

# **NON-FICTION SCREEN CANON (Y3- 8)™**

Documentary & Info Sources Ranked by Year  
Group + Interest

For children preparing for:

OC • Selective • Scholarship Reading & Writing

Background Knowledge Building

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# INTRODUCTION: Why This Exists & How to Use This Guide

## Why This Exists:

Selective / OC / scholarship reading loves:

- Current issues
- Science & environment
- Tech & space
- Australian society & history

Kids who already know this stuff from BTN, Nat Geo, etc. find inference and background-knowledge questions much easier.

## This guide gives you a ranked canon of:

- Documentaries
- News shows for kids
- Educational YouTube channels
- Info sites

...split by Year 3–4 / Year 5–6 / Year 7–8 and interest area.

Use it as your "go-to" list instead of scrolling Netflix or YouTube aimlessly.

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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**Aim for 1–2 episodes or videos a week from the canon.**

For each one, ask 3 questions:

1. "What was this mostly about?"
2. "What surprised you?"
3. "What big problem or idea did it show?"

## Colour Code:

 = gentle / lower primary

 = core upper primary (Selective sweet spot)

 = older / sensitive content – parent preview first

# CHAPTER 1: Year 3–4 Starter

## Canon (Core + Gentle)

### A. NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS

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#### 1. BTN - Behind the News (ABC) - Y4+, some segments fine for late Y3

**Type:** Weekly kids' news magazine (ABC TV + website + YouTube).

##### Why it matters:

- Australia's standard kids' news show (aimed at ages 8–13).
- Breaks down current events, civics, science stories, global issues in 8–12 minute segments.
- Perfect for building background knowledge + non-fiction inference.

##### How to use:

- Watch 1 episode a week.
- Ask: "What was one story about? Why is it important?"

### B. NATURE & ANIMALS

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## 2. National Geographic Kids - Video Hub & YouTube - Y3-4+

**Type:** Short animal & science videos ("Amazing Animals", "Around the World", "How Things Work").

### Why it matters:

- Bite-sized (1–4 mins) clips on animals, habitats, places, basic science.
- Great for learning subject vocabulary (predator, migration, ecosystem, etc.).

### How to use:

- 2–3 clips as a warm-up before reading or writing.
- "Tell me 3 facts you learned. What was the main idea of this video?"

## 3. Nature Boom Time / Kids vs Plastic (Nat Geo Kids) - Y3-4+

**Type:** Environment & sustainability video series within Nat Geo Kids.

### Why it matters:

- Introduces pollution, plastics, environmental action in a kid-friendly way.
- These themes appear constantly in OC/Selective reading.

## C. SCIENCE & "HOW THE WORLD WORKS"

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### 4. Crash Course Kids (YouTube) - Y3-5

**Type:** STEM & basic humanities channel, aimed at roughly Years 3–5.

**Why it matters:**

- Short 3–5 minute explainer videos on Earth Science, Physics, Engineering, Ecosystems and more.
- Builds the conceptual backbone for science passages in reading.

### 5. SciShow Kids (YouTube) - Y3-5

**Type:** Science experiments and "why" questions for kids; recommended as a top science channel in multiple ed-tech lists.

**Why it matters:**

- Tackles questions like "Why do planes leave white streaks?" with simple experiments.
- Excellent for cause-and-effect thinking and scientific explanation.

# D. AUSTRALIAN & GLOBAL KIDS' LIVES

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## 6. 199 Little Heroes (ABC Education / ABC iview) - 🌟 Y4-6

**Type:** Docu-series following children around the world going to school.

**Why it matters:**

- Brilliant for HSIE / Geography and empathy – "How do kids in Jordan / Australia / other countries travel to school?"
- Builds comparative thinking for questions like "How is this life similar/different to yours?"

# E. GENERAL LEARNING / FUN FACTS

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## 7. Horrible Histories / Horrible Science (TV adaptations) - 🌟 Y4-6

**Type:** Comedy + fact shows based on the book series; recommended for homeschooling / education TV.

**Why it matters:**

- Makes history & science sticky via humour and sketches.
- Helps kids handle texts that mix fact, satire and exaggeration.



# CHAPTER 2: Year 5–6 Core Selective Canon (High Leverage)

*This is your main Selective / scholarship prep tier.*

## A. NEWS, CIVICS & CURRENT ISSUES

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### 8. BTN - Behind the News (regular weekly viewing) -

Already listed above, but for Y5–6:

- Use more serious episodes (climate, elections, international crises).
- Perfect for practising "What is the issue?", "What are different viewpoints?".

## B. AUSTRALIAN HISTORY & SOCIETY

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## 9. My Place (ABC Education / ABC iview) - Y5-6+

**Type:** Historical drama series based on the My Place book; each episode set in a different decade of Australian history.

### Why it matters:

- Gives rich context for Federation, migration, First Nations history, post-war changes.
- Great for multi-text tasks (pair an episode with a non-fiction article).

## 10. Aussie Inventions That Changed the World (History / ClickView / SBS) - Y5-8

**Type:** Documentary series on Australian inventions; referenced as a top educational show.

### Why it matters:

- Perfect for innovation, design, cause-and-effect passages.
- Shows how ideas move from problem → prototype → impact.

## 11. The School That Tried to End Racism (ABC) - Y6-8 (parent preview)

**Type:** Docu-series about a ground-breaking anti-racism program in an Australian primary school.

**Why it matters:**

- Tackles bias, fairness, identity – very aligned with modern exam themes.
- Use select episodes / clips; good discussion for mature Year 6 & up.

