

# Strategies for Close Reading of Digital Text

- Guiding Questions
- Guided Reading
- Chunking
- Annotation

You're in: The Curious Garden and Our Earth: Helping Out

Now Playing: The Curious Garden



Focus on vocabulary

What does "restless" mean?

How does the word restless help the reader understand why the garden was curious?

# Guiding Questions - Strategy

- Provide readers with essential questions that
  - Prepare them to read the text
  - Engage them as they read
  - Encourage analysis after reading

## READING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS: GUIDING QUESTIONS

<b>APPROACHING TEXTS</b> Reading closely begins by considering my specific purposes for reading and important information about a text.	<b>I am aware of my purposes for reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why am I reading this text?</li><li>• In my reading, should I focus on:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⇒ The content and information about the topic?</li><li>⇒ The structure and language of the text?</li><li>⇒ The author's view?</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>I take note of information about the text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the title?</li><li>• Who is the author?</li><li>• What type of text is it?</li><li>• Who published the text?</li><li>• When was the text published?</li></ul>
<b>QUESTIONING TEXTS</b> Reading closely involves: 1) initially questioning a text to focus my attention on its structure, ideas, language and perspective then 2) questioning further as I read to sharpen my focus on the specific details in the text.	<b>I begin my reading with questions to help me understand the text and I pose new questions while reading that help me deepen my understanding:</b> <b>Structure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How is the text organized?</li><li>• How has the author structured the sentences, lines, paragraphs, scenes or stanzas?</li></ul> <b>Topic, Information and Ideas:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What information/ideas are presented at the beginning of the text?</li><li>• What stands out to me as I first examine this text?</li><li>• What information/ideas are described in detail?</li><li>• What do I learn about the topic as I read?</li><li>• How do the ideas relate to what I already know?</li><li>• What do I think this text is mainly about?</li></ul>	<b>Language:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What words or phrases stand out to me?</li><li>• What words and phrases are powerful or</li><li>• What do the author's words cause me to</li><li>• What words do I need to define to better</li><li>• What words and phrases are repeated?</li></ul> <b>Perspective:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is the intended audience of the text?</li><li>• What is the author's/narrator's stance or a topic or theme?</li><li>• How does the author's language show his</li><li>• What is the author's personal relationship themes?</li></ul>
<b>ANALYZING DETAILS</b> Reading closely involves analyzing and connecting the details I have found through my questioning to determine their meaning, importance, and the ways they help develop ideas across a text.	<b>I analyze the details I find through my questioning:</b> <b>Patterns across the text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does the repetition of words or phrases in the text suggest?</li><li>• How do details, information, characters or ideas change across the text?</li><li>• How do the text's structure and features influence my reading?</li></ul> <b>Meaning of Language:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do specific words or phrases impact the meaning of the text?</li><li>• What words or phrases are critical for my understanding of the text?</li></ul>	<b>Importance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which details are most important to the text?</li><li>• Which sections are most challenging and reading?</li></ul> <b>Relationships among details:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How are details in the text related in a themes or ideas?</li><li>• What does the text leave uncertain or un</li></ul>

# Student-Created Questions

- Authentic questions – reader doesn't know the answer
- Questioning continues throughout the reading process
- Clarifying questions may need to be answered first (who, what, when) before ponderous questions can be asked (how, why, should)
- Modeling how to answer questions - how to find the information - is key
- “Wonder” may need to be retaught
- Different students will have different questions

~Cris Tovani, Dublin Literacy Conference 2017





# Collecting Evidence from Text

- Identify text type
- Conduct “key word grab”
- Set personal purpose for reading – “question blitz” (Daniels, Text and Lessons)
- Use “evidence collector” while reading

~Angela Faulhaber, Ohio Writing Project,  
Miami University





## Explore the world of reading!

Pick a category to find your next story.



