



# Just One Oak

Written by  
*Maria Gianferrari*

Illustrated by  
*Diana Sudyka*

## About the Book

Explore an oak tree, from its leafy crown to its roots underground, and learn all the amazing ways it supports the animals, plants, and habitat where it lives in this surprising and enlightening nonfiction picture book companion to the award-winning *Fungi Grow*.

An oak tree is so much more than meets the eye. From tiny fungi to mighty mammals, this amazing tree contains a whole world.

For insects and birds, the oak's leaves, branches, and bark are a home. For bears and squirrels, the thousands of acorns the oak produces are a nutritious superfood. Owls, deer, foxes, and many more creatures are drawn to the rich and healthy environment an oak creates. Because of a single oak tree, its many neighbors flourish.

- Publisher : Beach Lane Books
- Publication date : April 7, 2026
- ISBN: 978-1665961042

\*In a richly illustrated picture book that's chock-full of ecological facts, Gianferrari and Sudyka venerate the astounding oak for its critical role as a keystone species. Employing anaphora, assonant lines highlight the many varied roles a single tree plays for a multitude of species across the seasons . . . Accompanying captions dive deep into adjacent topics, introducing concepts including marcescence (when a tree's withered leaves remain attached) and the brown food web (the recyclers and decomposers who reside in leaf litter). . . . the text goes on to celebrate the deciduous specimen's roots ("farther than/ the canopy is wide"), acorns ("a nutritious superfood!"), and its important functions cleaning air and preventing erosion. Spreads depicting an abundance of goggle-eyed critters washed in watery earthy hues incorporate labels for a field guide-like effect that IDs myriad flora and fauna living in concert with a lone tree. It's a satisfyingly comprehensive and appreciative portrait of oaks and their numerous contributions. -- Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEW

\*Gianferrari and Sudyka explore the many life forms and natural processes—both visible and invisible to the naked eye—that a single oak tree “nurtures and nourishes.” From feeding and sheltering wildlife above- and belowground to producing oxygen and preventing soil erosion, and beyond, the oak touches everything around it, forming a micro-ecosystem of its own. Gianferrari's text, with its frequent alliteration, occasional rhyme, and refrain of “just one oak,” constitutes an ode to the “beautiful and bountiful” tree's life-giving power. Sudyka's vibrant, painterly illustrations enrich the reading experience, zooming in and out as necessary to put a spotlight on different aspects of the oak-ecosystem. -- Horn Book STARRED REVIEW —

A joyous tribute to the many roles one living tree can take—from creating a microclimate to feeding and housing a wide variety of wild creatures. In a mix of lyrical general statements and expansive notes in smaller type, Gianferrari describes how oaks offer a “dining room” for more types of moths and butterflies than any other native tree genus and a winter granary for woodpeckers, which drill holes where they stash acorns. . . . In her painted illustrations, Sudyka envisions a mature tree teeming with wildlife, from googly-eyed bugs to birds and bears—nearly all identified with discreet labels—as well as associated flora, fungi, and, in a final scene, a racially diverse set of young tree lovers. . . . Offers plenty of cause to root for this keystone species. -- Kirkus

PreS-Gr 3—Many readers think of animals when they hear the term keystone species, but this book spreads the word about how the hard-working oak tree also serves as a keystone in its environment. Lyrical descriptions of main points introduce each spread, such as how the oak tree shelters insects through the winter. Then more technical details, like “overwintering insects are food sources for predatory spiders and songbirds,” appear in smaller font at the bottom of the scene. Paintings show the variety of life that depends on the oak, from white-tailed deer and black bears to field mice and fungi. Nearly everything is labeled for easy identification. Some images show the entire tree and its surroundings, while others zoom in for a closer look at leaf litter or the insects that create homes in acorns. Extensive back matter includes more information about oak leaves and acorns, how to grow oak trees, a diagram of the oak tree's life cycle, a source list, suggested further reading, and a list of additional sources and websites.

