1. Focus

Introduce the Mentor Science Fiction Story

Say: As we become writers of science fiction, we can learn a lot about the genre by reading or listening to science fiction other authors have written. Today I’m going to read aloud to you a science fiction story that was written by Joanna Korba. As we read, we’re going to pay attention to some key features of her story. You will be using these features in your science fiction stories, too.

Say: The title of Joanna Korba’s story is “Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!” I wonder why her story is called that and why she repeated the word dino in the title. What does the 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 narrative, use “Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs.”

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 three key features of a science fiction story:
1. Science fiction stories can have a realistic or fantastic, futuristic setting.
2. The tone of a science fiction story is more dark than light.
3. A science fiction story imagines the effects of science and technology on people and societies.

Tone

After reading page 11. Say: This no longer seems to me like a story about kids ordering cute robot baby dinosaur companions. Liza’s words, “We don’t want them getting loose in the house until we know how to control them,” sound threatening. If the dinosaurs were just toys, the kids wouldn’t have to worry about controlling them. Often the tone of a science fiction story is dark or ominous, suggesting that something negative might happen.

Setting

Page 13, after seventh paragraph. Say: In these paragraphs, I hear two sets of parents talking on telephones like we have today. In the first paragraph, Mona Mackey says she’s putting Sylvia Ramos on speakerphone so that Pete Mackey can hear, too. In the third paragraph, Sylvia describes “passing by the kids’ room,” and in the sixth paragraph she says, “We were in the hallway outside the boys’ room and overheard the Dino-Pals . . .” The setting of this science fiction story is realistic. Science fiction stories don’t always have to have a futuristic or fantasy setting.
**Tone**

After reading page 15. **Say:** In the final two paragraphs of the story, the tone grows extremely threatening. The Dino-Pals say the adults “won’t give us any more trouble” and “the first invasion ship will be landing. It’s D-Day.” **D-Day** is a military term meaning the day an attack is supposed to start. The author also describes Liza as “grinning fiercely,” which means her smile isn’t nice—it’s ferocious. In the final word of the story, the author cleverly combines D-Day with the word **doom,** which means “ruin and death.” **Doomsday** leaves me thinking that the outcome of the invasion will be terrible for the humans.

**The Effects of Science and Technology on Society**

After reading page 15. **Say:** This final page also raises some bigger questions about science and technology. I wonder if some gadgets have negative effects on people. When we build robots to do jobs here on Earth, do we need to worry about what will happen if those robots become smarter than we are?

**2. Rehearse**

**Respond Orally to the Mentor Science Fiction Story**

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

- What did you visualize as you listened to the story read aloud?
- Which event did you think was the darkest or scariest? Why?

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

- I visualized ______.
- The scariest event was ______.

**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

**Say:** Science fiction stories can have a realistic, fantasy, or futuristic setting. Whatever setting you choose, remember to provide details about your setting. Remember to include details that help your reader understand the more serious tone of your story. You’ll also want to imagine the effects that science and technology in your story will have on the characters and the society they live in.

During independent writing time, ask students to describe settings they could use in science fiction stories. 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 their descriptions of settings. Discuss whether students described realistic, fantastic, or futuristic settings.

**Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs**

**Beginning**

Use the pictures in the text to introduce the characters: Theo, Liza, Mr. Mackey, and Mrs. Mackey. Then point to the pictures on pages 10 and 11. **Say:** Theo and Liza are playing with their toys. (Point to the picture of Mrs. Mackey on page 12.) Mrs. Mackey is worried about the toys. (Point to Mr. and Mrs. Ramos on page 13.) Mr. and Mrs. Ramos are afraid of the toys.

**Beginning and Intermediate**

**Say:** This science fiction story is about kids who play with robot dinosaurs. The kids do not know that the dinosaurs come from outer space. The kids do not know that the dinosaurs are evil.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Draw a picture of a dinosaur and a robot on chart paper or display them using the interactive whiteboard resources. **Say:** The dinosaurs in the story are robots. Tell me what you know about robots. Encourage a background-building discussion about robots.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: **companion/el compañero/la compañera; computer/la computadora; dinosaurs/los dinosaurios.**