Animals and Nature



Earth and Sky



People and Places



ABCs and 123s



Adventure



Family and Community



Celebrations



Music and Rhyme



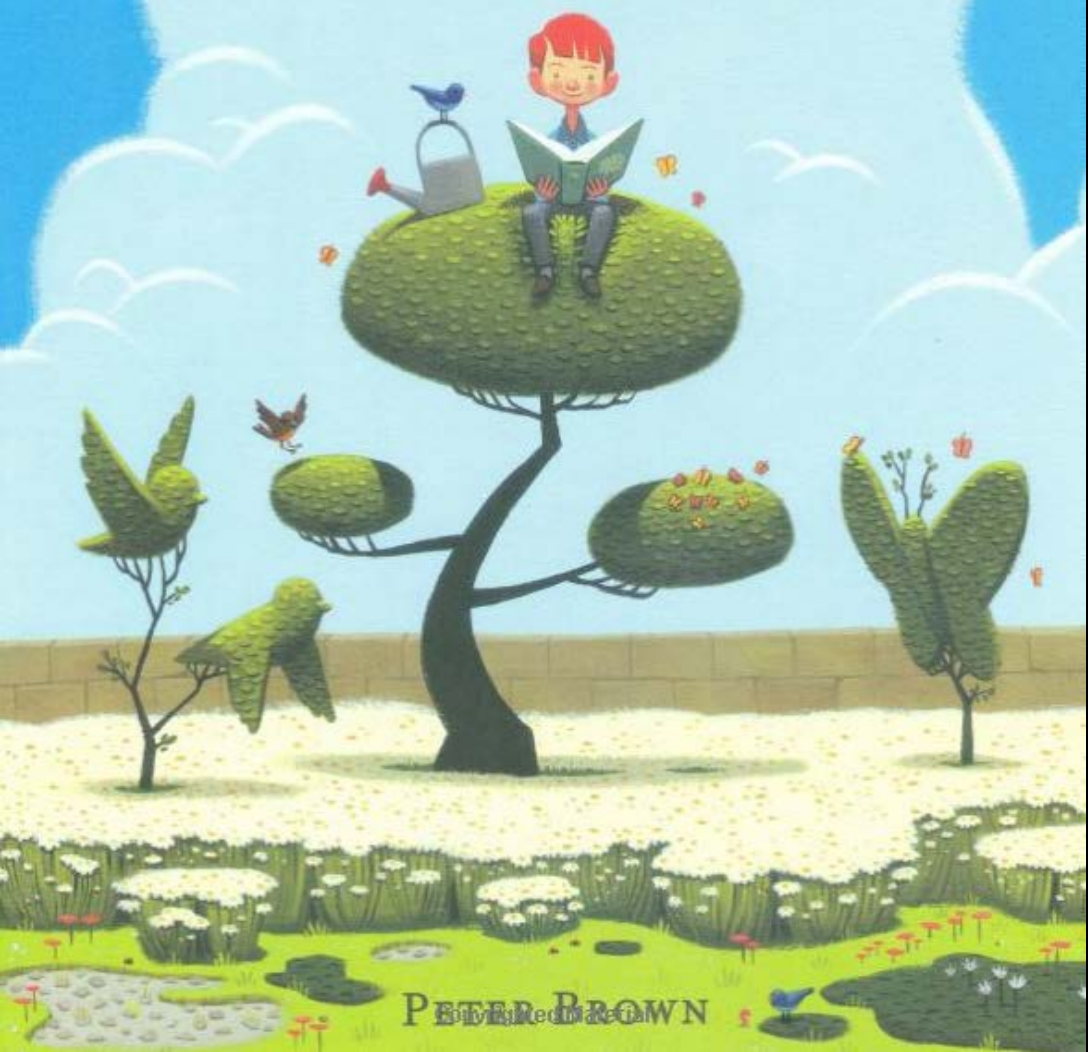
Imagination

# BookFlix

- 125 Fiction/NonFiction Pairs
- Fiction – WestWood Videos
- NonFiction – traditional eBook
- Both offer read-aloud and highlighted text
- Scholastic titles – popular and engaging



# The Curious Garden



What type of text is this?

What "key words" can you grab from the title and cover art?

What are questions do you have about the text using your key words? What about your partner?

Evidence Collector:

<p><b>Question 1</b> Why was the garden curious?</p>	<p><b>Question 2</b> How did the boy help the garden?</p>
<p><b>Question 3</b> What does the word "restless" mean? How does it explain why the garden was curious?</p>	<p><b>Question 4</b></p>

# Internet Guided Reading

- Start with print text
  - preview text with focus on text features, identify prior knowledge about the topic, locate vocabulary and discuss, make predictions, create a collaborative summary, create a question about text
- Locate digital text
  - Use question from print reading, use search engine to identify relevant text, closely read results
- Read digital text
  - Follow procedures used when reading print
  - Use online tool or graphic organizer to collect and synthesize evidence
    - David Salyer, Reading Teacher July, 2015

TEACHING TIP

## READING THE WEB

Internet Guided Reading With Young Children

*David Salyer*

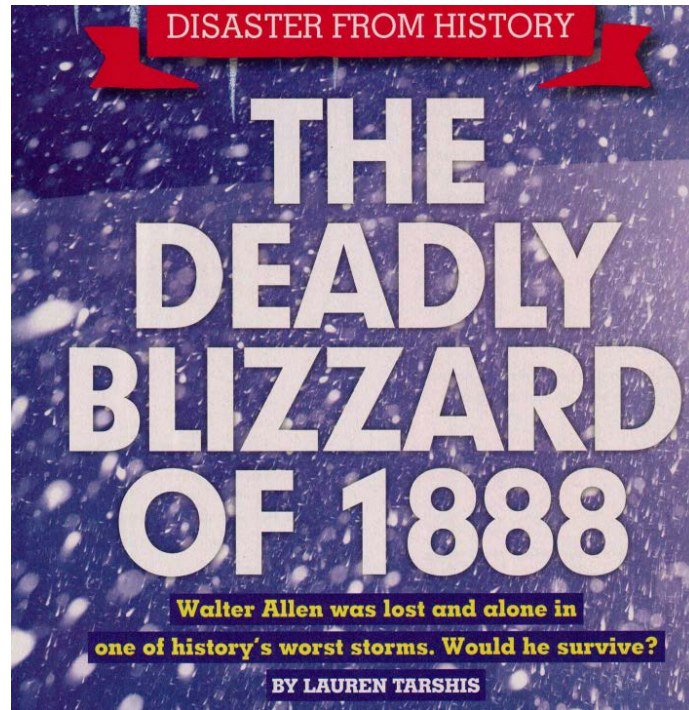
“What are the different kinds of kangaroos?” asked Stacy, a second grader, who was participating in an after-school reading clinic on the campus of a Midwestern college. Stacy was a member of an Internet Guided Reading group with two other second graders, Jalynn and Kyle, and their teacher, Ms. Peters (all names are pseudonyms). They were reading a print informational text that gave them limited information about this intriguing animal. Informational texts, used frequently in the campus reading clinic,

