Recognize Text Structures in Historical Fiction

1. Focus

**Explain Problem-and-Solution Text Structure**

*Say:* Like most fiction, historical fiction is about one or more characters and the problems they face. The story of the characters is told through a series of events that move toward a solution to the problem. One event leads to the next. When you write a historical fiction story, you organize your narrative based on this sequence of events, keeping in mind that your events lead from the development of the problem toward a solution to the problem.

**Model Identifying the Problem and Solution**

Ask students to listen as you read the first four paragraphs of “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.” (Note: You may wish to use the interactive whiteboard resources to display this page so that students may read along.)

*Say:* I can identify a problem and a solution to it in just these four paragraphs. The main character is Ditanu, and his problem is that he lives with his uncle, Lamusa, who “begrudged him every scrap of food and often raised an angry hand to him.” The solution to this problem is that the stone carver Belshunu offered Ditanu “an apprenticeship as well as a home.” So Ditanu no longer has to live with his mean uncle.

Then read the first paragraph on page 14. *Say:* The problem that was identified on the first page is not solved after all. Ditanu may have to go back to his mean uncle. I can look at events in the story to see how this problem is solved.

**Practice Identifying the Sequence of Events Between the Problem and Solution**

Ask students to listen as you read (or reread) the first five paragraphs on page 14 of “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.” (Note: You may wish to use the interactive whiteboard resources to display this page so that students may read along.) Ask students to identify the problem. Students should understand that Ditanu’s problem of having to live with his mean uncle, which was described on the first page, is not solved. Ditanu might have to go back to his uncle.

**Create a Chart Showing the Sequence of Events Leading to the Solution in a Historical Fiction Story**

On chart paper, work with students to list the main problem, events, and solution in the story “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.”
### Problem
After becoming an apprentice, Ditanu may have to go back to live with his uncle.

### Events
1. Belshunu makes Ditanu his apprentice; Ditanu lives happily with Belshunu and wife.
2. The Wife of Hudu-libbi asks Belshunu to make a votive statue.
3. Belshunu is busy so he says that Ditanu will make the votive statue.
4. The Wife of Hudu-libbi criticizes Ditanu, saying he has made her nose too big.
5. While she waits for Ditanu, she reads the laws Belshunu has carved.
6. Ditanu realizes he has something in common with her and makes the statue’s nose smaller.
7. The Wife of Hudu-libbi is happy with Ditanu’s work and gives him a purse of silver.
8. Lamusa arrives and demands that Ditanu return to live with him.

### Solution
The Wife of Hudu-libbi points out that the laws written in stone say Ditanu may stay with Belshunu. She threatens the wrath of the gods.

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#### 2. Rehearse

**Practice Talking About Problem and Solution**

**Turn and talk.** Ask students to talk to a partner to brainstorm another possible outcome to the story. Write these prompts on chart paper to help the discussion:

- *How else could the problem have been resolved?*
- *What events would have led up to your resolution?*

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 Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the different story resolutions they brainstorm. Encourage a discussion of how challenging it is to write about a believable problem and solution in a story.

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#### Strategies to Support ELs

##### Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw a problem and a solution. Meet with students one on one during the partner talk time or during independent writing and conferencing time. Ask students to tell you about their illustrations. Write captions for each image using simple sentences such as:

- *The problem is _____.*
- *The solution is _____.*

##### Intermediate and Advanced

Write the following sentence frames on chart paper to help ELs identify the sequence of events that leads from the problem to the solution in order to complete their anchor charts:

- *The lady wanted _____.*
- *Ditanu did the work because _____.*
- *Ditanu's uncle said _____.*
- *The lady said _____.*
- *In the end _____.*

##### All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: problem/el problema; sequence/la secuencia; solution/la solución; structure/la estructura.

Use photos or images from the book or interactive whiteboard resources to help ELs learn vocabulary and understand key concepts.

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### 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** A historical fiction story includes a main problem and a solution to the problem. The events in the story occur in a sequence. Together, these events move the characters toward a solution. As you write independently, remember to plan out your sequence of events to help your readers understand how the main character in the story finds the solution to the problem.

Encourage students explore possible story problems for their historical fiction stories based on one of the ideas they have brainstormed.

### 4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three students who have concepted a strong story problem to share their idea with the rest of the class.