

Teaching With Read to Know: A User's Manual

*This brief manual should explain everything you need to know about **Read to Know**, the weekly online news magazine for students.*

OVERVIEW

Read to Know is published 34 times a year. There are new issues every week from September to mid-May, except for the week of Thanksgiving and the last two weeks of December.

Every issue consists of a number of current events stories, written on a 5th to 8th grade level. These stories cover a range of topics, from national and international news to developments in science, sports, and the arts. Every issue also contains a vocabulary section and regular features such as “This Week in History” and the “Student Editorial Cartoon of the Week.”

Other current events programs, and many news accounts in the media, seek merely to cover the surface of important stories. But Read to Know goes deeper than that, focusing on the crucial historical context and background information that students need in order to understand and care about the material they read.

HOW TO USE READ TO KNOW

The program is used in several different ways. Some schools use Read to Know as part of their social studies curriculum, others buy the program primarily for reading and literacy work, and still others for specialized classes including special education, talented and gifted projects, and global studies. Read to Know is also very popular with ESL teachers, who use it to help students build background knowledge, vocabulary, and personal confidence — all at the same time.

Read to Know is very simple at its core: students log in every week and read the stories. After most of these stories, readers can easily click to a short comprehension quiz, which provides immediate feedback on how much of the story they understood.

Most stories also have a section labeled “Thought Questions.” These are largely inferential open-ended questions related to the story — many of them encourage students to make connections from the questions to their own lives, or to see an important topic in a new way. Teachers can assign these as themes for written assignments, journal or blog entries, or can utilize them in class discussions.

Many stories also have a section called “For More Information,” Here, students can find web addresses with additional information about the story. Our staff researches these links for appropriate language and content, but we cannot guarantee what happens when students continue “surfing” from there. If you do not want to let

students follow these links on their own, you can do it yourself with them, or ignore this section.

Teachers can also download other fun features under the “Activities” drop-down tab. These include our popular “Where in the World” section, which can function as a geography and comprehension test, a word search puzzle, and a vocabulary jumble.

SUGGESTIONS AND TIPS

- ◆ Read to Know can be used in many different ways. Students can read the stories individually or in pairs or small groups. Users also report success with projecting the program on a screen or “smartboard” and working on passages with the entire class. Feel free to experiment to see what works best for your students.
- ◆ There is no correct or incorrect order for the stories in Read to Know. Any order you (or the students) choose is perfectly valid.
- ◆ Read to Know works well with assistive reading technology programs like WYNN and Read&Write Gold.
- ◆ Share Read to Know with other teachers. Site licenses include everyone in the school community, so feel free to share your username and password information with other educators and administrators in your school. (But not with other schools. That would be bad.)
- ◆ Some schools send home the username and password so that families can work on Read to Know together.
- ◆ It is acceptable to print out the Read to Know story texts to use in your classroom. The best way to do this is by copying the text and pasting it into a document. But you **MUST NOT** use this text in any other way. And the best and most interactive experience for students is when they read the stories online.
- ◆ Make your own test by taking questions from each story’s quiz — or coming up with your own!
- ◆ Make sure you are signed up for the Read to Know Preview email. This weekly bulletin informs subscribers of the next week’s stories, as well as important program notes...and special offers from Knowledge Unlimited. If you are not signed up, email us at ncpreview@newscurrents.com and we’ll add you to the list.