

Grab and Go Lesson Plan

Adding Voice in Nonfiction Writing

Objective

November is **National Nonfiction month** - a time to highlight and celebrate factual books for all ages! To help your class explore the world of nonfiction, this lesson introduces students to author **Martin Jenkins**, who skillfully adds *voice* to his factual writing. Students will then practice using their own writer's voice in nonfiction.

Materials

- *The Emperor's Egg* by Martin Jenkins (or ANY book by this author). See Book List on page 11.
 - *Online version is available [HERE](#) - PLEASE mute and read aloud yourself!*
 - Chart paper or whiteboard & markers (for brainstorming student ideas)
 - Emperor Penguin paragraphs (printable or project on screen)
 - *Adding Your Voice- Chameleons* sheet (printable)
 - *Fact-React* sheet (printable)
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1. Introduction

Set the Context:

- Explain to students that November is **National Nonfiction Month** - a time to read, share, and learn interesting facts about the world through nonfiction books. Tell students you're excited to be celebrating nonfiction with them and that, over the month, you will be sharing some nonfiction books and that they will be learning a simple writing technique authors use to make factual writing more interesting.

Discussion Prompt:

- Ask:
 - “Who likes reading nonfiction or information books?”
 - “When you visit the nonfiction section of the library, what kinds of books do you like to explore?”
 - “Do you have a special topic you love learning about?”
- Have students share with a partner or the class.

- Explain that nonfiction books are full of true facts that help us learn about our world. Sometimes there's *so much* information that it can be hard to remember it all!
- Point out that while nonfiction is factual, it doesn't have to be boring. Authors can make facts engaging and interesting using different techniques. Today, they'll be learning one of those techniques.

2. Read Aloud

- Introduce Martin Jenkins as a nonfiction author who writes informational books for kids, often about animals, birds, insects, and reptiles. Explain that while his books contain lots of facts, they're *never boring!*
- Say something like:

"Martin Jenkins uses a simple writing strategy to make facts more interesting - and when facts are interesting, they stick in our brains much better!"

- Tell students you'll be reading *The Emperor's Egg*, a book about Emperor Penguins who live in Antarctica. Ask if anyone knows what the word *emperor* means. Explain that it's another word for *king*, and Emperor Penguins are called that because they're the tallest and heaviest of all penguins.
- Before reading, remind students to listen for facts *and* for how Jenkins makes those facts engaging.

(If using the [online version](#), mute the sound so students hear your voice. Use as much expression as possible!)

After reading

- Ask students to share one interesting or surprising fact they learned about Emperor Penguins with a partner.
- Create a class "Fact-Finding List" to record responses. Comment on how many facts they remembered:

"It seems like a lot of the facts in Martin Jenkins' book really stuck! He included so much information, yet we remembered a lot!"

- Ask:

“Why do you think these facts were easy to remember?”

“What do you think Martin Jenkins did to make them interesting?”

- Explain that you’ll now read two short paragraphs about Emperor Penguins written by two different authors. Students will decide which one is more interesting and why.
- Read the *Penguin Paragraphs* aloud (see page 5) or project them for the class. Discuss which paragraph was more engaging.
- Explain that both paragraphs included the same information, but the second (by Martin Jenkins) was more interesting because it sounded like he was *talking to us!* He wrote facts but also used his writer’s voice, adding his own comments and reactions: a *Fact–React* approach.
- Discuss ways Martin Jenkins adds voice:

Interesting words: “waddles”

Questions: “Can you imagine standing around in the freezing cold with an egg under your feet for two MONTHS???”

Opinions: “...and generally having a very nice time.”

Reactions: “...FOR TWO WHOLE MONTHS!!!”

- Discuss how adding your voice to factual writing makes it more enjoyable to read and helps facts *stick*.

3. Activity: Adding Your Voice

- Pass out the *Adding Your Voice* and *Fact–React* sheets (see pg 6-7 for Intermediate, pg 8-9 for Primary). For younger grades, you may wish to project the *chameleon facts* on a screen and complete the activity together.
- Explain that the author of the chameleon text provided facts, but no *voice*. Read the facts aloud. Then tell students they’ll add their own reactions, just like Martin Jenkins!
- Remind them of Jenkins’ techniques: interesting words, questions, opinions, reactions.