VERDICT Highly recommended for the layered text and intricate illustrations that make this a wonderful read-aloud for younger grades, while offering plenty of information for budding botanists. --School Library Journal, STARRED REVIEW



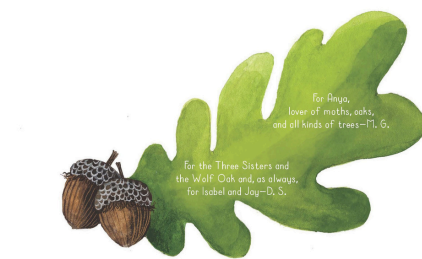
Maria Gianferrari is a picture book reader/writer, animal-lover, and bird nerd. She writes books that honor our bonds with creatures both domestic and wild, and that celebrate urban ecosystems and the natural world around us, including *Puffins!* and *You and the Bowerbird*, illustrated by Maris Wicks, *Fungi Grow* and *Just One Oak*, illustrated by Diana Sudyka; *Ice Cycle: Poems about the Life of Ice*, illustrated by Jieting Chen; *Being a Dog: A Tail of Mindfulness*, illustrated by Pete Oswald; *Bobcat Prowling*, illustrated by Bagram Ibatouilline; and *Be a Tree!*, illustrated by Felicita Sala. She lives with her family in Massachusetts in a house encircled by trees, where coyotes, bobcats and bears traverse her backyard.. To learn more about Maria, visit her website: [MariaGianferrari.com](http://MariaGianferrari.com).



Diana Sudyka is a Chicago-based illustrator. Early on, she created screen-printed gig posters for musicians but currently her illustration work focuses on young adult, middle grade, and children's books. She has illustrated several volumes of the award-winning book series *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart and *Circus Mirandus* by Cassie Beasley, as well as the picture books *Would You Come Too?* by Liz Garton Scanlon, *Sometimes Rain* by Meg Fleming, *What Miss Mitchell Saw* by Hayley Barrett, *How to Find a Bird* by Jennifer Ward, and *Fungi Grow* and *Just One Oak* by Maria Gianferrari. Visit her at [DianaSudyka.com](http://DianaSudyka.com).

## Before Reading

- Discuss the title. What does *Just One Oak* mean to you?
- The endpapers are the part of the book that is stuck down to the cover. They are the first thing we see when we open up the book. What do you notice about the endpapers of *Just One Oak*? Then, look at the title page. What do you notice? What predictions can you make from the endpapers and the title page?



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An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishers Division  
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The text for this book was set in Catalonia Clementina.  
The illustrations for this book were rendered in gouache, watercolor and finished digitally.  
Manufactured in China  
2016 232

First Edition  
C.B. # 0 1 6 5 4 3 2 1  
C.B. date for this book is available from the Library of Congress.  
ISBN 9781665796104  
ISBN 9781665796109 (black)



Beach Lane Books

New York Amsterdam/Antwerp London Toronto Sydney/Telbourne New Delhi



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## During Reading

- How do the author and illustrator show the importance of just one oak tree?
- How do the illustrations show the layers of the tree?
- Is this book fiction or nonfiction? How do you know what category it is? How is this nonfiction book different from other nonfiction books you have read or have had read to you?
- How do the animals depend on the oak tree?
- What would happen if there were no oak trees?
- How do the illustrations show details and scale?
- What facts surprised you while reading? What new information did you learn from reading this book?



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Diana Sudyka



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## Craft Moves

- Let's look at some of the craft moves the author made throughout the text! Alliteration is when a writer uses the same beginning sounds in several word next to or near each other. This adds rhythm and layers of sound into the text. Where do you see the author trying out this literary device? Can you try this out in your own writing?
- Why do you think the author chose to repeat the phrase "just one oak" throughout the text and on almost every page? What patterns did the author create in her writing? When does she change them? Why do you think she does this? How does repetition make the text feel like a poem?



## Activities

Make rubbings of both the bark of an oak tree and its leaves. Use the rubbings to create a piece of art using a collage technique.

Acorn Observation: Gather a selection of acorns if you are able. Observe the acorns. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What do you know already about acorns? Draw a picture of your acorn and add labels to your picture.

Extension: Compare two different acorns. What is the same? What is different?

Try It: Make your own version of Just One Oak. Write about a natural object that is interconnected to a lot of other animals and plants.

Just One \_\_\_\_\_

Try It: The illustrator used watercolor and a special kind of paint called gouache to make the illustrations for the book. Use watercolor to make your own illustration of an oak tree. How do you think the illustrator got all the details into the illustrations?

