
SCHOOL LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE TO THE 5 KINDS OF NONFICTION

Nonfiction isn't one-size-fits-all! It can be as creative and varied as fiction. Understanding the five kinds of nonfiction helps librarians guide students to find books that fit their interests and needs. This classification system, coined by Melissa Stewart and Marlene Correia, organizes nonfiction into five categories. Here's how to recognize and recommend each one.

1. Active Nonfiction

Definition:

Books that engage readers with activities, experiments, and hands-on projects. These books inspire learning by doing.

Examples:

- Cookbooks
- Craft and DIY guides
- STEM activity books

Ideal Readers:

- Curious learners who enjoy experimenting and creating.
- Students working on science fair projects or hobbies.

2. Browsable Nonfiction

Definition:

Books designed for quick, casual reading, often with eye-catching layouts, fun facts, and short sections.

Examples:

- Trivia books

- Infographics-based books
- Picture-heavy atlases

Ideal Readers:

- Reluctant readers who enjoy learning in small doses.
- Students seeking quick, digestible facts.

3. Expository Nonfiction

Definition:

Books that explain a topic in-depth, often using clear text and supporting visuals. These are fact-based and research-driven.

Examples:

- Animal encyclopedias
- Science-focused books
- History overviews

Ideal Readers:

- Students researching topics for assignments.
- Readers who enjoy deep dives into specific subjects.

4. Narrative Nonfiction

Definition:

Books that tell true stories using the techniques of fiction, including character development, dialogue, and a compelling plot.

Examples:

- Biographies and memoirs
- Historical narratives
- Adventure and survival stories

Ideal Readers:

- Fans of fiction who want real-life drama.
- Readers looking for inspirational or emotional stories.

5. Persuasive Nonfiction

Definition:

Books that advocate for a cause or aim to influence the reader's opinion.

Examples:

- Environmental advocacy books
- Social justice-focused works
- Opinion essays

Ideal Readers:

- Students working on persuasive essays or debates.
- Readers passionate about making a difference.

Tips for Librarians:

- **Know Your Collection:** Organize nonfiction by these categories to make book talks and recommendations easier.
- **Incorporate the 5 Kinds:** Highlight different kinds of nonfiction during displays or library lessons.
- **Guide Readers:** Use these categories to match books with students' interests and reading preferences.

Conclusion:

Nonfiction can spark curiosity, inspire action, and provide endless opportunities for exploration. By understanding the 5 kinds of nonfiction, you can help every student find a book they'll love!