

PREPARE TO BE AMAZED: SCIENCE AND LITERACY IN YOUR NEWSPAPER

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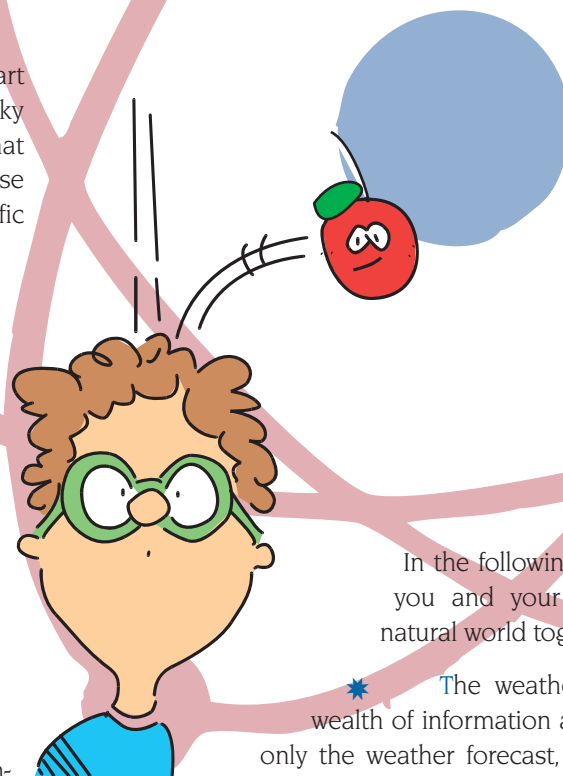
Humans are curious. As soon as young children start speaking, they begin asking questions: "Why is the sky blue?" "How come snakes don't have legs?" "What makes airplanes fly?" When parents answer these questions, they encourage their children's scientific curiosity. As children get older, their questions become more complex, but that underlying question of "why" is often the first posed.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines science as "the observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena." Phenomena can include types of rocks, the human body and how it functions, plants and how and where they grow, animals and their habitats, and many other topics.

Did you know that newspapers are a great resource when you are looking for answers to your child's questions? Newspapers contain breaking news about scientific discoveries. They also have pages and sometimes whole sections devoted to science and health. These pages contain reports on new inventions, implications of scientific knowledge on our lives, and other fascinating material. Reading news articles and looking for answers in the newspaper make science real because it is happening in the present and relates to real people.

Just think of all the information that is printed in newspapers each day about the weather, the environment, medical breakthroughs, new technologies, diet and its effect on the human body ... the list can go on forever. When children read or talk with their parents about topics of interest, they gain knowledge and learn how science affects their everyday lives. They find out that science not only happens in the laboratory, but also in the natural world around them.

In her book "The Sense of Wonder," noted environmental author Rachel Carson writes, "The lasting pleasures of contact with the natural world are not reserved for scientists but are available to anyone who will place himself under the influence of earth, sea, and sky and their amazing life."



In the following paragraphs you'll find some ways you and your children can share the amazing natural world together using the newspaper.

The weather page in your newspaper has a wealth of information about the natural world. It gives not only the weather forecast, but also information about pollen count and air quality; the times of sunrise, sunset, moonrise and moonset; water levels of rivers; and the times of high and low tides. If you or your child has allergies, the pollen count relates in a very personal way to your lives.

Your newspaper's weather page may also provide an opportunity to talk about history. What were the high and low temperatures yesterday? How do these compare with your city or region's average temperatures for this time of year? Does your newspaper list weather records, like highest or lowest temperature? When did those occur?

Try tracking temperatures over a week to see how accurate the weather forecast is. And if your child is really a weather bug, compare your weather to weather in other major U.S. and world cities. Talk about the fronts shown on the weather map and how those might affect your weather in the future.

When you plan a fishing trip with your child, check the weather report