

Note to Educators

As teachers of science, you want your students to acquire abilities that will enable them to conduct scientific inquiry, and you want them to gain an understanding of the scientific inquiry process. Scientific inquiry can best be taught by integrating minds-on and hands-on experiences. Over time, such experiences encourage students to independently formulate and seek answers to questions about the world we live in. As educators, you are constantly faced with engaging your students in scientific inquiry in new and different ways. In an age of abundant technology, standard teaching strategies can become monotonous to today's learners. The *Natural Inquirer* provides a fresh approach to science and a view of the outside world that is larger than the classroom and can still be used while in the school setting.

The *Natural Inquirer* is a science education resource journal to be used with learners from Grade 5 and up. The *Natural Inquirer* is written at the 7th grade level, but students from grade 5 upward have found the articles useful. The *Natural Inquirer* contains articles describing environmental and natural resource research conducted by Forest Service scientists and their research cooperators. These are scientific journal articles that have been reformatted to meet the needs of middle school students. The articles are easy to understand, aesthetically pleasing to the eye, contain glossaries, and include hands-on activities. The goal of the *Natural Inquirer* is to stimulate critical reading and thinking about scientific inquiry and investigation while learning about ecology, the natural environment, and natural resources.

The Format of a Natural Inquirer Article

Each *Natural Inquirer* article follows the same format. *Natural Inquirer* articles are written directly from a published science article, and all have been reviewed by the scientists for accuracy. Each article contains the following sections, which you may introduce to your students as they read:

Meet the Scientists: Introduces students to the scientists who did the research. Can be used in a discussion of careers in science.

Thinking About Science: Introduces something about the scientific process, such as a scientific habit of mind, or procedures used in scientific studies.

Thinking About the Environment: Introduces the environmental topic being addressed in the research.

Introduction: Introduces the problem or question being addressed by the research.

Method: Describes the method used by the scientists to collect and analyze their data.

Findings: Describes the results of the analysis.

Discussion: Discusses the findings and places them into the context of the original problem or question.

Citation: Gives the original article citation.

Glossary: Introduces possibly new scientific or other terms to students. The first occurrence of a glossary word is **bold** in the text.

FACTivity: This is a hands-on activity that reinforces an aspect of the research.

Science Education Standards and Evaluations

In the back of the journal, you will find a list that allows you to identify articles by the National Science Education Standards they address. You and your students may also complete evaluation forms online by visiting <http://www.naturalinquirer.org>.

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Educator Resources

Visit the *Natural Inquirer* Web site at <http://www.naturalinquirer.org>. From this site, you can read and download lesson plans, word games, and other resources to help you use the *Natural Inquirer* in your classroom. You can view and download a year-long lesson plan aimed at helping your students learn about the scientific process, or a number of generic lesson plans that can be used with any *Natural Inquirer* article.