

# BIG IDEAS SIMPLY EXPLAINED

## TEACHER'S GUIDE



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# TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Reading Is  
Fundamental  
RIF.org

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### Note to Educators

The attractive and informative books in DK's *Big Ideas Simply Explained* series break broad concepts into smaller units of information that are readily accessible to students, providing a foundation for general knowledge in various fields. Learning begins before students have even opened the book, as the attractive book jackets are illustrated with thought-provoking quotes that highlight important moments or developments in the history of the book's "Big Idea."

The books in the *Big Ideas Simply Explained* series can serve in your classroom as a combination encyclopedia, almanac, and dictionary for each topic, but they are much more engaging than a typical reference work and will have greater appeal to students. Use them to practice reference skills, to provide brief introductions to topics you are discussing in class, and to support students' individual research projects.

Whether you are using all the books, a selection of books, or just one book in your classroom, you can use this teacher's guide to explore the books with your students and to support the Common Core emphasis on using informational texts.

### Research and Writing (Anchor Standards 2 and 7, Writing):

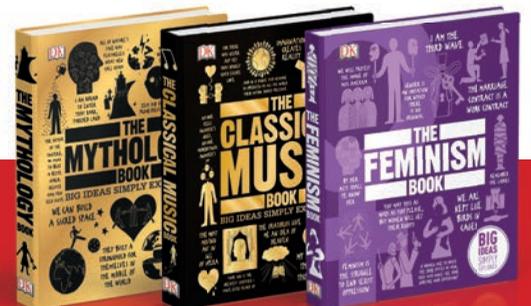
The Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing require students to conduct research projects of varying lengths and to use that research to produce clear and accurate informative or explanatory writing about given topics. Students can use the books in this series to practice these skills. Begin by having students compose a research question that can be answered by consulting the book you are using. Then have them use the book to answer that question and convey the answer in writing. For example, a student might ask, "How did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories help define the genre of detective fiction?" and then use *The Sherlock Holmes Book* to research and write an answer to that question. In addition, students can also use this exercise to practice narrowing and broadening their research questions as they work.

### Presentations (Anchor Standards 1, 2, and 4, Speaking and Listening):

The Common Core Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening require students to use clear and persuasive language to present and discuss their research findings. They also require students to demonstrate proficiency in presenting visual, oral, and quantitative information. Students can use the books in this series to research and support oral presentations. For example, students might select images from *The Art Book* and *The Movie Book* or charts and graphs from *The Business Book* and *The Economics Book* to accompany research-based presentations.

### Domain-Specific Vocabulary (Anchor Standards 3, 4, and 6, Language):

The Common Core Anchor Standards for Language emphasize the ability to use context clues to understand language and to learn domain-specific vocabulary. The *Big Ideas Simply Explained* series is ideal for practicing this skill precisely because each book addresses a specific discipline or domain with its own specialized vocabulary. Most of the books in this series also include a glossary, a text feature that students can use to practice using reference materials to acquire new vocabulary and understand it in a domain-specific context.



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### Understanding Information (Anchor Standards 2 and 3, Reading):

The Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading ask students to identify and analyze central ideas and themes, analyze the development of individuals, events, and ideas over the course of the text, and analyze the structure of texts, including how various parts of the text relate to the whole. The books in this series are perfectly aligned with helping students to accomplish these goals. To help students identify central ideas and themes, direct students to the introduction of the book and the introductions to each section, where these are typically expressed. Then ask students to trace the development of the ideas and themes they identify throughout the book, using specific examples from various points in the text. To complete this exercise, have students select two or more of the entries and analyze how they relate to each other and to the larger themes or ideas of the book. Any of the books in the *Big Ideas Simply Explained* series can be used to complete this assignment.

### Purpose (Anchor Standard 5, Reading):

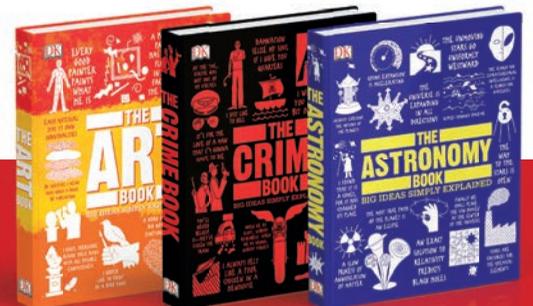
The Common Core Anchor Standards ask students to identify the purpose of a text and assess how that purpose shapes the content and style. Using any of the books in this series, ask students to identify the authors' purpose for writing. Then discuss how the type of information included and the organization of that information supports the authors' purpose. Complete this exercise at a whole-book level, or complete this exercise using only one of the entries. Have students use nonfiction text features such as the Table of Contents, headings and subheadings, and sidebars to describe how organization of information helps the authors accomplish their purpose.

### Visual Information (Anchor Standard 7, Reading):

Students today must be prepared to interpret information presented in a variety of formats, a reality that is addressed in the Common Core Anchor Standards. Increasingly, information is presented visually, in the form of images, charts, and graphs. The books in this series provide plenty of opportunity for students to practice analyzing and interpreting visual information. For example, the timelines at the beginning of each section in *The Shakespeare Book* can be used to provide a summary of Shakespeare's life, times, and works. The many graphical depictions of the ideas expressed in *The Science Book* can be used to help students easily understand a particular scientific concept or scientist's contribution. All the books in this series provide ample opportunities for evaluating visual information.

### More Nonfiction Text Features

In addition to the nonfiction text features mentioned in the activities above, the main entries are followed by a section most often called a Directory (but given another title in some of the books) that provides brief one- or two-paragraph entries on people, ideas, events, and works of art and literature relevant to the topic of the book that are not included as main entries, but are still important to know. For example, *The History Book* includes a list of "Further Events." These shorter entries can provide a starting point for additional research and can be used to emphasize the idea that no one book can cover everything. All the books also include an Index, and most include a list of Quote Attributions for the quotations that appear throughout the books. Practice using these nonfiction text features with students to support the Common Core emphasis on informational texts.



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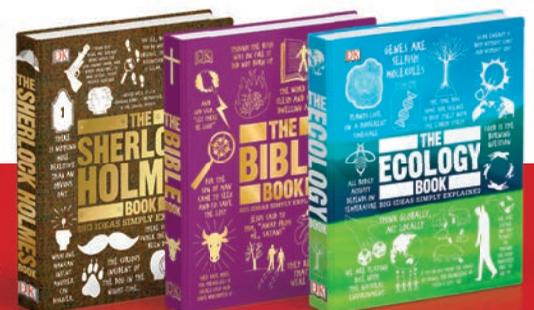
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