Extension: Now label the parts of your tree using the text to help you. What details can you add to your labels?



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## Activities

Compare the illustrations and the text. What scientific information can you see in the illustrations?

Optional extension: Use sticky notes to annotate the text with the different facts the students see in the illustrations.

Build It: Build a model of an oak tree out of loose parts.



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Vocabulary to explore:

- sustain
- crown
- granary
- boughs
- nourish
- nurture
- lateral
- canopy
- nutritious
- microclimate
- topsoil
- erosion
- bountiful



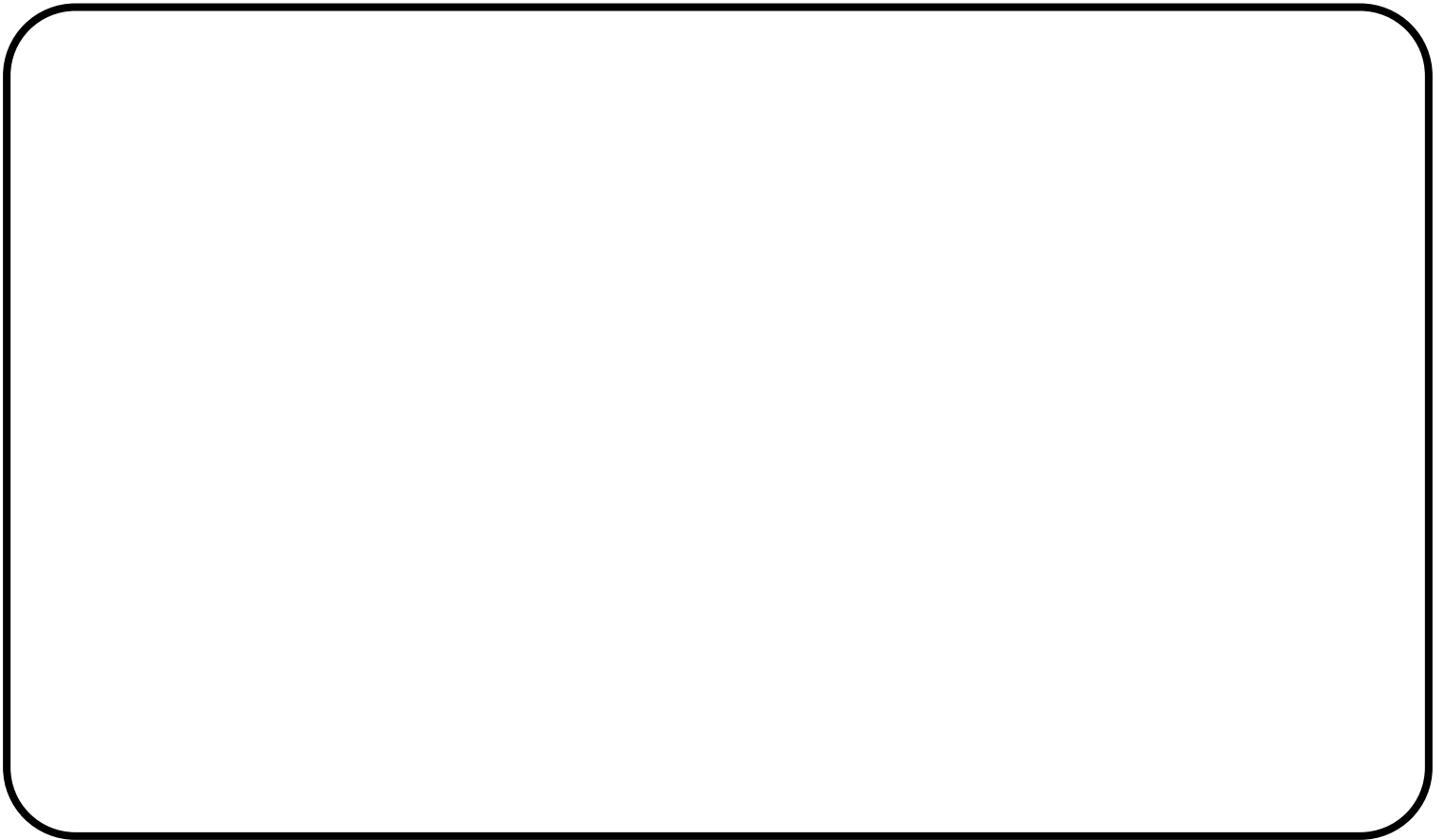
Other Picture Book Texts that Connect to  
Just One Oak:

