1. Focus

Introduce the Mentor Historical Fiction Story

**Say:** We can learn about historical fiction by reading or listening to it. Today I’m going to read aloud a story and highlight some key features.

**Say:** The title of the story is “The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Crossing the Rocky Mountains.” The title tells me the names of two famous explorers of the American West and gives me a clue to events in the story. I wonder if the main characters are Lewis and Clark or other members of their expedition. What does the title make you wonder about? Allow students to share their predictions.

If your class includes English learners or other students who would benefit from vocabulary and oral language development to comprehend the narrative, use “Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs.”

Read Aloud the Mentor Historical Fiction Story

Read aloud the text, stopping at some or all of the places indicated (or at other points you choose) to highlight three key features of a historical fiction story:
1. The story describes an authentic historical setting.
2. The characters lived or could have lived in the setting.
3. The events did occur or could have occurred.

Details About Setting

**Page 9, after third paragraph. Say:** The phrase “difficult terrain of the Rocky Mountains” create an image in my mind of a steep, rocky path. When I read that the people “struggle” to hear each other over the “battering rain,” I understand that the weather is making it hard to travel. In the third paragraph, I learn that there is snow on the ground, so the air must be very cold. All of these details help create an authentic setting that tells me how difficult it was for the group to explore this harsh mountainous landscape. I also learn that the explorers are traveling on horseback. In the early 1800s, horses were the main means of transportation on land, so this detail helps make the setting authentic.

Details About Characters

**Page 9, after fourth paragraph. Say:** In the third paragraph, the authors introduce Sergeant Patrick Gass. Patrick was a real person who kept a diary about the expedition. In the fourth paragraph, the authors blend historical facts with fiction to help me understand Patrick and his feelings. First I learn a historical fact: Patrick had been a carpenter for the army. Then the authors add an element of fiction by writing, “Now, here he was, freezing in the frigid forest air.” This sentence puts me into the story by re-creating what this moment could have been like for Patrick. From Patrick’s diary, the authors could have learned...
that he was hungry “and at times he wondered if he’d survive another day.”

Details About Events
Page 10, after last full paragraph. Say: The authors use dialogue to dramatize the historical events. From Patrick’s diary, the authors know that the men did not like the soup given to them by the captain. The authors imagine how real people might have reacted in this situation. I can tell how much they hate the food when two of them spill their bowls on purpose and say, “This soup stinks!”

Details About Events
After reading page 13. Say: The lack of food has made the men weak and created a crisis for the expedition. The authors invent a conversation between Patrick and Hugh that helps me understand the hardships that these explorers faced. Patrick is “so cold, so hungry” that he can “barely move.” Hugh gives him hope that the explorers may soon reach Nez Perce territory, but Patrick loses his balance and falls down. I understand how serious the problem is.

2. Rehearse

Respond Orally to the Mentor Historical Fiction Story

Invite students to discuss their own ideas about the setting, characters, and events in the story by asking such questions as:

• Which details of the setting let you know this story takes place in the past?
• Which details of the characters let you know that they belong to the time and place of the story?

Model the following sentence frames to support ELs and struggling students:

• The setting seems authentically historical because ______.
• The characters seem historical because ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Remember that when you write a historical fiction story you’ll want to create an authentic setting that fits the time and place where your story occurs. You’ll also want to describe characters who really lived or who could have lived. The events in the story should dramatize things that happened or could have happened during that time and in that place.

Ask students to write a paragraph in which they describe any historical setting of their choosing or describe a character who could have lived in the past.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share their descriptions of a setting or character.

Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs

Beginning
Point to the illustrations in the story as you name the characters and identify the objects shown (horses, mountains, rain, etc.).

Intermediate
Point to the illustration on page 9. Say: This story is about people who traveled through the Rocky Mountains in 1805. They were explorers. They traveled on horseback. It was hard to travel through the mountains. The weather was bad. They did not have enough food to eat.

Intermediate and Advanced
Use the illustrations from the book and display pictures of explorers in harsh mountain terrain from books or magazines or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Encourage a background-building discussion about explorers and traveling through harsh terrain on horseback in bad weather. Say: Tell me what you know about explorers. What would it have been like to travel by horseback?

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: captain/el capitán/la capitana; mountains/las montañas; terrain/el terreno.