Use Sequential and Descriptive Text Structures

1. Focus

Explain Sequential and Descriptive Text Structures

Say: The events that occur in a memoir are usually organized using a sequential text structure, which lets the reader understand the order in which the events happen. In addition to the sequential text structure, memoirs often use a descriptive text structure to help readers visualize the events and people involved. Certain signal words can help readers identify the text structures used in a memoir. Let’s review signal words for the sequential and descriptive text structures.

Model Identifying Sequential and Descriptive Text Structures

Ask students to listen as you read (or reread) pages 8 and 9 of “From Puerto Rico, 1937.” Note: You may want to display these pages from the book using the interactive whiteboard resources so that students may read along.

Say: In the second paragraph on page 8 the author writes, “But I didn’t know any of that in 1937 when I was ten years old.” The date and the signal word when let me know that the events I’m about to read about took place a long time ago. There are also quite a few words and phrases that describe where things are and what they are like. These descriptive words help me imagine the author’s world. I can see the cathedral across the street. I can hear the giant bells, see the big wooden cathedral doors, giggle at the boys’ short pants, and imagine eating the small pieces of salami. These sequence and descriptive signal words and phrases make it easier for me to follow and picture the events.

Practice Identifying Sequential and Descriptive Language and Create an Anchor Chart

Say: Now I’ll read the rest of the memoir while you listen for other words and phrases that help you follow the sequence of events and understand descriptions. As you identify signal words and phrases, we’ll add them to a Signal Language anchor chart. Display a two-column chart like the one that follows on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Students should identify the signal words and phrases shown in the chart. Include any others that students notice, as well.
Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw their series of related events. Meet with students one on one during independent writing and conferencing time, and ask them to tell you about their illustrations, encouraging them to use hand gestures and pantomime to add descriptions to their events. Write simple captions for each image.

Intermediate

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner turn-and-talk activity. Display the following simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to contribute ideas. For example:

During _____.
An important event was _____.
This event was important because _____.

Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.