Use a Storytelling Voice to Connect with Readers

1. Focus

Explain Using Storytelling in Informational Reports

Say: Everybody loves a good story. When I write an informational report, I look for a part of it that I can tell like a story, so I can make my report more enjoyable to readers. Using a storytelling voice in an informational report is really just another way to present some of the facts I have collected about my topic. Because a story has a beginning, middle, and end, I can interest readers in my topic with a strong beginning and keep them reading about the topic to the end. Of course, in an informational report, the stories I tell are true and not made up. Today I’m going to show you an example in which a writer mixes in facts about a topic while telling a true story. Then we’ll practice this skill so that we can use it when we write our own informational reports.

Model How Writers Use Storytelling in Informational Reports

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Modeling Text

Read example 1. Say: The writer starts this report with the phrase back in 1905, which sets a scene more than a hundred years ago. This sounds like storytelling to me. The writer could have just said “in 1905,” but chose to make the voice sound more like conversation. After this, the writer mixes in fact by telling that people often made their own soft drinks and mixed flavored soda powder and water with a stick. Then the writer goes back to storytelling with the sentence, “That’s just what eleven-year-old Frank Epperson of San Francisco did one cold night. He left his drink on the porch. The temperature dropped. The drink froze with the stick still in it.” This sounds like the voice of a person telling me a story, especially the phrase just what. The writer also gives me a detail about the setting with the phrase cold night. Then the writer tells more about what happened to Frank on that particular night. He writes sentences that sound like events in a story: “He left his drink on the porch. The temperature dropped. The drink froze with the stick still in it.” I am getting a picture of how Frank came up with his invention by accident—and I am hearing the writer’s storytelling voice.
Read example 2. Say: The writer keeps building the story in this paragraph. He imagines Frank trying the frozen treat. I see that he is careful to say that Frank “may have” given the soft drink accident a lick. This is still a nonfiction report, so the author needs to tell when he is guessing at things and not telling known facts. Still, I like how he has worked in this storytelling detail to keep me interested. And, at the end of the paragraph, I feel some suspense about what happened in 1923—just like when I hear a story. I can see how it’s useful to use the voice of a storyteller sometimes when writing informational text.

2. Rehearse

**Practice Using Storytelling in an Informational Report**

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

| We start school in the morning. We learn many things. We work in groups. We take a break to eat lunch. Then we learn more, until it is time to go home. |

**Practice Text**

Ask students to add words or phrases to these sentences that add facts about their school or classroom and also tell a story about what a day at their school is like. Students can change the existing sentences. They can also add text to use more of a storyteller’s voice. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite pairs to read aloud their sentences and explain how they used a storytelling voice along with facts to tell about a day at school. Record sample student sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own informational reports.

**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

Say: We just learned that a writer can mix facts with storytelling to make an informational report fun for the audience. A writer can add words to sound like he or she is sitting right there, telling readers a story. A writer can also build characters, plot, and suspense along with the facts. As you write your informational report, look for places where you can sound like a storyteller even as you present facts about your topic.

Encourage students to apply this strategy during independent writing time. 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 informational reports in which they used the voice of a storyteller to tell about a nonfiction topic. Ask them to explain what they did to develop this voice.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

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<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate and Advanced</th>
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<tr>
<td>While other students work with partners or during independent writing time, work one on one with beginning ELs. Model generating oral sentences in which you tell a story about events in the school day using sentence frames such as the following: <em>We _____</em>. Then we _____. Write your sentences on chart paper. Invite students to read them with you. Then ask students to generate additional sentences of their own using the same sentence frames.</td>
<td>Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Levels</td>
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<td>If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: <strong>informational/informativo(a); voice/la voz.</strong></td>
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