



## Writing Guidelines: Iconic Species (Op-Ed)

### PROMPT

Whales and elephants, polar bears and leopards. These are the stuffed animals we grow up with, they're on the posters adorning our bedroom walls, the subjects of our favorite documentaries. It is undeniable that certain threatened species capture our imaginations from a young age and don't let go.

But iconic species are important not just for their memorable traits; the presence of such a species represents the health of an entire ecosystem. If polar bears are thriving in the tundra, most likely the muskoxes and snowy owls are, too.

How can we save iconic species from extinction, dear writers? In a 600-1,000 word Op-Ed, choose one species, and tell us how protection efforts should be focused.

### Guiding Ideas

- **MAKE IT PERSONAL:** We want to know what you think. It's always tempting to check out the research and opinions that are already out there before crafting your own response. But before you consider what other people think, carefully contemplate your chosen topic and jot down any ideas that come to mind, as well as any emotions that surface.
- **INVESTIGATE YOUR OPINION:** Why do you think what you think? Can you identify the people or experiences that have influenced you in forming this opinion? Your friends? Your family? School? The media or the culture in which you live? Exploring the root of your opinion demonstrates to your readers that you have thought deeply about the issues at hand.
- **BACK UP YOUR IDEAS:** Once you have a sense of what you want to say, start collecting evidence. Look at the existing research on your topic, find persuasive quotes from reputable sources, and/or identify experiences from your own life (or anecdotes from people you know) that demonstrate the validity of your perspective.



- **WELCOME CHANGE:** As your knowledge deepens, your ideas will likely evolve. This is a good thing! Be open to your perspective becoming more complex and nuanced.
- **TAKE A STAND:** An op-ed is your chance to weigh in on a social, political, or cultural issue. Most essentially, an op-ed asserts an opinion. So be sure to include a clear thesis statement that unequivocally states your central argument.
- **CAPTIVATE YOUR READER:** An opinion piece should be a riveting read. Make sure your writing is thoughtful, reflective and clearly structured. Think about starting the piece with a story or anecdote that hooks your reader. Make sure your argument is compelling and watertight from beginning to end.
- **MAKE IT UNIVERSAL:** As you share your opinion, keep in mind that your goal is to persuade your audience to listen up. Oftentimes, the most compelling op-eds are both personal and universal. Try sharing an experience from your life that supports your opinion, while also explaining (or showing through examples) how this topic impacts people on a broader scale.
- **GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE:** Don't forget to cite your sources.