Organize Your Ideas for Historical Fiction

1. Focus

Explain Organizing Ideas for Historical Fiction

Say: Now that we have researched the context for our historical fiction stories, we are ready to organize our stories. One way to do that is to use a story map. I will show you how I organize my ideas on a story map using my research information about a family immigrating to America.

Model Organizing Ideas

Display a Historical Fiction story map like the one below on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Add information to the story map as you think aloud about organizing your research.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn how to use research information to organize ideas on a story map.
- Practice using research information to organize ideas in a story map based on one of their own historical fiction writing ideas.
- Discuss how to apply the strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Historical Fiction Story Map (BLM 5)
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the story map onto chart paper. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

Backdrop Event: Famine in Ireland caused many people to move to America.

Setting: 1855, on the ship, in steerage. Dark, smelly, cramped, only space was their berth or bed.

Characters: strong, friendly, determined girl, 12; younger brother, about 2; mother who is tired and worn out from the struggle of surviving the famine in Ireland and now the voyage.

Problem: brother isn’t getting good food; is weak, listless; mother fears he’ll get sick.

Events:
1. girl goes on deck when she can; meets boy in second class who is able to talk to her through gate separating second class from steerage
2. People in steerage are getting sick.
3. mother worries about girl’s brother
4. bad storm keeps girl below deck for several days
5. brother getting weaker

Solution: The storm breaks; girl meets up with friend in second class; he gets food for brother, which makes him stronger.

Sample Historical Fiction Story Map (BLM 5)

About “Backdrop Event” section. Say: My research told me that in the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, many people left Ireland and immigrated to America. In 1845, there was a famine in Ireland and around 350,000 people died. People left Ireland hoping to find a new life in America. Model making notes.

About “Setting” section. Say: The backdrop of my story is leaving Ireland. The setting is 1855 on a ship taking the immigrants to America. Most immigrants travelled in steerage, which was dark, smelly, and crowded. There was no air circulation and poor food. I found out that the only space people in steerage had was the berth where they slept. Model making notes.

About “Characters” section. Say: My story is about a girl, her baby brother, and her mom who are travelling to New York City to meet up with their father. The girl is twelve. She’s strong and determined and adventurous. Her little
brother is two years old. The mother is tired from helping her family survive the famine and now the difficult journey. Model making notes.

About “Problem” section. Say: My research told me that the food served in steerage was poor, mostly leftovers from the first and second class passengers. The problem will be that the baby brother is not getting enough food, he’s weak, and the cramped, smelly quarters are making him sick. Model making notes.

About “Events” section. Say: I need to think of the events that will lead to the solution. The first event will be that the girl, who is adventurous, goes up on deck whenever she can to get fresh air. While on deck, she meets a boy who is in the second-class section. Second class is separated from steerage by a gate, but the girl talks to the boy every time they both are on deck. The second event will be that many people in steerage are getting sick. The third event will be that her brother is getting weak and listless. Her mother fears the baby will get sick. The fourth event is that the girl wants to ask her new friend if he can get her some healthy food for her brother, but a storm hits the ship that lasts for days. Meanwhile, her brother is getting worse.

About “Solution” section. Say: Finally the storm lets up. The girl hurries on deck and finds her friend. He agrees to get food for her brother. The baby eats good food, and the girl takes him on deck. Her brother gets better.

2. Rehearse

Practice Organizing Ideas

Invite students to orally rehearse how they plan to organize their stories by talking to a partner.

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share their partner discussions.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that we can use the information gathered in our research to help us organize ideas for a historical fiction story. We can use a story map to record our ideas. Make sure to use a story map as you organize your writing.

Make BLM 5 available to students who are ready to organize their research for their historical fiction story 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 the class together. Invite volunteers to report on their progress in organizing their research using the story map.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to storyboard the events in their historical fiction story. Encourage students to tell you about their drawings. Expand on their language and write simple sentences on self-stick notes for each drawing. Read the self-stick notes with students.

Intermediate and Advanced

Encourage ELs to use the following sentence frames to help them organize the events in their historical fiction stories:

The first event is ______.
The second event is ______.
After that, _______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: organize ideas/organizar las ideas.