**Guided Reading, Reciprocal Teaching, and Online Reading Comprehension**

Internet Guided Reading with younger readers draws upon the areas of evidence-based literacy instruction: (1) guided reading, (2) reciprocal teaching, and (3) online reading comprehension instruction. Guided reading is a well-established best practice for organizing small groups of children for supported literacy instruction. The guided reading approach scaffolds children in learning “more about the process of reading while reading” (Jaquinta, 2006, p. 414) so they

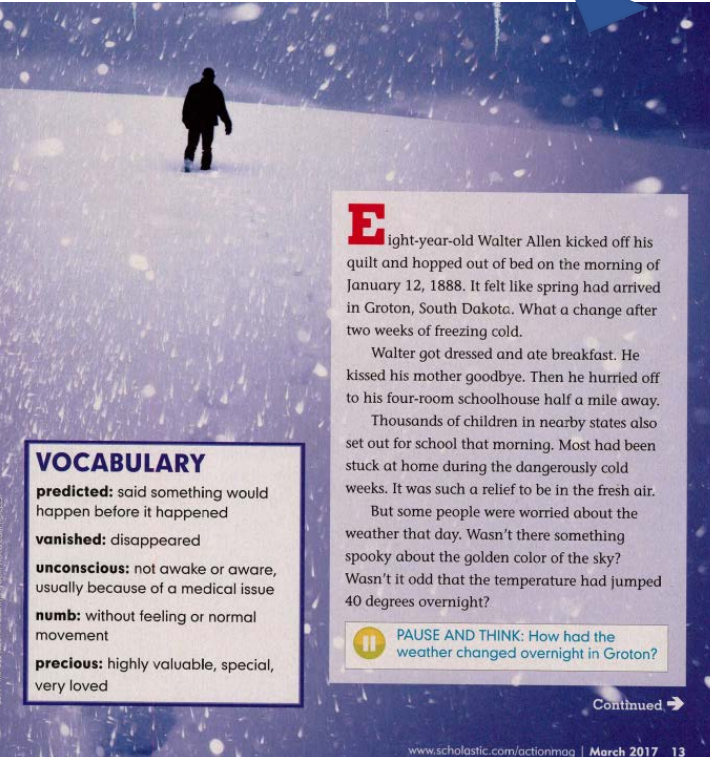


# 1. Read print text



Full-color images and authentic text engage readers.

Instructional tools are built in—vocabulary and guided reading questions are provided.



**VOCABULARY**

**predicted:** said something would happen before it happened

**vanished:** disappeared

**unconscious:** not awake or aware, usually because of a medical issue

**numb:** without feeling or normal movement

**precious:** highly valuable, special, very loved

**E**ight-year-old Walter Allen kicked off his quilt and hopped out of bed on the morning of January 12, 1888. It felt like spring had arrived in Groton, South Dakota. What a change after two weeks of freezing cold.