- Before We Stood Tall: From Small Seed to Mighty Tree by Jessica Kulekjian, illustrated by Madeline Kloepper
- Because of An Acorn by Lola M Schaefer, illustrated by Frann Preston-Gannon
- The Blue Jays that Grew a Forest by Lynn Street, illustrated by Anne Hunter
- Forests by Nell Cross Beckerman, illustrated by Kalen Chock



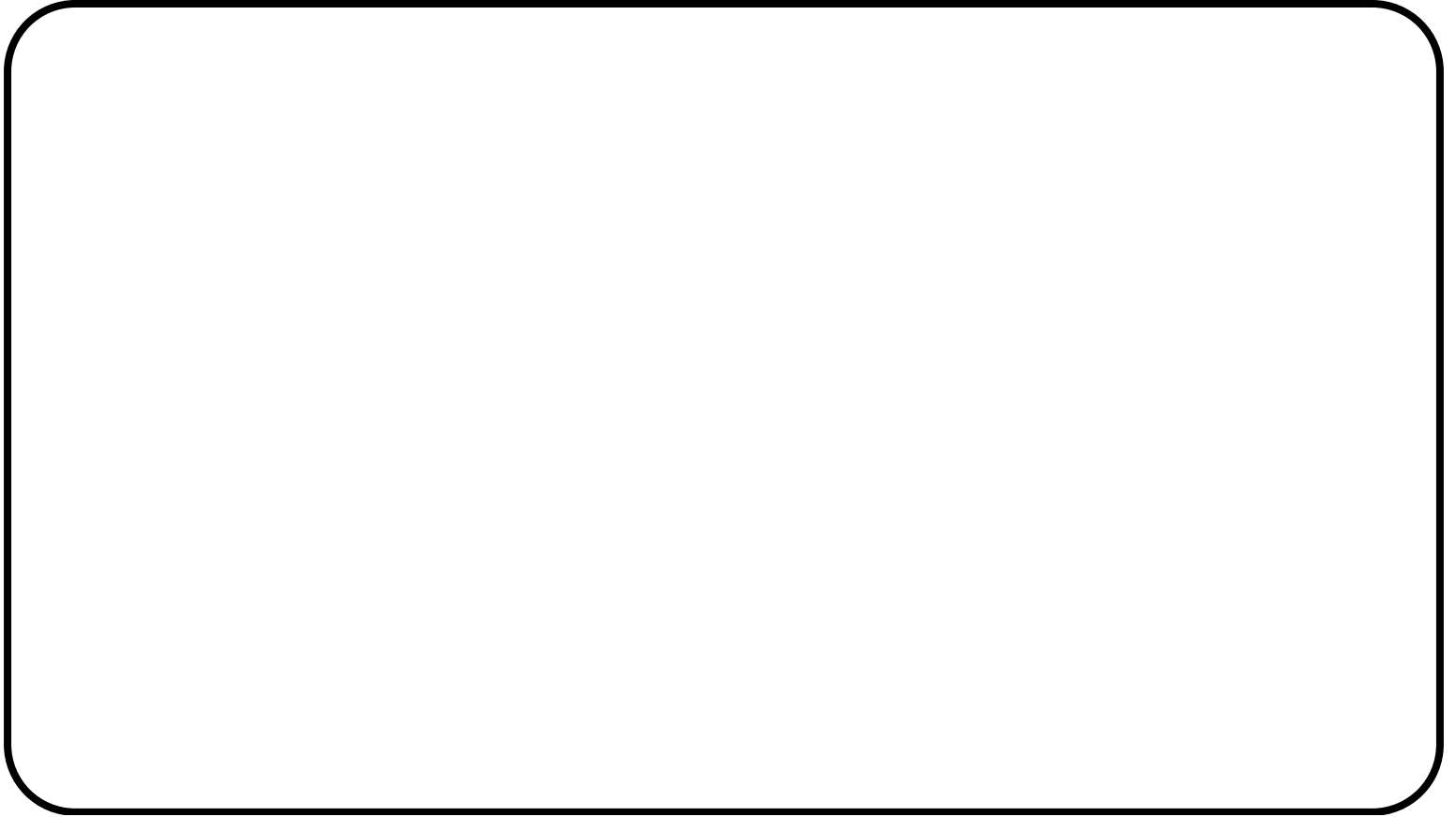
# Acorn Observation

What do you notice? What do you see?



