WHAT IN THE WORLD?

LEVEL 2 (GRADES 8 AND UP)

Data Centre BOOM

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SAMPLE EDITION
2026/2027: ISSUE 1

LesPlan

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TO THE TEACHER

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Level 2, 2026/2027: Issue 1

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>
> K. Camelon, Grade 7/8 teacher
>
> Admaston, ON

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WHAT YOU'RE MISSING

NATIONAL

B.C. BATTLES A SUMMER OF WILDFIRES

Sheltered in her truck, foot firmly on the gas, Atlyn Becker watched in horror as the hills near British Columbia's Okanagan Lake turned an eerie shade of incandescent orange. She was fleeing her property just ahead of a massive wildfire that had 'exploded' and was devouring . . .

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NATIONAL

FAST-TRACKING A NEW PIPELINE PROJECT

Canada could soon have another way to export crude oil to customers in Asia and other overseas markets if a pipeline project promoted by Alberta Premier Danielle Smith goes through.
The pipeline, which would carry about one million . . .

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INTERNATIONAL

THE U.S.-IRAN WAR DRAGS ON

In late February, Iranians woke to a flame-streaked sky and a series of ground-shaking explosions. American and Israeli missiles and warplanes were attacking military bases, air-defence systems, nuclear facilities, and other targets across the country. Operation Epic Fury had . . .

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Inside the World's Data Centre Boom

—Massive New AI Facilities Demand Lots of Resources

Before Reading

1. Write the title of article on the board:

Inside the World's Data Centre Boom - *Massive New AI Facilities Demand Lots of Resources*

2. In small groups, have students discuss what they know about data centres. (e.g., large computing warehouses; more demand for these to create capacity for AI; some communities are protesting new construction of these; they require a lot of electricity to operate; they require a lot of water to cool down the computing systems which work 24/7; etc.)

3. Debrief ideas as a class.

4. Show students this short video about how data centres work and some of the concerns related to them. Ask students to consider a question that they have about data centres while they watch the video.

https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=lPM6EBTCzjY [1:37]

5. Invite students to set a purpose for reading the article (perhaps using the question they identified above), referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.

Amazon Web Services

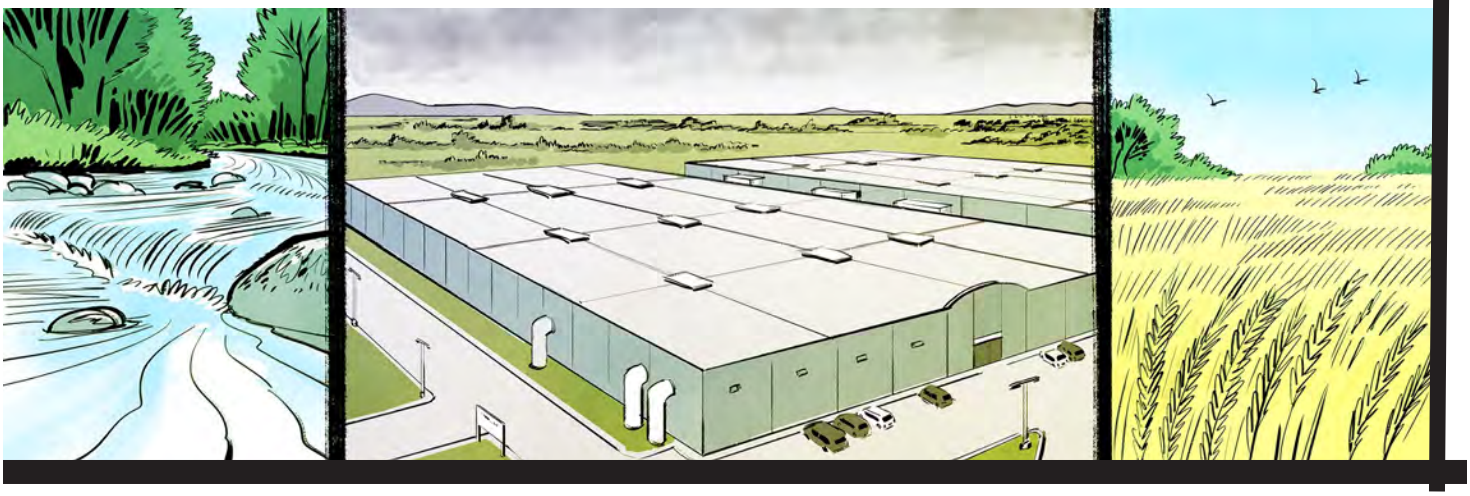
11 August 2023

Part of AWS's us-west-2 availability zone, showing three datacenters with a fourth under construction (Morrow County, Oregon).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amazon_AWS_us-west-2_morrow_east_AZ_01.jpg

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES



For 20 years, Christie Little has enjoyed life in Île-des-Chênes, a small community south of Winnipeg. Then she learned about plans to build an enormous data centre on a 141-hectare field near her home.

The proposal called for a site the size of hundreds of hockey rinks that would store rows of powerful computers in a huge facility. This centre would process vast amounts of queries and other information needed to run **artificial intelligence** (AI) systems such as **chatbots**, image generators, and even self-driving cars.

Worried about the noise, pollution, and loss of farmland that such a project would entail, Ms. Little started an online petition. It soon attracted more than 13,000 signatures.

The debate in Île-des-Chênes is not isolated. Similar discussions are ongoing around the globe as big tech companies push to build more data centres. Video streaming, banking, visiting social media sites, and playing games have always relied on off-site data centres (i.e. cloud computing). So why do we need more now? Simply put, AI needs enormous compute resources. That's driving huge demand for much bigger facilities, known as hyperscale data centres.