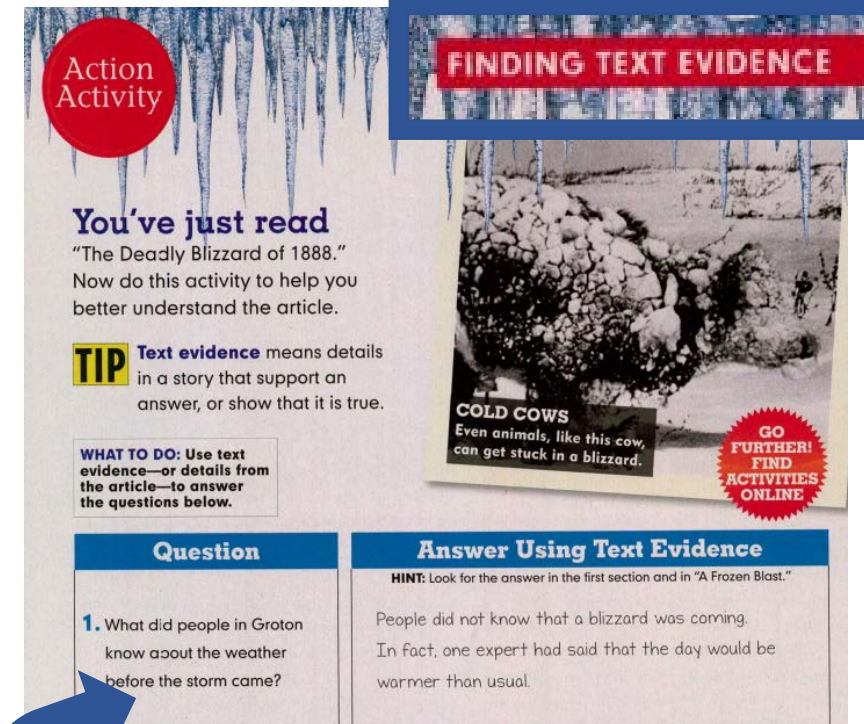
Walter got dressed and ate breakfast. He kissed his mother goodbye. Then he hurried off to his four-room schoolhouse half a mile away. Thousands of children in nearby states also set out for school that morning. Most had been stuck at home during the dangerously cold weeks. It was such a relief to be in the fresh air.

But some people were worried about the weather that day. Wasn't there something spooky about the golden color of the sky? Wasn't it odd that the temperature had jumped 40 degrees overnight?

**PAUSE AND THINK:** How had the weather changed overnight in Groton?

Continued →

www.scholastic.com/actionmag | March 2017 13



**Action Activity**

**FINDING TEXT EVIDENCE**

**You've just read**  
"The Deadly Blizzard of 1888."  
Now do this activity to help you better understand the article.

**TIP** **Text evidence** means details in a story that support an answer, or show that it is true.

**WHAT TO DO:** Use text evidence—or details from the article—to answer the questions below.

**Question**

1. What did people in Groton know about the weather before the storm came?

**Answer Using Text Evidence**

**HINT:** Look for the answer in the first section and in "A Frozen Blast."

People did not know that a blizzard was coming. In fact, one expert had said that the day would be warmer than usual.

**COLD COWS**  
Even animals, like this cow, can get stuck in a blizzard.

**GO FURTHER!**  
FIND ACTIVITIES ONLINE

The reading selection is followed by an exercise to help students find text evidence to support their understanding of the text.



## 2. Locate digital text

The screenshot shows the ISearch database interface. At the top, the logo 'ISearch Powered by INFOhio' is visible. The search bar contains 'blizzard of 1888'. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'eBooks & Videos', 'Basic Sources', 'Advanced Sources', 'Basic Encyclopedias', 'Advanced Encyclopedias', and 'STEM'. The 'Basic Sources' tab is selected, and the search results are displayed. The results list includes:

- 1. **THE DEADLY BLIZZARD OF 1888.** Author: TARSHIS, LAUREN. Source: Scholastic Action. Mar2017, Vol. 40 Issue 6, p12-16. 5p. Format: PDF. View/Download button.
- 2. **The Cataclysm That Changed New York.** Author: Ernsberger Jr., Richard. Source: American History. Oct2015, Vol. 50 Issue 4, p52-57. 6p. Format: PDF. View/Download button.
- 3. **Retrospect: January 12, 1888: The Children's Blizzard.** Author: Potter, Sean. Source: Weatherwise. Jan/Feb2012, Vol. 65 Issue 1, p10-11. 2p. 1 Map. Format: PDF. View/Download button.
- 4. **Retrospect.** Author: Potter, Sean. Source: Weatherwise. Mar2014, Vol. 67 Issue 2, p10-11. 2p. Format: PDF. View/Download button.
- 5. **One For The Books: Recalling Blizzards Of Winters Past: This Week's** View/Download button.

On the left side, there is a 'Limit Search Results' section with 'Narrowed by:' and 'Full Text' selected. Below this is a 'Publication' list with the following items and counts:

- weatherwise (4)
- grand forks herald (nd) (3)
- philadelphia inquirer, the (pa) (3)
- toronto star (canada) (3)
- american history (2)

At the bottom of the publication list, there is a 'blizzards' category with a count of (7), and a sub-list of related terms:

- winter storms (3)
- hurricanes (2)
- allen, walter (1)
- blizzards -- social aspects (1)

Three blue callout boxes are overlaid on the image:

- Box 1: 'Let them explore to discover... This is the article they just read.' pointing to the first search result.
- Box 2: 'Students can click here...' pointing to the 'View/Download' button of the second search result.
- Box 3: '...or here to find the description of the article's content.' pointing to the 'View/Download' button of the third search result.

# 3. Read digital text

## The Cataclysm That Changed New York

### Contents

1888 Blizzard in Brief

[TOP BLIZZARDS](#)

Listen   American Accent    

### How the Blizzard of 1888 Scared a Great City Into Modernizing Its Infrastructure

On Monday, March 11, 1888, the New York Herald published a poem by its staff poet, Walt Whitman, touting the coming change of seasons: "The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face," read one line. Whitman's timing was unfortunate. While the weather had been unseasonably mild, what New Yorkers faced that Monday morning bore no resemblance to spring or moderate weather of any kind.



