1. Focus

**Introduce the Mentor Realistic Fiction Story**

**Say:** As we become writers of realistic fiction, we can learn a lot about the genre by reading or listening to realistic fiction other authors have written. Today I’m going to read aloud to you a short story that was written by a writer named Amanda Jenkins, an award-winning author of many books for children and young adults. As we read, we’re going to pay attention to some key features of her story. You will be using these features in your stories, too.

You may wish to display the story using the interactive whiteboard resources so that students may follow along as you read aloud.

**Say:** The title of Amanda Jenkins’s story is “Jamal’s Secret.” I wonder why her story is called that. What does that title make you think of? Allow students to share their predictions or “I wonder” questions.

If your class includes English learners or other students who would benefit from vocabulary and oral language development to comprehend the story, refer to “Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs” in this lesson.

**Read Aloud the Mentor Realistic Fiction Story**

Read aloud the text, stopping at some or all of the places indicated (or at other points you choose) to highlight two key features of a realistic fiction story:

1. **Realistic setting**

   Page 14, after first paragraph. **Say:** This paragraph describes the setting—kids walking home from school to the apartments where they live. This setting is like a real place, and it reminds me of the place where I live. It is a realistic setting.

2. **Realistic Characters**

   Page 15, after first paragraph. **Say:** When Tia says, “Yeah, right,” it sounds like a real girl talking. This helps me understand that the characters are like real kids. I hear kids talk like this all the time.

   **Realistic Setting**

   Page 16, after first paragraph. **Say:** Now the kids are going down to the basement because Jamal is supposed to be doing laundry there. I know that many people in real life have their washing machines in the basement and do laundry there. This detail about the setting helps me know that I’m reading a realistic story.

---

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Listen to an interactive realistic fiction story read-aloud to learn that a realistic fiction story is set in the world we live in, the characters in a realistic fiction story are like people we know, and everything these characters do and experience could happen in the real world.
- Share personal responses to the realistic fiction story.
- Discuss what makes the setting and the characters in this story realistic.

**Preparation**

**Materials Needed**

- Mentor text: “Jamal’s Secret”
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If necessary, copy the sentence frames for ELs on chart paper.
Realistic Characters
After reading page 16. Say: The story tells me how Jamal rescued a stray dog. I have heard about people who rescue stray animals. I have read many realistic stories about kids who have rescued animals, too. This shows me that Jamal is like a real boy.

2. Rehearse

Respond Orally to the Mentor Realistic Fiction Story

After reading the story aloud, invite students to discuss their own ideas about the setting and the characters by asking such questions as:

- Which details of the setting let you know this story takes place in the real world?
- Which details about the characters let you know they are like people you might know?
- Did you like this story? Why or why not?
- What did you see in your mind, or visualize, as you listened to “Jamal’s Secret”?

If necessary, model the following sentence frames to support ELs and struggling students:

- The setting seems real because ______.
- The characters seem real because ______.
- I liked this story because ______.
- I visualized ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that realistic stories have realistic settings and realistic characters. We can often identify with these characters. They do things that could really happen. Remember to make your characters believable as you work on your realistic stories.

Encourage students to write a paragraph describing a character or a setting during independent writing time. 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 read aloud their paragraphs describing a character or setting.

Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs

Beginning
Show students the illustration on page 14 of the story, or use the interactive whiteboard resources, to name and label the apartment building and the kids. Also, show photos of someone washing a dog in a tub, draw a picture of a dog in a tub, or use the interactive whiteboard resources to show the photos. Label the pictures of the vocabulary students will encounter as they listen to the text: apartment building, kids, dog, tub, bath, and so on.

Intermediate
Help students understand how the characters and setting are realistic. Use sentence frames to help them talk about the characters and setting:

- The characters are real because ______.
- The setting is real because ______.

Intermediate and Advanced
Draw a picture of a dog and a bathtub on chart paper or show photographs using the interactive whiteboard resources. Say: Tell me what you know about dogs. What does a pet dog need every day? What happens when a dog gets wet? Encourage a background-building discussion about how people care for their pet dogs.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: apartment/el apartamento; gigantic/gigantesco(a); secret/el secreto.

Use the images from the interactive whiteboard resources to help ELs learn vocabulary and key concepts for the read-aloud.