



A Look at Informational FICtion

The term *informational fiction* refers to books that contain a significant amount of true information that’s supported by documented research, but also have some made up parts.



These books include historical fiction, like the Dear America series, and picture book biographies with some invented dialog, imagined scenes, or events presented out of chronological order to improve the storytelling.

They also include STEM-themed books that present concepts accurately, but contain made-up characters, fantastical art, or other embellishments. Examples include The Magic School Bus series, books narrated

by animals or inanimate objects, and some animal life cycle stories.



This helpful term acknowledges that, in some cases, taking creative liberties with true, documentable facts can be an effective way to share ideas and information with young readers. But it also emphasizes the importance of transparency, especially in this era of fake news. Young readers have a right to know if what they reading is completely true, and if not, what parts are made up and why.

Generally speaking, authors embrace the term “informational fiction” because it acknowledges their research process and that their books are mostly faithful to the facts. But the Library of Congress labels these books “juvenile literature” (the term they use for nonfiction). And for the most part, publishers and reviewers called the books nonfiction. But the term “**nonfiction**” doesn’t just mean a book has *some* documentable ideas and information, it means nothing—not a single thing—is made up.



To reinforce this idea, teachers and librarians should think carefully about where they shelve informational fiction titles in their collections. Placing these books in a separate section will help children recognize that while they include documentable information, they include also some made-up parts.

Ideally, this knowledge will encourage students to think critically as they read. Perhaps they’ll even skim the backmatter first to find out what’s made up and why the author and/or illustrator made these choices. These are the kinds of skills we hope all 21st-century learners will develop in school and use to evaluate texts throughout their lives.