INSIDE A HYPERSCALE DATA CENTRE

Think of a hyperscale data centre as an enormous warehouse with a campus that can cover hundreds of hectares. These vast complexes are filled with mind-blowing computing capacity. Servers—powerful computers that store information and run much of the online world—are stacked by the thousands in tall steel cabinets called racks. Using special **microchips**, these machines perform the incredibly complex calculations needed to train and run artificial intelligence systems.

All that equipment requires extensive infrastructure. **Fibre optic** cables carry data between servers and connect the data centre to the internet. The hardware is cooled by fans, air conditioners or circulating liquids. Some large facilities use millions of litres of water a day for cooling; others reuse water in closed-loop systems. Big data centres also require huge amounts of electricity. A planned Meta campus north of Edmonton will need about one **gigawatt** of power, enough to power about 800,000 homes. Backup batteries and generators keep the computers running if the power grid goes down.

THE U.S. DOMINATES

There are over 12,000 data centres across the globe and 5427 (almost half) are in the United States. Germany has the second most with 529. Canada has 337.

The U.S. sites are not evenly distributed. They tend to cluster in places with ample electrical power, extensive **fibre optic** networks, and connections to people and businesses who use the data. Virginia has the most with 674 and many are located near Washington, D.C., in "Data

DEFINITIONS

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI): the ability of a computer to do tasks that usually need a human brain, like learning, solving problems, and speaking

CHATBOT: an AI-powered computer program that can understand questions and respond in conversational language

FIBRE OPTICS: technology that carries digital data at very high speeds through thin strands of glass or plastic using pulses of light

GIGAWATT: a unit of electric power equal to one billion watts (or 1,000 megawatts). One gigawatt is roughly the continuous power output of a large nuclear power plant or enough electricity to power about 700,000 to 1,000,000 homes.

MICROCHIP (OR 'CHIP'): a group of tiny electronic circuits that work together on a very small piece of hard material

Center Alley." This region accounts for 13 percent of total global capacity. Texas has the second-most with 537, and California is third with 296.

Virginia's dominance has deep roots. Northern Virginia was an important hub of the early internet, where telecommunications companies built a dense network of fibre-optic cables. Why there? Being close to Washington, D.C. provided access to the U.S. government, defence contractors, and other major users of computer services. Over time, one advantage reinforced another. Businesses wanted their equipment near other networks because information could move between them faster. As well, Virginia offered fairly cheap and reliable electricity, along with land and tax incentives.

Why all the hype?

The big hyperscale tech companies are leading the expansion. Amazon, Microsoft, Alphabet (Google), and Meta operate vast computing networks serving millions of people and businesses. Together, they plan to spend roughly $700 billion on capital projects in 2026, much of it on the data centres, servers, chips, and networking equipment needed for AI.

DID YOU KNOW?

One ChatGPT-style query uses 10 times the electricity of a Google search

A major player missing from this list? Apple. It has taken a different approach, developing smaller AI models that can perform more tasks directly on its devices. But it still relies on data centres for major AI work.

As for the other giants, they're buying specialized computer processors that perform the calculations behind AI. They're also purchasing networking equipment which allows thousands of processors and servers to use and share information quickly—almost like one enormous supercomputer.

NVIDIA, CPUs, and GPUs

Data centers use a mix of specialized microchips to handle standard cloud computing, heavy data storage, and intensive AI workloads. Examples of microchips include central processing units (CPUs) for general tasks, graphics processing units (GPUs), application-specific chips for AI, and dedicated memory and networking chips.

Nvidia is an American technology giant based in Santa Clara, California. Founded in 1993, it invented the GPU and those chips now power the global AI boom, gaming, and data centres. In 2015, Nvidia's market value was $18 billion and it reported sales of $4.7 billion. In late 2023, Nvidia was worth $1.2 trillion and revenue was $61 billion. Currently Nvidia is worth $5.4 trillion and is reporting sales of $253 billion, driven heavily by high global demand for AI hardware. If you purchased $1,000 of NVIDIA stock in 2015, that investment would be worth about $416,000 today.

Nvidia chip prices vary wildly, ranging from $300 for entry-level consumer gaming GPUs up to $40,000+ for enterprise-grade artificial intelligence data center processors.

All in favour?

Supporters say that building this infrastructure helps turn ideas into commercial products, creates jobs, and allows businesses to compete in a fast-growing global industry.

Hyperscale projects can also deliver economic benefits. Meta, for example, is investing over $13 billion in a 708-hectare campus north of Edmonton that could create 3000 construction jobs and about 300 permanent positions. Once operating, the province estimates taxes, royalties, and other fees could generate about $250 million a year.

That kind of revenue can have a big impact on a small community. For example, Quincy, Washington, has a population of 8500. It also hosts 30 data centres that provide some 57 percent of city property tax revenue. That's helped fund a high school, hospital, library, and police station, among other things.

All opposed?

The benefits haven't fully reached everyone, however. Most Quincy residents are better off, but home prices have almost doubled in 10 years. And many new jobs went to people from outside the area.

Thousands of computers working around the clock need a lot of electricity; hyperscale centres often require new power plants and electricity lines. Critics worry that consumers could end up paying some of these costs through higher bills.

Computers and servers in many data centres also can get hot, so they need special cooling systems. Some of these consume large amounts of water, possibly putting pressure on local water supplies and returning warm water to nearby rivers and lakes. Newer closed-loop systems can greatly reduce water use by circulating the same water repeatedly.

An ongoing issue

In June, Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew announced that the Île-des-Chênes project won't go ahead, saying that its size, energy needs, and environmental effects outweighed the benefits.