- Model one or two examples on the *Fact–React* sheet (see below) before having students try on their own or in pairs.


| FACT | REACT |
|--|--|
| Chameleons are a kind of lizard. They have bumpy skin and bulging eyes, and their mouths turn down at the corners. | <p><i>Now, that’s what I call a “perma-frown”!</i></p> <p><i>Can you imagine looking sad all the time, even when you’re not?</i></p> |

4. End the Lesson

“Today we learned that factual writing doesn’t have to be boring! When we use our writer’s voice, we make facts more interesting and easier to remember. Thank you, Martin Jenkins, for teaching us how to write a FACT and then REACT!”

Extension Activities (Optional)

- Older students can merge their facts and reactions into a short paragraph about chameleons.
- Throughout Nonfiction November, continue reading aloud nonfiction books by Martin Jenkins and other authors who use voice (see book list, page 11)
- Provide grade-level nonfiction texts and have students apply the *Fact–React* strategy.

 *Tip:* Some students may get carried away with reactions! Suggest a “**3 Facts : 1 Reaction**” guideline.

Modification for Primary Students

- This can be done entirely as a whole class lesson, with students contributing their “voice” while the teacher records their reactions onto a chart paper.
- Alternatively, use modified printables on pages 8 and 9.

Penguin Paragraphs

Name: _____

Nonfiction writing is factual, but it doesn't have to be boring! Using your "voice" to "talk" to your reader is the best way to keep your reader interested in the information you are sharing.

Read the examples below. Discuss with your partner which one was more interesting and why? What was the writer doing to make it interesting?

Passage 1:

After the female Emperor penguin lays her egg, she heads off to the sea. Female emperor penguins spend most of their winter finding food to store as fat. Male Emperor Penguins take the role of taking care of the egg. They protect the egg from the wind and cold by sitting on it for approximately two months.



Passage 2:

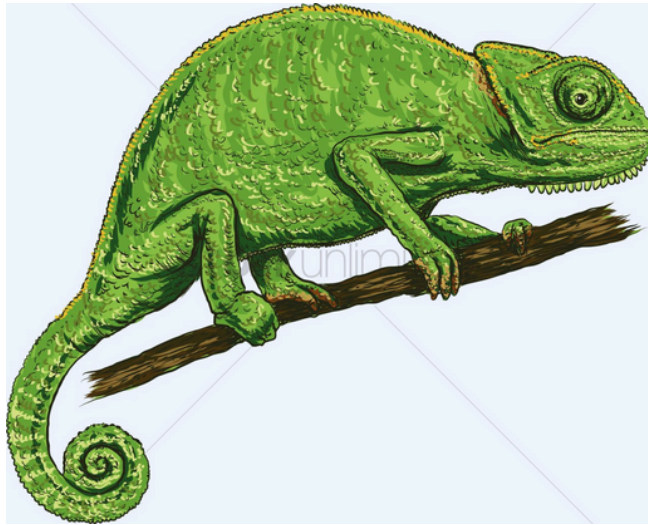
Soon after a female Emperor penguin lays her egg, she turns and waddles off to sea. That's where female Emperor penguins spend most of the winter - swimming about, getting as fat as they can, eating as much as they can and generally having a very nice time! This leaves the father penguin stuck on the ice with his egg. And what better way to stop the egg from getting cold but to rest it on your feet and tuck it right up under your tummy? Which is just what the father penguin does - and that's where he stays - FOR TWO WHOLE MONTHS! Can you imagine standing around in the freezing cold with an egg under your feet for two MONTHS???

Adding Your Voice

Name: _____

Read the paragraph below. As you read, pay attention to your thinking and your reactions. On the next page, record your thoughts beside each section. Share your thoughts with a partner.

Chameleons



Chameleons are a kind of lizard. They have bumpy skin and bulgy eyes and their mouths turn down at the corners. Some chameleons change color when they're angry, hot, cold, or sick. Other chameleons don't change colour at all. Chameleons move slowly along branches, using their pincher-shaped feet for holding on. They have long tongues that they use to catch insects. Unlike humans, chameleons can move each eye separately and in different direction in their sockets.

