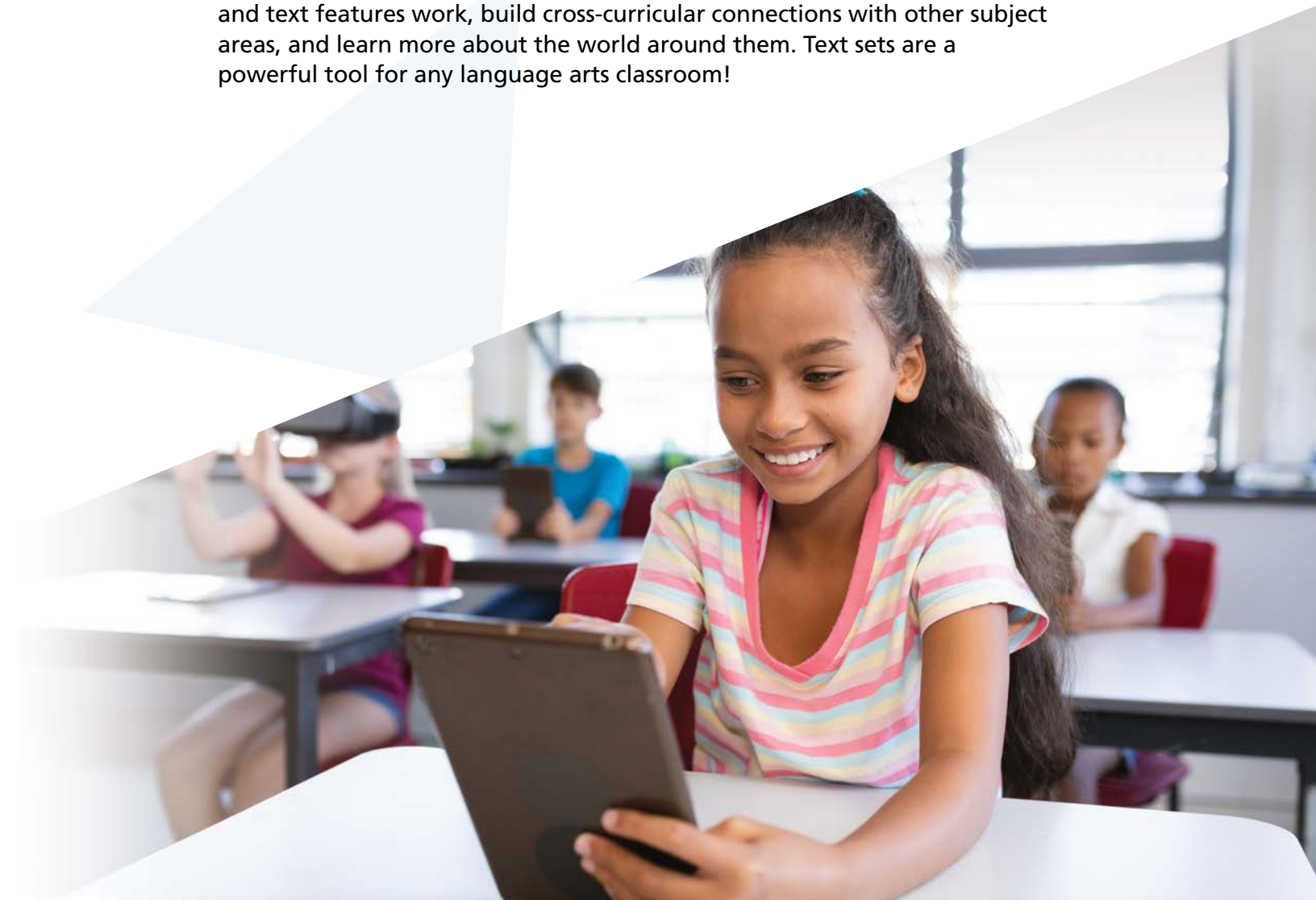
Finally, have students apply what they've learned via a culminating project. Projects like these give students an opportunity to demonstrate and enhance their understanding of a specific topic.