*New Yorkers struggle to make their way along 26th Street during the 1888 blizzard.*

HTML...

# T

he night before, arctic winds had blown in from Canada and mixed with warm air sweeping up from the Atlantic Ocean. Temperatures plunged and it began raining heavily—and then after midnight the rain turned to snow. By morning New York City and all of the northeastern United States, from Washington to Maine, was caught in a ferocious blizzard that would pummel the region with 80-mile-an-hour winds, dump three to five feet of snow over the next 36 hours, sink ships along the East Coast, paralyze transportation and communications networks—isolating New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington for days—and kill more than 400 people. “The great white hurricane,” as the storm was called, so completely hobbled New York City that, in the aftermath, civic leaders renewed calls to build an underground transportation system and to bury all electrical lines. That’s a big reason why experts consider the 1888 blizzard one of the most consequential storms in American history.

In the late 19th century New Yorkers believed that neither man nor nature could slow their booming metropolis. That March morning, before the storm’s full impact became apparent, many braved the pelting snow and bitter wind to go to work. Within hours everybody was stranded. Massive snowdrifts, icy rails and no visibility shut down the city’s elevated train system and knocked over horse-drawn trolleys. Thousands of people got stuck on platforms and on trains and were forced to make their way home on foot. Scores escaped Brooklyn by

walking over frozen stretches of the East River—a rare occurrence.

Many people did not make it to safety, getting lost or disoriented and freezing to death in the tempest. Half the deaths from the storm were in New York City. A NIGHT OF DEVASTATION! read a headline in the *Herald*. PERISHING MEN AND WOMEN; WANDERERS FOUND DEAD IN SNOWDRIFTS. The *New York Times* called it “the worst storm the city has ever known.” Roscoe Conkling, a former U.S. senator from New York, collapsed in his hotel residence on Madison Square after making a three-hour trek from his Wall Street law office. He died five weeks later of complications from exposure.

Apart from dangers, the storm had plenty of

A tangle of icy telephone, telegraph and electrical wires hangs over New York after the storm.

## 1888 Blizzard in Brief

**Type of storm:** Classic nor’easter  
**Snowfall:** 30 to 60 inches from Chesapeake to Maine  
**Winds:** Upwards of 80 mph  
**Snowdrifts:** As high as 50 feet  
**Deaths:** More than 400, about half in New York City  
**Property damage from fire:** Estimated \$25 million



...or PDF.



## Pause and Ponder

- Using Internet Guided Reading requires a source of high-quality print informational texts. How can you make sure that young readers will have ready access to these texts? How will readers be matched with these texts?
- What types of devices and Internet access do you now have that would be optimal for Internet Guided Reading?
- As young readers become skillful with online reading comprehension, how might that begin to suggest changes in learning and teaching throughout the curriculum? Could this involve adopting an inquiry-based or project-based learning approach to content areas such as social studies or science?

Table 1 Eight Questions to Ask When Selecting a Website

1. Does the website have a clear purpose?
2. Does the website have information needed to answer the reader's questions?
3. Are the language and concepts within the reader's control, or nearly so with appropriate support?
4. Will the organization of the website be clear to the reader?
5. Is the navigation reader-friendly?
6. Will the graphics be accessible to the reader?
7. Do the dynamic and interactive elements support the purpose of the website?
8. Are there short bursts of text, or can the text be easily segmented to manage and differentiate the reading?

Table 2 A Comparison of Online and Offline Informational Text Reading Practices

### Online Guided Reading

- Create/review a question
- Discuss the information needed to answer the question
- Query the search engine
- Read the titles and snippets of the search engine results
- Make a decision to follow a link
- Preview the webpage
- Navigate/monitor (scroll, swipe, follow links)
- Read, view, listen, discuss the text

### Offline Guided Reading

- Select a text related to a topic
- Scan table of contents/index to preview the information in the text
- Select a section
- Preview the section
- Navigate/monitor (locate/turn pages)
- Read, view, discuss the text

# Chunking - Strategy

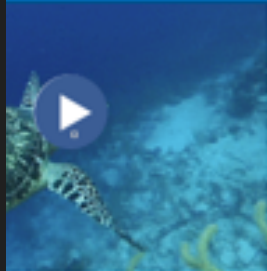
- Breaking down larger sections of text into smaller, more manageable sections
- Works well for complex texts
- Great for discussion or modeling
- Allows for zooming on devices for larger text size

D BOOK KIDS Welcome INFOhio

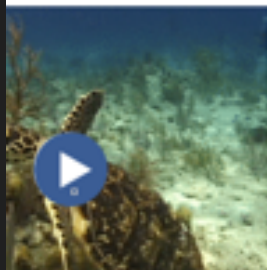
Pictures, Videos, and More More information

## Sea turtle

Sea turtles are large turtles that live almost their whole lives in the ocean. They have long necks and flippers. They can travel thousands of miles across the seas. Their large flippers make them excellent swimmers. However, they are slow moving and drag themselves along with their flippers. There are several kinds of sea turtles.



