**Brainstorm Ideas Using Textbooks for Inspiration**

### Objectives

**In this mini-lesson, students will:**

- Use what was learned in social studies to brainstorm ideas for historical fiction.
- Work with partners to brainstorm ideas inspired by their knowledge of historical periods.
- Contribute to a class web of historical fiction ideas.

### Preparation

**Materials Needed**

- Chart paper and markers
- Writer’s notebooks
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, you may wish to copy on chart paper the sample sentence frames provided in “Strategies to Support ELs” to help students talk about brainstorming.

**Preparation Tip**

You may want students to use their social studies textbooks or folders when they practice brainstorming with a partner. If the texts are not readily available in the classroom, ask the day before this lesson that students bring them to class. Explain that the books will be used as tools for brainstorming.

### 1. Focus

**Explain the Brainstorming Process**

**Say:** Brainstorming is a way to remember to think of ideas. When we brainstorm for writing historical fiction, one way to spark an idea for a story is to think back about things we’ve studied—specifically, what we learned about different time periods in history. This can lead us to great ideas for writing historical fiction. Let me show you how I do that.

**Model Brainstorming Ideas for a Biography**

Demonstrate how to use memories of prior learning to spark ideas for historical fiction. Use the sample think-aloud to help you develop your own brainstorming model. Demonstrate by recording ideas on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources as you model brainstorming.

**Sample think-aloud. Say:** When I studied American history, I learned about the time of colonization in America. So many people left their homes in Europe and made very difficult voyages to a new world that probably seemed barbaric to them. I could use that time in history and write a story about someone’s first year in the New World. I also remember learning about the American Revolutionary War and how divided people were about it. I could write a story set in that time—maybe about a young man who left home to fight with the patriots. I also liked learning about the Renaissance when I studied about world history. It must have been a fascinating time. I could set a story in Italy in the mid 1600s when Galileo was making discoveries that changed what everyone thought they knew about Earth. Maybe he could even be one of my characters.

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**Sample Brainstorming Web**

- American Revolutionary War; fighting with the patriots
- first year in the New World
- Renaissance Italy; working with Galileo

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2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming Ideas for a Biography

Invite students to work with partners to brainstorm historical time periods they studied this year or last year for ideas for writing historical fiction. (Students may also refer to social studies textbooks if they have them available.) Remind students to record their ideas in their writer’s notebooks.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students back together and invite them to share their ideas based on brainstorming historical time periods. As students share, add their ideas to the brainstorming web you started earlier. Reread the list on the web together and ask students to share basic plot ideas that could take place during the time periods.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We’ve just learned how brainstorming historical periods we’ve studied helps us find ideas for writing. As you do more brainstorming on your own, think about places, people, and events from the past that you’ve studied this year or last year. Brainstorming what we know and what we’re interested in is always the best place to start when we need ideas for writing.

Encourage students to think about historical periods they studied in social studies as they brainstorm ideas 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 students together. Invite volunteers to share some of the ideas for historical fiction they are excited about.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to tell you about their ideas for a historical fiction story using whatever words they can. You may also invite them to draw about an idea. Provide them with key words or labels that come from the ideas they share. Help them use the words to form simple sentences as they brainstorm.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their idea for a personal narrative. For example:

An interesting time in history is ______.
My story could be about ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: historical fiction/la ficción histórica.