Motivating Young Minds

The Best Kids’ Magazines Turn
Natural Curiosity into Exceptional Knowledge

Why is the sky blue? Where did the slaves buy tickets for the underground railroad? How small is an atom? Who was Einstein? What happened to the dinosaurs? When did women start voting? Kids are full of questions. No teacher (or parent) can supply all of the answers—but sidestepping their queries with a quick “look it up” is a sure way to quash most kids’ curiosity. Fortunately, there is an alternative to encyclopedias and textbooks: kids’ magazines.

Many educational magazines written just for kids are well known—such as National Geographic for Kids, Time for Kids, and Sesame Street Magazine—but we’ve found a couple that aren’t as well known as they deserve to be: ASK and Kids Discover. ASK is a broad-ranging magazine for elementary school children. Recent issues have covered, for example, the solar system, deserts, how (and why) money works, the human body, how wild animals stay healthy, and volcanoes. It’s modeled after adult magazines in that it has a mix of short and long pieces, but it’s more focused in that each issue has one central topic. To stay kid-friendly, content-heavy articles are balanced with content-related comic strips and fun activities.

Kids Discover is aimed at an older audience, typically fifth- to eighth-grade children. Unlike other children’s magazines, it is purely academic—no comics, no mention of the latest video game, no distractions—and each issue is devoted to a single science or history topic. It would work well as a supplement, or alternative, to a textbook. And yet, it’s fascinating. The writing, images, and design are all engaging. But the real reason it works so well is that the world around us is inherently interesting, and Kids Discover manages to capture it.

The next few pages have content directly from recent issues of both ASK and Kids Discover. To see more sample issues, review their companion teaching guides, and find subscription information, go to the ASK Web site at www.cobblestonepub.com/magazine/ASK and to the Kids Discover Web site at www.kidsdiscoverteachers.com.

—Editors
Great Depression

For many, new clothing was a rare treat. Younger children got hand-me-downs from older siblings. Farm mothers sewed clothes out of flour and food sacks. Eventually, when they realized this was happening, some companies began making the sacks in pretty patterns.

The Dust Bowl

The Great Depression continued with the continued expansion of southern Germany in India. In 1931, droughts in parts of the southern United States left many farmers homeless and desolate. Farmers fled to the Great Plains. They did not find work.

The same storm conditions that devastated America's breadbasket became the Dust Bowl. Dust storms and droughts created a dust cloud that filled the air and disrupted the lives of farmers and their families.

During the Depression, there were "hunts" on banks, when panicked depositors tried to withdraw all their money. Banks were forced to close, and many depositors lost all their money. In 1933, Roosevelt declared a bank holiday, meaning that all the banks in the country were closed for four days. Government employees were told not to take their checks or demand drafting. People began to feel more confident in the banks.