Most sea turtles eat algae and sea grasses. They also eat such animals as crabs and small fish. Some kinds of sea turtles have more specialized diets. For example, sea turtles eat jellyfish.



There were once hundreds of millions of sea turtles. Their numbers have decreased due to human activities. People hunt sea turtles for their meat and eggs. Many sea turtles are becoming trapped in large nets of commercial fishing boats. Oil spills and pollution can harm sea turtles. Beach development can harm sea turtle nesting sites. Sea turtles are protected by law.



Everything

All Fields

brain aneurysm

Search

Advanced Search

- eBooks & Videos
- Basic Sources
- Advanced Sources
- Basic Encyclopedias
- Advanced Encyclopedias
- STEM

## Advanced Sources

1356 Results Found

1 2 3 4 5

### Narrowed by:

- Full Text
- Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Jou...

Clear all

Select an Action


Sort By:

**Traumatic Basal Subarachnoid Haemorrhage Or Ruptured Brain Aneurysm In 16-Year-Old Boy? – Case Report**

View/Download

**Author** Rafal Skowronek

**Source** Archives of Forensic Medicine and Criminology, Vol 66, Iss 1, Pp 32-40 (2016)

**Format** 


2.

**Can We Evaluate Cranial Aneurysms On Conventional Brain Magnetic Resonance Imaging?**

View/Download

**Author** Emine Caliskan

**Source** Journal of Neurosciences in Rural Practice, Vol 7, Iss 1, Pp 83-86 (2016)

**Format** 

3.

**Key Perspectives On The Learning Curve Of Pedicle Screw Placement, Stereotactic Radiosurgery For Brain Metastases, Growth Of Incidentally Found Meningiomas, And The Barrow Ruptured Aneurysm Trial**

View/Download

**Author** Angela Bohner

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## INTRODUCTION

Intracranial aneurysm is a cerebrovascular disorder resulting in abnormal bulging or dilation of one of the arteries in the brain. Intracranial aneurysms occur in all ages but are most prevalent between the ages of 35 to 60 years and women are more prone to develop aneurysms than men with a ratio of 3:2. Aneurysmal expansion and giant aneurysms can compress brain parenchyma, resulting in focal neurological deficits. The primary goal of the surgical procedure is exclusion of the aneurysm where feasible from the cerebral circulation and reduction of mass effect on adjacent structures. Various approaches have been developed and tailored to the anatomy

and location of the aneurysm. One approach placing a clip across the aneurysm neck. Potential surgical complications are avoided by monitoring (IONM), induced hypotension, drainage, diuretics, hyperventilation, and uremia, with or without circulatory arrest, is cited in et al. 2001, Quiñones-Hinojosa et al. 2003.

Multimodality IONM during aneurysm microsurgical approach for neurovascular aneurysms was introduced 20 years ago (Little et al. 1987, Stecker et al. 2001, Baciocchini et al. 2001). Somatosensory evoked potential (BAEP) and somatosensory evoked potential (SSEP) was introduced 20 years ago (Little et al. 1987, Wiedemayer et al. 2004, Neuloh et al. 2004). Transcranial electrical motor evoked potential (TEM) is a modality of monitoring motor pathway deficits caused by ischemia has become increasingly a part of practice (Ginsburg et al. 1985, Suzuki et al. 2003, Horiuchi et al. 2005) due to lack of sensitivity of SSEPs (Derk 1992, Guo et al. 2011). With advanced IONM equipment, it is now feasible to incorporate multiple relevant modalities depending on the surgical procedure and location of the aneurysm. IONM plays an important role during and while transitioning to deep hypothermia with circulatory arrest. Identification and physiological assessment of electrocerebral silence (ECS) using electroencephalography (EEG) and four limb SSEPs are the only true methods of quantification. Due to individual patient systemic variables that influence ECS, the use of IONM is a recommended standard of practice to determine the best temperature for circulatory arrest in published case series (Ghariani et al 1999). Recording

Intracranial aneurysm is a cerebrovascular disorder resulting in abnormal bulging or dilation of one of the arteries in the brain. Intracranial aneurysms occur in all ages but are most prevalent between the ages of 35 to 60 years and women are more prone to develop aneurysms than men with a ratio of 3:2. Aneurysmal expansion and giant aneurysms can compress brain parenchyma, resulting in focal neurological deficits. The primary goal of the surgical procedure is exclusion of the aneurysm where feasible from the cerebral circulation and reduction of mass effect on adjacent structures. Various approaches have been developed and tailored to the anatomy

# Annotating - Strategy

- Highlighting, notetaking
- Often built into online platforms

The screenshot shows a digital document with text about Antarctica. The text is annotated with yellow highlights and a note-taking interface is overlaid on the bottom right.