Examples of culminating projects might include:

- Writing and illustrating a mini-book on the topic
- Creating a diagram with labels (using new vocabulary)
- Writing and/or drawing step-by-step instructions or a how-to guide
- Working with a partner to debate an issue, identifying relevant pros and cons

Be sure to give students the opportunity to share their culminating projects with each other, whether by presenting them in front of the class or displaying them in the classroom.

By systematically teaching text sets, you'll provide students with the opportunity to read with purpose, grow their vocabulary, understand how text structures and text features work, build cross-curricular connections with other subject areas, and learn more about the world around them. Text sets are a powerful tool for any language arts classroom!



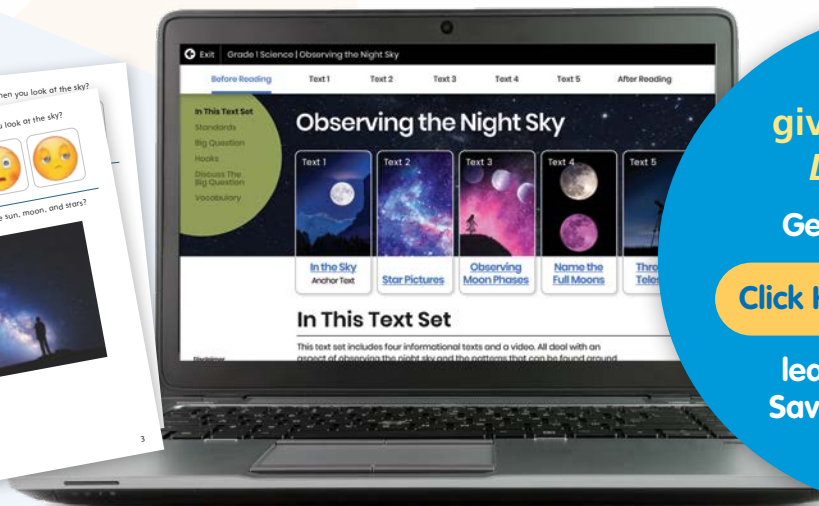
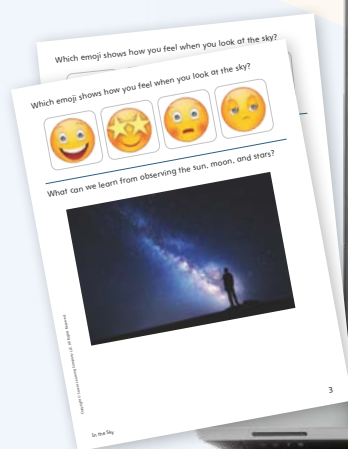
SAVVAS·NOW™ LITERACY

READY-TO-TEACH RESOURCES

**Worried about the time it takes to build cohesive text sets?
Finding and preparing resources for the classroom can take
hours out of a teacher's day—but it doesn't have to!**

With Savvas Now™ Literacy, you have easy access to thousands of high-quality, ready-to-use teacher resources. This digital resource library provides:

- Nonfiction text sets centered around grade-level science and social studies topics—each complete with five texts, multimedia hooks, and a step-by-step editable lesson plan
- Prebuilt, editable lesson plans for popular titles such as *Hair Love*, *Drawn Together*, *When Stars Are Scattered*, and *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You*, and others
- Graphic organizers, worksheets, and other resources for phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, writer's craft, and more
- Interactive resources such as see-and-sing videos, digital games, instructional videos, and even professional learning materials



Ready to
give Savvas Now™
Literacy a try?

Get a 7-Day Free Trial

[Click Here to Sign Up Today](#)

[learning.savvas.com/
SavvasNowLiteracyTrial](https://learning.savvas.com/SavvasNowLiteracyTrial)

SAVVAS
LEARNING COMPANY

Savvas.com
800-848-9500

Copyright © 2023 Savvas Learning Company LLC. All Rights Reserved.
Savvas® and Savvas Learning Company® are the exclusive trademarks
of Savvas Learning Company LLC in the US and in other countries.

Join the Conversation
@SavvasLearning



Get Fresh Ideas for Teaching
Blog.Savvas.com