So for now, the field across from Christie Little's home will remain farmland. But the controversy is global. Communities and governments around the world are questioning whether the enormous resource demands are worth it. With many new hyperscale centres planned, the debate is far from over. ★

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain what a **data centre** is.

2. What are the three main components necessary for a data centre to operate?

3. What is a **microchip**?

4. What kind of microchips are necessary for a data centre to operate?

5. List at least three important facts about Nvidia.

6. How many data centres are there in the world? How many are in the U.S.? How many are in Canada?

7. Which three U.S. states have the most data centres?

8. Why are there so many near the U.S. capital?

9. List three reasons why some people are in favour of building more large data centres.

10. List three reasons why some people are opposed to building more data centres.

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. The article states: "One ChatGPT-style query uses 10 times the electricity of a Google search." As you see it, how will the energy needs of AI technology affect the lives of everyday citizens? Give examples to support your ideas.

2. Would you want a data centre built near your home? Give reasons to support your ideas.

3. Describe your online activity. How much of the time that you spend online involves AI, gaming, or applications that require graphics, video, or heavy data storage? After reading this article, will your online activity change? Explain.

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

Note: The links below are listed at **www.lesplan.com/links** for easy access.

1. Learn more about the data centre boom in Canada:

https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=Rj_icscgo_Q [6:26]

What did you learn?

2. Learn more about the environmental, financial, and public concerns related to data centres:

https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=JSTWplGA1SI [7:46]

What questions do you have?

3. Learn why Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew said no to the proposed data centre in Île-des-Chênees, Manitoba:

https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.7223319 [2:51]

Do you agree with his decision? Explain.

4. Hear about the needs of data centres with respect to water usage:

https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=boC56yqIkbk&t=64s [6:36]

What did you learn?

5. Learn more about which countries have the most data centres:

https://www.statista.com/chart/24149/data-centers-per-country/?srsltid=AfmBOor2nMkpWq95q7BP_Ij4OSVUBJ3Ig5ynw7s3jP9GGDn27JEmGUea

What questions do you have?

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—Massive new AI facilities demand lots of resources

ORGANIZER

A. Using the information in the article and your own thinking, what are some of the reasons ***for*** and ***against*** building new data centres? Give specific details to back up each point.

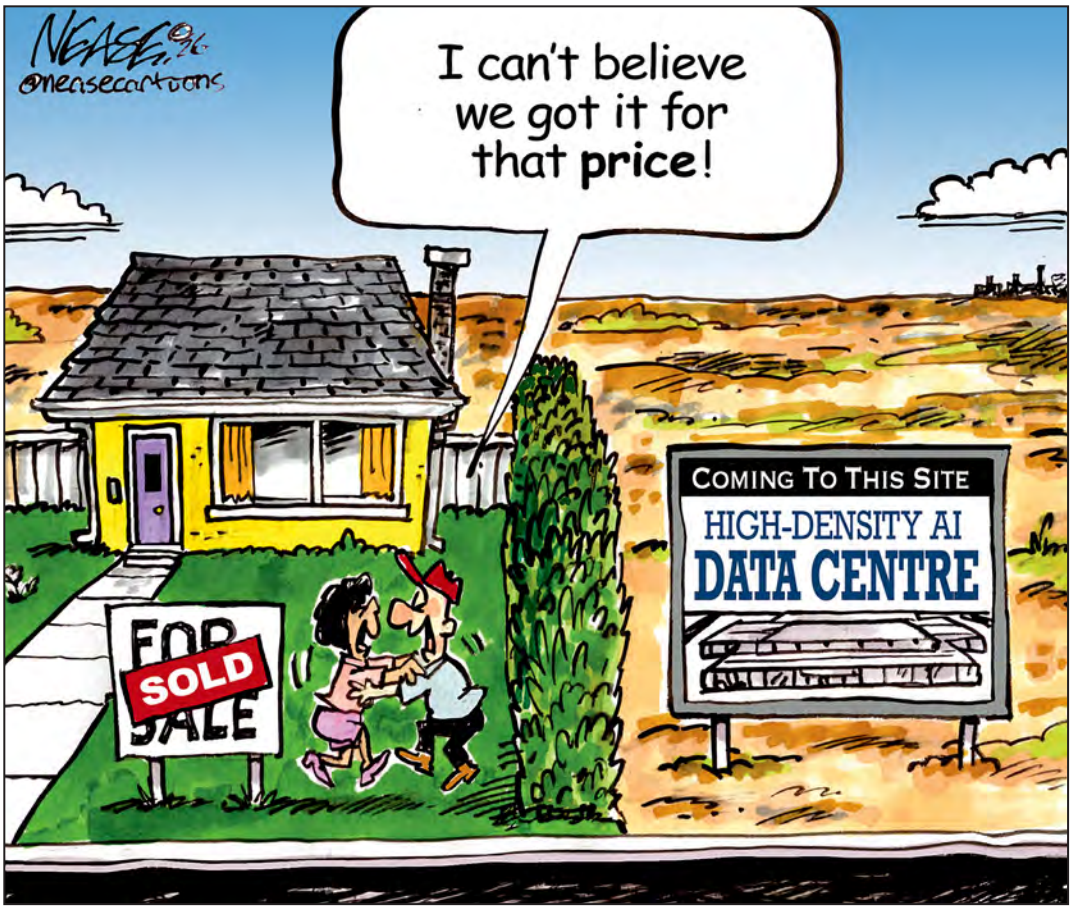
Reasons for	Reasons against
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•

B. After completing the organizer, answer the following: *Are you **more in favour of** or **more opposed to** building new data centres? Give reasons to support your response.*

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

CARTOON



YOUR TASK:

Examine the editorial cartoon. Then, use the questions below to help you decode the cartoon's message. Be specific and include as many details as possible in your answers.