# Tree Observation

What do you notice? What do you see?



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# ***ACORN COMPARISON***

Directions: Use the T-chart below to compare two acorns.

Acorn #1

Acorn #2

Acorn #1	Acorn #2



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Reproducible

# Just One

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By:

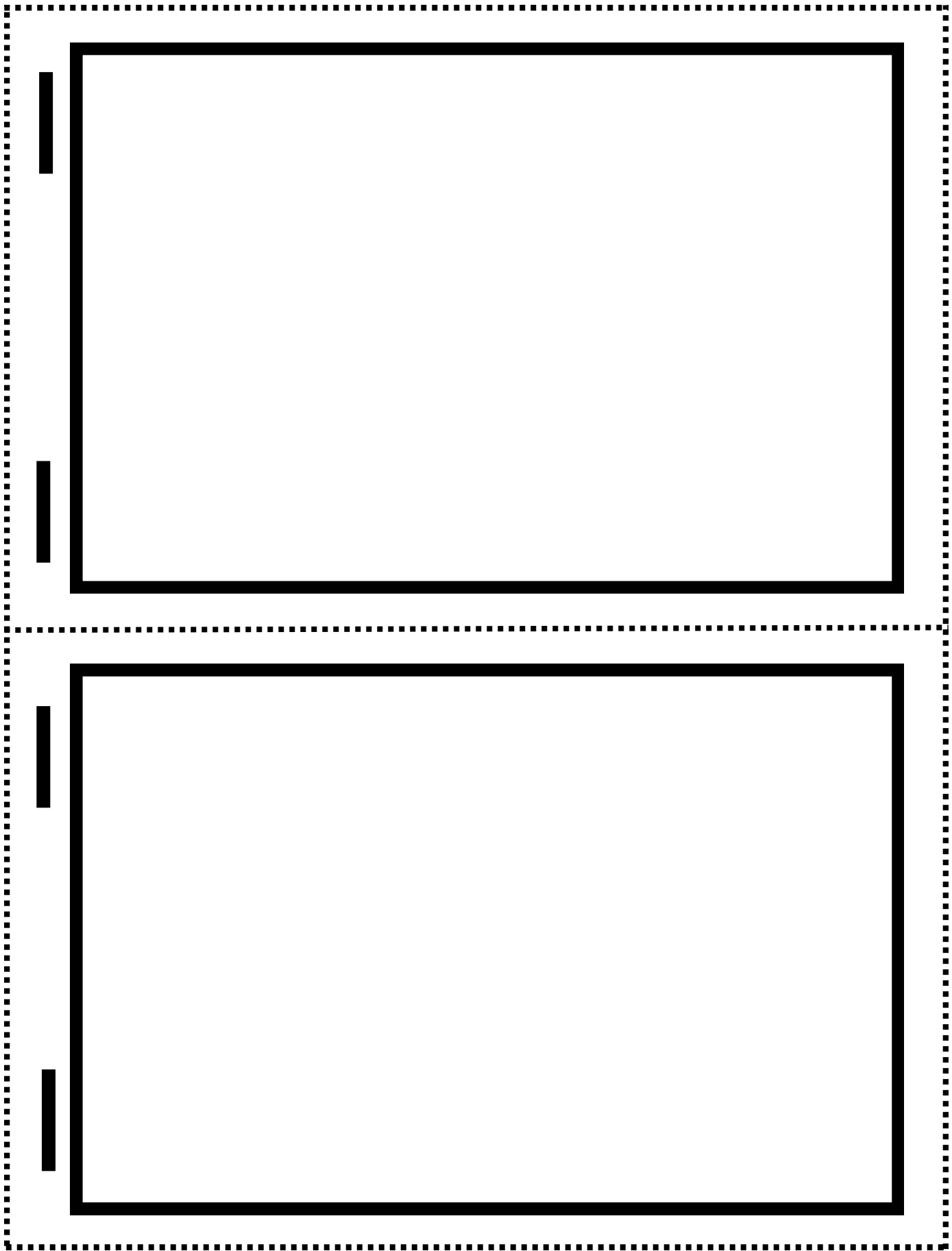


