Brainstorm Ideas Using Content-Related Picture Books

1. Focus

Explain the Brainstorming Process

Say: When we choose a topic to write about for our informational reports, it’s best to choose something that we’re very interested in. We need to ask ourselves, “What do I know about this topic? Is this something I want to know more about?” We can look at nonfiction picture books to get ideas for our topics.

Model Brainstorming with Content-Related Picture Books

Display several content-related picture books. Refer to them as you think aloud about topics for an informational report. Use the sample think-aloud to develop your own brainstorming models to share with students. Demonstrate how to record ideas on an ideas web similar to the sample below.

Sample think-aloud. Say: This is a book about the ocean. It shows lots of different kinds of fish including a starfish. I’ve always been very interested in starfish. Did you know that they’re really not fish at all? They’re a kind of sea animal and if they lose an arm, they can just grow it back! I’d love to write a report about starfish because I’d like to know more about them. I’ll write that idea on my web. This book is about soccer. I know many people are interested in soccer, but not me. I really don’t think I want to write a report about it, so I won’t put it on my ideas web. This book is about the South Pole. That would be interesting to find out about. I know it’s very cold there, but I’d need to find out a lot more. I’ll write that as an idea for a report, too. Continue to model brainstorming ideas and adding them to your web.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn a strategy for brainstorming ideas for an informational report by using content-related picture books.
• Work with a small group to brainstorm topic ideas.
• Contribute to a class web of topic ideas for informational reports.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Content-related picture books
• Chart paper and markers
• Writer’s notebooks
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
Gather several content-related picture books, either from your classroom library or from your school library, to use as you think aloud to model brainstorming.

Sample Brainstorming Web

starfish
comets
the South Pole
Informational Report Ideas
great apes
tornadoes

Sample Brainstorming Web
2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming Topics with Content-Related Picture Books

Ask students to work in small groups using content-related picture books to brainstorm ideas for an informational report. Remind students to use their own interests to guide their brainstorming and to record their ideas in their writer’s notebooks.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite them to share their favorite ideas for an informational report as you record them on the web of topic ideas you started earlier. Comment on the differences and the similarities in the topics that the writers in the classroom chose. Reread the ideas and remind students that a classmate’s idea can often spark a new idea of their own.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to browse through content-related picture books to find a topic that interests them. Ask them to use whatever words they can to tell you about the topic.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their informational report topics. For example:

- I want to know more about ______.
- I am interested in ______.
- This is interesting because ______.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: **information/la información; interested/interesado(a).**

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We’ve just learned one strategy for brainstorming informational report topics. As you brainstorm on your own, you can use information books to discover things that interest you. These are the topics that will work best because they’re things you’re interested in already!

Encourage students to apply this strategy when they brainstorm during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share some topics they are especially interested in and explain why. Discuss how using picture books helped them brainstorm ideas.