Mentor Historical Fiction Collection: *The Strong and the Weak/Tomb Robbers!*

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### MANAGEMENT & ASSESSMENT TOOLS

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*Advanced preparation for this mini-lesson may include gathering visual props or writing model and/or practice text on chart paper (if you are not using the interactive whiteboard resources).*
FINDING TOPICS FOR HISTORICAL FICTION

Introduce Historical Fiction Writing

Display a variety of historical fiction books. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about the range of topics in historical fiction. Use the sample books to explain that writers of historical fiction usually have some personal connection to their subjects.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I want to share some great historical fiction books with you. The stories in these books are set in different time periods and cover a wide range of topics. “Crispin, The Cross of Lead” by Avi is about a boy, in 14th-century medieval England, who is accused of a crime he did not commit. “The Game of Silence” by Louise Erdrich tells the story of a Native American girl from the Ojibwe tribe living in 1850 on an island in Lake Superior. “Out of the Dust” by Karen Hesse takes place during the great dust storms in Oklahoma in the 1930s; “Under the Blood Red Sun” by Graham Salisbury is about a Japanese American boy, in Hawaii in 1941, who witnesses the bombing of Pearl Harbor and then experiences ethnic tension after the United States enters World War II. “One Crazy Summer” by Rita Garcia Williams tells about an eleven-year-old girl’s experiences of an important moment in African American history during the summer of 1968 in Oakland, California. I find it amazing how authors choose so many different historical time periods in which to set their works. I’m amazed because to write their stories in these time periods, they have to immerse themselves into what was happening in a particular place at a particular time.

Say: You may wonder how writers of historical fiction come up with such a wide range of topics. Several authors of the books I just mentioned got their ideas from their family history or state history. Rita Garcia Williams was born in 1957 and would have been eleven in 1968, like Delphine, the main character in her book. The author and her character were both born in New York. On her website, the author says she grew up very aware of the events of the 1960s, which is the subject of her novel. Louise Erdrich is a member of the Ojibwe tribe, which is also called the Chippewa. Nearly all her books are about Native American characters and aspects of her heritage. Graham Salisbury is not Japanese, but he grew up in Hawaii on the islands of Oahu and Hawaii. It is very common for writers to have a personal connection to the topics they pick for their historical fiction stories.
Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Historical Fiction

Say: You may wonder about the purpose of historical fiction. Why not just read straight history textbooks or nonfiction books instead? I like to read historical fiction because it helps me understand how people lived and felt, long before I was born. Times change, but human feelings remain pretty much the same. As a writer, when you blend history and fiction together in a story, you can bring the past alive in a way that informational writing about historical facts can’t do. It’s also fun and entertaining to become absorbed in an adventure from the past. I imagine that the audience for the historical fiction I like to read and write includes anyone interested in learning about the lives and adventures of people who lived in a particular time and place long ago.

Practice Telling Historical Fiction Story Ideas Orally

Invite students to work with a partner. Each student should tell their partner about a historical period or event in which they have a particular interest and why. Encourage students to think about historical events, settings, and time periods that have some significance to their family history or culture. The partner listening should be prepared to retell this connection to the class.

Use “Strategies to Support ELs” to assist English learners or other students who need support.

Share Historical Connections with the Class

Invite volunteers to tell about what part of history their partner is interested in. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in discussion about the practice activity.

Storyteller
• What is your personal interest in this historical period or event?

Listener
• What questions do you have about your partner’s idea so far, that you might like to see answered in a historical fiction story about this topic?

Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing

Say: We come from a wide range of places and cultures, which all existed before we were born. In the next several weeks, we will be making personal connections to historical subjects to help us bring the past alive in our historical fiction.

Make Cultural Connections

This unit provides an excellent opportunity to acknowledge the cultural diversity in your classroom and to encourage students to share stories based on their backgrounds and cultures. Say: We come from diverse backgrounds and places. Our differences offer us a wealth of topics for our historical fiction stories. Personal connections to family and cultural origins can help us make connections to history.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Meet with beginning ELs one-on-one while other students work with partners. Display illustrated historical fiction books to build the concept of historical fiction. Point to one of the books. Say: This book is historical fiction. This book is about ______. Display illustrations that show the time and place where the story is set. Invite students to tell you the historical time and place by saying “This book is about ______.”

Intermediate
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice. Display simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to describe a historical period and/or a connection between a historical period or event and their family or culture. For example:

I am interested in ______.
A long time ago, people used to ______.
My ancestors ______.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: ancestor/el antepasado; connection/la conexión; historical/histórico(a).

