Read Aloud a Mentor Biography 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 person in ancient history. 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.

Ask: Have you ever heard of Julius Caesar? What do you know about him? 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 three key features of a biography:

1. A strong hook at the beginning.
2. The person’s birthplace and birth date.
3. Information about the person’s family, childhood, and important life events.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Listen to a biography read aloud to learn that it includes a beginning with a strong hook; tells a person’s birth date and birthplace; and tells about a person’s family, childhood, and important life events.
• Share personal responses to a biography.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: “Julius Caesar”
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, find pictures of Ancient Rome to display for the background discussion for ELs.
The author doesn’t tell me about his father or whether he had brothers and sisters. I learn a little about Caesar’s childhood, though. He was trained to be a politician from an early age, and he was very well educated.

Family, Childhood, and Important Events
Page 10, after fourth paragraph. Say: Here I learn more about Caesar’s youth. He served in the Roman military, and other soldiers admired his ability to endure hardships. Once, he was taken hostage by pirates. He told the pirates that they should ask for more ransom, and as soon as the ransom was paid and Caesar was freed, he chased down the pirates and had them killed. This gives me a preview of what kind of leader Caesar would become.

2. Rehearse

Respond Orally to the Mentor Biography

After reading, invite students to share their own ideas about and reactions to the text by asking questions such as:
• What did you visualize as you listened to descriptions of events in Julius Caesar’s life?
• Which event in Caesar’s life was most impressive to you? How would you have felt in his 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 that impressed me most is ______. I would have felt ______.
• This biography was interesting/not interesting because ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned some important features of biographies. A biography has an attention-grabbing introduction that tells us something interesting about the subject and makes us want to read more. We call this a hook, or a strong lead. We also saw that biographies tell when and where a person was born, and they describe important events in a person’s life. Remember that these are features you want to include in your biography.

Invite students to write one or more paragraphs summarizing the facts and details about Julius Caesar 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 volunteers to share their responses to the mentor biography.

Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Display illustrations depicting life in Ancient Rome. <strong>Say:</strong> This is Ancient Rome. (Point to the picture on page 8 of the mentor text.) This man is Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar lived in Ancient Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intermediate and Advanced</td>
<td>Display illustrations of Ancient Rome. <strong>Say:</strong> This is Ancient Rome. What do you know about this time? What did buildings look like? What kind of clothes did people wear? How did they travel? Encourage a background-building discussion about Ancient Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Levels</td>
<td>If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates: Egypt/el Egipto; leader/el líder; province/provincia; Rome/la Roma.</td>
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