**1. Focus**

**Explain Genre Features**

**Say:** In every realistic fiction story, the main character or characters have a problem or conflict that they must solve. A writer uses several sentences or paragraphs to introduce the story problem. Through the events that follow, the writer tells how the problem is solved. The way the characters solve the problem is what makes the story interesting and exciting. Writers often take several paragraphs or pages to tell how the problem is solved. Today we are going to identify and analyze problems and solutions in a realistic fiction story.

**Model Identifying a Problem and a Solution**

Read aloud “The Writing on the Wall.” Stop at the bottom of page 8. Model how the author takes a full page to explain Maria’s problem. Note: You may want to use the interactive whiteboard resources so that students can follow along.

**Say:** In the first two pages, we learn that Maria has planned to spend the morning with her mom. But then her friend Jake shows up. In the first paragraph on page 8, Maria’s problem starts to become clear to me after I read two sentences. The first is Mom’s comment, “Don’t forget, dear.” The second sentence is, “She looked worried.” If one of the characters is worrying about something, I know there must be a problem, but I still don’t know what it is. At the end of the first paragraph, the writer makes it clear that Maria is deciding between two choices: going to the cave with Jake and staying at the cabin with Mom. The other paragraphs on this page give even more details about Maria’s conflict. Maria feels a conflict when she thinks about what Jake and her mom each want. In the last paragraph, the writer finally states Maria’s conflict clearly: She doesn’t want to hurt her mom’s feelings or Jake’s feelings.

Read page 9. **Say:** Maria thinks maybe she can go to the cave with Jake and then be back before her mom knows she has left. This sounds like a good plan. But the story isn’t over yet. I know that the author will add more events to tell me how Maria finally solves her problem.

**2. Rehearse**

**Practice Identifying Problems and Solutions**

Read the rest of the story and ask students to listen for how Maria’s problem is finally solved. Discuss how it takes several pages before the reader knows how the problem is solved.
Say: Maria makes Jake feel okay by leaving her flashlight so he can rework his carving to trick Linda. Then she goes home to apologize to her mom by suggesting they spend the whole day together. The writer includes several story events over several pages before Maria’s conflict is finally solved.

Create a Class Anchor Chart of Problems and Solutions

On chart paper, work with students to list the characters’ problem and solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>1. Doesn’t want to hurt Jake’s or Mom’s feelings 2. Has to decide whether to believe cave drawing shows ancient twin</td>
<td>1. Goes to the cave with Jake; returns to the cabin, apologizes to Mom, suggests they spend the whole day together 2. Notices that girl in drawing has rubber bands in her hair and that Jake has dust on his jeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>Worries that Maria will not stay at home to get ready for their special day</td>
<td>Leaves the room to let Maria make up her own mind about what to do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Problems and Solutions Anchor Chart

Practice Identifying Problems and Solutions

Turn and talk. Ask students to work with a partner to think of one problem and a solution to that problem that could occur in a realistic fiction story. If your class includes students who would benefit from vocabulary and oral language development to comprehend the narrative, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Problems and Solutions

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the problems and solutions they invented with their partners. Ask the class if the problems and solutions seem realistic and why or why not.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures of the problems and solutions in the story. Ask them to tell you about their drawings. Write captions for each picture using simple sentences.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair students with fluent English speakers to complete the turn-and-talk activity. Display the sentence frames below on chart paper to support ELs and struggling writers as they identify problems and solutions in order to complete their charts.

Maria’s problem is _______.
Mom’s problem is _______.
The solution to Maria’s problem is _______.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus:

problem/el problema; solution/la solución.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that characters in stories have problems or conflicts they need to solve. Usually it takes several sentences or paragraphs to explain the problem and several sentences or paragraphs to explain the solution. How the characters solve problems is what makes the story interesting. Remember to include a problem and solution in your realistic fiction story.

Encourage students to experiment with the idea of creating problems that characters have to solve by listing several problems and how characters could solve them. During student 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 problems and what characters could do to solve them.