INITIAL READING: What can an initial look reveal?

1. Glance quickly at the cartoon. What is your first impression – your "gut response"?

2. Consider your background knowledge. What do you already know about the context of the cartoon – the time, place or situation? (List key facts.)

CLOSER LOOK: What's happening in the cartoon?

3. Describe what you *see* and *read* in the cartoon.

DRAW CONCLUSIONS: What overall impression can you draw?

4. Identify possible biases. Whose perspective or point of view is expressed in the cartoon?

5. Explain the overall message of the cartoon in a paragraph. (Remember, a good interpretation is *specific* and *detailed*.) ★

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

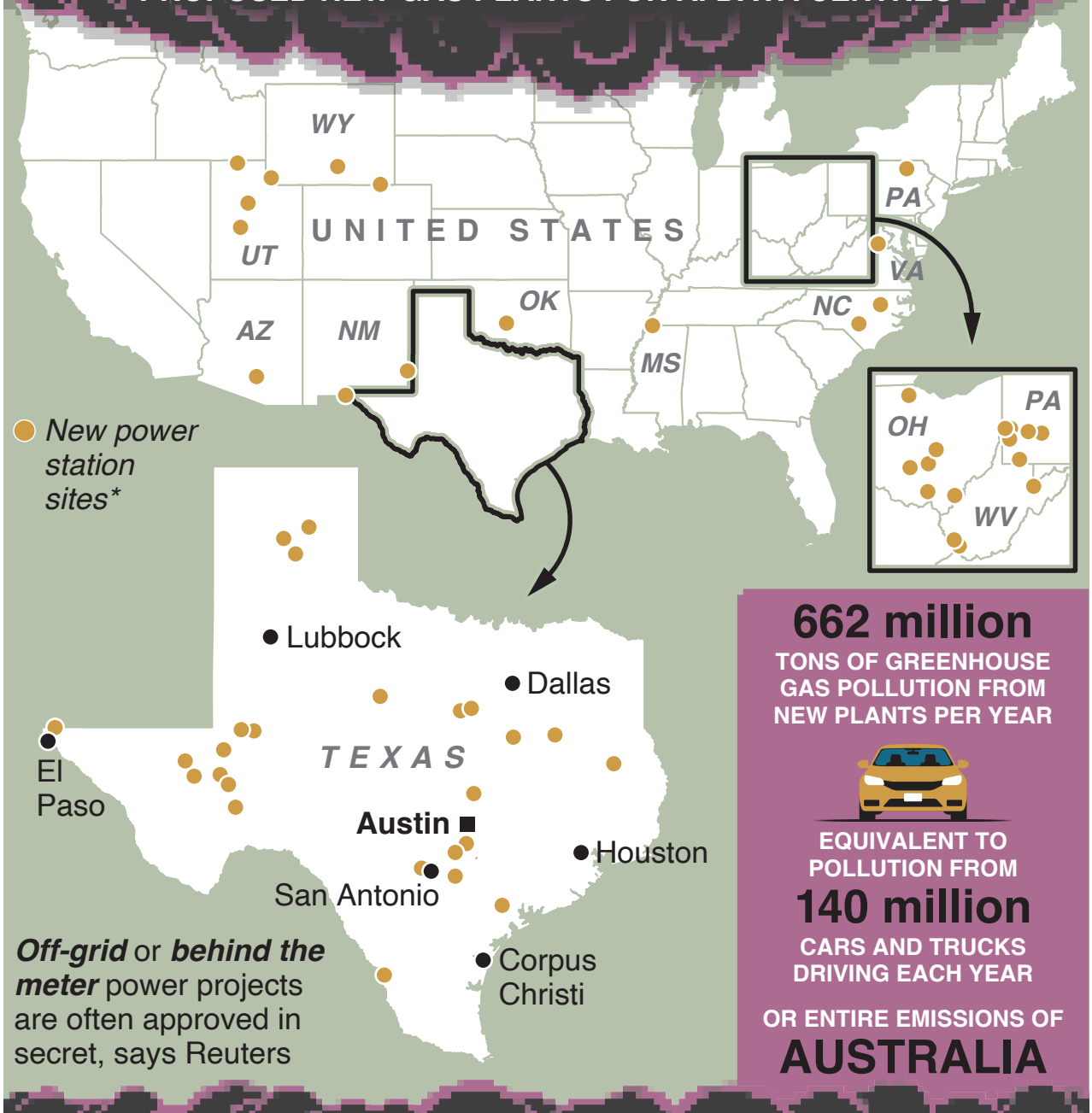
—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

INFOGRAPHIC

U.S. AI data centre pollution fears

Construction of at least 74 gas-fired power stations needed for the AI industry boom are being fast-tracked across the U.S. – bypassing federal regulations as they're not linked to major electrical grids

PROPOSED NEW GAS PLANTS FOR AI DATA CENTRES



Off-grid or ***behind the meter*** power projects are often approved in secret, says Reuters

662 million

TONS OF GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION FROM NEW PLANTS PER YEAR

