

SCHOOLWIDE BOOK REVIEW

The “Read and Wonder” Series—Terrific Nonfiction!

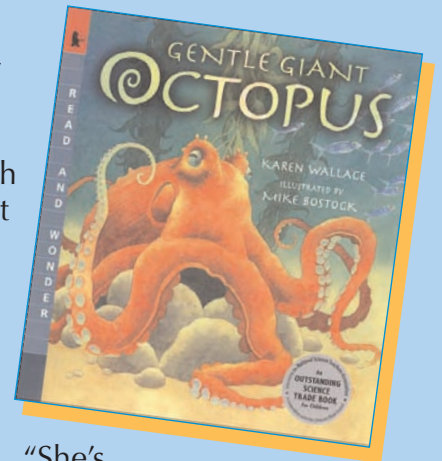
The “Read and Wonder” series of nonfiction books by Candlewick Press offers a terrific sampling of nonfiction topics, many about animals that your students already may be interested in learning about: wild animals such as whales, octopi, penguins, dinosaurs (*T. Rex*), and domestic animals, such as geese, pigs, and horses. With eye-catching illustrations and captions, your students will be drawn into these books and will then ask for more. The engaging stories are enriched by vital information that will inspire your readers as well as add to their content knowledge in science. Check to see if the book you want from this series comes in the big-book format—several do. With so many books to choose from (fifteen total in the series), it was difficult to choose only four to highlight. Because they are featured texts in our Writing Fundamentals and Testing Fundamentals curriculum, the choice was narrowed to the books described below.

***Gentle Giant Octopus* by Karen Wallace**

ISBN 076361730-X

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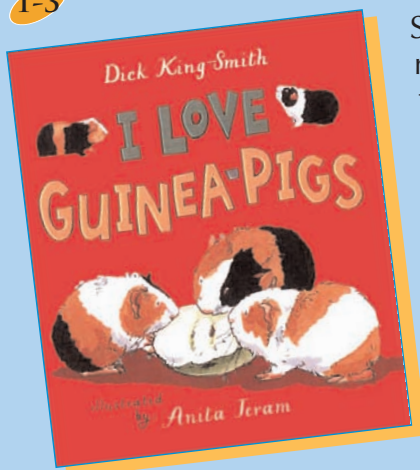
This wonderful work of literary nonfiction takes readers on an undersea journey with a mother octopus as she searches for a den in which to lay her impressive cache of eggs. Wallace interweaves into the narrative tale general facts about giant octopi, such as: they “don’t have any bones, and they can squeeze through the tiniest of holes.” Mike Bostock’s exquisite watercolor paintings vividly depict the textual details to give readers a close-up look at the octopus, the obstacles she faces, and the brood she bears and protects. Keep in mind that the giant octopus dies after her young hatch, a fact that is shared in the last line but ameliorated by the triumphant sense of life having come full circle at the end of the book. This book is also a wonderful tool for discussing how writers, even nonfiction writers, use literary devices and figurative language. Wallace’s similes are especially well accomplished in her descriptions of the octopus (e.g., “She’s huge like a spaceship”; her “long tentacles fly like ribbons behind her”; and she “sinks like a huge rubber flower”). *Think of an Eel* is also written by Karen Wallace for the Read and Wonder series.



***I Love Guinea Pigs* by Dick King-Smith**

ISBN 076361435-1

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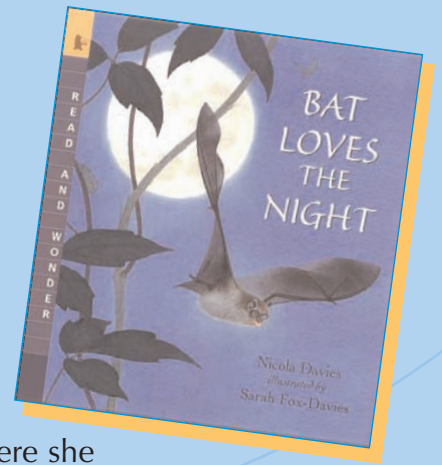
Several of your students will undoubtedly have guinea pigs at home, and young readers’ familiarity with these animals make this a perfect book for introducing the nonfiction genre. The fuzzy, fun-loving creatures are brought to life in Anita Jeram’s colorful drawings, which brilliantly complement the fact-filled text. Within the discussions of the proper care and feeding of these loveable animals, the author integrates additional facts in a smaller font, such as how long guinea pigs live (five to eight years) and their Latin name, *cavia porcellus*. King-Smith also personalizes his writing by including observations and anecdotal stories about the guinea pigs he has known and loved. He even shares with students the special place where his pets that have passed are buried. This touching nonfiction book will inspire students to learn all about their own favorite animals, write about topics they love, and share their personal experiences and expertise in writing, too. Also look for *All Pigs are Beautiful* by King-Smith in the Read and Wonder series.

Bat Loves the Night by Nicola Davies

ISBN 076362438-1

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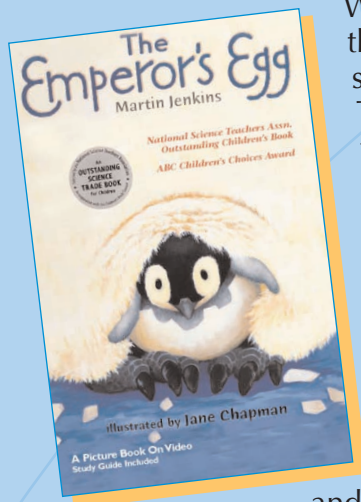
A wonderful work of literary nonfiction that melodically takes readers on the nightly journey of Bat, a female *pipistrelle*, who flies and hunts throughout the night to feed herself and her young. The illustrations by Sarah Fox-Davies zoom in on the subtle beauty and delicacy of these fine creatures and show students the world of the bat in all its active glory from the unique vantage point of the bat itself. Interspersed between narrative passages are general facts about bats, set off in a smaller font than the main text. Wonderful action words heighten suspense for readers as Bat “plunges” and “grabs” her prey; “dives,” “nets it,” and “scoops it to her mouth” (p. 17). Beautiful language abounds, and Nicola Davies is especially adept at employing similes and sensory details, such as where she tells readers that Bat “beams her voice around her like a flashlight, and the echoes come singing back” (p. 14).



The Emperor's Egg by Martin Jenkins

ISBN 076361871-3

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With the popularity of the award-winning documentary, *March of the Penguins*, and the more recent release, *Happy Feet* (an animated feature about penguins), your students will want to pick up this delightfully informative book by Martin Jenkins. The book walks the reader through the process of how Emperor penguins care for their eggs—showing in detail both parents’ roles in caretaking. Large font with emphasized text for excitement makes this a book both easily accessible to a wide range of students and one that is fun to read. Captions help a reader learn more about penguins with detailed information, such as: “Male Emperor penguins are about 4 feet tall”; “Inside the egg, a penguin chick is starting to grow”; and “penguins eat mainly fish, squid, and tiny shrimp-like animals called krill.” The illustrations by Jane Chapman draw the reader in and help to enrich the text. An index allows students to search back through the text to find specific information they want to know about Emperor penguins. Jenkins turns what could be dry information about an animal into an intriguing portrait about penguin family life and the excitement of watching an egg hatch. With this book in your classroom, you’ll

have a text from which you can teach the features of nonfiction and a book students will want to read over and over again.