



Writing Fundamentals

Drafting I: Finding a Purpose

2-3 Nonfiction

Rationale:

Nonfiction writers consider their purpose and their readers in choosing how to present materials. Students will ask themselves questions about the audience and purpose of their writing.

Preparation:

- *Tigress* by Nick Dowson
- “Questions to Guide You in Finding a Purpose” (see Appendix)

Teaching:

Inform

How writers choose to present their information depends on their purpose and their readers. Today, we will look at one author’s purpose and see if his book affects his readers in the ways he wanted. This will help you clarify your own purpose as a writer and to think about what your readers will need from you.

Present

Read the “About the Author” section at the end of *Tigress*. What does this tell readers about who Nick Dowson is as a person and why he wrote this book? (Possible responses: He is a teacher, so he wants to teach students. He has been fascinated by tigers his whole life and dreams about tigers. He is worried about them and wants to protect them.) The way Nick chose to write his information also helps make his point. Read pp. 10–11. What do you notice about his writing style? Dowson uses a lot of detailed, beautiful language in describing things (e.g., “smooth as a river she moves”; “strong muscles stretch and ripple . . . like wind on water”). His descriptive writing shows his readers why he believes the tigress is fascinating and worthy of protection. Thinking about ways to make readers feel that way, too, he decided to tell about how the tigress cares for her babies just like humans do. This makes readers like the tigress who might have seemed scary at first. The way Jane Chapman’s illustrations show the tigress loving on and caring for her cubs also helps readers—whether they are students or adults—really see the kindness and gentleness with which she treats them.

Another idea Nick had was to add extra information about tigers in the back of his book to support his purpose. Read the “About Tigers” section at the end of the book. Nick makes it very clear here that he is worried about

the future of tigers. With his writer’s craft, Nick shows that tigers are fascinating creatures. His facts help others understand why tigers should be protected.

Engage

Before you draft your piece, you need to think about your own purpose as an author. How do you want your reader to feel about your subject? What do you think they should know? Hand out “Questions to Guide You in Finding a Purpose.” Read these aloud. Model the process by providing your own verbal answers to these questions about a topic of your choosing. Work quietly for a few minutes to answer these questions before you begin your draft today.

Reiterate

Nonfiction authors think about how to craft and present their ideas to best fulfill their purpose and reach their readers. As you begin your draft, be clear about your purpose. In this way, you can impact your audience and get them to feel about your subject the way you do.

Conference Questions:

- What are you writing your piece about? Why?
- Do you want to teach your reader something? What?

Extensions:

Consider how Bernard Most uses humor, questions, and illustrations to fulfill his purpose of educating and entertaining his readers in *How Big Were the Dinosaurs?*

Appendix:

“Questions to Guide You in Finding a Purpose”



Name _____ Date _____

Questions to Guide You in Finding a Purpose

What are you writing your piece about? _____

Do you want to teach your reader something? _____

Do you want to change or influence your readers' thinking about something? _____

Do you want to make them love your topic like you do? _____

Is your purpose to be entertaining or funny? If so, why? _____

Do you want your readers to try something new? If so, what? _____

Is there a lesson that you want to communicate? If so, what? _____

Do you think describing something well will make your readers care about what you care about? _____

Could writing from a different perspective help you to achieve your purpose? _____

Who do you want to read your book? _____