EQUIVALENT TO POLLUTION FROM

140 million

CARS AND TRUCKS DRIVING EACH YEAR

OR ENTIRE EMISSIONS OF

AUSTRALIA

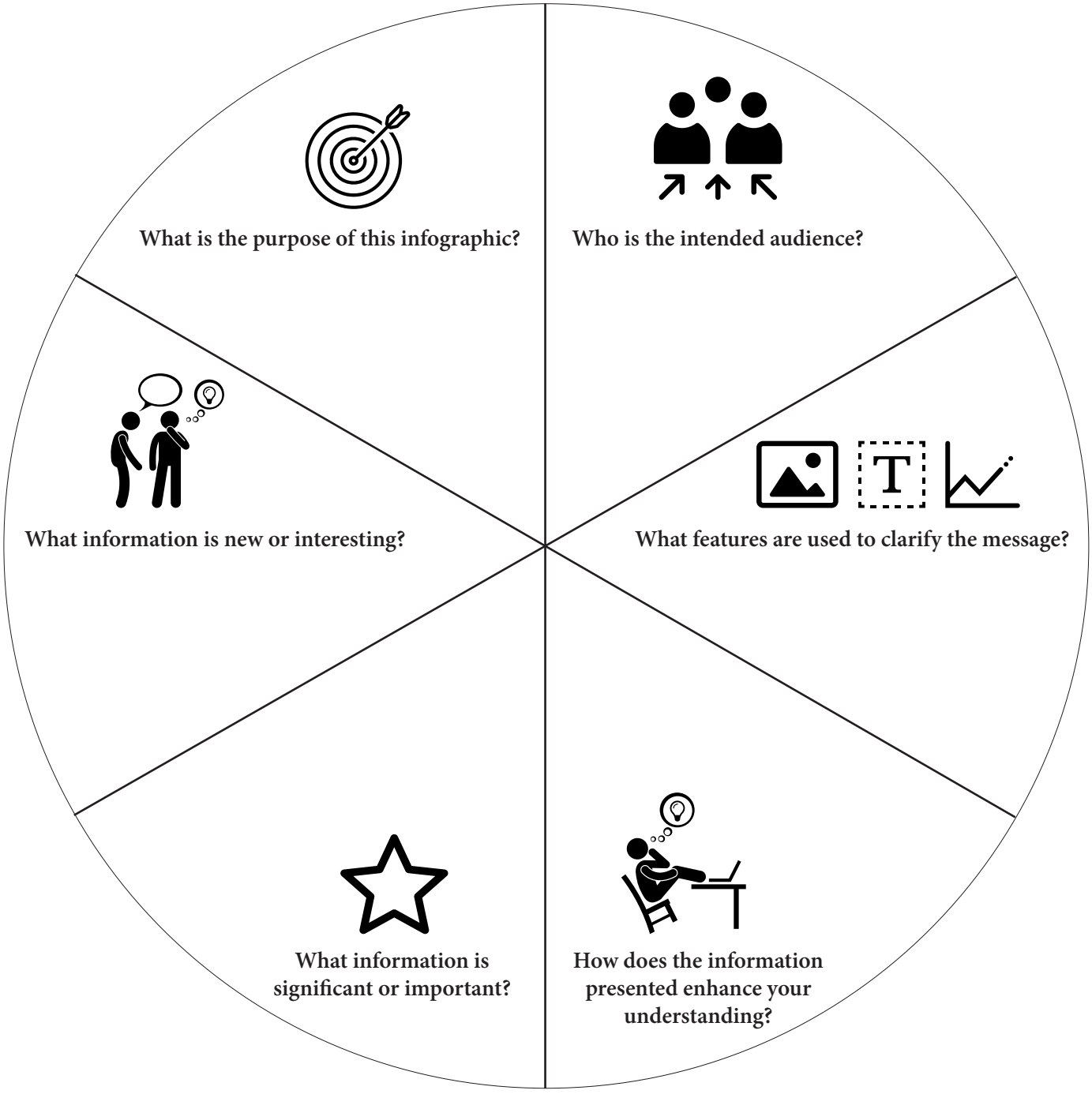
***Locations of seven proposed power plants are unknown and thus not displayed on maps, and some power plants are near one another and occupy same map location marker**

Sources: Reuters, Environmental Integrity Project

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

ANALYZING AN INFOGRAPHIC



What questions do you still have about the topic presented?

