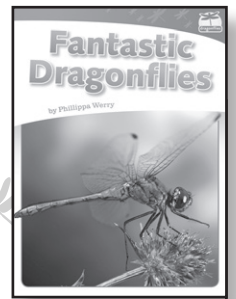


Fantastic Dragonflies

by Philippa Werry






Overview

This informational text explores the life of dragonflies, focusing on the special features that have enabled them to survive for millions of years. It uses fun facts and vivid photography to engage the reader. (Big idea: Scientists study plants and animals to help us understand them.)

Suggested purposes

This book supports the following **comprehension strategies**:

- understanding the author's purpose 
- visualising 
- comparing and contrasting. 

It supports the following **non-fiction strategies**:

- gaining information from photographs and captions
- using a flow chart – life cycle
- reading labelled diagrams
- using a glossary (boldface type).

Key vocabulary

The vocabulary that is focused on includes:

- Anchor words – *animals, features, habitat, plants, survive*
- Content words – *adult, air, birds, dinosaurs, dragonflies, Earth, eggs, eyes, fish, gills, insects, jaws, lakes, legs, life cycle, moulting, mouth, nymphs, ponds, predators, prey, river, skin, spiders, streams, summer, tail, water, wings*
- High-frequency words – *about, again, behind, eat, find, first, got, home, into, last, left, live, long, look, many, other, their, through, use*

Features of the text

- Non-fiction features:
 - cover flap, which provides support for identifying the big ideas and anchor words
 - the topic (dragonflies), which expands on pages 8 and 9 of the anchor book *Being a Scientist*
 - preview question on the back cover
 - headings, which support students to read in sections
 - labelled diagrams
 - life cycle
 - flow chart
 - fact boxes
 - close-up photographs
 - captions
 - use of italics, bright colours, and arrows
 - green boxes that elaborate on the text
 - index
 - glossary (boldface type)
- Word study:
 - compound words – *dragonflies, somewhere*
 - plural endings – *dragonflies*
- Descriptive language:
 - similes – *like a basket, like a dragon's mouth, like a robot arm*
 - adjectives – *strong, scary*
- Apostrophe – *dragonfly's*



Setting the scene

If you have already introduced the topic using the whole-class lesson plan and the anchor book (*Being a Scientist*), you can review the discussion and show the students pages 8 and 9 of the anchor book.

Draw a three-column chart on a large piece of paper. Write the headings “What I Know”, “What I Want to Know”, and “What I Learned”. (This is called a KWL chart.)

- *What do you know about dragonflies?*
- *What questions do you have about them?*

Record the students’ responses in the first and second columns. Explain that as you read the book, you will complete the third column.

ELL support

Non-fiction text features such as headings, boldface type, tables, and graphics are important supports for ELL students when reading. Drawing their attention to these features allows them to glean information they may not be able to read independently.

The first reading

Page 2 – Have the students read the contents page. Encourage them to ask questions, for example, “What does “nymph” mean?” “Why are a dragonfly’s eyes amazing?” Add the students’ questions to the second column of the KWL chart. Have them refer back to their original questions. *Which section/s might have the answers?*

AP **Page 3** – (**Understanding the author’s purpose**) *What does “features” mean? Why is it in bold? Where might we find the meaning? Have the students refer to the glossary. What features might have helped the dragonfly to survive? How has the author made the subject interesting? (exciting facts, captions, bright colours, questions)*

Page 4 – *Were any of your questions answered? How do you think flying has helped the dragonfly survive? Refer to the diagram and discuss how it helps us to understand the text. Refer to the blue labels. How are the labels similar to or different from the text? (give similar information but have less text)*

AP **Page 5** – (**Understanding the author’s purpose**) *Focus on the “Fantastic Fact”. How does this grab your attention? (bright colour, lively heading, author’s choice of words) What does “loop the loop” mean? Have the students draw a loop in the air. Ask them to imagine being in a race with a dragonfly. Who would win?*

Introducing the book

Front cover – Discuss the title and the photograph. *What does this photograph show? Why has the author used the word “fantastic”? How does the photograph show that the dragonfly is “fantastic”?*

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Discuss the KWL chart to build the students’ background knowledge.

Using the flap – Read aloud the text on the flap, and (if relevant) remind the students that they have read this in *Being a Scientist*. Read aloud the other side of the flap. Tell the students that they can point out the anchor words when they find them in the book. Ask them to leave the flap open as they read.

