

## THINKING ALOUD WITH UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Good readers try to figure out the reason that the author wrote a text. They want to know the purpose of the text. If a text gives a clear opinion or tries to convince the reader of something, the author's purpose is to persuade. If a text gives facts or tells a reader how to do something, the author's purpose is to inform. If the text is enjoyable, tells a story, or uses a story to teach a lesson, the author's purpose is to entertain.

Why was the book written? What was the purpose? Was it to persuade readers? Was it to inform, or give the readers new information? Was it to engage us in an entertaining story? To begin thinking aloud for understanding the author's purpose, I have selected three interrelated texts—all on the same topic. By choosing books on the same topic, young readers can see the different purposes of each author. The scripts with *Lizards*, *I Wanna Iguana*, and *Private I. Guana: The Case of the Missing Chameleon* will showcase these different purposes.

It is important to note that there are not absolute demarcations between the different categories of an author's purpose. An author does not write a text solely to inform or to persuade; these purposes are not neat and tidy distinctions. Often, texts achieve a couple of purposes. Today's best nonfiction authors can both inform and entertain their readers. For further evidence of this, take a look at the think aloud script of *Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade*.

### Teaching Understanding the Author's Purpose in Grades K–2: Inform *Lizards* by Laura Marsh

#### Overview and Rationale

Kids are fascinated by the creepy-crawly! This informational text, published through National Geographic Kids, provides fascinating information on all types of lizards—from geckos to iguanas, from Komodo dragons to chameleons. This compact book includes multiple text features, such as a table of contents, detailed glossy photos, and labeled diagrams. Geared toward the early reader, this text clearly demonstrates the author's purpose of informing.

Lexile Framework: 370

Grade-Level Equivalent: 2.6

Guided Reading Level: M

What the Text Says	What I Say
What am I? A lizard! (pp. 4–5)	<i>I predict that the author's purpose is to inform about all of the different kinds of lizards—some small, some big, some smooth, some bumpy.</i>
Turtles, snakes, crocodiles, and tortoises are also reptiles. (p. 6)	<i>Here, the author really wants me to understand what reptiles are, and some of the characteristics of reptiles.</i>
Lizards live on every continent except Antarctica. (pp. 8–9)	<i>I think what the author is really telling me is that lizards would rather be warm than be cold. They have to keep themselves warm, and they don't live on the coldest continent, so the purpose here is to show me why lizards are better suited for warm climates.</i>

What the Text Says	What I Say
Scales keep a lizard from losing water, too. (p. 11)	<i>The author wants me to learn how important scales are for keeping lizards safe, warm, and hydrated.</i>
It's dinnertime! (pp. 14–15)	<i>Here, the author is informing me about all of the types of foods a lizard will eat.</i>
Baby lizards can take care of themselves. (p. 16)	<i>I'm getting the sense that the author really wants me to see that lizards are unique since the babies don't need their mothers.</i>
Snakes don't have these. (pp. 18–19)	<i>The author wants me to be sure that even if they sometimes look alike, lizards and snakes are not the same thing.</i>
Predators can't see them. (p. 20)	<i>A golden word for me here is camouflage. The author uses it to show me how well lizards can hide.</i>
And some lizards just try to look big and strong. (pp. 22–23)	<i>The author doesn't want me to think that lizards only hide—here she informs me of ways that they try to get noticed.</i>
A new tail will grow back in its place. (pp. 24–25)	<i>By giving me all of these examples, the author is really making me see how dangerous lizards can be.</i>
That's about the size of a pushpin. (pp. 26–27)	<i>The author has written this page to inform me about how different lizards can be—both big and small!</i>
Let's hear it for the lizards! (p. 28)	<i>In this last page of the book, I can tell the author wrote this book to inform us about how different and unique lizards are.</i>

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