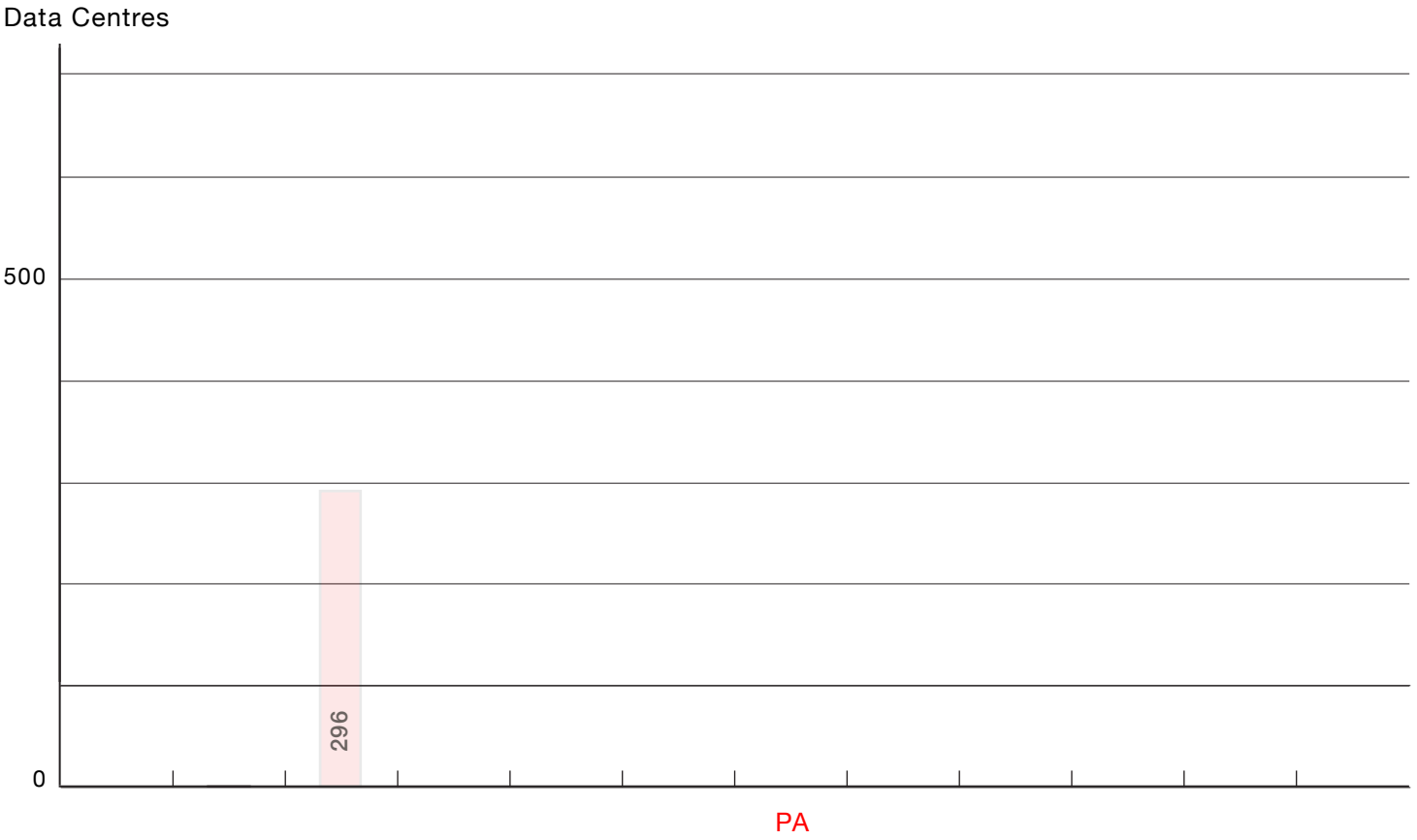
INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete the table to show and the number of data centers in each of the top 12 states and the abbreviation for each state. Use the following links to help you: **https://www.datacentermap.com/usa/**
https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=53971

State		Texas				
Abbreviation						OH
Data Centres			296			
State				Oregon		
Abbreviation					IN	
Data Centres	174					



2. Then, plot a bar graph to show the number of data centers in each state

3. List the number of data centers on each bar.

4. Label your graph with a proper title.

5. Examine your graph. What observations can you make and what conclusions can you draw? Explain.

6. *Bonus*: What reasons can you suggest to explain why some states have many more data centers than other states?

MAP ASSIGNMENT

U.S.A. DATA CENTRES

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *'The World's Data Centre Boom.'*

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.

2. Colour your map **after** all labelling is completed.

3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.

4. Work carefully and neatly.

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label the four U.S. states with the most data centres and shade them purple:

Virginia (674)
California (296)
Texas (537)
Georgia (276)

Part B Locate and label the next four U.S. states that have the most data centres and shade them red:

Illinois (242)
Pennsylvania (174)
Ohio (240)
Arizona (160)

Part C Locate and label the next four U.S. states that have the most data centres and shade them orange:

New York (135)
Indiana (125)
Oregon (135)
Washington (117)

Part D Shade all remaining U.S. territory yellow:

Part E Locate and label the capital of the United States and underline.

Part F Locate and label the following countries and shade each as indicated:

Canada (green)
Cuba (pink)
Mexico (grey)
The Bahamas (green)

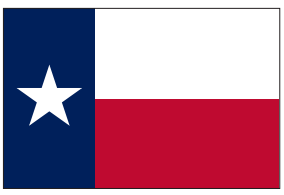
Part G Locate and label the Great Lakes and shade all fresh water light blue.

Part H Locate and label the following and shade all salt water dark blue.

