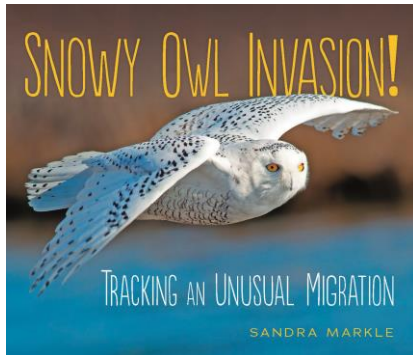


## Interruption Construction Treasure Hunt

As students begin to read middle grade titles, the text becomes increasingly complex. Sentences are often jam-packed with information that takes time and close reading to synthesize and interpret. The good news is that the information is often presented in patterns, and when students know how to identify those patterns, they can break sentences into more manageable chunks.



When writers use the interruption construction, they insert a bit of extra information between commas or em-dashes. You can easily teach students to recognize this type of dependent clause using the example on page 4 of *Snowy Owl Invasion! Tracking an Unusual Migration* by Sandra Markle:

“On one sand dune, peeking through winter-dried plants, sat a big white bird—a snowy owl.”

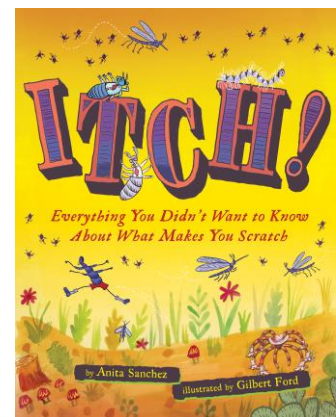
After writing this sentence on the classroom whiteboard, cover the interrupting phrase “peeking through winter-dried plants” with your hand to show students that the remaining part of the sentence forms a complete thought.

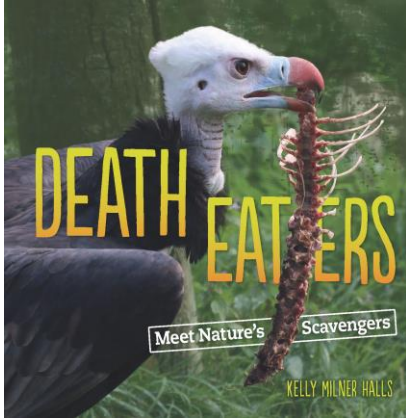
Let your class know that if a sentence like this seems overwhelming to them, they can cover the interruption with their finger. After they understand the main part of the sentence, they can read the phrase to get some bonus information. In the example above, the interruption provides a lovely detail that helps readers visualize the owl in their minds.

Here’s another example from page 11 of *Itch! Everything You Didn’t Want to Know About What Makes You Scratch* by Anita Sanchez:

“Parasites are organisms that use other living things—like you and me—for food and shelter.”

In this case, the interruption helps to make the reader feel more connected to the content.





To give students practice interacting with the interruption construction, divide the class into small groups and pass out copies *Death Eaters: Meet Nature's Scavengers* by Kelly Milner Halls. Encourage the teams to find as many examples as they can of the interruption construction. (If students struggle with this activity, suggest that they try page 18.) Ask teammates to use a sticky note to mark each example and write a quick explanation of why the author utilized this writing technique. How does each extra bit of information enrich the writing?

When the groups seem ready, invite student volunteers to share one of the examples their team found and the reason they think the author decided to use the interruption construction in this location. Classmates should feel free to agree or respectfully disagree with the presenter. They may also ask questions or offer their own insights.

Finally, invite students to look back at nonfiction they wrote earlier in the year. Can they find any places where they used the interruption construction? If not, encourage them to hunt for one or two spots where they could add this sentence construction and then revise their piece.