Title page – *What does this close-up photograph tell you about dragonflies? Where might this dragonfly live?*

Page 6 – Read aloud the heading. Look up “prey” and “predator” in the glossary. *Why are dragonflies’ eyes good for hunting?*

Page 7 – (**Visualising, Understanding the author’s purpose**) *Why is this fact “fantastic”? What other creatures can see in many different directions? What would it be like to have eyes like that? How does this page show that the author thinks dragonflies are fantastic?*



Page 8 – Have the students read the heading. Discuss the comma. *How do we read this?* Have them read aloud the heading, ensuring that they take a short pause after “long”. Read the first sentence. *Why has the author used a comma here?* (to encourage the reader to pause and think about what “all insects” are like)

Page 9 – (**Visualising**) *How has the author described how the dragonfly uses its legs? Ask a volunteer to demonstrate using their hands like a basket. Explain that the simile “like a basket” makes it easier for us to visualise and understand. Visualise a dragonfly flying through the air, seeing a fly and scooping it up. Have volunteers research gnats and midges and share their findings with the class.*



V

Page 10 – Read the heading. *What might a dragon have to do with a dragonfly?* (Visualising) *Can you find the simile that helps us visualise a dragonfly's jaws? How might its jaws have helped it to survive?*

AP

Page 11 – *How has the author kept you interested in the dragonfly?* (Understanding the author's purpose) (extreme close-up, Fantastic Fact)

Page 12 – *What is the purpose of the photograph? How can you use the text to figure out what "habitat" means?* Revisit the KWL chart. Tick off items from the first column that have appeared in the book. Add new information under "What I Learned".

V

AP

Page 13 – (Visualising, Understanding the author's purpose) *How do the photograph and caption create a sense of danger?* (When we read the caption, we realise that the dragonfly could be eaten by a hungry fish.) Look up "life cycle" in the glossary. *What does "nymph" mean? How does the text help you figure it out?* Ensure the students understand that the "ph" is pronounced "f".

V

CC

Pages 14 and 15 – (Visualising, Comparing and contrasting) Discuss the differences between an adult dragonfly and a nymph. (For example, a nymph lives for up to five years; a dragonfly lives only a few weeks.) *What further questions do you have?*

Pages 16, 17, 18, and 19 – *What does "moulting" mean? How do you know?* Have the students refer to the glossary. *Were you correct?* Discuss the students' prior knowledge of moulting. (dogs, cats, birds) How does the life cycle begin again?

Pages 20 and 21 – Read the heading and revisit the term "life cycle." *How is this diagram like a cycle? What features help you to read it?* Explain that along with the text and photographs, the arrows show it as a cycle. Explain that diagrams summarise information and help us to remember it. Have the students work in pairs to explain the life cycle of a dragonfly. Encourage them to refer to the book.

Reflect on the students' questions on the chart. *Which questions have been answered? What have you learned? Complete the final column. What features of the text helped you learn about dragonflies? Do you have any new questions?* (Understanding the author's purpose) *How does the author feel about dragonflies? How does she show this?* ("fantastic" in the title, descriptive language, encouraging the reader to take an interest ["If you're ever near a pond, watch out for dragonflies"])

AP

Vocabulary activity

Focus word: features

1. Turn to page 3 and reread the text. *They have many features that have helped them to survive.*
2. Say "features" with me.
3. Explain that a feature is a special characteristic. *A feature is a part of something that makes it special.* Have the students choose an animal and describe to a partner its features. Give an example: "An elephant has many features. It has a trunk for drinking water, washing itself, and scaring away predators. It has tusks for stripping bark from trees and fighting other animals."
4. Have the students make connections with "features".
 - Describe your features. What makes you special or unique?
 - Describe the features of your classroom.
 - Describe the features of your favourite game.
 - Explain that "features" can also apply to the special elements of this book, such as diagrams and headings, exclamation marks, descriptive language (similes and adjectives), and the Fantastic Fact boxes.
5. Do the following activities:
 - Have the students compare a nymph's features with a dragonfly's using a Venn diagram. Explain that they must decide which features are similar and which are different.
 - Have the students work in groups. One member must think of an object or animal. The others must guess what it is by asking questions about its features.
 - Bring an object to class. Have the students brainstorm its features using a word web.
6. *What is the word we have been learning that means a special characteristic? Say "features" with me.*

ELL activity

Language objective: Developing understanding and recognition of similes

- Reread the book with the students.
- *Let's share the different ways the author describes dragonflies.* Record the students' ideas. Encourage them to find specific words and phrases. If they don't find examples of similes, draw their attention to those on pages 9 (hold their legs like a basket), 10 (mouth is strong and scary, like a dragon's mouth), and 15 (a nymph has a big lower lip. It's like a robot arm).