Pacific Ocean
Atlantic Ocean
Gulf of Mexico

Part I Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★

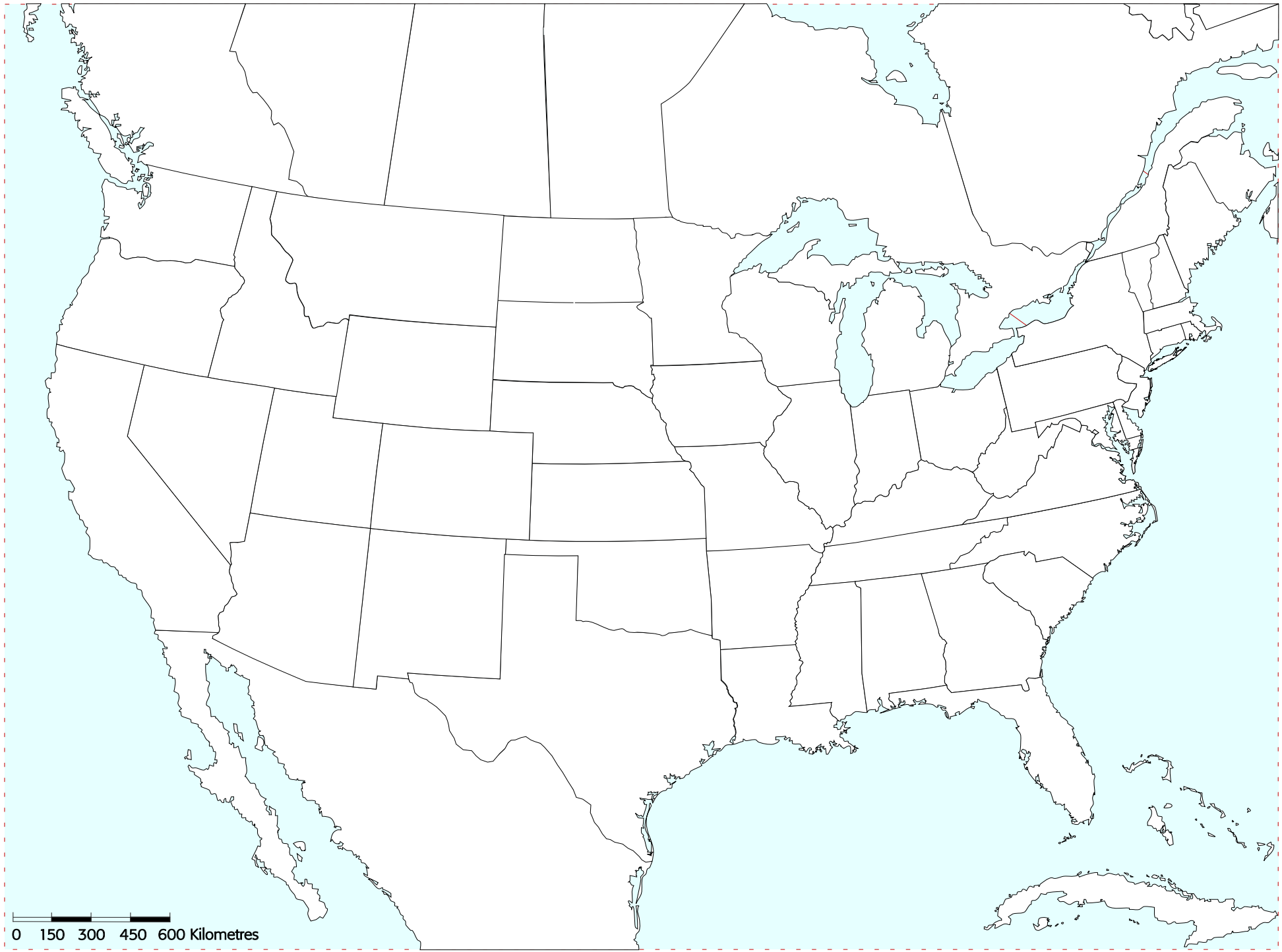
Virginia



Texas

California

Georgia


0 150 300 450 600 Kilometres

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DATA CENTRE BOOM

—MASSIVE NEW AI FACILITIES DEMAND LOTS OF RESOURCES

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

_____ 1. **How much is Nvidia worth?**

a) $18 billion
b) $670 billion
c) $1.2 trillion
d) $5.4 trillion
e) $12.7 trillion

_____ 2. **Which type of cables connect data centre servers to each other and to the internet?**

a) fibre optic
b) copper
c) ethernet
d) HDMI
e) coaxial

_____ 3. **Which large technology company is not interested in building data centres?**

a) Microsoft
b) Apple
c) Amazon
d) Meta
e) Alphabet

B. Mark the statements T (True) or F (False). If a statement is True, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is False, write the words that make it true on the line below.

_____ 4. **True** or **False?** Nvidia is located in California.

_____

_____ 5. **True** or **False?** Canada has less than one hundred data centres.

_____

_____ 6. **True** or **False?** Microsoft invented the GPU.

_____

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. GPU = _____ processing unit.

8. _____ plans to build a $13 billion data centre near Edmonton.

9. Many residents near proposed data centres are worried about noise, pollution and loss of _____ .

D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. ***(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)***

10. ***Canada should do more to encourage large tech companies to build data centres here.*** Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons to support your response.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Resource page for Students

SETTING A PURPOSE BEFORE READING

There are a number of reasons we read, and setting a purpose for reading – knowing WHY we are reading – helps us to focus on important information and to better understand and remember what we read. It also helps us decide HOW we will read the text.

We don't read all texts for the same purposes or in the same way. For example, we read an instruction manual for a new Blu-ray player for a different reason than we read a book or a website. How we will read it – the strategies we use – will also differ. We are more likely to skim to find the information we need in a manual. Once we find what we need, we might read the instructions carefully to figure out what to do. Then, we stop reading, put the manual down, and carry out the steps. We may have to reread if we get confused or forget what to do.

This is a very different approach than the one we would use to read a book. When we read a book, we usually read cover-to-cover. We read carefully so we don't miss any details because we want to understand the whole story. Sometimes we make connections or create images in our minds as we read to help us better understand what we are reading. Depending on its length, we may put the book down before we finish reading it but we will start reading where we left off.

Good readers are flexible and responsive. This means that they match their reading strategies to their purpose for reading. What types of text do you read? Why do you read them? What strategies do you use to read each of these texts? The chart below is a summary of the main purposes for reading and what each entails.

Purpose for reading	What it looks like
For enjoyment	Usually student-selected. Allows students to choose a variety of genres and forms. Allows students to pursue what interests them while developing reading skills.
To experience something new	Students make connections between their personal experiences and those of people around the world.
To learn more about themselves and others	Students reflect on what they've read and express opinions and perspectives. Students develop a sense of their personal values and make sense of the world around them.
To gain information	Students use the features of informational texts to gather, analyse and apply what they've learned.
To understand issues	Students develop a sense of perspective. Students pose questions, acknowledge other points of view, critique the opinions presented and support opinions with evidence.
To appreciate writing	Students respond to text in ways other than written answers to apply what they've learned in new contexts.
To appreciate use of media to communicate	Students respond to a variety of media formats (e.g., infographics, political cartoons, videos, etc.) and react to how the format supports the meaning of the message.

