Essential Skill: Intro to Informative Writing

Animal Clues

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Margaret. My friend texted me yesterday and told me she just got a new pet. I was so excited to hear more about it, and I thought it would be fun to guess what kind of pet she got. So, I asked her to give me some clues. Here's what she told me about it:

- It's really cute.
- It's my favorite animal.
- I love to play with it!
- I love to dress it up in funny hats.

After reading all these clues, I still had no idea what kind of pet she got. You might have noticed that it was a little hard to figure out what kind of pet she got based on the information she gave.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What clues would make it easier to guess the pet?

HOOK 2

Maybe a good clue would be what the animal eats, or if it has scales, or feathers. Or if it lives on land, in water, or in both.

Let's pretend my friend gave me a different set of clues about her animal. As I read these new clues, think about what it could be. If you think you know what her pet is, put your hand on your head, like this. Here we go:

- It eats insects with a really long tongue.
- It's a type of lizard with eyes that look like they are popping out.
- It can change the color of its skin as a way to warm up.

My friend got a chameleon! Notice how listing actual facts made it much easier to guess. Saying it's a color-changing lizard is way more informative than saying it wears a funny hat—lots of animals could wear hats.

This is one of the many great uses of informative writing. It helps teach or inform your reader. My friend used facts about chameleons to inform me on what kind of pet she got. In the same way, writers use this kind of writing to inform their readers on a topic so that their reader can learn more.

Informative writing is all around us—in textbooks, instructions for a game, or cupcake recipes. These are all examples of a few ways writers teach someone about a topic.

To really understand what informative writing sounds like, let's play a game! First, I'll give you a topic and two different sentences. Then, I want you to vote for the sentence that does the best job of informing you about the topic. Vote with your fingers by holding up a one or a two.

Let's try it!

The topic is turtles.

Remember to pick the sentence that helps you learn something about turtles.

Number 1: Turtles are funny to watch.

Number 2: Turtles have a shell that protects them from predators.

Ready?

Go!

It was this one. This sentence is informative because it taught us a fact about turtles. This sentence just says how I feel about turtles, but it doesn't inform or teach me anything on the topic of turtles.

Let's try another one.

The topic is cheetahs.

Remember to pick the sentence that helps you learn something about cheetahs.

1. Cheetahs are very fast land animals.

2: Once upon a time there was a cheetah named Lou.

Ready?

Go!

It was this one. This sentence is informative because it taught us a fact about cheetahs. This sentence sounds like the beginning of a story. Lou might be a cheetah, but this doesn't inform or teach me anything about the topic of cheetahs.

Now, you're going to try writing your own informative sentences about more animals. You'll create clues that inform your reader so they can guess what your animal is.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies. You will need your Animal Clues worksheet.

Some of your worksheets will say “Partner A,” and some of your worksheets will say “Partner B.”

STEP 2

You should have a worksheet that looks similar to mine. I'll go first.

I'm going to pick an animal that I know lots about—a chameleon—and put a small dot on it so no one sees what I picked. Then I'm going to use the lines below to write as many clues as I can about the animal so that I can help my partner guess correctly. Here's what I wrote:

- My animal is small.
- It's a type of reptile that has scaly skin.
- Its skin changes color based on its temperature.
- It likes to eat insects with a really long tongue.

Notice how I didn't talk about why I liked this animal or told a story about it. Instead, I used facts that can help my reader guess correctly.

Now it's your turn to try. Point to number one on your page. You have five boxes, each with a different animal. Choose one animal that you know the most about and draw a

small dot in the box. It's important that you don't share your animal with anyone so that it stays a secret for the game.

STEP 3

Now look at the lines underneath the boxes. You will need to write as many informative sentences as you can about the animal you chose. If you're not sure what to write, you can write about what the animal looks like, what it eats, or any other fact you know.

Your teacher will let you know when to begin.

STEP 4

Whisper-read your sentences. While you read, think about if your sentences would inform or teach your reader about the animal you chose. If you need to make changes to your sentences, you can do that now.

STEP 5

Point to number two on your page. You have another five boxes, each with a different animal. Choose one animal that you know the most about and draw a small dot in the box. Make sure you don't share your animal with anyone else.

STEP 6

Now look at the lines underneath the boxes. You will need to write as many informative sentences as you can about the animal you chose. If you're not sure what to write, think about what the animal looks like, what it eats, or any other fact you know.

Your teacher will let you know when to begin.

STEP 7

Whisper-read your sentences. While you read, think about if your sentences would inform or teach your reader about the animal you chose. If you need to make changes to your sentences, you can do that now.

STEP 8

Now look at the top of your page. If your worksheet says, "Partner A," then hold up a sign language A, like this. If your worksheet says, "Partner B," then hold up a sign language B, like this.

When your teacher says, "Go!", you will need to quietly find a partner that has a different letter worksheet than you. So, if you're an A, you will need to find a B. And if you are a B, you will need to find an A. Once you find your partner, stand next to them and remember to keep the animals on your page a secret.

STEP 9

Partner A: you'll be the reader.

Partner B: you'll be the guesser.

You'll get to switch later.

Partner A: you will read your sentences for number one.

Partner B: remember to let your partner finish reading all of their sentences before you start guessing.

After Partner B guesses the animal, you can move on to number two.

Your teacher will let you know when to begin.

STEP 10

Now, Partner B will be the reader and Partner A will be the guesser.

Partner B: you will read your sentences for number one.

Partner A: remember to let your partner finish reading all of their sentences before you start guessing.

After Partner A guesses the animal, you can move on to number two.

Your teacher will let you know when to begin.

WRAP UP

Great job! You were able to create sentences that informed your partner so they could have the best chance of guessing your animal correctly.

When you're writing to inform, it's important to make sure you're giving your reader clear facts, details, and explanations so that your reader can better understand the topic.

As a writer, you will get to write in lots of different styles or genres. The informative genre is only one style of writing. Some other genres might look like an exciting story you make up, a recipe you write for a new concoction, or a letter convincing your teacher to give you more recess. As a writer, you'll get to write in all of these genres.

Before you go, try to find other pieces of informative writing you see in real life.

See you next time, writers.