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READ ALOUD A MENTOR
HISTORICAL FICTION STORY

Introduce the Mentor Historical Fiction Story

Say: As we become writers of historical fiction, we can learn a lot about the genre by reading or listening to historical fiction written by other authors. Today I’m going to read you a historical fiction story by Amanda Jenkins, who has also written several young adult novels. As I read, pay attention to some key features of her story, including the setting, the characters and the main events. These are features of any fiction story. However, writers of historical fiction use these features in special ways. You will be using these features in your historical fiction stories, too.

Say: The title of the story is “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.” The title contains a pair of opposites. I wonder what that has to do with Hammurabi’s Code? What does the title make you think of? Allow students to share their predictions or “I wonder” questions.

You may wish to display the story using the interactive whiteboard resources so that students can follow along as you read.

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.

Authentic Historical Setting

Page 8, after second paragraph. Say: I’ve only read two paragraphs, but already I know a lot about where and when the story takes place. The author uses details like “the temple complex” and “the streets of Babylon” to tell me the story is set in the Middle East in ancient times. I know Babylon must be a magnificent city because the author says the temple complex has many great artisans. The details about Ditanu’s working arrangement with Belshunu also tell me about the setting. Stone carving is an ancient skill. In those early times, it was normal for a young boy who wanted to learn a trade to become an apprentice by working and living at the home of a master craftsman. Now I’ll think about what I know about these two characters and read on to find out more.

Details About Characters
Page 8, after second paragraph. Say: The setting tells me the characters live in ancient times, but they also have qualities that remind me of people today. Ditanu is hardworking, talented, and conscientious because the author says he “placed the chisel precisely where [Belshanu] wanted it.” I also know that Belshanu has an eye for talent and believes in giving people chances because the author says Belshanu “had seen something in the boy he could bring out.” Belshanu must be a good teacher, too, since Ditanu is doing such good work.

Details About Characters

Page 10, after third paragraph. Say: The name Wife of Hudu-libbi tells me this character has to live according to the rules of her time. But Ditanu’s first thoughts about her tell me she is also like people living today: “No one dared tell the widow…she should stay quietly at home.” I know she is intimidating and proud. Also, she can read at a time when few men and fewer women had that skill. This tells me she is smart, like plenty of people today.

Details About Events that Occurred or Could Have Occurred

After page 10. Say: The Wife of Hudu-libbi comes into Belshanu’s workshop to order a votive figure. This is an event that could have occurred at the time this story is set. In the fifth paragraph, the author explains the rules and customs of the time that resulted in wealthy people ordering stone statues of themselves. In the sixth paragraph, the author blends historical fact with fiction. There really was a stone stele engraved with Hammurabi’s laws and someone had to carve it. I can believe that Belshanu could have been the man who carved Hammurabi’s code.

Respond Orally to the Mentor Historical Fiction Story

After reading the story aloud, invite students to respond personally to the story and to discuss their own ideas about the setting, the characters, and the events by asking such questions as:

• Did you enjoy this historical fiction story? Why or why not?
• What did you visualize as you listened to it read aloud?
• Which characters did you feel you got to know best? In what ways?
• Which details helped you understand what life was like during this time?

If necessary, model the following sentence frames to supports ELs and struggling students:

• I liked this story because ______.
• I visualized ______.
• I understand what life was like because ______.

Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing

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 then. The events in the story should dramatize things that did happen or that could have happened during that time and in that place.

Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs

Beginning

Point to the illustration on page 8. Say: These men are carving stones.

Point to the photograph on page 9. Say: This building is 4,000 years old.

Intermediate and Advanced

Display illustrations from pages 8, 10, and 15 of the story. Say: What do you know about these tools? If you carved a sculpture from stone, what would it look like? Which rules, or laws, do you think a king would want to write down? What do you think of the writing on this stone? Encourage a background-building discussion about stone carving and sculpture, or rules and laws and ancient cuneiform writing.

All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: code/el código; temple/el templo.

Use the images provided on the interactive whiteboard resources to help ELs learn vocabulary and key concepts for the read-aloud.
READ ALOUD A MENTOR
HISTORICAL FICTION STORY

Introduce the Mentor Historical Fiction Story

Say: Today I’m going to read you a historical fiction story, “Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt.” The author, Amanda Jenkins, has also written several young adult novels, and she teaches writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Ask: What does the title of the story tell you about the subject, setting, historical time period or themes of the story? Do you have any idea who the characters might be? Allow students to share their predictions.

You may wish to display the story using the interactive whiteboard resources so that students can follow along as you read.

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 key features of this historical fiction story:
1. The dialogue is made up, but it sounds realistic for the characters’ situation and setting.
2. Historical fiction can be told in the first or third person.
3. At least one main character deals with a conflict.