* Chart adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4-6, p. 11.

RESOURCE PAGE FOR TEACHERS

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students' responses holistically.

	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
Supports thinking	Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/ evidence.	Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/ evidence.	Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/ details/evidence.
Shows understanding	Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the 'so what'.
Thinks critically	Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling.	Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/ or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical.	Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T). Inferences are plausible.	Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W). Inferences are plausible and insightful.

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Current Events, Clearly Explained

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but the news can be difficult and time-consuming to teach.

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The Canadian Reader

- ✓ **PDF/Word** resource
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Product details: 8 issues. 38 pages. Available in English and in French for grades 3 and up (1 reading level).

What in the World?

- ✓ **PDF/Word** resource
- ✓ Four national and international news stories
- ✓ Key vocabulary
- ✓ Background information
- ✓ Varied assignments that build content-area knowledge and enhance critical thinking
- ✓ Maps and illustrations

Product details: 8 issues. 60 pages. Available in English and in French, and in 2 reading levels, for grades 5 and up.

Currents4Kids.com

- ✓ **Online** and interactive
- ✓ Weekly
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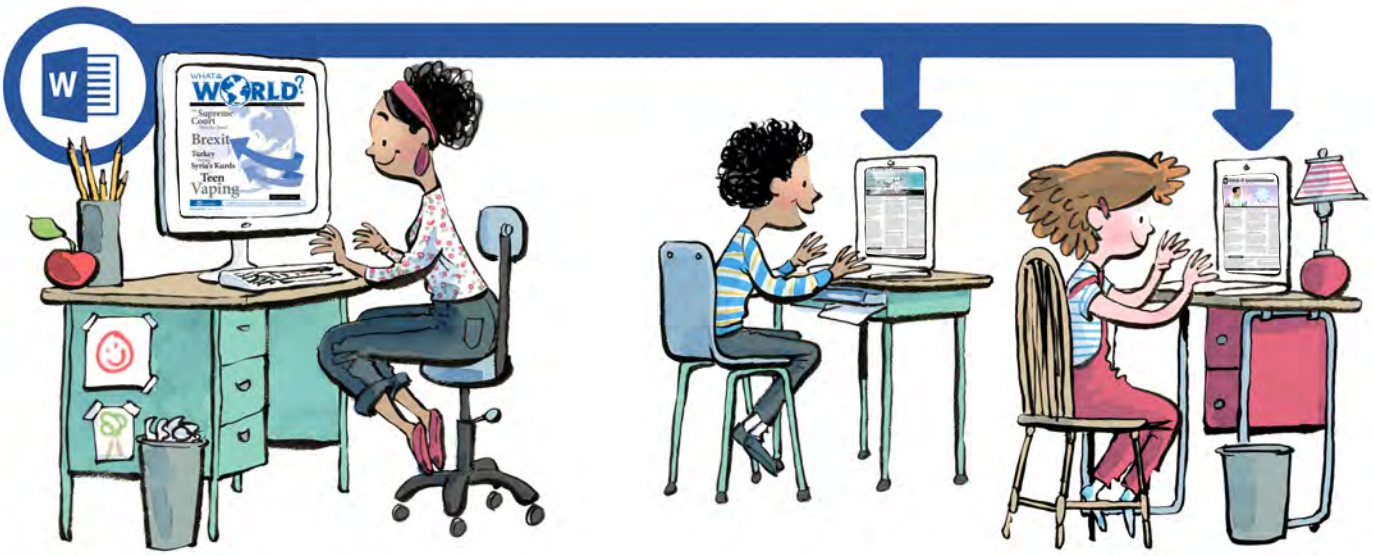

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There are **three** ways to access data from a **Word** file:

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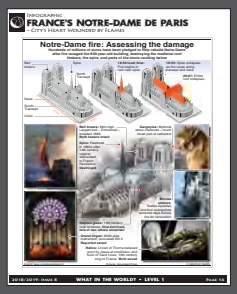

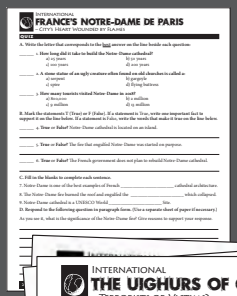

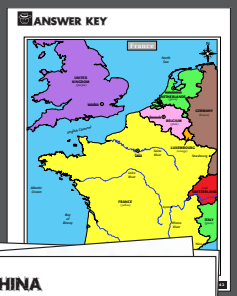

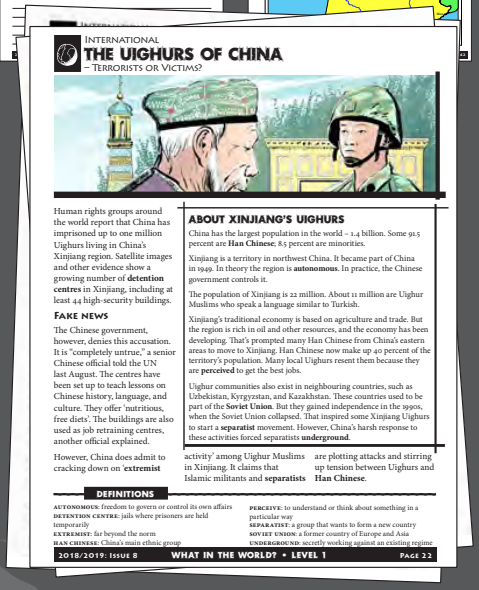

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