

# Inquiry Mini-Lessons

## Using Non-fiction Text Features to Find Information

As students delve deeper into their research, it is essential that they understand how to access information through the various features found in non-fiction texts. These include organizational features (e.g., table of contents, index, glossary, appendix), graphic features (e.g., illustrations, photographs, charts), and textual features (e.g., title, headings/subheadings, captions, boldface type, italic type). It is recommended that you focus on only one feature at a time.

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Materials:**

- a non-fiction Big Book that includes a table of contents, e.g., *Explore! Magazine* from the *Water Works!* inquiry unit
- chart paper and marker

**Grouping:** whole class

### Procedure:

**Teaching Tip:** This lesson is designed to show students how to use the table of contents, but you can use the format to teach any of the other features of non-fiction texts.

1. Show students the cover of the Big Book, and have them brainstorm what the book might be about with a partner.
2. Have students brainstorm the types of questions that they think the book might answer. Record these questions on chart paper.
3. Turn to the table of contents.  
Have students discuss what they know about this page and why the author might have included it. Point out the various features of the table of contents (e.g., chapter titles and corresponding page numbers).  
*Yes, that's right. A table of contents contains information about what is in the book. It gives the title of each chapter and the page number where the chapter starts in the book. These chapter titles will often be very descriptive and tell us what that chapter is about.*
4. Explain to students that you will be demonstrating how to find the answer to one of the questions (see step 2) by using the table of contents.
5. Choose one of the questions from step 2. Highlight the key information in the question.
6. Read down the list of chapter titles. Have students raise their hands when they hear something that is related to the chosen question. Model how to turn to the corresponding page in the book. Be sure to point out where the chapter title and page number are found on this page.

7. Return to the table of contents and continue reading down the list of chapter titles. Have students again raise their hands when they hear something that is related to the chosen question. Have a student come up and demonstrate how to turn to the corresponding page, pointing out the chapter title and page number. Continue doing this until you have read through the entire table of contents.
8. On chart paper, summarize how to use a table of contents. Post this chart so that students may refer to it during their investigations.

**Teaching Tip:** Repeat the process to focus on a particular text feature such as an index, glossary, chart, etc.