1. Focus

Explain Genre Features

Say: Each writing genre has certain features, or characteristics, that help to define that genre. Today we’re going to identify and analyze the features of historical fiction stories.

Build a Class Genre Features Anchor Chart

Say: I want you to think about what you already know about historical fiction. Think of the stories we have read together and that you have read by yourself. Let’s build an anchor chart to summarize the features, or characteristics, we would expect to find in any work of historical fiction.

Display a blank chart like the one shown here on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Also distribute copies of the chart to students on BLM 1. Work with students to record features of historical fiction stories in the left column. If necessary, use the following prompts to guide students:

• What kind of setting does a historical fiction story have?
• What kind of characters would you expect to find in a historical fiction story?
• What kind of events take place in a historical fiction story?
• What must be true about the dialogue in a historical fiction story?
• Which points of view could you use to tell a historical fiction story?
• What happens to characters in a historical fiction story?

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Analyze features of historical fiction on a class anchor chart.
• Listen to an interactive historical fiction story read aloud and find the features of the genre in the narrative.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Mentor text: “Building the Transcontinental Railroad”
• Chart paper and markers
• Historical Fiction Features (BLM 1)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, you may wish to copy the Historical Fiction Features anchor chart onto chart paper. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Fiction Features</th>
<th>Examples from the Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic historical setting</td>
<td>page 20: “It was March 1867. It had been a whole year . . . hired by the Central Pacific Railroad to work on the Transcontinental Railroad.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters who lived or could have lived in the setting</td>
<td>page 19: “I am freezing,’ Wen told Chang, his teeth chattering. ‘At this pace . . . for the rest of our lives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events that occurred or could have occurred at the time the story is set</td>
<td>page 20: “For twenty-five dollars a month, the men worked long, hard shifts, carving away inch by inch at the mountainside.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue must sound realistic for the setting and characters</td>
<td>page 21: Wen and Chang chatting while they work. “I hear there is desert on the other side . . . At least the desert is warm.’ ‘Not warm. Hot,’ Chang corrected. ‘Warm, hot—as long as it’s not cold.”’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person or first person</td>
<td>Use of pronouns indicates the story is told from the third person point of view. page 20: “Chang and Wen had been hired by” “Workers on the West Coast” “the men worked long, hard shifts” “if they didn’t get through”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one character deals with a conflict of self, with others, or with nature</td>
<td>page 24: Mr. Howden wants someone to place the explosives, but the workers don’t want to because they are scared. “Who will take this new explosive into the tunnel?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read Aloud a Historical Fiction Story

Before you read, point out the second column on your chart and on students’ BLMs. Explain that you are going to read aloud (or reread) a historical fiction story and that, as students listen, they should look for examples of the genre features in the story. Explain that, after reading, students will work together in small groups to complete the chart. They will write down examples of each genre feature. Read aloud (or reread) “Building the Transcontinental Railroad: Blasting Through the Sierra Nevadas.” You may wish to project the text using the interactive whiteboard resources so that students can follow along.

2. Rehearse

Analyze the Mentor Text

Divide students into small groups to complete the second column of the graphic organizer on BLM 1. If you are using the interactive whiteboard resources, invite students to revisit parts of the text at the whiteboard as they look for the examples they need. If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the examples they found in “Building the Transcontinental Railroad: Blasting Through the Sierra Nevadas.” Record their findings on the anchor chart. Post this anchor chart for students to refer to throughout the unit as they think about the historical fiction features they need to include in their stories.

Strategies to Support ELs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Support Provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
<td>Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the “Analyze the Mentor Text” activity. Keep in mind that they will not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with them individually to reinforce concepts while other students write independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate</strong></td>
<td>Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity. Write the following simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to contribute ideas in the group. For example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that ELs work with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Levels</strong></td>
<td>If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: character/el carácter; conflict/el conflicto; dialogue/el diálogo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** Most historical fiction includes the features we have discussed. Readers of your historical fiction story will expect to see these features, such as an authentic historical setting; characters, dialogue, and events that are realistic for the time and place of the story; and conflict. Consult our classroom anchor chart to help you remember these features when you write your own historical fiction stories.

Encourage students to think about the features of a historical fiction story as they brainstorm and plan their stories.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three students who have selected their story ideas to talk about how they plan to incorporate specific features of historical fiction genre.