Details About Point of View
Page 19, after second paragraph. Say: I notice that the author refers to Mery’s feet as her feet and Mery’s dress as her dress. That’s a clue that the author is telling the story in the third person. If the story were told from Mery’s point of view, the author would have said “I was immediately on my feet” and “I pulled my dress over my head.” Historical fiction stories can be told from either point of view: first person or third person. But it’s clear that this story is being told in the third person.

Dialogue that Sounds Realistic for the Situation and Setting
Page 20. Say: I really understand the different points of view of Mery and Khaba, thanks to their dialogue. Mery expresses her worst fears and her sense of what’s right and wrong when she whispers, “If you’re caught, you’ll be executed.” Khaba’s resolute determination comes through in his reply: “I’m not going to get caught.” I can see that Mery is caring and Khaba is self-confident from the way they speak to each other. The dialogue is made up, but it is like a conversation between real people.
At Least One Main Character Deals with a Conflict
Page 20, after sixth paragraph. Say: From the dialogue here, I learn about the main problem in the story. Mery says, “Khaba, you can’t rob the pharaoh’s tomb.” And Khaba says, “Watch me.” Now I understand the conflict and the difference of opinion between the brother and sister. Historical fiction stories have a conflict that one or more of the characters need to solve. This is what makes the story interesting.

At Least One Main Character Deals with a Conflict
After reading page 20. Say: I learn a lot more about the conflict between Mery and Khaba on this page. Mery gives two reasons why she thinks Khaba can’t rob the tomb. First she says that if he does that, the pharaoh “won’t watch after us from the afterlife.” This reason fits the beliefs people held about pharaohs in ancient Egypt. Khaba counters immediately with reasons why he doesn’t agree: “He’s not watching over us anyway.” Mery comes up with a second objection, saying Khaba will be executed if he’s caught. And again, Khaba refutes this by saying he won’t get caught. I like the way the author develops the conflict here, through dialogue that builds the dramatic tension in the story.

Respond Orally to the Mentor Historical Fiction Story
After reading the story aloud, invite students to respond personally to the story and to discuss their own ideas about the story’s dialogue, point of view, and conflicts by asking such questions as:
- Did you like this story? Why or why not?
- What did you picture in your mind as you listened to the story?
- Does the conflict between Mery and Khaba make you remember any conflict you have experienced in your life?
- Which places in the story help you visualize what life was like during this time period?

If necessary, model the following sentence frames to supports ELs and struggling students:
- I liked this story because ______.
- I visualized ______.
- The conflict in the story reminded me of ______.
- This story helped me understand what life was like when ______.

Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing
Say: Today we learned that dialogue in a historical fiction story must sound authentic to the characters and to their historical time and place. Historical fiction is told either through first person or third person point of view. Historical fiction also develops a conflict that one or more of the characters must solve. Remember these features as you work independently to write your own piece of historical fiction.

Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs
Beginning
Display pictures from the mentor text to help beginning ELs understand the setting and historical time period of the story. Name each image you point to: pyramid; hieroglyphs; tomb. Also point to the illustrations of the brother and sister in the story as you say their names (Mery, Khaba). You may wish to display a map showing Egypt.

Intermediate and Advanced
Invite students to tell you what they know about ancient Egypt, including the pyramids and ancient Egyptian tombs. Encourage a background-building discussion. Use images from the interactive whiteboard resources or the book to support students’ comprehension.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: pharaoh/el faraón; pyramid/la pirámide; tomb/tumba.

Use photos or the images provided in the interactive whiteboard resources to help ELs learn vocabulary and key concepts for the read-aloud.
Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt

By Amanda Jenkins

Mentor Text

**Mini-Lesson Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

* Analyze features of historical fiction on a class anchor chart.
* Listen to an interactive historical fiction story and find the features of the genre in the narrative.

**Mini-Lesson Preparation**

Materials Needed

* Mentor text: "Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt"
* Features of Historical Fiction (BLM 1)
* Chart paper and markers
* Interactive whiteboard resources

Preparation Tip

This lesson builds on Introduce the Genre Mini-Lessons 2 and 3, during which students have listened to mentor historical fiction stories. If your students have not had prior experiences reading and discussing historical fiction, you may wish to teach one or both of those mini-lessons prior to this one.

**ANALYZE THE FEATURES OF A HISTORICAL FICTION STORY**

**Explain Genre Features**

**Say:** Every genre has certain features that readers can expect to find. For example, if you read a research paper, you expect to find a text in which information is presented in a logical order and which has a list of sources at the end. When you write a research paper, your readers will expect you to give credit to your sources for the information you present. If you read a memoir, you expect a personal narrative in which the writer recounts his or her feelings about an important experience. As a reader of historical fiction, you can expect to find certain features in any historical fiction story. Today we’re going to identify and analyze features of the historical fiction genre.

