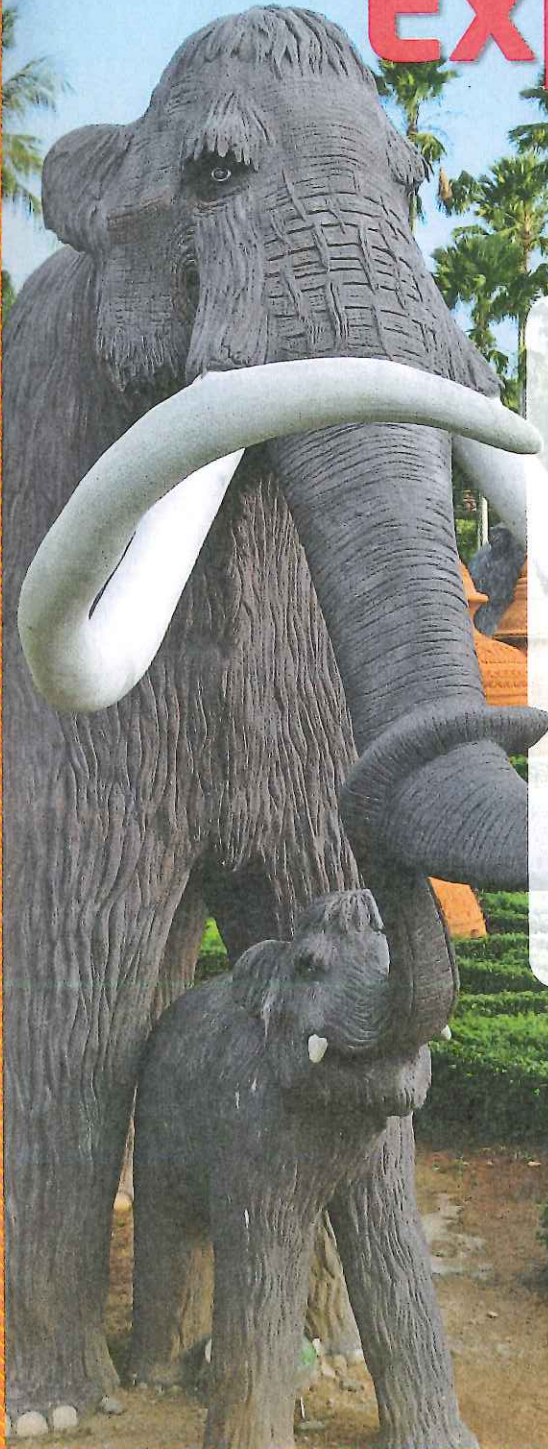


Writing Informative/Explanatory Texts



The woolly mammoth has fascinated scientists for centuries. These giant mammals lived across Europe, North America, and Siberia 10,000 to 250,000 years ago. Their physical characteristics and behavior were similar to those of modern-day elephants. About 10,000 years ago, the woolly mammoth suddenly died out, and no one knows why. If you study the woolly mammoth, how can you share the information you discover with an audience? One good way to share information is by writing an informative/explanatory text.

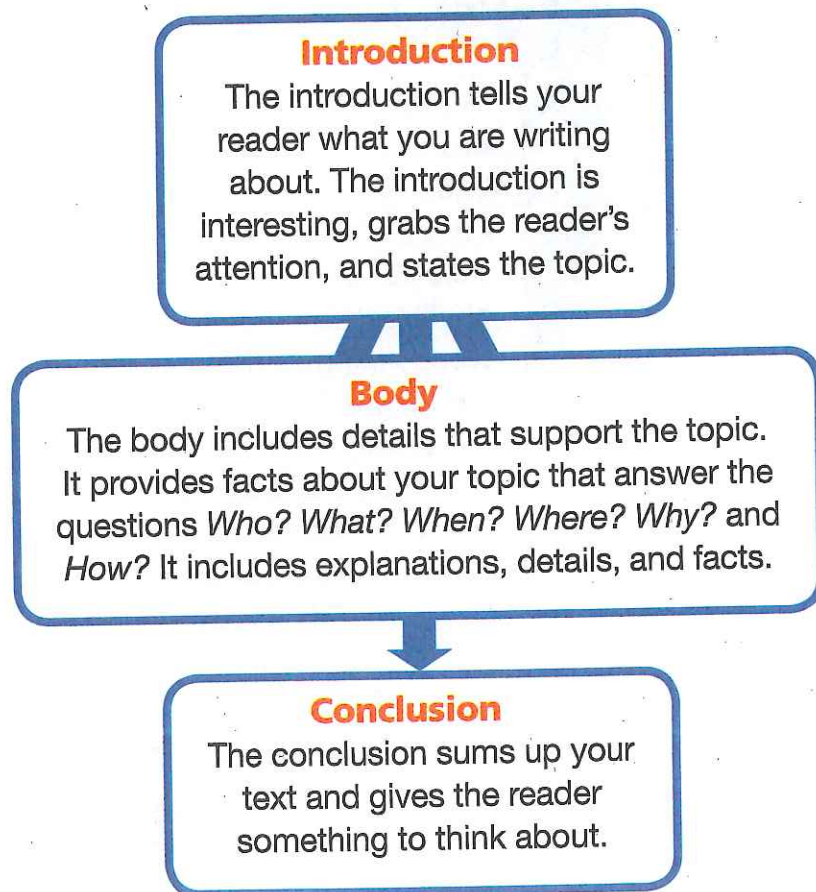
ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does an informative/explanatory text convey information?

