

No More Boring Nonfiction!

Create Nonfiction That's Fun to Read AND Fun to Write

with Patricia Newman

Nonfiction Reading + Mentor Text List

A River's Gifts: The Mighty Elwha River Reborn by Patricia Newman, illustrated by Natasha Donovan

Ablaze with Color: A Story of Painter Alma Thomas by Jeanne Walker Harvey, illustrated by Loveis Wise

Accidental Archaeologists: True Stories of Unexpected Discoveries by Sarah Albee, illustrated by Nathan Hackett

Classified: The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross, Cherokee Aerospace Engineer by Traci Sorell, illustrated by Natasha Donovan

Eavesdropping on Elephants: How Listening Helps Conservation by Patricia Newman

From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry: The Killing of Vincent Chin and the Trial that Galvanized the Asian American Movement by Paula Yoo

Giant Squid by Candace Fleming, illustrated by Eric Rohmann

Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera by Candace Fleming, illustrated by Eric Rohmann

How Do You Spell Unfair? MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Frank Morrison

Jerry Changed the Game, by Don Tate, illustrated by Cherise Harris

Kids Fight Plastic by Martin Dorey, illustrated by Tim Wesson

No Way, They Were Gay? Hidden Lives and Secret Loves by Lee Wind

Peculiar Primates: Fun Facts About These Curious Creatures by Debra Kempf Shumaker, illustrated by Claire Powell

Planet Ocean: Why We All Need a Healthy Ocean by Patricia Newman, photographs by Annie Crawley



Plastic, Ahoy! Investigating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch by Patricia Newman, photographs by Annie Crawley

Poop for Breakfast: Why Some Animals Eat It by Sara Levine, illustrated by Florance Weiser

Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators That Saved an Ecosystem by Patricia Newman

Seashells: More Than a Home by Melissa Stewart, illustrated by Sarah S. Brannen

Seen and Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams's Photographs Reveal About the Japanese American Incarceration by Elizabeth Partridge, illustrated by Lauren Tamaki

Something Rotten: A Fresh Look at Roadkill by Heather L. Montgomery, illustrated by Kevin O'Malley

The Big Book of Blue by Yuval Zommer

The Fire of Stars by Kirsten W. Larson, illustrated by Katherine Roy

The Global Ocean by Rochelle Strauss, illustrated by Natasha Donovan

The Tower of Life: How Yaffa Eliach Rebuilt Her Town in Stories and Photographs by Chana Stiefel, illustrated by Susan Gal

The Universe in You by Jason Chin

The Wolves and Moose of Isle Royale: Restoring an Island Ecosystem by Nancy F. Castaldo, photographs by Morgan Heim

Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Floyd Cooper

Informational fiction examples

Amara's Farm by JaNay Brown-Wood, illustrated by Samara Hardy

I, Fly: The Buzz about Flies and How Awesome They Are by Bridget Heos, illustrated by Jennifer Plecas

Moving to Mars by Stef Wade, illustrated by Erin Taylor

Over and Under the Pond by Kate Messner, illustrated by Christoher Silas Neal

Red and Green and Blue and White by Lee Wind, illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky

The Magic School Bus series by Joana Cole and Bruce Degen

How to learn from mentor texts

1. Read them many times.
2. Type them into a Word document – or at least a few chapters if your mentor text is a middle grade.
3. Study their:
 - format,
 - word choice,
 - sentence length,
 - scope,
 - focus, and
 - tone.

Questions to ask about your idea

WHY are you writing this book?

Why are YOU writing this book?

Jot down your concept in a phrase or single sentence, then ask:

Why are you attracted to this concept?

Why do you want to share it with kids?

Research tips

Begin with questions about your concept:

- What do I already know?
- What do I need to know?
- Who are the stakeholders? How do I reach them?
- Do I need to interview experts?
- Do I have access to primary sources?

Some strategies for developing your nonfiction voice

1. Find hints to the HOW in your topic through your research
2. Possible text structures (not a complete list—you may discover another way of structuring your book):
 - Sequence
 - Description
 - Compare & Contrast
 - Cause & Effect
 - Problem-Solution
 - Q & A
 - List
3. Play with narrative distance
4. Literary devices (popular examples, not a full list):
 - Juxtaposition
 - Imagery
 - Setting
 - Similies
 - Rhythm
 - Rhyme
 - Repetition
 - Tone

Helpful Resources

“Getting to the Truth” by Candace Flemming and Karen Blumenthal on the Nonfiction Ninjas blog: tinyurl.com/y68j2wzj

How to Sell Your Children’s Nonfiction with a Brilliant Book Proposal workshop with Patricia Newman: bit.ly/NFBookProposal

Melissa Stewart’s 5 Kinds of Nonfiction updated post: bit.ly/5KindsNonfiction

5 Kinds of Nonfiction by Melissa Stewart and Marlene Correia (full book explaining categories in detail): bit.ly/5KindsBook