# C. NATURE / PLANET / ENVIRONMENT (BIG PICTURE CORE)

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## 12. Our Planet (Netflix, narrated by David Attenborough) - 🌟 Y5-8

(Age 6+ but intense in parts; preview for sensitive kids)

### Why it matters:

- Stunning visuals + strong climate change, habitat loss, biodiversity messages.
- These themes are exactly what you see in selective reading and persuasive prompts.

**Parent note:** Some scenes of predation / animal death and, in later episodes, distressing climate impacts. Common Sense Media rates it age 6+ but notes graphic moments.

## 13. Planet Earth / Planet Earth II (BBC, widely available) - 🌟 Y5-8

**Type:** Landmark nature doc series.

### Why it matters:

- Broader planetary overview (habitats, ecosystems, animal adaptations).

- Builds vocabulary & schema for any animal / environment text.

## 14. David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet (Netflix, PG) - Y6-8 (parent preview)

### Why it matters:

- Part memoir, part environmental argument.
- Excellent prep for argument / persuasive non-fiction in upper primary & early high school.

## D. SCIENCE, TECH & FOOD

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### 15. Scope (Network 10 / education platforms) - Y5-8

**Type:** Aussie children's science show; recommended in "Top 11 TV shows for homeschooling".

**Why it matters:** Fun segments on engineering, medicine, space, tech; aligns nicely with STEM passages.

### 16. Phenomenom (Aussie web series about food & agriculture) - Y5-6

**Type:** Food education & sustainability series.

**Why it matters:** Fantastic for food systems, sustainability, health – a growing exam theme.

## **E. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE & HUMAN STORIES**

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### **17. 199 Little Heroes - (see Y3-4)**

🟡 now use more complex episodes & discussion.

### **18. BTN Specials (Finance / Environment / Refugees / Indigenous issues) - 🟡 Y5-6**

BTN publishes themed specials (e.g. Finance, Environment, Sport, Indigenous stories).

**Why it matters:** Deep dives that align with longer non-fiction extracts.

## **F. YOUTUBE - UPPER PRIMARY "CORE CHANNELS"**

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*These are your go-to non-fiction channels to build general knowledge.*

### **19. Crash Course Kids - 🟡 Y4-6**

Already mentioned; use as a structured "mini class" on ecosystems, engineering, space, forces.

## 20. SciShow Kids - Y3-6

Science "why" questions.

## 21. Nat Geo Kids (YouTube) - Y3-6

Animals, places, "How Things Work".

# CHAPTER 3: Year 7–8 Extension Canon (For Strong Thinkers)

*For your advanced Year 6s and early high-schoolers who soak this stuff up.*

## A. BIG-IDEA EXPLAINERS

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### 22. Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell (YouTube) - Y6-8 (parent preview by topic)

**Why it matters:**

- High-end animated explainers on space, biology, existential risks, AI, climate.
- Great for strong readers; can be intense or philosophical → choose topics carefully.

### 23. CrashCourse (main channel) - Y7-8+ (select series)

**Why it matters:**

- Structured courses in World History, US History, Biology, Economics, Literature.

- Older style, fast-paced; excellent for extending top kids' content + academic vocab.

## B. SOCIAL ISSUES & IDENTITY

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### 24. The School That Tried to End Racism (ABC) - (listed earlier) - Y6-8

Use this now as part of ethics / civics and writing prompts:

- "Should schools run programs like this?"
- "What are the challenges?"

## C. LONG-FORM DOCS (FAMILY VIEWING)

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### 25. Our Planet & Planet Earth / Planet Earth II - used more deeply:

pause and discuss cause/effect, problem/solution, persuasive language.

## **26. David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet - use as basis for:**

- "Summarise his argument in 3 points."
- "What evidence does he use? Which is strongest?"

# **D. GENERAL ED YOUTUBE SHORTLIST (FROM ED-TECH CURATION)**

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In addition to those already listed, tech & parenting sites frequently recommend **TED-Ed**, **Khan Academy**, **National Geographic Kids**, **CrashCourse** & **SciShow Kids** as high-value educational channels across subjects.

For Y6–8, selectively use:

## **TED-Ed**

Short animated lessons on history, science, philosophy, puzzles.

## **Khan Academy**

Concept explanation (especially for maths/science) rather than "documentary", but very useful for background understanding.

# REFERENCE: Quick "Discussion Card" for Any Doc

Print this and stick it on the fridge.

After any documentary / episode / video, ask:

## **1. What was this mostly about?**

("This episode was about...")

## **2. What was the big problem or idea?**

("The main issue was...")

## **3. What surprised or bothered you? Why?**

**4. Who was affected, and how did they feel?**

**5. If you were writing an exam passage based on this, what question would you ask?**

This turns passive watching into exam-style comprehension practice and makes every doc a little non-fiction reading lesson in disguise.

# QUICK GUIDE: Minimum Effective Dose for Selective (Y5–6)

If a family is busy and wants a bare minimum "screen canon" for a Year 5–6 Selective attempt:

**BTN – 1 episode/week (core)**

**Our Planet / Planet Earth – 1 episode/fortnight (environment core)**

**199 Little Heroes – 1 episode/week (global kids' lives)**

**Crash Course Kids / SciShow Kids / Nat Geo Kids – 2–3 short videos/week (science core)**

# **My Place / Aussie Inventions / Horrible Histories - 1 episode/week rotating (history & society core)**

That alone, over a year, builds huge background knowledge for:

- Reading comprehension
- Inference skills
- Writing ideas (examples/stats/contexts)

## **Result:**

That's exactly what this guide gives families: **A ranked, extensive canon of documentary & non-fiction sources, matched to year level and interest, so parents can stop guessing and just follow the list.**