Read Aloud a Mentor Biographical Text 1

1. Focus

Introduce the Mentor Biography

Say: In order to become a good biography writer, it helps to read examples of other people’s biographies. Today I’m going to read you a biography about an important American. As we read the biography, we will look for some features of biographical texts. You will be using many of these features in your own biography writing.

Read aloud the title of the selection on page 8 of the mentor text. You may also wish to display the text using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Ask: Who do you think Frederick Douglass is? Why do you think he might be the subject of a biography?

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

Read Aloud the Mentor Biography

Read aloud the biography, stopping at some or all of the places indicated (or at other points you choose), to highlight two key features of a biography:

1. The person’s birthplace and their date of birth.
2. The person’s family, childhood, and important events.

“Hook” at the Beginning of a Story

Page 9, after third paragraph. Say: The writer of this biography gets my attention with these first paragraphs. From the way she describes Frederick’s life as a child, she creates sympathy for him and this makes me want to know more about his life. I want to know more about what happened to him after his mother died.

Subject’s Birthplace

Page 9, after fourth paragraph. Say: Biographies give us information about where and when someone was born. The writer tells us where Frederick was born and gives an idea of when he was born. The fact that we do not know Frederick’s actual birth date gives me even more information about what his life may have been like. No one kept track of the birth dates of slaves. That shows how they were treated in society.

Details About Subject’s Life

Page 10, after third paragraph. Say: I learn what young Frederick Douglass’s life was like. He lived in a shack, wore rags as clothes, and did not have enough

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Listen to an interactive read-aloud to learn that biographies start with a strong hook, tell a person’s birth date and birthplace, and tell important events about a person’s life.
• Share personal responses to biographies.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Mentor text: “Frederick Douglass”
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

Display photographs depicting slavery for a background discussion with ELs. (Photos are available using the interactive whiteboard resources.)
food to eat. Often at the beginning of a biography, the writer tells us about what the life of the person was like when he or she was very young.

Details About Subject’s Life
Page 12, after fourth paragraph. Say: Here the writer tells about an incident that affects Frederick. She says that losing his privileges made Frederick more determined than ever to run away. I think this incident is very interesting. It helps me understand more about Frederick Douglass’s personality. He was someone who did not give up easily. As you read more biographies, you’ll see that biographers usually describe events that dramatize their subjects’ characters.

2. Rehearse

Respond Orally to the Mentor Biography

After reading, invite students to share their own ideas and reactions to the text by asking questions such as:
• What did you visualize as you listened to descriptions of things that happened to him?
• Which event in Douglass’s life had the most impact on you? How would you have felt in that situation?
• Did you find this biography interesting? Why or why not?

If necessary, model the following sentence frames to support ELs and struggling students:
• I visualized ______.
• The event I remember the most is ______.
• This text was interesting/not interesting because ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned some important features of biographies. A biography begins with interesting text that makes us want to read more. We call this a “hook,” or a strong lead. Biographies tell when and where a person was born. They also describe important events in a person’s life. Remember that these are features you want in your biographies.

Invite students to write one or more paragraphs summarizing the facts and details about Frederick Douglass that they remember from the read aloud and drawing a conclusion about why the writer felt he was an important biographical subject.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three students to share their summaries and conclusions.