Class Pets

First Grade | Writing, Science | 65 minutes | Standards: W.1.1, W.1.8

by Jennifer Morton | June 26, 2015

Have your students been begging for a class pet? Combine opinion letter writing with science as your students try to convince you to get the PERFECT class pet.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to write opinion letters in which they introduce the topic, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure. Students will be able to recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer questions about a pet's basic needs.

Materials and Preparation

- *I Wanna Iguana* by Karen Kaufman Orloff
- Books or websites with information about various pets
- Blank paper or graphic organizer
- Lined paper or letter template

Lesson

Introduction *(5 minutes)*

- Tell students that several people have asked about having a class pet, but have suggested different animals.
- Tell students that their pleas reminded you of a story called *I Wanna Iguana*.
- Tell students that the main character, Alex, wants to have a pet iguana but his mother is not convinced it would be a good idea. Alex writes her a series of letters to change her mind.
- Ask students to listen for the reasons Alex gives to convince his mother to get an iguana.

Get more lesson plans at [www.education.com/lesson-plans/](http://www.education.com/lesson-plans/)
Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling *(15 minutes)*

- Read the book *I Wanna Iguana*, stopping to think aloud or have students identify each reason Alex gives for why he should get an iguana. Chart these reasons on the board.
- Tell students that an iguana is too big to be a classroom pet. Ask them to think of some possible classroom pets. Chart their ideas.
- Ask students to identify the basic needs of all animals. Work with them to develop questions that would have to be answered before getting a class pet. For example, what does it eat? How does it get water? How much space does it need? What does it use for shelter?
- Have students record these questions on blank paper or a graphic organizer. Ask them to choose the animal from your class list that they think would make the best class pet. Write the name of the animal on their question page.

Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling *(15 minutes)*

- Group students by animal chosen. Have them record any answers to the questions about basic needs that they already know from experience. Provide them with books or websites to locate answers to their remaining questions. Circulate to assist students in their research.
- Gather students as a whole group. Review the letter format using the book *I Wanna Iguana* and a letter template.
- Ask them to write you a letter explaining which animal they think would make the best class pet and why.
- Remind them to include the information about meeting the pet’s basic needs.
- Refer them to the list of reasons Alex gave his mother for ideas of how to support their opinion.
- On large paper, chart the parts of the letter they will need and an outline of what they will have to include in the body of their letter.

Independent Working Time *(15 minutes)*

- Provide students with blank lined paper or a letter template in order to draft their letter to you.
- Post the outlined letter in a place everyone can see.

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Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment:** Respond to student letters with questions, as Alex’s mother did in *I Wanna Iguana*. Have students add a post script or additional note to answer your concerns.
- **Support:** Provide a letter template with sentence starters. Fill in sections of the letter template as appropriate.

Review

Assessment *(5 minutes)*

- Review the letters for the following parts: opinion statement, reason to support the opinion, and information about meeting the basic needs of the proposed class pet.
- The letters may also be used as an assessment for writing conventions.

Review and Closing *(10 minutes)*

- Have several students share their letters. Ask the other students to observe if the student included the required parts. Have them suggest additions or revisions as necessary.
- After reviewing all the letters, write individual responses or a class response in letter form. If a class pet is possible and desirable, ask for any additional information needed to prepare for one.