Talk About What Could Really Happen

1. Focus

Introduce Realistic Fiction Writing

Display a basketball (or other ball). Tell students two different stories with the same characters, one that is realistic and one that is fantasy.

Say: I want to share two stories with you. Both stories are fiction. That is, they are both made up. However, some things in the first story could not happen in real life. It is a make-believe story. The second story is an example of realistic fiction. Everything that happens in the second story could happen in real life.

Tell the first story. Say: One morning, Eric walked his dog Rusty to school. Grandma came along to walk Rusty back home. When they arrived at the front entrance, Eric started to hand Rusty’s leash to Grandma. But Rusty bounded inside, trailing the leash behind him down the hallway, all the way to the gym. There he found a basketball and started dribbling the ball up and down the court with his paws. No one had ever seen anything like it. He stood up on his back legs and ran like a person. He also revealed that he could fly, by taking a giant leap from half-court to make a dunk. The players in the gym clapped. Then they found him a uniform. Rusty had made the team!

Tell the second story. Say: One morning, Eric walked his dog Rusty to school. Grandma came along to walk Rusty back home. When they arrived at the front entrance, Eric started to hand Rusty’s leash to Grandma. But Rusty bounded inside, trailing the leash behind him down the hallway, all the way to the gym. There he interrupted an early morning basketball game by crashing into a rack of balls on the sidelines. The balls went everywhere. It was a crazy sight. Fortunately, after Rusty had his fun, he came and sat obediently in front of Eric, when Eric called him. Rusty even sat still while everybody helped Eric collect the balls.

Sample think-aloud. Say: The first and second stories start out the same. Both tell about something that could really happen—a boy walking to school with his grandma and his dog. And dogs sometimes do run off in real life. But then the first story tells about Rusty dribbling and shooting baskets. This is not realistic. It’s not something real dogs do. The second story is realistic because it tells about something that could happen with a real dog.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Realistic Fiction

Ask: Why do people write realistic fiction? (Allow responses.) I write realistic fiction because it allows me to write about characters who are like the people I know. They have everyday problems and experiences like you or I might have. Realistic fiction offers examples of how people deal with conflicts and build...
relationships. It is also entertaining to take a break from your own life and read about someone else’s adventures. I imagine that my audience is made up of people who learn and grow from reading about characters who are like themselves.

2. Rehearse

Practice Telling Realistic and Fantasy Stories Orally

Invite students to work with a partner to make up two stories—one that is fantasy and one that is realistic—about an object from the classroom or a person they know. Tell students they will share their stories with the class.

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

Share Stories with the Class

Invite volunteers to retell the stories they made up with their partners. Ask them to explain why one story is make-believe and the other is realistic fiction. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in discussion about the exercise:

- Why did you choose the object you used in both of your stories?
- What events in your fantasy story could not happen in real life?
- What made your realistic story real?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that a realistic fiction story tells about events that could happen in real life. In the next several weeks, we will read many examples of realistic fiction, and we will write our own realistic fiction stories, too.

Invite students to write about an event that could happen in a realistic fiction story. As you confer with individual students, reinforce their understanding that realistic stories have problems that real people could experience.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to discuss the events they wrote about. Discuss what makes these events appropriate for realistic fiction.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Provide examples of picture books that have make-believe events, such as animals wearing clothes and talking, and realistic events. Model pointing to specific titles and naming them realistic or fantasy. Ask students to identify realistic fiction and fantasy with you.

Intermediate
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice. Write simple sentence frames on chart paper to help them talk about the stories they share:

- The story could really happen because _____.
- The character is realistic because _____.
- The story could not happen because _____.
- The character is not real because _____.

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 to help them understand the lesson focus: fiction/la ficción; realistic/realista.