Write “Meet the Characters” Descriptions

1. Focus

Explain “Meet the Characters” Descriptions

Say: Think about all the times you have picked up a book in the library or in a bookstore, and you’re wondering if you should read that book. You stand there and read the information on the front and back covers and on the inside flaps to get an idea about whether or not this book is for you. Writers try to help readers connect with their books. Sometimes they write blurbs about the plot of the book. Sometimes they write blurbs to introduce their characters to you. Today we’re going to learn how to do this for our stories.

Model “Meet the Characters” Descriptions

Read aloud the sections indicated below from the story “The Thing in the Cave” as you talk about the characters.

Say: In the story “The Thing in the Cave,” there is one main character named Cai. We get to know quite a bit about him as we read. There are other characters, too, including Jake, Maria, and Linda. We can tell some things about these characters based on what we learn in the story.

Reread page 7. Say: Here we find out that Cai runs into two characters, Jake and Maria. The text describes Jake as a red-haired boy and Maria as dark-haired. We learn that Maria is reading.

Reread page 8. Say: Now we meet another character, Linda. We find out that she is Jake’s sister and she seems full of energy.

Reread pages 9 and 10. Say: We find out more about Linda on these pages—that she’s bossy when she commands Jake to go in the cave and she’s scared of the dark. Beyond this, we don’t learn too much more about Linda, and we don’t learn much at all about Jake and Maria.

Display “Meet the Characters” from page 4 of the mentor text or using the interactive whiteboard resources, and read aloud the character descriptions to students.

Say: The writer provides an introduction to the characters in the story. Why do you think she does that? (Allow responses.) We already know that we can learn only some things about the characters from reading the story. Do we find out anything about their families as we read? Do we find out what these characters like to do most? No, we don’t. The writer wants us to get to know the characters as if they are real people. She wants to provide more information than we get from the main text. Providing an introduction is one way to do this.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing “Meet the Characters” Descriptions

Invite students to work with a partner. Ask each pair to choose a realistic story that one of them has been working on (or use a story idea that you provide). Ask partners to focus on one of the characters in the story and write a brief “meet the character” description that would get readers interested and provide some important background information about the character. Partners should write down their description to share with the class.

Share and Discuss

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share their descriptions. Discuss the process of writing an introduction using prompts such as the following:

- What background information did you include about the character?
- What traits did you describe?
- What did you say to make your readers interested in the character?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we can add introductions to our stories that include information about what the characters are like. An introduction can help make a story and its characters more interesting to the reader. As you write your realistic fiction story, decide if an introduction will make your story better.

Encourage students to write an introduction to their characters when writing their realistic fiction drafts 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 tell about the characters in their realistic fiction stories.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Provide practice for beginning ELs in describing a character. Ask them to draw a picture of one of their characters in their stories. Then ask them to describe the character in any way they can, using words or gestures. Prompt them with questions, such as What is your character’s name? and What does your character like to do?

Intermediate
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the “Practice Writing ‘Meet the Characters’ Descriptions” partner activity. Provide sentence frames to help students talk about their characters:

My character likes ______.
My character lives ______.
My character has ______.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.