What's an Informative/Explanatory Text?

Mammoths had shaggy hair up to three feet long that made them well adapted to colder climates. They also had giant, curved tusks that they used to protect themselves against predators, such as saber-toothed tigers and packs of hyenas. These are all facts and details that you would find in an informative/explanatory text on the woolly mammoth.

In an **informative/explanatory text**, you present information about a specific subject. The information is presented in a clear, logical way for the reader. The flow chart below describes some ways to make your informative/explanatory text effective.



Let's look at an informative/explanatory text.

Analyze a Mentor Text

This is an example of a fifth-grade informative/explanatory text. Read it and then complete the activities in the boxes as a class.

The Woolly Mammoth

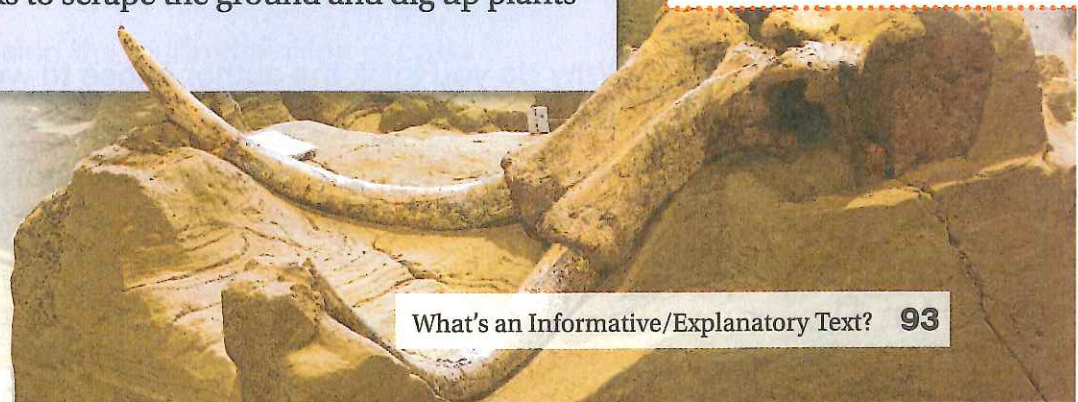
The woolly mammoth was a huge elephant-like animal that lived in Europe, North America, and Siberia 10,000 to 250,000 years ago. It had shaggy fur and thick layers of fat to keep it warm in the frigid climate. It weighed six tons and towered almost eleven feet high. That makes the mammoth one of the largest mammals to ever walk the earth. Scientists have learned about woolly mammoths by studying their fossils and skeletons. They have learned about the size of mammoths, what they ate, and when they died out.

Everything about the mammoth was gigantic. Its large teeth were shaped like bricks and weighed ten pounds each. The trunk was six feet long. The curved tusks were also impressive. They grew up to thirteen feet long and could weigh almost 200 pounds! With such large bodies and tusks, woolly mammoths were not in danger from many predators. The only predators that threatened adult mammoths were sabertooth cats and later, humans.

