

Teaching Understanding the Author's Purpose in Grades K–2: Persuade

I Wanna Iguana by Karen Orloff

Overview and Rationale

Written as a series of letters between a mother and her son Alex, this book presents Alex's attempt to persuade his mother to get him a pet iguana. He promises that he will be completely responsible for it, but Mom fears life with a six-foot iguana. Alex tries to assuage her fears as their negotiations continue. Because it is written in child-friendly language, kids will relate to Alex's efforts to convince his mother of what he wants.

Lexile Framework: 460

Grade-Level Equivalent: 2.3

Guided Reading Level: J

What the Text Says	What I Say
Signed, Your sensitive son, Alex (p. 1)	<i>I wonder why the author has started off with a letter. I'll have to keep reading to find out more. But I like—right from the start—how the author is showing me that Alex is trying to convince his mother of what he wants. He wants an iguana, and she does not.</i>
Love, Mom (p. 2)	<i>I like how we get a response from Alex's mom. I think the author is using these letters to let the characters give their side of the argument.</i>
Love, Your adorable son, Alex (p. 4)	<i>I like how the author signs the letters "adorable" and "sensitive" son. It makes me think that Alex is really trying to turn up the charm to get what he wants.</i>
Just thought I'd mention it. Love, Mom (p. 5)	<i>The author is showing me here that Mom won't give in without a fight. She's not convinced by Alex's efforts.</i>
... much less on your dresser (with or without your trophies) ... (p. 7)	<i>Here I can see that Alex is trying a new route to persuading his mom—trying to make her think that she would never even know the iguana is there because it would be so small. But Mom comes back with a fact to show him he's wrong!</i>
Love, Your smart and mature kid, Alex (p. 9).	<i>I'm wondering why the author has Alex writing only to his mom, not to "Mom and Dad." Maybe he doesn't live with his dad. Or maybe his mom is the decision maker of the house, so he doesn't include his dad on the letters.</i>
... when you own a six-foot-long reptile? (p. 11)	<i>I'm noticing how clever his mom is. Not once has she said no. Instead she's just poking holes in his argument.</i>
This iguana can be the brother I've always wanted. (pp. 12–13)	<i>It looks like Alex is trying another route to persuading his mom. By saying he is "lonely" and has always wanted a brother, he's trying to make her feel guilty. If she feels guilty, maybe she will say yes.</i>
You have a brother. (p. 14)	<i>Ha! Looks like Mom wins again—he already has a brother, and she doesn't feel guilty!</i>
I could teach it tricks and things. (p. 16)	<i>The author is showing me here that Alex really won't quit. He must really want that iguana!</i>

What the Text Says	What I Say
Remember what happened when you took home the class fish? (p. 17)	<i>I like here how the author has Mom ask questions. Rather than lecturing Alex about responsibility, she's making Alex remember something bad that happened with the fish.</i>
I never would have taken the cover off of the jar! (p. 18)	<i>How did a fish jump into spaghetti sauce? The author is showing me that Alex has accepted his mistake, but maybe he's only saying this to get his iguana.</i>
Let's say I let you have the iguana on a trial basis. (p. 19)	<i>A golden line here is "Let's say." The author is showing me that Alex's mom is considering the iguana!</i>
And I would clean his cage when it got messy. (p. 20)	<i>I like how the author uses all of these arguments to make me as the reader root for Alex. Here he's trying to show how responsible he is so he can persuade his mom.</i>
P.S. If you clean his cage as well as you clean your room, you're in trouble. (p. 22)	<i>I'm really liking the author's decision now to write this book in the form of letters. They are much funnier and more appealing than if Alex and his mom were just having a conversation about the iguana.</i>
I'll pay for the lettuce with my allowance. (p. 23)	<i>I'm seeing that the author is giving us another persuasion tactic—Alex will spend his allowance on the iguana's food.</i>
"Yes, Mom! I wanna iguana . . . Please!" (p. 24)	<i>The author has changed to speech. I wonder why? My guess is that this conversation is so important it can't just happen through letters.</i>
"YESSSS! Thank you! Thank you!" (p. 26)	<i>The author doesn't come right out and say it, but the picture and Alex's reaction let me know he was successful in persuading his mom to let him get the iguana. He used lots of different arguments to convince her, but I think the most important thing was his persistence! He did not give up.</i>

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