**Drag and drop a note** | **Highlights**

### Antarctica's Opposite

Antarctica is the southernmost region on Earth. Antarctica means "the land opposite the North Pole". The continent lies entirely in the Southern Hemisphere. At its icy heart is the South Pole, Earth's southernmost point. Antarctica is the fifth-largest continent. It is about one and a half times the size of the United States and of Europe.

### Highs and Lows

The crushing weight of Antarctica's ice has pushed down some parts of the land to 2,555 meters (8,380 feet) below sea level. Some of the highest mountains are completely buried under the ice. Antarctica's highest mountain is the Vinson Massif. It rises to 4,897 meters (16,066 feet) above sea level.


**Note**

Southern Hemisphere  
Fifth largest continent  
One and half times the size of US and Europe

[PRIVACY POLICY](#) | **Edit** | **Delete**

# Literary Reference Center

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### Reference Shelf

- [Encyclopedia of Literature](#)
- [Dictionary](#)
- [Citation Help](#)
- [Research Guide](#)
- [Literary Glossary](#)
- [Curriculum Standards](#)


### Content Spotlight

#### Writer on the Wild Side

Societies, nature, fiction, and fact all intertwine in the complex oeuvre of Peter Matthiessen.

 [»](#)

### Book Highlight



- Critical Insights: The Great Gatsby**  
by [Dickstein, Morris](#)
- Critical Insights: Great Expectations**  
by [Goodheart, Eugene](#)
- Critical Insights: The Canterbury Tales**  
by [Lynch, Jack](#)
- Critical Insights: John Steinbeck**  
by [Noble, Don](#)
- Critical Insights: Mark Twain**  
by [Rasmussen, R. Kent](#)
- Critical Insights: Flannery O'Connor**  
by [Mav, Charles E.](#)
- Critical Insights: To Kill a Mockingbird**  
by [Noble, Don](#)


### Featured Work

#### "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where  
my secret lies.  
I'm not cute or built to suit a  
fashion models size  
But when I start to tell them,  
They think I'm telling lies.  
I say,  
It's in the reach of my arms,  
The span of my hips,  
The stride of my step,  
The curl of my lips.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally,  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

### Featured Author

#### Maya Angelou



A true Renaissance woman, Maya was a singer, actress, director, and writer, having published an enormous number of books for children, thirteen collections of poetry, and prose superior to her poetry. Angelou's style of her poetry seems to stem from her personal narrative and its exploration of the African American tradition established by Frederick Douglass, which address issues such as race and identity.

 [»](#)

- More than 35,000 plot summaries, synopses, and work overviews.
- Nearly 100,000 pieces of literary criticism.
- More than 252,000 author biographies. [?](#)
- 450 literary journals.
- More than 693,000 book reviews.
- More than 78,400 full-text classic and contemporary poems.
- More than 19,700 full-text classic and contemporary short stories.
- More than 6,600 author interviews.





Detailed Record

PDF Full Text

Source: Critical Insights: The Canterbury Tales

Inside this work

Full Text Contents

1 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 - 15 | >>

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On The Canterbury Tales. 3

Contents. 3

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The Canterbury Tales... 17

<< All Records from this Title



### The Paris Review Perspective

Benjamin Lytal for *The Paris Review*

Winter looked bleak. It was October 1386; Geoffrey Chaucer was about to lose his position as customs comptroller of the London docks, and so he was moving house, quitting Greenwich, which was suburban and expensive. We do not know precisely what his house was like, but like most fourteenth-century homes it was probably drafty, with small windows and a cold flagstone floor. Chaucer must have liked it, though: he had recently planted an arbor outside and returfed the lawn. But, thanks to royal machinations, his prosperity was temporarily at an end. And his poetry, too, was in bad shape.

