Write a Story with a First Person Voice

1. Focus

Explain Using a First Person Voice to Tell a Realistic Fiction Story

Say: When I write realistic fiction, I often like to use a first person narrator. A first person narrator is a character who is part of the story, so it sounds as though he or she is right there, telling about everything as it happens. A first person narrator uses words such as I, me, my, our, and we to tell a story. When the first person narrator talks, he or she sounds like someone sitting right in front of the reader, telling the reader the story. Today I’m going to show you an example of a first person narrator. We will discuss how you can use a first person voice in your own realistic fiction stories.

Model How Writers Use a First Person Voice to Tell a Realistic Fiction Story

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for the voice of the first person narrator as you read the text aloud.

My mother left the room. Then Jake said, “You have to come to the cave, Maria!” I tried to act like I was uninterested. But I must admit that I was curious. Jake’s father had found the cave a week ago. Jake loved it there. Linda, Cai, and I all loved the cave, too. It was our own private place. We were going to meet there later.

Modeling Text

Say: In this passage, Maria is the first person narrator. She describes things that happen around her, such as her mother leaving the room. I notice that the writer uses the pronouns I, my, our, and we. This tells me the narrator is in the scene. The narrator, Maria, also tells her thoughts and feelings, such as in the sentences “I tried to act like I was uninterested. But I must admit that I was curious.” I feel very close to Maria. I can understand having mixed feelings about something. Maria sounds very honest. When I listen to this first person narrator, I feel as though I am right there with her in the same room. Near the end of this example, she tells me more of her mixed feelings: she acts uninterested, but she wants to go to the cave. I feel I understand the characters well because Maria sounds like my friend, telling me directly what is going on. Using a real-sounding narrator as the first person voice fits well for a realistic fiction story.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn about using a first person voice to tell a realistic fiction story.
• Practice writing sentences with a first person narrator.
• Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, write the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper to support ELs.

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2. Rehearse

**Practice Writing in the Voice of a First Person Narrator**

Write the practice text on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

Emma watched the other kids in the pool. She stuck her toe in the water. It felt great. But Emma did not know how to swim. So she was scared. The water looked deep.

**Practice Text**

Ask students to rewrite these sentences so that Emma is the first person narrator. Students can change the existing sentences. They can also add text. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain how using a first person narrator changes the story.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite pairs to read aloud their sentences and explain how they turned Emma into the first person narrator. Record some sample students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their stories with first person narrators.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We just learned that a first person narrator can sound like he or she is sitting right in front of you telling you the story. This is one reason a first person narrative voice is a good choice for a realistic fiction story: the narrator brings you close to the events and to the narrator’s own thoughts and feelings. As you write your realistic fiction story, consider using a first person narrator to create a close connection between your narrator and your readers.

Encourage students to apply their understanding of first person voice during independent writing time, as appropriate. During student 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 read aloud a section of their realistic fiction stories in which they used a first person narrator. Ask them to explain how this affected their stories.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning and Intermediate**

Model how you use a first person narrator by telling a story about a character who visits a swimming pool. Invite students to tell about two events in the first person by using sentence frames such as:

- I saw ______.
- I like ______.

**Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: fiction/la ficción; narrator/el narrador; realistic/realista.