Fact - React

Name: _____

Topic: _____

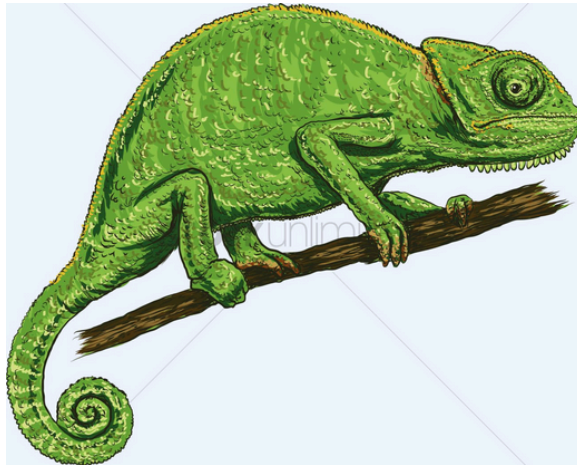
| Fact | React |
|--|-------------------------|
| <p>Chameleons are a kind of lizard. They have bumpy skin and bulging eyes, and their mouths turn down at the corners.</p> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <p>Some chameleons change colour when they're angry, hot, cold, or sick. Other chameleons don't change colour at all.</p> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <p>Unlike humans, chameleons can move each eye separately and in different directions in their sockets.</p> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <p>Chameleons move slowly along branches, using their pincher-shaped feet for holding on. They have long tongues that they use to catch insects.</p> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |

Adding Your Voice

Name: _____

Read the paragraph below. As you read, pay attention to your thinking and your reactions. On the next page, record your thoughts beside each section. Share your thoughts with a partner.

Chameleons



Chameleons are lizards. They have bumpy skin and big eyes. Their mouths turn down at the corners. Some chameleons change color when they are mad, hot, cold, or sick. Other chameleons do not change color. Chameleons move slowly on branches. They use their feet to hold on. They have long tongues to catch bugs. Chameleons can move each eye in a different direction.

Fact - React

Name: _____

Topic: _____

Fact

React

Chameleons' mouths turn down at the corners.

Some chameleons can change colour when they are hot, cold, mad, or sick.

Chameleons can move each eye in different directions.

Chameleons have long tongues to catch bugs.

Adding Your Voice Examples

Name: _____

Examples of Adding Voice to Nonfiction Writing

Below are examples of how simple factual text can be rewritten to include 'voice.' The left column has plain facts, and the right column shows how those same facts can sound livelier and more interesting when voice is added.

Facts Only

Chameleons are lizards.

They have bumpy skin and big eyes.

Their mouths turn down at the corners.

Some chameleons change color when they are mad, hot, cold, or sick.

Other chameleons do not change color.

Chameleons move slowly on branches.

They use their feet to hold on.

They have long tongues to catch bugs.

Chameleons can move each eye in a different direction.

With Voice (Example)

Chameleons are amazing lizards!

Their skin is rough and bumpy, and their big eyes seem to pop right out of their heads!

With mouths that turn down at the corners, they always look a little grumpy!

Some chameleons are masters of color—they can switch shades when they feel mad, hot, cold, or even sick.

But not all of them can—some stay the same color all the time.

Chameleons move one careful step at a time, slowly creeping along branches.

Their strong, pinching feet help them hold on tight so they don't fall.

When it's time to eat, their long, sticky tongues shoot out to grab tasty bugs.

And here's the coolest part—they can move each eye a different way at the same time!

Nonfiction Mentor Texts for Voice

[*The Emperor's Egg*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Chameleons are Cool*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Can We Save the Tiger?*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Fabulous Frogs*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Puffin*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Ice Journey of the Polar Bear*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Exploring Space*](#) - Martin Jenkins

[*Fox Explores the Night*](#) (A First Science Storybook) - Martin Jenkins

[*Bird Builds a Nest*](#) (A First Science Storybook) - Martin Jenkins

[*This is My Brain!: A Book on Neurodiversity*](#) - Elise Gravel

[*How Big is It?- A Big Book All About BIGness!*](#) - Ben Hillman

[*Even More Lesser Spotted Animals*](#) - Martin Brown

[*Gentle, Giant Octopus*](#) - Karen Wallace

[*Volcanoes*](#) - Nell Cross Beckerman

[*Summertime Sleepers: Animals That Estivate*](#) - Melissa Stewart

[*Deadliest Animals*](#) (National Geographic Kids)- Melissa Stewart

[*Thank You, Moon: Celebrating Nature's Nightlight*](#) - Melissa Stewart

[*Animal Grossapedia*](#) by Melissa Stewart

[*What if You Had Animal Eyes*](#) -Sandra Markel (or any book in this series)

[*A Black Hole Is Not a Hole*](#) by Carolyn Cinami DeCristofano

[*Bone by Bone: Comparing Animal Skeletons*](#) by Sarah Levin

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