Mammoths had to eat all day long to maintain their size. They were herbivores, or vegetarians, and they ate grasses, plants, tree buds, and bark. They lived on vast flat areas called steppes. The steppes were windy, dry landscapes covered with short grasses, a few trees, rivers, and streams. Other herbivores such as reindeer, musk oxen, and horses also lived on the steppes. Mammoths used their trunks to reach down and tear out grass. Scientists believe they used their tusks to scrape the ground and dig up plants or rip off tree bark.

TOPIC The writer gets the reader's attention in the introduction by describing the woolly mammoth's huge size. The writer also states the topic—the woolly mammoth—and tells the main idea. Draw a box around the topic sentence that states the main idea.

SUPPORTING DETAILS In the second and third paragraphs, the writer gives details that support the main idea, and explanations and facts that elaborate on the details. In each paragraph, put a box around the strong supporting detail. Underline the explanations and facts that elaborate on the supporting detail.



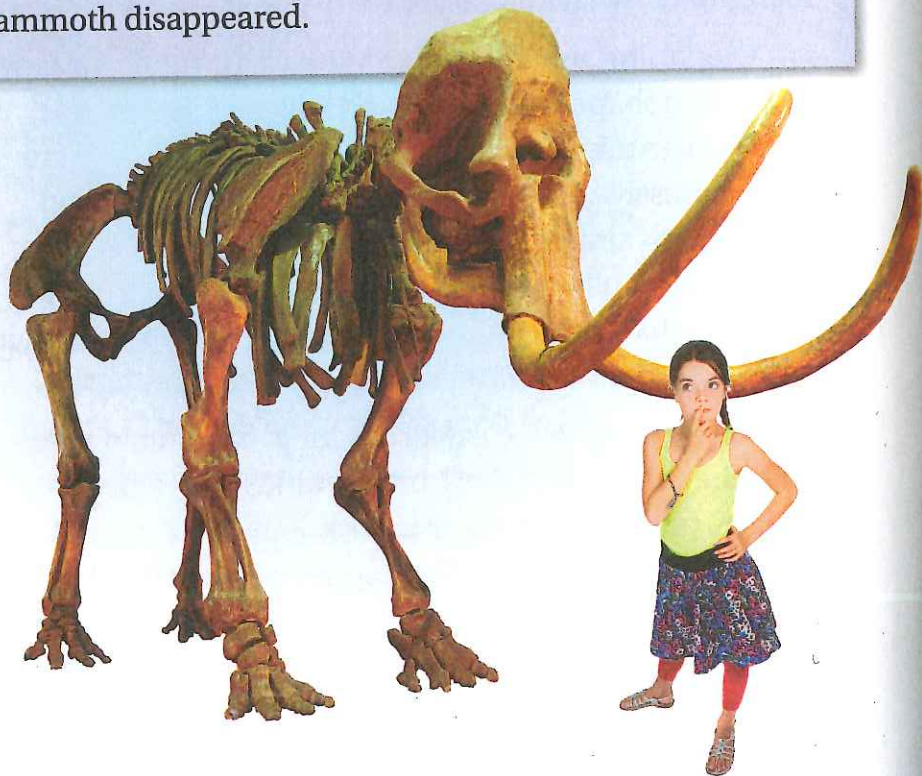
SUPPORTING DETAILS

In the fourth paragraph, the writer provides one more strong detail that supports the main idea of the text, along with explanations and facts that elaborate on the supporting detail. Draw a box around the strong supporting detail, and underline the sentences that elaborate on the detail with explanations and facts.

CONCLUSION In the conclusion, the writer sums up the informative text and gives the reader something to think about. Draw a star by the sentence that gives you something to think about.

The woolly mammoth died out about 10,000 years ago. Scientists are not sure why it became extinct. Some scientists believe that a massive climate change caused the world to grow warmer and the glaciers to melt. As oceans rose, the mammoth's habitat disappeared. Therefore, the mammoth had a difficult time finding food. Another theory suggests that humans may have hunted the mammoth to extinction. Whatever the cause, the woolly mammoth disappeared from most of its territory at the end of the last ice age.

Scientists have studied mammoths for a long time and learned a lot about them. However, we still have a lot to learn about these magnificent creatures. By studying fossils and bones, maybe someday we will learn why the woolly mammoth disappeared.



Think About It ▶

Why do you think the author chose to write about the woolly mammoth?

What part of the informative/explanatory text did you find most interesting? Why?