Lesson Skill: Understanding text features

Strand Reading--nonfiction

SOL 6.6
7.6
8.6

Materials

- Social studies or science textbooks (student-provided)
- Copies of the attached Text Features worksheet

Lesson

1. Prior to this lesson, tell each student to bring his or her social studies or science textbook to class. All students should bring the same content-area text.

2. Introduce the lesson by defining text features—i.e., such elements as bold font, italics, sidebar, map, chart, heading, subheading, color. Then, have students find examples of text features in their textbooks. Encourage students to look throughout the textbook because some features may not appear in every chapter.

3. Have students use the Text Features worksheet to list the examples they found and explain in the second column each feature's purpose or how it is used. Students may work independently or in groups.

4. When students have completed the worksheet, list on the board the examples the students found and the purposes they identified. Allow students to add information to their worksheets as necessary.

5. Divide students into groups, and assign each group a different chapter of the textbook. Have each group write five questions whose answers can be easily found by noticing and using the text features found in that chapter. If necessary give students a few examples of such questions, based on the elements they found. For example, the answer to the question, "What is the definition of *gene*?" should be easy to find by noticing and using bold text and/or italics.

6. When groups have finished writing their questions, have students race to find the answers, working either as groups, pairs, or individuals.

7. Close the lesson by reminding students that noticing and taking advantage of text features will help them better understand informative text and locate information quickly.

Text Features

Fill out the graphic organizer below. Use the back of the page to add more, if necessary.

Text Feature	Purpose