**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 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 kinds of characters would you expect to find in a historical fiction story?
- What kind of events would occur?
- What do you think must be true about the dialogue?
- Which points of view could you use to tell a historical fiction story?
- What kinds of conflicts would you expect to find?

**Examples from the Text**

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<th>Examples from the Text</th>
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<td>Authentic historical setting</td>
<td>page 18: “her brother’s sleeping mat,” “a water skin” page 19: “the lush oasis…bare sand and rock. The pyramid lay ahead…”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characters who lived or could have lived in the setting</td>
<td>page 19: the names Mery and Khaba sound authentically Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events that occurred or could have occurred at the time the story is set</td>
<td>page 19: “He was in love with a girl named Neferet, who refused…because he was poor. Khaba had been fretting about how he could get a cow or a bit of copper.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue that sounds realistic for the setting and characters</td>
<td>page 23: “The robbers were digging…when they got caught,” Khaba said. “You mean when the curse took effect,” Mery corrected.</td>
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</table>
Story told through third person or first person point of view

At least one character who deals with a conflict of self, with others, or with nature

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<th>Features of Historical Fiction Anchor Chart (BLM 1)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Story told through third person or first person point of view</strong></td>
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</table>
| page 22: “She had forgotten how superstitious Khaba was.”
“Next they made their way through…” |
| **At least one character who deals with a conflict of self, with others, or with nature** |
| page 20 “Khaba you can’t rob the pharaoh’s tomb.” “Watch me.” “If you’re caught…you’ll be executed.” |

**Read Aloud a Historical Fiction Story**

Before you read, point out the right-hand 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) “Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt.” You may wish to use interactive whiteboard resources to display the text so that students can follow along.

**Analyze the Mentor Text**

Divide students into small groups to complete second column on BLM 1. If you are using 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 “Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt.” Record their findings on your 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.

**Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing**

Say: As you independently write your own historical fiction story, keep in mind that most historical fiction includes the features of this genre that we have discussed. Readers of your historical fiction story will expect to see these features. Consult our classroom anchor chart to help you remember them.

**Teacher Tip**

Many of the writing mini-lessons include partner and small-group activities. Throughout the unit, ensure that all students work with a variety of partners and groups. This will expose students to many points of view and give them opportunities to make connections among their classmates.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group 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.

**Intermediate**

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:

- **Historical fiction has _____**.

- **Characters in historical fiction are _____**.

- **The setting in historical fiction is _____**.

**Advanced**

Ensure that ELs work with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity.

**All Levels**

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.**
RECOGNIZE HOW WRITERS SEQUENCE EVENTS IN A HISTORICAL FICTION STORY

Mentor Text

INTRODUCE THE GENRE
MINI-LESSON 5

The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code
Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt

Mini-Lesson Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Listen to a historical fiction story and analyze the sequence of events.
• Recognize how authors sequence events to move the problem in the story toward a solution.
• Create a chart identifying the events from problem to solution in a historical fiction story.

Mini-Lesson Preparation

Materials Needed

• Mentor text: “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code”
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If your class includes English learners, you may prepare sentence frames to help identify problems and solutions in the text. You may also wish to use interactive whiteboard resources and photos or illustrations from the text to help ELs identify the problems and solutions in the story.

RECOGNIZE HOW WRITERS SEQUENCE EVENTS IN A HISTORICAL FICTION STORY

Explain Problem-and-Solution Text Structure in Historical Fiction

Say: Like most fiction, historical fiction is about one or more characters and the problems they face. The story of the characters is told through a series of events that move toward a solution to the problem. One event leads to the next. When you write a historical fiction story, you organize your narrative based on this sequence of events, keeping in mind that your events lead from the development of the problem toward a solution to the problem.

Model Identifying the Problem and Solution

Ask students to listen as you read (or reread) the first four paragraphs of “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.” Note: You may wish to use the interactive whiteboard resources to display this page so that students may read along.

Say: I can identify a problem and a solution to it in just these four paragraphs. The main character is Ditanu, and his problem is that he lives with his uncle, Lamusa, who “begrudged him every scrap of food and often raised an angry hand to him.” The solution to this problem is that the stone carver Belshanu offered Ditanu “an apprenticeship as well as a home.” So Ditanu no longer has to live with his mean uncle.

Then read the first paragraph on page 14. Say: The problem that was identified on the first page is not solved after all. Ditanu may have to go back to his mean uncle. I can look at events in the story to see how this problem is solved.

Practice Identifying the Sequence of Events Between the Problem and Solution

Ask students to listen as you read (or reread) the first five paragraphs on page 14 of “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.” Note: You may wish to use the interactive whiteboard resources to display this page so that students may read along.

