Use a Story Planning Chart to Organize a Story

1. Focus

Explain Using a Story Planning Chart

Say: We’ve chosen the idea that we want to use for our science fiction story, and now we need to plan our ideas for the story. We need to think about the story elements of characters, setting, problem and solution, and events. This will make it easier when we begin writing our drafts. A story planning chart can help us do this. Today I’m going to show you how to use a story planning chart to help you organize your ideas before you begin your drafts.

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 “Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!”

Sample think-alouds. Say: I’ll imagine I’m the writer of this story and I’ll jot down ideas for characters, setting, and story events the way the writer of this story might have done before she began her draft. I want to think about my story’s problem first. It’s a science fiction story, so I need to involve technology. I will have robots in my story; they have come to take over the world. Model writing the story’s problem on the chart.

Setting. Say: Now I need to think about a setting. Where are these robots? They could be marching through the cities. No, I don’t like that idea. I know. I can have the robots be inside people’s houses. Maybe they could be toys. Model writing on the chart.

Characters. Say: Besides the robots, which will be like toy dinosaurs, I need other characters. I think I might have two families. There is a boy and a girl and two parents in one family. They are friends with another family that has two boys. Model jotting down your ideas on the chart.

Events. Say: Now I’ll think of what happens relating to the problem of the robots wanting to take over the world. I’ll have the kids play with the robots, but the parents start to get suspicious about the toys. I’ll have the kids already be taken over by the robots. My readers will need to infer this from clues I give them. The kids leave the parents with the robots, and they get brainwashed, too. Model writing in the events row on the chart.

Solution. Say: My solution is really a twist. Because it’s science fiction, I’ve decided not to have a happy resolution. I’ll end my story with the robots talking to each other about D-Day and the invasion ships on the way, as the kids parrot back their approval. Model writing the events and the solution on the chart.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn how to use a story planning chart to organize ideas for a science fiction story.
• Practice organizing their own ideas for a science fiction story on a story planning chart.
• Discuss how to apply the strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: “Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!”
• 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 and sentence frames for ELs onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.
Problem: Robots come to take over the world.

Setting: Inside the houses of ordinary people.

Characters
1. Robots that look like toy dinosaurs.
2. Main family: boy about fourteen, girl about twelve, mother, father
3. Second family: two boys, mother and father

Events that Develop the Problem
1. Kids convince parents to let them get Dino-Pals.
2. Kids start acting strangely, and parents get suspicious.
3. Parents in two families share suspicions.
4. Robots brainwash kids, and then kids help robots brainwash their parents.

Solution to the Problem
Robots succeed in taking over minds of parents and kids; congratulate themselves for their successful plan to take over world.

Sample Story Planning Chart (BLM 4)

Practice Organizing Your Ideas
Invite students to use the Story Planning chart to begin to organize ideas for their science 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.”

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that we can use a story planning chart to organize the story before we begin drafting it. When we have a plan, we can write a better story. Knowing what our story’s problem is going to be helps us think of interesting story events that lead to the solution.

You may wish to make BLM 4 available to students who are ready to organize ideas for their science fiction stories 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 the class together. Invite volunteers to share some of the information on their planning chart. Ask them how using the planning chart is helping them organize their story ideas.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures of their characters and settings. Encourage them to talk about the characters and settings 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 story’s problem is _____.
My setting is _____.
My main characters are _____.
My problem will be solved by _____.

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.