Use a Story Planning Chart to Organize Your Story

1. Focus

Explain Using a Story Planning Chart

Say: We’ve chosen our best idea for a realistic fiction story, so what do we need to do next? We need to organize our thoughts and expand on our idea. Today I’m going to show you how to use a story planning chart to help you organize your ideas before you begin your draft.

Model Using a Story Planning Chart

Display the Story Planning chart on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Use some, or all, of the sample think-alouds below based on “The Thing in the Cave.” (Note: If you have not read aloud the mentor text, you may wish to do so now.)

Sample think-aloud. Say: I’m going to use the mentor text “The Thing in the Cave” to model how to expand on ideas for a realistic story. I’ll imagine I’m the writer of this story. I’ll jot down ideas for characters, setting, and story events the way the writer of that story might have done.

Characters. Say: I’ll start by thinking about whom I want to have in my story. Let’s see. I think my main character will be a boy. I think I’ll give him a dog. My story will be about a boy and his dog. Model jotting down your ideas on the chart.

Problem. Say: I want to think about my story problem next because it might affect what my setting is. What problem could the boy have? I know. The dog could get lost. That would make a good story. Model writing the problem on the chart.

Setting. Say: OK, so where are the boy and his dog? Maybe they’re at home, and the dog gets out of the yard. No, I want something more interesting. How about the boy and his dog are on vacation? They’re at the beach when the dog gets lost. I like that idea because they will be in unfamiliar surroundings. It will make the story more exciting. Model writing the setting on the chart.

Events. Say: Now I’ll think of what happens as the boy tries to find his dog. Maybe he meets some other kids as he’s looking. I’ll need new characters for this, so I’ll write them in the “Characters” section. Then I’ll add that the boy meets them in the “Events” section. (Model writing the new characters and events on the chart.) The kids that the boy meets are looking for a cave. My character decides to go with them as he looks for his dog. What else could happen? I could have my character be afraid to go in the cave, but then he goes in with another kid who’s afraid. Model writing the events on the chart.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn how to use a story planning chart to organize ideas for a realistic story.
• Practice organizing their own ideas for a realistic fiction story on a story planning chart.
• Discuss how to apply the strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Mentor text: “The Thing in the Cave”
• Chart paper and markers
• Story Planning Chart (BLM 4)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text onto chart paper. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.
Solution. Say: I just had an idea for how I could solve the problem of the lost dog. The kids could hear a noise and run out of the cave. But the boy recognizes the noise—it’s his dog! Model writing the event and solution on the chart.

| Problem: A boy loses his dog. |
| Setting: The boy and his dog are at the beach on vacation. |
| Characters: |
| 1. A boy and his dog |
| 2. Other kids the boy meets at the beach |
| Events that Develop the Problem: |
| 1. Dog goes missing. |
| 2. Boy finds other kids as he looks for his dog and goes with them to a cave. |
| 3. Boy is afraid to go in the dark cave—so is another kid, but they go in together. |
| 4. Kids hear a noise in the cave, get scared, and leave—all except the boy. |
| Solution to the Problem: Boy recognizes the noise and knows it’s his dog. |

Sample Story Planning Chart (BLM 4)

2. Rehearse

Practice Organizing Your Ideas

Invite students to use the Story Planning chart to begin to organize ideas for their realistic fiction story. Students will not have time to complete their organization during the mini-lesson, but they can continue during independent writing time.

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

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the ideas they organized on the chart. Discuss how setting up the story problem will help them write.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures of their characters and the setting. Encourage them to talk about the characters and setting using words and/or gestures. Expand on their ideas and help them write captions for their pictures.

Intermediate and Advanced

Encourage ELs to use the following sentence frames to help them talk about their story ideas:

- My main character is ______.
- My story takes place ______.
- The story problem is ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: organize ideas/organizar las ideas; problem/el problema; solution/la solución.