Say: Listen as I read these paragraphs aloud. See if you can identify the problem. Students should understand that Ditanu’s problem of having to live with his mean uncle, which was described on the first page, is not solved. Ditanu might have to go back to his uncle.

Create a Chart Showing Sequence of Events Leading to the Solution in a Historical Fiction Story

Say: Let’s create a chart to list the main problem in this historical fiction story and the sequence of events that leads to the solution.
On chart paper, work with students to list the main problem and the solution of the story “The Strong and the Weak: Hammurabi’s Code.” Reread and clarify the meaning of any unfamiliar vocabulary words.

**Problem** After finding a home as an apprentice to Belshanu, Ditanu may have to go back to live with his uncle.

**Events**
1. Belshanu makes Ditanu his apprentice and Ditanu lives happily with Belshanu and his wife.
2. The Wife of Hudu-libbi asks Belshanu to make a votive statue.
3. Belshanu is busy so he says that Ditanu will make the votive statue.
4. The Wife of Hudu-libbi criticizes Ditanu, saying he has made her nose too big.
5. While she waits for Ditanu, she reads the laws Belshanu has carved.
6. Ditanu realizes he has something in common with her and makes the nose smaller on the statue.
7. The Wife of Hudu-libbi is happy with Ditanu’s work and gives him a purse of silver.
8. Lamusa arrives and demands that Ditanu return to live with him.

**Solution** The Wife of Hudu-libbi points out that the laws written in stone say Ditanu may stay with Belshanu. She threatens the wrath of the gods if Lamusa breaks the law.
Lamusa decides Belshanu may keep Ditanu as his apprentice.

**Sequence of Events Problem/Solution Anchor Chart**

### Practice Talking About Problem and Solution

**Turn and talk.** Ask students to talk to a partner to brainstorm another possible outcome to the story. Write these prompts on chart paper to help the discussion.
- How else could the problem have been resolved?
- What events would have led up to your resolution?

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

### Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the different story resolutions they brainstorm. Encourage a discussion of how challenging it is to execute a believable problem and solution in a story.

### Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing

**Say:** A historical fiction story includes a main problem and a solution to the problem. The events in the story occur in a sequence. Together, these events move the problem toward the solution. As you write independently, remember to plan out your sequence of events to help your readers understand how the character in the story finds the solution to the problem.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to draw a problem and a solution. Meet with students one-on-one during the partner talk time or during independent writing and conferencing time. Ask students to tell you about their illustrations. Write captions for each image using simple sentences such as:

- The problem is ______.
- The solution is ______.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Write the sentence frames below on chart paper to help ELs identify the sequence of events that leads from the problem to the solution in order to complete their anchor charts.

- The lady wanted _____.
- Ditanu did the work because ______.
- Ditanu’s uncle said ______.
- The lady said ______.
- In the end ______.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: **problem/el problema; sequence/la secuencia; solution/la solución; structure/la estructura.**

Use photos or images from the book or interactive whiteboard resources to help ELs learn vocabulary and understand key concepts.
BRAINSTORM IDEAS USING SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING AS INSPIRATION

**Explain Brainstorming**

**Say:** Sometimes brainstorming involves making connections to things we already know. When we brainstorm ideas for historical fiction, one way to spark an idea for a story is to think back on things we’ve studied—specifically, what we learned about different time periods in history. This can lead us to great settings and conflicts for writing historical fiction. Let me show you how I do this.

**Model Using Social Studies Learning to Brainstorming**

Demonstrate how to use memories of prior learning to spark ideas for historical fiction. Use the sample think-aloud to help you develop your own brainstorming model. Demonstrate how to record ideas on chart paper as you model brainstorming.

**Sample think-aloud. Say:** When I studied American history, I learned about the time of colonization in America. I found this period of time fascinating. So many people left their homes in Europe and made very difficult voyages to a new world that probably seemed barbaric to them. I could use that time in history and write a story about the experiences someone had during his or her first year on the North American continent. I also remember learning about the Revolutionary War and how divided people were about it. I could write a story set in that time—maybe about a young man who left home to fight with the patriots. I also liked learning about the Renaissance when I studied world history. What an interesting time period that must have been! I could set a story in Italy in the mid-1600s when Galileo was making discoveries that changed what everyone thought they knew about the Earth. Maybe he could even be one of my characters.

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**Mini-Lesson Objectives**

In this mini-lesson students will:
- Learn how to brainstorm ideas for historical fiction by thinking about historical events they have learned about in history and social studies.
- Work with a partner to brainstorm ideas inspired by their knowledge of historical periods.
- Contribute to a class list of historical fiction ideas.
- Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing process.