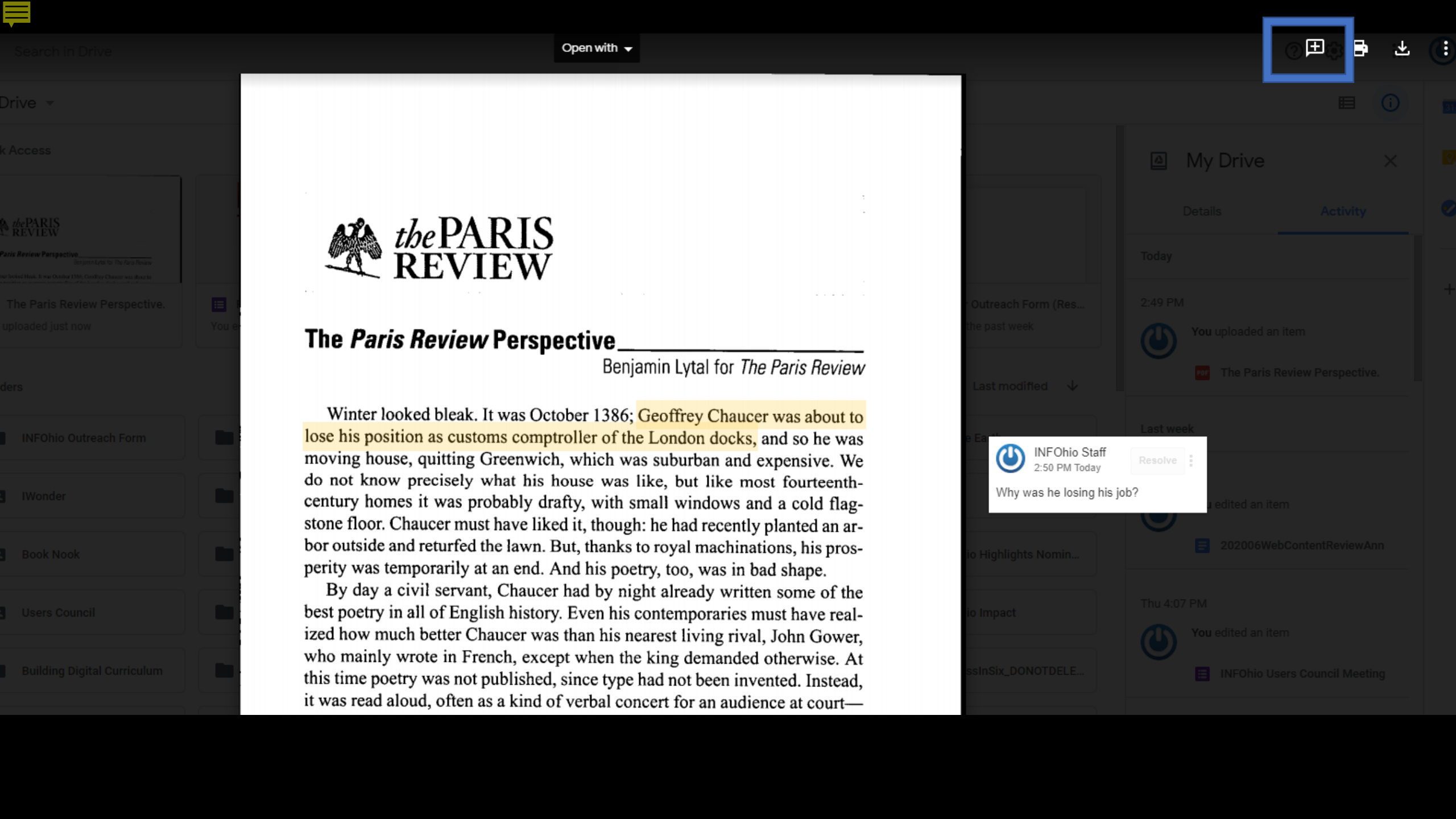
By day a civil servant, Chaucer had by night already written some of the best poetry in all of English history. Even his contemporaries must have realized how much better Chaucer was than his nearest living rival, John Gower, who mainly wrote in French, except when the king demanded otherwise. At this time poetry was not published, since type had not been invented. Instead, it was read aloud, often as a kind of verbal concert for an audience at court—and was therefore often less dense, less psychologically satisfying than our own poetry. But Chaucer had taken steps forward: he had finished a very long poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, that unfolds like a novel, carefully plotting the personalities and changing motives of two lovers.

Chaucer's most recent effort, however, had been a fiasco. He had not even wanted to write it, but he was moved by a sense of guilt: afraid that he had said too many bad things about women in his previous work, he attempted to make up for it by writing *The Legend of Good Women*. He grew bored and began to insert jokes at solemn moments, eventually breaking off the manuscript, never to finish it.

And a new type of literature was beginning to interest him. The fabliaux of France were racier than any poetry that had been written down in English. Most of what Chaucer had written before was visionary, allegorical, inspired by the polite traditions of court. Now, in his late middle age, he wanted to do something different. But he was nervous—he did not want to be accused of vulgarity.

As he packed and prepared to leave the house at Greenwich, Chaucer would have had to go through all his orphaned manuscripts. These were po-





Open with ▾



## The *Paris Review* Perspective

Benjamin Lytal for *The Paris Review*

Winter looked bleak. It was October 1386; Geoffrey Chaucer was about to lose his position as customs comptroller of the London docks, and so he was moving house, quitting Greenwich, which was suburban and expensive. We do not know precisely what his house was like, but like most fourteenth-century homes it was probably drafty, with small windows and a cold flagstone floor. Chaucer must have liked it, though: he had recently planted an arbor outside and turfed the lawn. But, thanks to royal machinations, his prosperity was temporarily at an end. And his poetry, too, was in bad shape.

By day a civil servant, Chaucer had by night already written some of the best poetry in all of English history. Even his contemporaries must have realized how much better Chaucer was than his nearest living rival, John Gower, who mainly wrote in French, except when the king demanded otherwise. At this time poetry was not published, since type had not been invented. Instead, it was read aloud, often as a kind of verbal concert for an audience at court—

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