



Tips for Teaching with *Ranger Rick*[®] Magazine

Take a Tour. When a new issue of *Ranger Rick* arrives, invite students to take a “picture walk” through the magazine, either as a group or on their own. Look at the story titles, photos and illustrations, and photo captions for clues to what each story will be about. Ask students to make predictions, jot down questions, and note which stories they are most interested in reading.

Make It Relevant. Before reading a story, engage students’ interest by providing opportunities for them to share what they already know about a subject. For example, has anyone seen a featured animal in the wild or at a zoo? Has anyone visited the place where a story is set? Has anyone read a book or watched a television program on this topic?

Spread the Words. Stories in *Ranger Rick* often include words related to the topic that may be new to students. Introduce new vocabulary before students read a story. Encourage students to use these words in pre- and post-reading discussions.

Dissect the Text. Discuss with students how informational texts (nonfiction that informs readers about a specific topic) differs from fiction in both purpose and structure. Keep an ongoing list of helpful features in informational texts, such as the table of contents, titles, subheadings, photos and illustrations, captions, maps, diagrams, definitions, and different sizes and styles of typeface. Encourage students to look for and make use of these features as they read.

Talk About It. After students have read a story, be sure to discuss it. Good discussions encourage students to think about what they have read, and as a result, enhance comprehension. Jump-start your discussion by posing open-ended questions about the story: questions that do not have “one correct answer” and that require more than a single-word response. This type of discussion invites students to participate and to engage in higher level thinking.

Consider the Options. When it comes to reading *Ranger Rick*, try mixing and matching a variety of options. Students could: 1) read it to themselves as an assignment or during free-reading time, 2) read it together as a class, with the teacher reading aloud or students taking turns, 3) read it with a partner or in a small group while the teacher is working with other reading groups, or 4) read a selected story and do a corresponding activity at a learning center during individualized instruction time.

Let ’Em Listen. If some students in your group are not yet reading at the level of *Ranger Rick*, tape yourself reading a story aloud. Then set up a listening center with a tape player, headphones, and a print version of the magazine. Students can listen to the words as they follow along with the text and look at the pictures.

Ranger Rick® Teaching Tips

Read with a Buddy. Match your group with a group of younger or older students and pair each student with a buddy from the other group. Give pairs time to read together and discuss what they have read, with older students acting as mentors for younger students.

Take It Home. Give students an opportunity to take the magazine home to read and discuss with their families. Particularly for students just learning English, this is a great way to practice language skills and involve family members in a child's education. If you don't have enough magazines for students to keep them, consider assembling some "reading backpacks" that hold an issue of *Ranger Rick* and several books about topics featured in the magazine. Students can then check out a backpack to take home for a designated period of time.

Keep It Real. Whenever possible, provide students with firsthand experiences to bring the text to life. For example, observe common animals such as snails or turtles before reading about them. Go outside and look for animal tracks after reading about a wildlife tracker. Visit a park, a museum, an aquarium, or any other setting where students can see the things they have been or will be reading about.

Connect Across the Curriculum. Learning about biodiversity in science? Studying desert cultures in social studies? Comparing fiction and nonfiction in language arts? Introducing bar graphs or pie charts in math? These are just a few of the many opportunities you'll find to make connections between stories in *Ranger Rick* and other elements of your curriculum. The more students see how subjects are interrelated, the richer and more meaningful their new knowledge becomes.

Create a Research File. Will students be researching themes related to animals or nature for reports or presentations at some point during the school year? Or just looking for answers to their own questions? If so, archive back issues of *Ranger Rick* as sources for students to consult.

Go Deeper. Ask students to agree on a specific animal, location, or ecosystem featured in *Ranger Rick* that particularly interests them. Then use the story as a launching point for an in-depth study of this topic. Students can find books at the library on the subject; search for information online; and look for fiction, poems, songs, or art that further enhance their understanding and appreciation of the subject. Designate a place in the room for this collection and encourage students to explore and add to it over time.

Keep Learning! As students read about new subjects in *Ranger Rick*, they will invariably ask you questions that you can't answer. That's OK—you can learn together! Hunt for answers to their questions in the library or online. Use field guides to identify living things and natural phenomena in your own neighborhood. And check the *Ranger Rick* Web page (especially the Book Nook) at nwf.org/rangerrick for more information on topics featured in the current issue of the magazine.

Have a teaching tip of your own that you'd like to share? We would love to hear it!

Email rick@nwf.org with your ideas.