**Mini-Lesson Preparation**

**Materials Needed**
- Chart paper and markers
- Students’ writer’s notebooks
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, you may wish to copy on chart paper the sample sentence frames provided in “Strategies to Support ELs” to help students talk about brainstorming.

**Preparation Tip**

You may want students to use their social studies textbooks or folders for reference when they practice brainstorming with a partner. If the texts are not readily available in the classroom, assign students the responsibility of bringing them to class. You may also want to coordinate this lesson with your school’s social studies faculty.
Practice Using Social Studies Learning to Brainstorming

Invite students to work with a partner to brainstorm historical time periods in which they could set historical fiction stories. Students can refer to social studies textbooks if they have them available to get ideas. Remind students to record their ideas in their writer’s notebooks.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students back together and invite them to share the ideas they brainstormed. As students share, record their ideas on a class brainstorming list. Ask students to tell you key events that happened in the time period. Choose a few of these and lead a discussion with the class about how these events might help to shape a historical fiction story.

Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing

Say: We’ve just learned one strategy for brainstorming ideas for historical fiction. We learned that we can think about time periods in history that we have studied. We can use what we know about these time periods to help us focus on historical settings in which we could develop a plot and characters. Remember to use this strategy as you develop ideas for your independent writing.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

To illustrate the concept of history, show students pictures of different historical events using class social studies texts. Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture about a time in history they would like to write a story about. Provide them with key words or labels that come from the ideas they share. Help them use the words to form simple sentences as they brainstorm.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their idea for a personal narrative. For example:

An interesting time in history is ______. During this time ______. I could write about ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: historical fiction/la ficción histórica; past/el pasado.
Evaluate Your Ideas to Narrow the Focus

Explain the Process

Say: When we brainstorm, we list many ideas that we could write about. Before we actually write, however, we need to narrow our focus. We need to select one idea. And that can be harder than it sounds. Sometimes we like all of our ideas! So what can we do? One way to narrow our focus is to ask ourselves some questions about our ideas and rate our responses to those questions based on a scale of one to three. One is the lowest rating and three is the highest rating. Then we can decide whether or not we still want to consider the idea. I’m going to show you how I evaluate my historical fiction ideas by rating responses to three questions.

Model Evaluating Ideas to Narrow Your Focus

Display a Historical Fiction Ideas Evaluation Rubric like the one below on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read aloud the three evaluation questions. Use the sample historical fiction ideas on the rubric or list ideas of your own with which to model.

Sample Think Aloud

Read aloud the first evaluation question. Say: Well, I definitely like this idea. Otherwise I wouldn’t have included it on my list, but to what degree do I like the idea? Studying this part of American history was so interesting—living in a log cabin in the wilderness with wild animals all around, no grocery store or doctor, not seeing another family for months, or even longer. And what must it have been like to be a teenager during this time? I think I’ll rate this idea a 3; I am very certain I like it. Write a 3 on the chart in the correct box.

Read aloud the second evaluation question. Say: When I write my historical fiction story, I will include many details. I’ll describe the setting and characters. One of my favorite movies is The Last of the Mohicans. The setting for the movie is the same as this idea. The North American landscape during this time period was beautiful. There were lots of untouched forests and rivers. People lived in clearings between forests or in valleys. Wild animals lived all around. I can definitely make the setting interesting. And my characters…well, they would definitely be hardy folk. Just think of the grit and determination they must have had to forge a new life for themselves in the wilderness. I could choose a person living by himself, or I could include an entire family. Either way, I think I can develop some interesting characters. I’ll also rate this question a 3; I am very certain I could develop interesting characters and an interesting setting acceptable. Write a 3 on the chart in the correct box.

Read aloud the third evaluation question. Say: Now what about the actual problem and solution in the story? I know that people in the New World encountered many problems. They faced disease, famine, infant deaths. Life was very difficult, and there were mad sad events. But I’m sure that through
all their hardships, they had happy times, too. It’s just human nature to want to be happy. For this idea, I would choose a specific struggle but also include how my characters found joy through their struggle. I think I could do this, but I know it would be a challenge. I think I’ll rate this question a 2. I am confident I could do this, but I wouldn’t say I’m very confident. Write a 2 on the chart in the correct box.

**Say:** Now that I’ve rated each question for this story, I’ll total my numbers. (Total the numbers and write an 8 in the correct box.) 8. Wow! That’s high. I must really like this idea.

Explain that as students evaluate ideas, they might end up with two or more ideas with the same score. If this happens, use the following questions to help students choose between the two ideas.

- Which idea would you like to research more?
- Which idea would you choose to read about?

