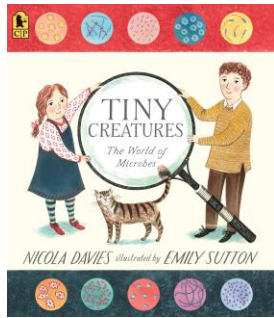


## Point of View in Nonfiction Writing

In the past, nearly all nonfiction books for children featured third-person point of view, and many still do. But more and more, authors of expository literature and narrative nonfiction are experimenting with other kinds of narration.

### Second-person Narration



As you read the following excerpt from *Tiny Creatures: The World of Microbes* by Nicola Davies, notice how addressing readers with “you” makes the information relevant to their lives and their world:

Right now there are more microbes living on your skin than there are people on Earth, and there are ten or even a hundred times as many as that in your stomach.

Now take a look at a few lines from *Bone by Bone: Comparing Animal Skeletons* by Sara Levine:



Can you imagine how you'd look if we added some bones to your spine?

What if your vertebrae didn't stop at your rear end?

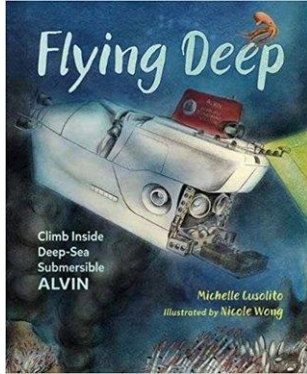
What if they kept going?

**YOU'D HAVE A TAIL!**

Tails are made of vertebrae. Lots of animals have tails. They wag on happy dogs and sweep side to side to help alligators swim through the water.

According to Levine, as she crafted her manuscript, she looked for ways to “make learning interactive, relevant, and fun.” She thought about how “children enjoy being addressed directly and being active participants in responding to questions that make them think, especially about silly possibilities.”

As you can see in this excerpt from *Flying Deep: Climb Inside Deep-Sea Submersible ALVIN* by Michelle Cusolito, second-person point of view can also be used to take young readers on an armchair journey to places few people will ever go:



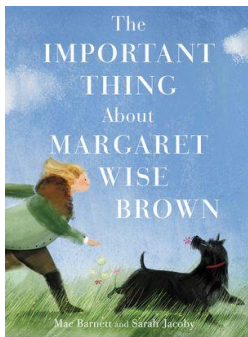
Imagine  
you're a pilot  
of *Alvin*,  
a deep-sea submersible  
barely big enough for three . . .

Lower yourself  
through *Alvin*'s hatch.  
Flip on oxygen--  
*pssssssssssss*.  
Switch on carbon dioxide scrubber--  
*zzzzzzzzhhhhhhh*.

Isn't it amazing how Cusolito's use of sensory details and second-person narration puts readers right in the middle of the action? What a powerful way to engage and connect with children!

### First-person Narration

When you think of nonfiction with a first-person point of view, autobiographical accounts like *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson, *Hey, Kiddo* by Jarrett Krosoczka, or *The Scraps Book: Notes from a Colorful Life* by Lois Ehlert probably come to mind. But authors are also trying some exciting new things.



For example, *The Important Thing About Margaret Wise Brown* by Mac Barnett is a picture book biography written in the form of a personal essay, resulting in a book that's as much about Barnett's view of the world as it is about a legendary children's book author.

Similarly, *Something Rotten: A Fresh Look at Roadkill* by Heather L. Montgomery takes an astonishingly innovative approach to a topic that might turn some stomachs. First-person narration allows the author's fascination—and hesitation—come through loud and clear. I'm looking forward to seeing more creative experimentation from nonfiction authors in the future.

