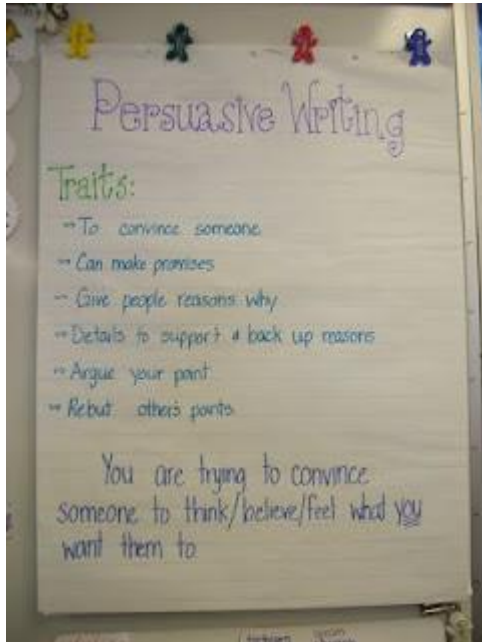


A Mega-fun Mentor Text for Opinion Writing



In most states, the ELA standards expect students to create opinion pieces, or persuasive writing. A quick google search can provide lists of fictional mentor texts, but since the pieces students create will be nonfiction, wouldn't an informational book make a better mentor?

Your school's librarian or literacy coach can probably create a list of persuasive nonfiction titles on serious topics, such as:

City Chickens by Christine Heppermann

Frog Song by Brenda Z. Guiberson

A Place for Bats by Melissa Stewart

Write On, Mercy: The Secret Life of Mercy Otis Warren by Gretchen Woelfle

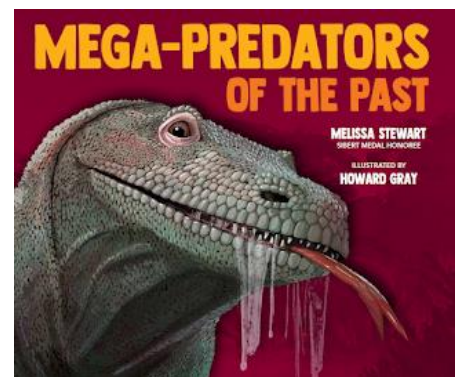
Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors? The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell by Tanya Lee Stone

But oftentimes, especially in the elementary grades, the opinion pieces students are writing are more lighthearted. They might be requesting a change in the school cafeteria or trying to convince their parents to let them have a pet. So wouldn't it be helpful if they used a mentor text that's fun AND informative?

Mega-Predators of the Past is the perfect choice. Here's a description of the book:

It's time for dinosaurs to step aside and let prehistoric mega-predators like the terror bird and giant ripper lizard take the spotlight! Travel back in time to meet some little-known hunters that once populated our planet. Discover how they lived, what they ate, and what they have in common with animals alive today.

Young readers will appreciate the book's humorous voice as well as the dynamic browsable design and art that's both playful and scientifically accurate. Mega fact files,



infographics, and rich back matter provide a plethora of additional details.

And here's how it begins:



Think you're looking at a dinosaur? Think again.

Sure, dinosaurs like *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Giganotosaurus* were humongous hunters. And they did live a long, long time ago. But you know what? The last thing those super-sized celebrities need is more attention.

That's why the stars of this book are prehistoric predators that had a whole lot in common with animals alive today. Like this giant ripper lizard. Cool name, right?

We'll find out more about this tongue-flicking terror in a minute, but let's start with some mega-predators that look more familiar.

Readers will immediately realize that the narrator has a clear point of view—that dinosaurs get too much attention and that it's time for other hulking hunters of the past to get their moment on the sun.

And it's reinforced with comments sprinkled throughout the text. For example:



“No doubt about it. American lions deserve some time in the spotlight. Why in the world do dinosaurs get all the hype?”

And here’s how the book ends:



“Face the facts, Friends. Snarling, stalking, scene-stealing dinosaurs are overexposed and overrated. It’s time to let other prize-worthy predators of the past share the stage.”

There are lots of dino-loving kids out there that will be surprised by the narrator’s opinion. Some of them may be ready for an argument. Others may be intrigued and ready to expand their understanding of the prehistoric world. Either way, they’ll keep on reading. And isn’t that exactly what a persuasive essay should do?

After reading the book, encourage students to write a response to the narrator. If they agree with the narrator’s opinion, they can quote parts of the book that convinced them. And if they disagree, they can build an argument of their own.

What a fun way to explore opinion writing!

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