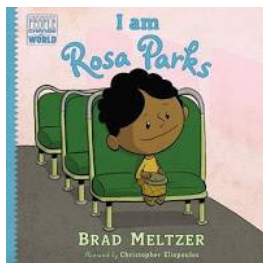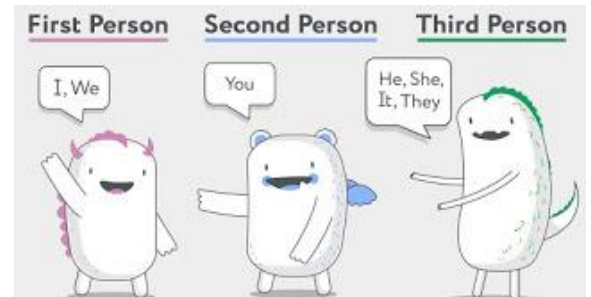## What Is a Pseudo-narrative?

In fiction, first-person narration is powerful because it allows readers to see the world from the main character's perspective. In recent years, some authors have tried to bring this same kind of intimacy and engagement to our understanding of historic figures by writing "biographies" in first person.

In books like *I Am Rosa Parks* by Brad Meltzer and *Solving the Puzzle Under the Sea: Marie Tharp Maps the Ocean Floor* by Robert Burleigh, iconic figures from the past seem to tell their own stories. But in fact, white male authors are inventing the text by putting words in the mouths of the subjects. And that makes these books informational fiction—not nonfiction.

Informational fiction is based on documented facts but takes creative liberties, such as made-up dialog or imagined scenes, in an effort to make the book more engaging. Informational fiction also includes "pseudo-narratives"—books that have an expository writing style but resemble a narrative because the information is reported in the first-person by a fictional narrator, such as an animal or inanimate object or a person other than the author. Examples include:
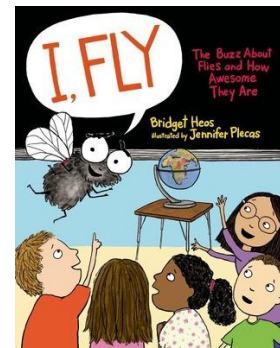
The Deadliest Creature in the World by Brenda Z. Guiberson

Hey, Water by Antoinette Portis

I, Fly: The Buzz About Flies and How Awesome They Are by Bridget Heos

One Proud Penny by Randy Siegel

Sun: One in a Billion by Stacey McAnulty

In some cases, these books can be an effective way to share ideas and information with young readers, but they shouldn't take the place of nonfiction books in your classroom or library collection, and they shouldn't be used as mentor texts in writing workshop during the informational writing unit. It's critically important for students to understand that, in a nonfiction book, nothing at all is made up.