1. Focus

Explain Problem-and-Solution Text Structure

Say: Most science fiction stories imagine the effects of science and technology on people and societies. The main problem faced by characters in science fiction is usually related to an element of science or technology. The solution to the problem often reflects the dark tone that is typical of science fiction. When you write a science fiction story, select a problem based on the elements of science or technology you want to include in the story.

Model Identifying Problem-and-Solution Structure

Read (or reread) pages 8–12 of “Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!” Note: You may want to use the interactive whiteboard resources to display this page so that students may read along.

Say: The author introduces the problem over the first five pages. At first, everything seems fine. Theo and Liza get robotic dinosaur toys. When the toys arrive, I get the sense that there is something odd about them. First, Mr. Mackey notices that the shipping boxes have no return address. And the toys are much more advanced than any robots that Mr. Mackey has seen or heard about. Also, Theo and Liza’s behavior seems to change after they get the toys. The writer hasn’t actually said what the conflict is, but we can infer, or guess based on clues, that the conflict has to do with these strange robotic creatures that already seem to have affected the children. The writer has set up a problem-and-solution text structure. The rest of the story will include events that lead up to a final solution of the conflict with the robot toys.

Practice Identifying Problem-and-Solution Structure

Create a class problem-and-solution anchor chart and record the problem on the chart. Read aloud the rest of the story. Ask students to listen for the important story events that lead to the resolution of the problem.

Record the events that students identify on the anchor chart.

Say: When one of the dinosaurs says on page 15, “The first invasion ship will be landing in two hours,” we finally understand that the Dino-Pals are aliens who want to invade Earth. We have had clues before this. When Mr. and Mrs. Mackey come out of the basement smiling and saying, “Everything’s totally, totally fine now,” we get a clue to how the story conflict will be resolved. We understand that the aliens are controlling the parents’ thoughts just as they control all the other characters’ thoughts. The resolution will be the invasion of Earth.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Listen to an interactive science fiction story and analyze the problem-and-solution text structure.
• Discuss how writers solve story problems through events in the story.

Mini-Lesson Preparation

Materials Needed

• Mentor text: “Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!”
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you have English learners and will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, support the oral language turn-and-talk activities by preparing sample sentence frames on chart paper.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Problem-and-Solution Structure in Oral Conversation

**Turn and talk.** Ask students to work with a partner to think of a different solution to the problem with the Dino-Pals in the story. Ask them to use the problem-and-solution anchor chart to remind them of story events so that their altered story solution fits into the story.

If your class includes English learners or other 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 their alternative solution to the story conflict, or problem. Discuss with students how the different resolutions fit with the characters, setting, and story events of the original story.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that the problem in a science fiction story usually concerns science or technology. The solution to the problem may occur during the story or after it ends. Remember that if the tone of your story is dark, continue to convey that when you describe a problem’s solution.

Encourage students to use the problem-and-solution chart to explore story problem ideas for their science fiction stories 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 share the story problems and events leading to a solution that they are exploring for their science fiction stories.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures of a problem and a solution that involve science or technology. Work with students one on one and ask them to tell you about their drawings. Write captions for each image using simple sentences and read them aloud with students.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the turn-and-talk activity.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: invasion/la invasión; telephone/el teléfono; voice/la voz.