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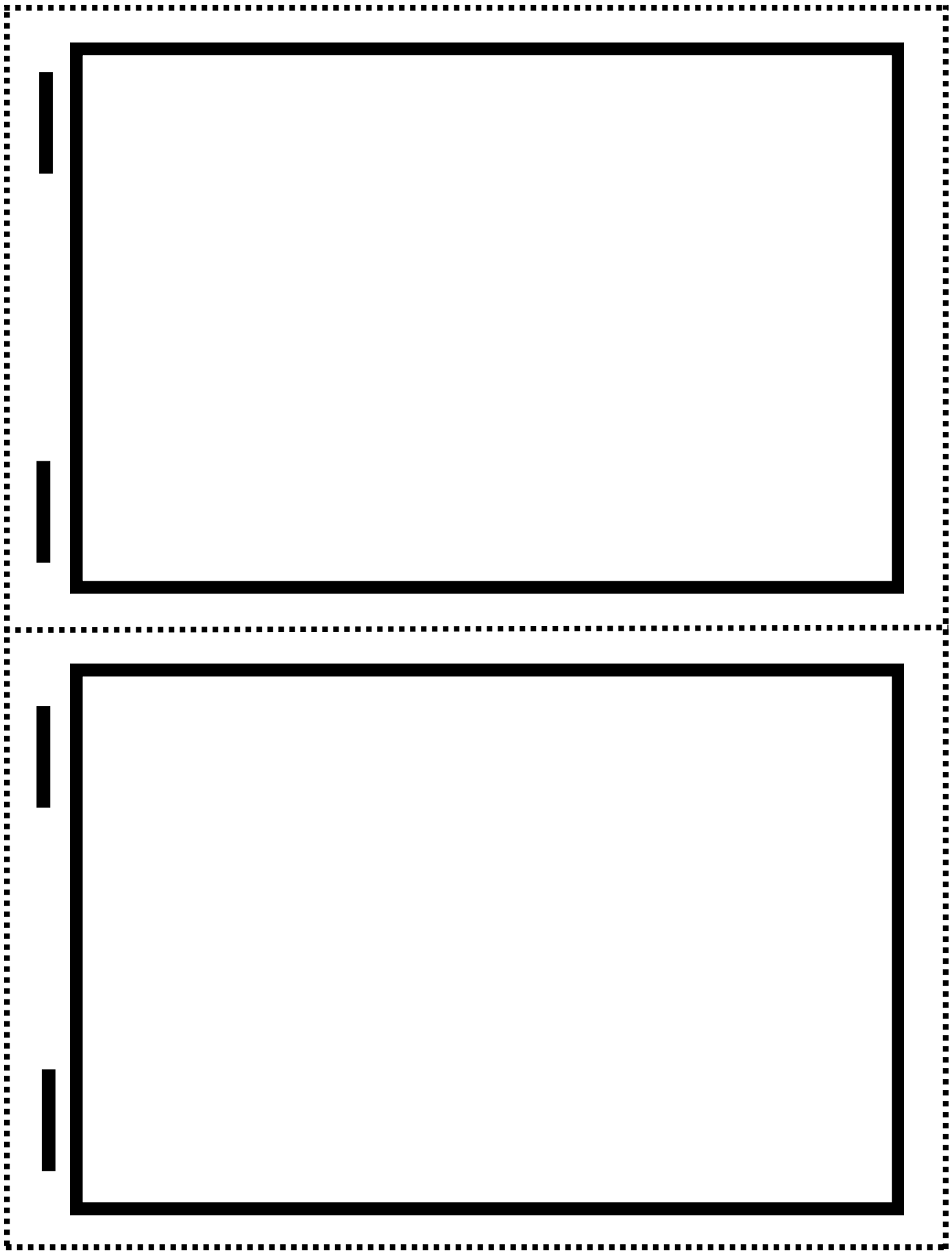
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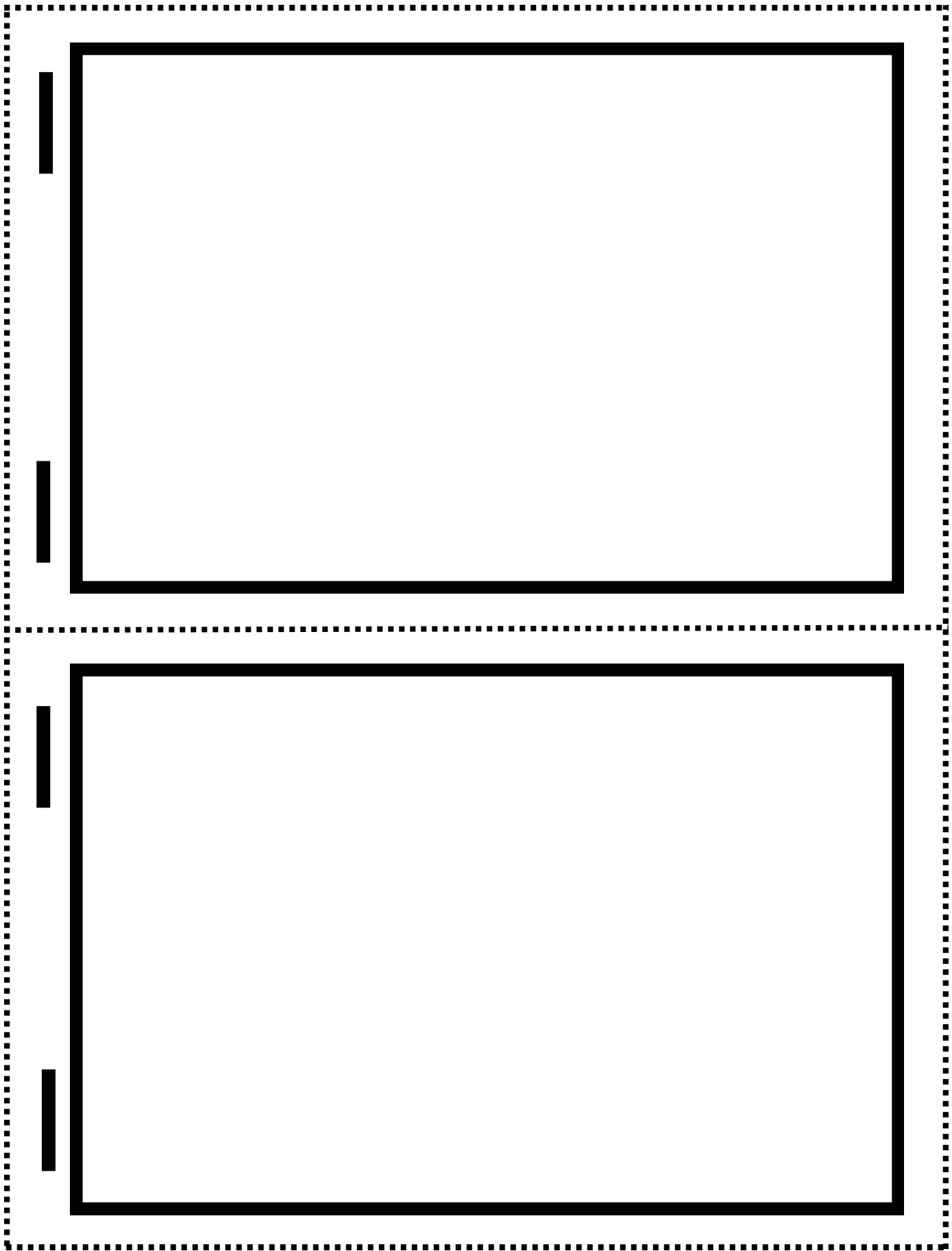
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# Common Core and NGSS Standards

## 1-LS1-1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes

Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.

## K-LS1-1.

Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

## 2-LS4-1.

Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4

Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.7

Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.3

Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.7

Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.1

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7

Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).