- Write the three examples on the board. *What word do all these sentences use?* (like)
- Talk about how similes use “like” to compare one thing with another.
- *Let’s think of some similes.* Allow the students to describe familiar things in the classroom using similes.
- Ask the students to write a simile and draw a picture.

Ideas for revisiting the text

1. Review and check

- Listen as the students reread the text, observing their fluency and decoding strategies.
- Review the anchor and content words by doing a Word Splash. Write the words onto cards and have the students put them into groups. Encourage them to give reasons for their choices. Discuss any leftover words and clarify their meanings.

2. Stop and learn

a. Decoding/word attack activities

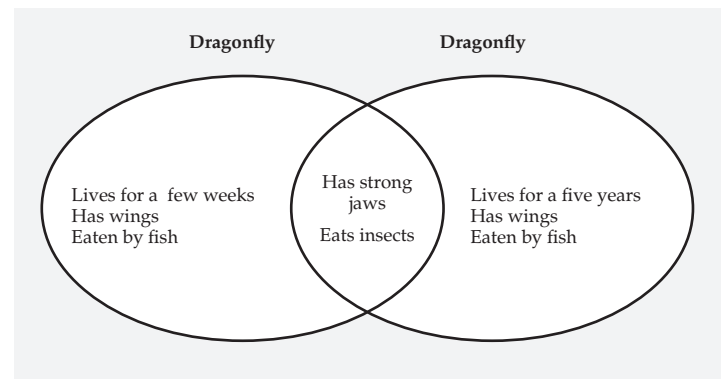
BLM – Using plural endings

Explain that when we want to show more than one of something, we often add “s”. *How do we change “dragonfly” to mean more than one? Write “dragonfly” and “dragonflies” on the board. Which letter has been dropped from “dragonfly”? Which letters have replaced it? Explain that we change “y” to “i” and add “es”. Have the students practise using the BLM.*

b. Comprehension activities

- Discuss the author’s style of writing. *How does the author show that she loves dragonflies?* Draw out elements such as the following:
 - dramatic words (fantastic, amazing, survivors, dragon’s jaws)
 - exclamation marks to show enthusiasm
 - question marks to engage the reader’s curiosity
- Discuss the close-up photographs. *What effect do they have?* Give examples such as the following:
 - *The dragonfly seems to be looking at the reader.*
 - *The dragonfly looks as though it comes from another planet.*
 - *We can see the patterns on its wings more clearly.*
- Discuss the index. *How does it help you to find information?*

- Refer to the discussion of pages 14 and 15. Have the students draw a Venn diagram to show the differences and similarities between a dragonfly and a nymph. Use the diagram below as a model.



BLM – Identifying and summarising the main ideas

Have the students reread *Fantastic Dragonflies*.

Reflect on the purpose of the life cycle diagram on pages 20 and 21. Explain that a mind map is another way of organising and summarizing information. The students can use the mind map on the BLM to organise and summarise information about a dragonfly’s features.

c. Writing activities

- Have the students imagine they are a nymph or a dragonfly. They must write diary entries that include information about their habitat and features. Provide sentence starters such as the following:
 - *This morning, I found ...*
 - *I hid in the riverbed and ...*
 - *Today I ate ...*
- Have the students draw the life cycle of another insect, such as a butterfly, using pages 20 and 21 as a model. Remind them to use pictures, arrows, and brief descriptions. Emphasise that the purpose of a life cycle diagram is to help the reader understand and remember information.
- Have the students research another creature, focusing on the features that help it to survive.

3. Suggestions for further activities

- Research any unanswered questions using the Internet or a library.
- Expand on the survival theme by inventing a new feature to make the dragonfly even stronger, such as something to keep fish away as it lays eggs. Have the students draw a labelled diagram of a dragonfly with the new feature.
- Make a papier-mâché or wire model of a dragonfly. Use the diagrams in the book to help.