### Historical Fiction Ideas Evaluation Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Fiction Ideas</th>
<th>Like this idea?</th>
<th>Can develop interesting characters and setting?</th>
<th>Can develop an interesting problem and solution?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First year in the New World</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Revolution—fighting with the patriots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaissance Italy—working with Galileo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Historical Fiction Ideas Evaluation Rubric**

### Practice Narrowing the Focus

Distribute copies of the Ideas Evaluation Rubric (BLM 2) to students. Invite students to work with a partner to apply the evaluation questions to one idea they have brainstormed for a historical fiction story. 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 their ideas and how they answered the questions. Ask students to discuss how the process worked.

### Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing

**Say:** Having many ideas is wonderful, but we have to narrow our focus. We just learned one strategy for narrowing the focus—using questions on a rubric to evaluate our ideas. You can use this same evaluation rubric when you are deciding which of your historical fiction ideas to write about.

Make BLM 2 available to students who are ready to select their historical fiction topic during independent writing time.
USING YOUR RESEARCH TO ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS ON A HISTORICAL FICTION STORY MAP

**Explain the Process**

**Say:** Ok, you’ve brainstormed, narrowed your focus, and gathered lots of useful information during your research. What next? (Allow responses.)

Before you draft, you need to use your research to organize your ideas. One way to organize ideas for historical fiction is to use a story map so you have a kind of road map as you write. Today I will show you how to use research information to organize your ideas on a story map.

**Model Organizing Ideas**

Display a Historical Fiction Story Map like the one below on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

**Sample Think-Alouds**

Backdrop Event(s). **Say:** My research told me that in the early 1600s, people came to America for many different reasons. One reason was to have a second chance at a new life. There were Native American tribes living in villages in what is now New England, but there were no white people there when the ships landed.

Location/Year. **Say:** I also learned that they arrived in spring or early summer so they would have time to prepare for winter. I’ll have my story take place in a wooded area in the winter of 1625, after homes have been built.

Characters. **Say:** I’ll have my story be about a family of four. There will be two boys, ages 9 and 12. The father is strong, quiet, and very determined to make this new life work for his family. My research told me that many people came thinking they could conquer the land. I’ll use this information with the father. I’ll say that he knows a lot, but not everything, about living off the land and doesn’t accept his limitations. That should make for some good plot twists. The mother is a sweet-tempered woman who takes good care of her family.

Problem. **Say:** My research told me that pride was a problem faced by many early colonists. They wanted to prove that they did not need help. Pride will be one of the father’s character traits, and this pride places his family in danger. My research told me that many people came thinking they could conquer the land. I’ll use this information with the father. I’ll say that he knows a lot, but not everything, about living off the land and doesn’t accept his limitations. That should make for some good plot twists.

The mother is a sweet-tempered woman who takes good care of her family.

Preparation Tip

This mini-lesson models organizing thoughts and ideas for a historical fiction based on answers to research questions developed during Research Mini-Lesson 1. If you have not already taught this lesson, you may wish to do so. Using a familiar context and vocabulary will support struggling writers and ELs.
Event 4. Say: I learned that early colonists often died during blizzards because they could not find their way home. I’ll weave that fact into my next event. So Father is gone for several hours. Mother has no idea where he is and begins to worry. She knows the dangers of being caught in a blizzard.

**Solution. Say:** How am I going to solve this problem? I think I should build on Father’s pride issue. I’m going to have Father return home…but in an unusual way. A Wampanoag Indian finds Father in the woods almost frozen to death and brings him home. Father realizes he can’t do everything by himself. I’ll end this story with Father deciding to move closer to the colony.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backdrop Event</th>
<th>People came to America for a second chance at a new life; there were no other white people; there were Native American tribes who didn’t bother the colonists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>wooded area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>winter of 1625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Characters     | 1. Father: strong; quiet; determined to make this new life work; knows a lot about living off the land, but not everything; doesn’t want to admit limitations  
2. Mother: sweet-tempered; takes good care of her family  
3. two boys: 12 years old and 9 years old |
| Problem        | Pride; father wants to prove he doesn’t need help; builds home a few miles away from the other colonists; family gets caught in a blizzard |
| Events         | 1. Father tells his wife they are trapped by the blizzard.  
2. Mother realizes their food supply is very low. Do they have enough to last?  
3. They finish their food on second day of blizzard.  
4. Father decides he must go hunting.  
5. Father is gone for several hours; Mother is worried, knowing the dangers of being caught in a blizzard. |
| Solution       | A Wampanoag Indian finds Father in the woods almost frozen to death and brings him home. Father admits his pride and moves his family to the colony. |

Sample Historical Fiction Story Map (BLM 3)

**Practice Organizing Ideas**

Invite students to use information learned during research to organize their ideas for a historical fiction story using BLM 3. 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 ideas they organized. Discuss how writers use research information to organize ideas.

**Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing**

**Say:** We just learned that after we research our historical fiction stories, we need to organize our research. We are not ready to write until we think through how our story will unfold. How will we introduce the problem? What series of events will develop the problem? And how will we solve the problem? Remember to organize your ideas before you start writing your story.

Make BLMs 3 and 4 available to students who are ready to organize ideas for their own historical fiction story during independent writing time.
GATHERING SENSORY DETAILS ABOUT A HISTORICAL SETTING

Explain Gathering Sensory Details About a Historical Setting

Say: When I write, I need to know about the time and place I’m writing about. I need to see what my characters see, hear the sounds they hear, smell the odors and fragrances they smell, touch things they touch, and taste the foods they eat. In a realistic story, I don’t have to work that hard to do this. I know a lot about the world around me. I’m familiar with the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of my world. But what if I am writing about characters that lived 400 years ago? How do I get into their world? How do I make sure my story is believable? I have to do a lot of research to create sensory images. Today we’re going to practice doing that together.

Model Gathering Sensory Details About a Historical Setting

Display a Sensory Details chart like the one below on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Also display an image of a colonial New England farm. (If you have an interactive whiteboard with Internet access, you may wish to take students to this photo of early colonial houses at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/history/scenery.html. As you talk about the sensory details, model recording them on the chart.

Sample Think Aloud

Say: I want my story to take place in colonial New England. It’s the early 1600s, and my characters have just arrived. I need to form a mental picture of how my characters live, so I took some books out of the library. I also found a map of the thirteen original colonies, and I went on the Internet to find images of life in colonial New England. In the early 1600s, the colonies are not well formed. Colonists were mostly living in small cabins; they didn’t have big farms yet. Since there were no photographs in colonial times, I looked for paintings and other images. Here’s one image I found. It’s a photo of colonial houses from that time period. As I looked at this and other images, I started to form ideas about my characters. I decided they will live near the wilderness and a body of water. They have cleared the land around their little cabin. They have a few animals—a horse, maybe a cow to give them milk, and maybe a few chickens, too. They don’t have much! They are isolated from other families. It’s very lonely. They can hear wolves howling at night. At night, it is black except for the moon and the stars. They can also hear birds, crickets, and frogs. They don’t have much to eat. Sometimes they have milk. They have cool water from a lake. They might find some berries, and they probably eat fish and wild birds. I bet there are many mosquitoes in their little cabin. The mosquitoes probably buzz around my characters ears at night and bite them. I’m going to write all of these details onto my sensory description chart. These details will help me describe my setting and characters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Outside Details</th>
<th>Inside Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>• wilderness</td>
<td>• lake or other body of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• isolated</td>
<td>• isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• very dark at night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>• farm animal sounds</td>
<td>• wild animals in the forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• wild animals in the forest</td>
<td>• birds, crickets, frogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• mosquitoes buzzing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>• animal smells</td>
<td>• plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch</td>
<td>• mosquitoes biting you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>• cool water</td>
<td>• milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• milk</td>
<td>• berries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• berries</td>
<td>• birds, like wild turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Sensory Details Chart

Practice Gathering Sensory Details About a Historical Setting

Distribute copies of BLM 5. Display images of the interior of an early colonial house. (If you have an interactive whiteboard with Internet access, you may wish to take students photograph at: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/history/governor.html.) Ask students to imagine they are going to write about characters who live in a home like this. They should come up with sensory details about what their characters might see, hear, smell, touch, and taste inside such a home.

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 ideas they generated in their small groups. Add details to the right column of your sensory details chart. Ask students to discuss how they can apply this same strategy to their independent research.

Connect and Transfer to Independent Writing

Say: Sensory detail makes our settings and characters come alive. Today we learned that in order to write convincingly about a historical context, we need a lot of research. We need to absorb the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of a place in time. We need to feel what our characters felt. If we are writing about a colonist, we need to put ourselves into a colony. If we are writing about a pioneer living in a log cabin, we need to go inside a log cabin. Since we can’t go back in time, we do research to find out as much as we can.

Make BLM 5 available to students who are ready to research their historical fiction setting during independent writing time.
# Features of Historical Fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Fiction Features</th>
<th>Examples from the Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Historical Fiction Ideas Evaluation Rubric

**Scale:**
1. 3—Very certain
2. 2—Certain
3. 1—Somewhat certain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Fiction Ideas</th>
<th>How certain am I that I like this idea?</th>
<th>How certain am I that I can develop interesting characters and setting?</th>
<th>How certain am I that I can develop an interesting problem and solution?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Historical Fiction Story Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backdrop Event:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Main Character Development Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Character:</th>
<th>Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>At the Beginning of the Story</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the Middle of the Story</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At the End of the Story</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Sensory Details Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td></td>
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</table>