Look at the Differences Between Types of Fiction

1. Focus

Introduce Animal Fiction and Realistic Fiction

Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about the differences between animal fiction and realistic fiction.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I want to share two stories with you. Both stories are fiction. One story is about animals that do things no real animals could ever do. It is a make-believe story about animals that act like humans. The second story is also make-believe, but it is an example of realistic fiction. Everything that happens in the second story could happen in real life. I want you to think about the differences between the two stories as you listen to them.

Tell the first story. Say: One morning, Juan’s dog, Rover, looked at the clock. Rover saw that Juan had slept too long. The dog knew that if Juan didn’t get up right away, the boy would miss the school bus. Rover jumped on the bed and said, “Juan, time to pop out of bed and get dressed, or you’ll be late.” Thanks to Rover’s quick thinking, Juan made it to school on time that day.

Tell the second story. Say: One morning, Juan’s dog Rover lay on his dog bed on the floor next to Juan’s bed. When the sun shone in through the window, Rover jumped up on Juan’s bed. Rover lay down with his head on Juan’s feet. This woke Juan up. “Hey, Rover,” Juan said. “I’m glad you jumped on my bed because it’s time for me to get up.” Rover wagged his tail and went back to sleep. Juan got ready for school and made it to the bus stop just in time.

Introduce the Differences Between Animal Fiction and Realistic Fiction

Say: Now I want to talk about the differences between the two stories. In the first story, Rover does three things that no real dog could do. First, he is able to tell the time on a clock. The story says, “Rover looked at the clock. Rover saw that Juan had slept too long.” The second unusual thing is that Rover knows what time the school bus arrives. The third thing Rover does is speak with a human voice. He says, “Juan, time to pop out of bed . . . .” In an animal fiction story, animals think or speak or act like people.

Say: In the second story, Rover acts like a real dog. After the sunlight wakes Rover, he jumps on the bed, and the weight of his head on Juan’s legs wakes Juan up. All of Rover’s behavior in that story is something a real dog could do. Both characters, the boy and the dog, are like a person and an animal you might meet in real life. In realistic fiction, the things that happen are made up. They did not really take place. But the characters are like people you know, and everything that happens in the story could happen in the world as we know it.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, teachers will:

• Launch the fiction unit of study.
• Establish themselves as a fiction writing mentor by discussing the differences between animal fiction and realistic fiction.

Students will:

• Share an animal fiction story and a realistic fiction story with a partner.
• Discuss the differences between these two kinds of stories with the whole class.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If necessary, write the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper to support ELs.
2. Rehearse

Practice Telling Animal Fiction and Realistic Fiction Stories Orally

Invite students to work with a partner to share brief stories orally. One student should tell an animal fiction story. The other should tell a realistic fiction story. Both partners should be prepared to explain to the class why one story is animal fiction and the other is realistic fiction.

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

Share Stories with the Class

Invite volunteers to retell the stories their partners shared with them. Ask students to tell whether the story is animal fiction or realistic fiction and explain why. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in a discussion about the exercise:

Storyteller
• Explain what made your story either animal fiction or realistic fiction.

Listener
• As you listened to your partner, how could you tell it was an animal fiction story or a realistic fiction story?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: A story that is animal fiction includes animal characters that think, act, or speak like humans. A story that is realistic fiction has characters who are often a lot like you and who live in the same world that you do. In the next several weeks, we will talk more about the features of realistic fiction to help us write our own realistic fiction stories.

During independent writing time, encourage students to draw a scene that could happen in a realistic fiction story.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share and tell about their drawings.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Meet with beginning ELs one on one while other students work with partners for the practice activity. Encourage them to tell a story about an animal in any way they can—with words or gestures. Encourage them to tell a story about a girl or boy. Expand on their ideas with simple sentences.

Intermediate
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice. Display simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to describe two things: one thing that could really happen and one thing that an animal does that could never happen in the world as we know it. For example:

The story is animal fiction because ______.
The story is realistic fiction because ______.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: animal/el animal; fiction/la ficción; realistic/realista.

Use the images provided on the interactive whiteboard resources as additional visual prompts for telling realistic fiction stories and animal fiction stories.