

PRODUCT reviews

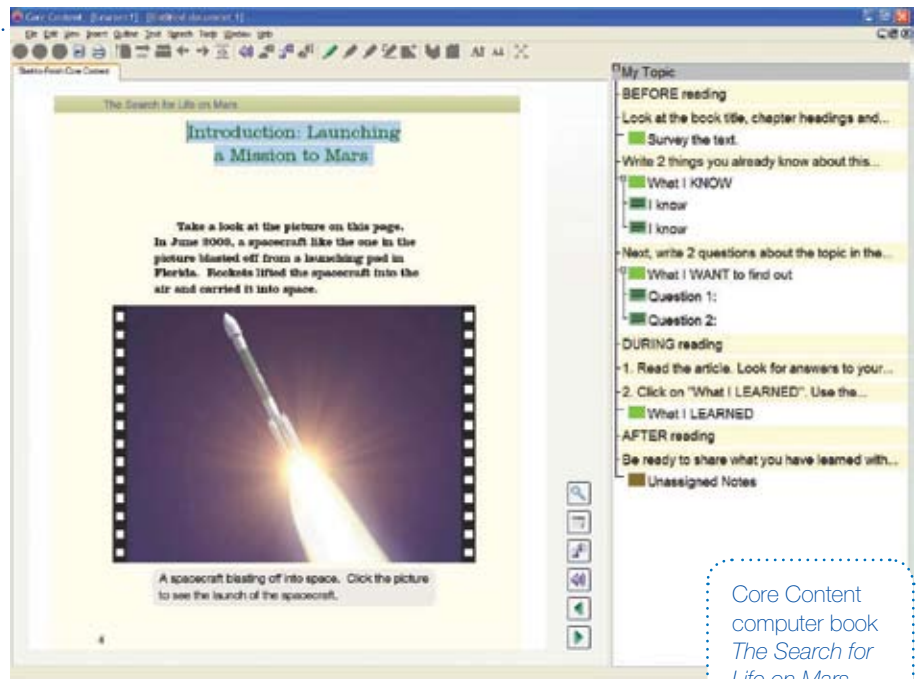
• Start-to-Finish Core Content

Start-to-Finish Core Content

By Terence W. Cavanaugh

Start-to-Finish books are an excellent example of how text can be adapted to better serve students who may be reluctant or remedial readers, those who may have a print disability, and students who may be English language learners (ELL). The Start-to-Finish Core series has added another facet by providing high interest books in science and history. The Core Content books are written to two reading ranges: Gold Core Content for grade 2–3 readability and Blue Core Content for grade 4–5 readability. Although the structure of the text is designed for those readability levels, the content itself could be appropriate for science and history courses through high school, depending on the ability or needs of the learner.

The system has three different facets that can be used independently or together. There is a paperback book, CD audio book, and a computer book version of the text, with a single book title set available at \$79. The text itself is written to be grade-level appropriate in structure with appropriate visual styles, including color images and color-coded text to provide clues about the words. The texts are designed to provide reading supports to assist in comprehension, including supported reading guides, pre-reading questions, and summaries. The computer book version adds an additional level of interaction with its outlining, note taking, and concept mapping abilities.

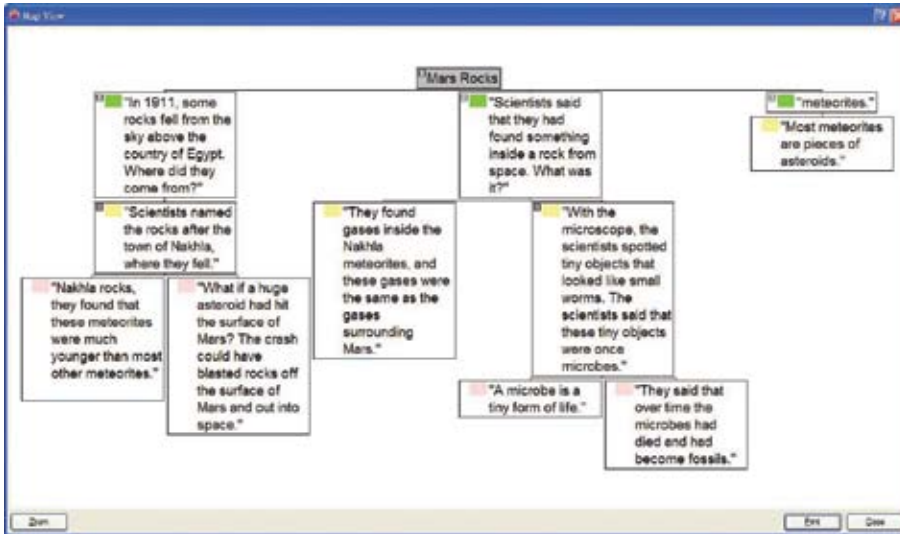


Core Content computer book *The Search for Life on Mars* displaying the book text and a KWL-supported reading guide as an outline.

The audio book provides each chapter as a separate track, which is read by a professional reader reciting the complete text. The audio book version can be used by itself or as a tool for listening as the student reads along, supporting multi-channel input for learning. It would be nice if in the future Don Johnston would also include MP3 versions of the chapters for use with the MP3 players that are starting to be used in classrooms.

The computer book version requires that the Core Content program be installed, but when the program runs, each book is run from its CD. The Core Content program will save student-created works and can be used by a teacher to track what a student has done. Teachers can also use the Teacher Central portion of the program to preset some options for the individual readers in a class. When running the

book on the computer, the program allows users to adjust the display size (75–150%), and provides synchronized sentence-by-sentence highlighting of text with audio narration, which is available both as computerized text-to-speech and professional human narration. In addition to the two forms of audio narration, the computer book provides a number of videos that can be accessed by clicking on book images that have sprocket edges. Perhaps the most impressive features of the computer book are its interactive features. The computer book interface allows readers to use multicolored highlighters within the text for activities similar to power highlighting. These highlights are also used with the sidebar for note taking and outlining. The system also



Concept map made from using the power highlighting and mapping tools of a chapter from a Core Content computer book.

provides three different versions of preset KWL-supported reading guides that can be used with the outlining tool. Also impressive is the ability of the program to take the outline and display it as a manipulatable concept map.

The supports and options provided by the different versions of each book, including audio book and computer versions in the Core Content series, allow students to read materials that are at their instructional level, at the same time keeping them from be-

coming frustrated due to a reading problem or print disability. These supports make the Start-to-Finish Core Content books for science and history an excellent resource for any teacher involved with those subjects.

Start-to-Finish Core Content

Don Johnston
1.800.999.4660
<http://www.donjohnston.com>

Price: \$79 for an individual set of a paperback, CD, and computer book. Individual paperback (\$8.48–\$12.45) and audio books (\$14.49–\$18.95).

Requirements: Computer Book: Mac (OS 10.2 or higher); Win (2000 or XP).



Dr. Terence W. Cavanaugh is an instructor of instructional technology in the College of Education and Human Services at the University of North Florida. His areas of interest include instructional technology, electronic books, assistive technology, ESOL education, and teacher education. He has been an educator for 25 years at the college and secondary levels.

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