Use the Problem-and-Solution Text Structure

1. Focus

Explain the Problem-and-Solution Text Structure

Say: Persuasive letter writers have a position on a topic. That position is usually a problem. The writer uses examples to convince you that there is a problem, and then the writer suggests a solution to the problem.

Model Identifying the Problem-and-Solution Text Structure

Ask students to listen as you reread sections of “Our School Can Save Trees.”

Identify the Problem (page 8, paragraphs 2 and 3). Say: These paragraphs tell me exactly what the writer thinks the problem is at her school. People waste too much paper, and on top of that, they don’t recycle. She uses very clear examples to help me see the problem.

Provide a Solution (page 9). Say: Wow, this letter writer has really thought about the problem and a possible solution. She explains it in great detail. She has done research and knows how much money it will cost to buy recycling bins for the classrooms, and she proposes a bake sale to raise the money. She says, “If everyone recycled paper, then people would not need to cut down so many trees.” That’s an interesting sentence: If...then. You will see that sentence structure often in a problem-and-solution text.

Create a Class Problem-and-Solution Signal Words Anchor Chart

On chart paper, work with students to brainstorm a list of words writers use when they talk about problems and solutions. Begin by writing the words If . . . then.

Advanced Preparation

If you have English learners, support the oral language turn-and-talk activities by copying the idea bank and the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Listen to a persuasive letter excerpt and analyze the problem-and-solution text structure.
• Recognize the problem and solution in a persuasive letter.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: “Our School Can Save Trees”
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Problem-and-Solution Signal Language

If...then
When...
We need...
We should...
Because...

Sample Problem-and-Solution Signal Words Anchor Chart
## 2. Rehearse

### Practice Using the Problem-and-Solution Text Structure in Oral Conversation

**Turn and talk.** Ask students to use problem-and-solution signal words as they talk about a problem and solution with a partner. Each student should orally explain a problem that relates to their school or classroom. Then have them suggest a specific solution to the problem. (Note: You may wish to provide an idea bank for students. See “Strategies to Support ELs.”)

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

### Share Ideas

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share their problems and solutions with the class using signal words. Record any new signal words students use on your class anchor chart.

---

### Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture of a problem. Help them discuss their pictures using a simple sentence frame: *The problem is ______.* Encourage them to tell you using words and gestures how they think the problem might be solved.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Provide the idea bank and sentence frames below on chart paper to support ELs and struggling writers as they talk about problems and solutions.

**Idea Bank**

- Sharing things
- Taking turns
- Taking things from other students
- Not listening to others

**Sentence Frames**

- *The problem is ______.*
- *The solution is ______.*

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates: *problem/el problema; solution/la solución.*

---

## 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** When you plan your own persuasive letter, think carefully about what the problem is, and what solution you will give. Remember to look at our anchor chart for words to help you talk about problems and solutions.

During independent writing time, encourage students to think about the problem they will address in their letter and possible solutions they could propose to solve that problem. During student conferences, reinforce students’ understanding of problem and solution text structure as it applies to persuasive letters.

---

## 4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to talk about the problems and solutions they plan to write about.