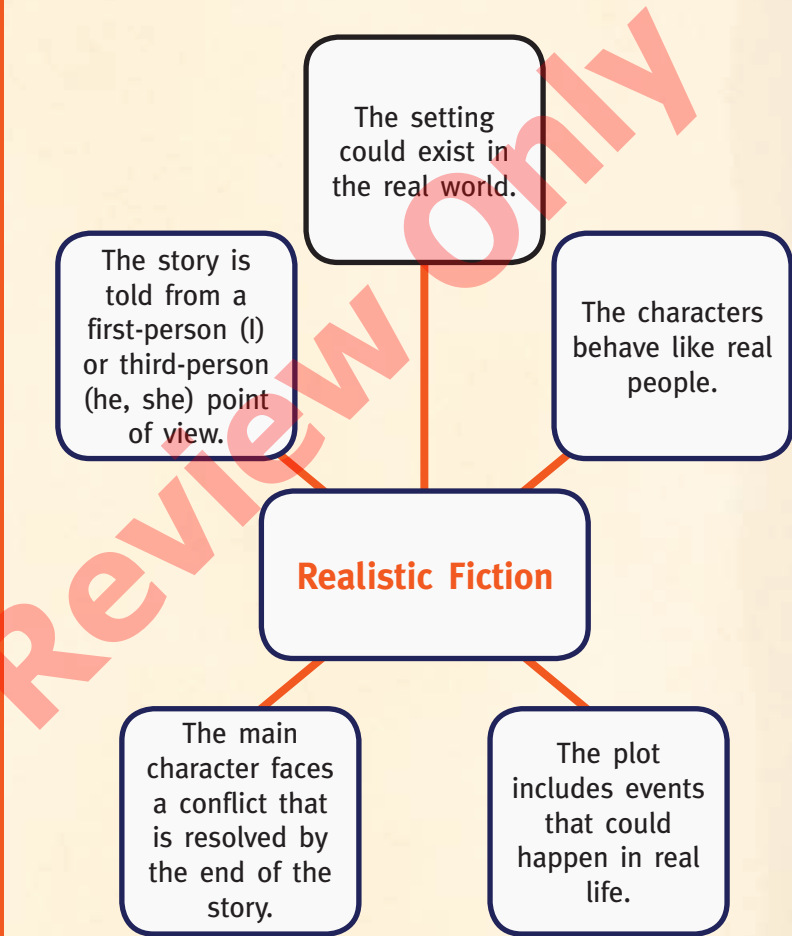


I WAS THERE



Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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The New Kids

“Hey, heads up!” Eric tossed a fastball to Tim. They hurried inside East Lake Elementary School just as the bell rang.

“Got it!” Tim held up the baseball in one hand.

On the way to Mr. Campbell’s classroom, they walked past a group of students they had never seen.

“After we see the cafeteria, gym, and lockers, I’ll take you to your classes,” the principal, Mr. Sung, said. “Come with me.”

“Wow, they really did bring those new kids here,” Eric said.

“Who are they?” Tim asked.

“Kids from the school over on Edgewood,” Eric said. He tossed the ball to Tim.

“Oh yeah,” Tim said. “I heard our neighbor say the school was getting too crowded. Did you notice that kid in the baseball shirt? I wonder if he wants to be on our team.”

“Why would we want him?” Eric said.

Tim ignored Eric’s question as they entered Mr. Campbell’s class.



Mr. Campbell was just starting their social studies lesson when Mr. Sung entered. A girl with eyeglasses and the boy in the baseball shirt followed him.

“Class, we are joined by two new students, Valeria Lopez and Will Gardner. Please make them feel welcome,” Mr. Campbell said.

Mr. Campbell nodded at his new students and then wrote three words on the board:

I Was There.

“Now have you ever wished that you could meet someone who made history?” he asked. “I mean someone from long ago who made a big difference in everyone’s lives.”



“Greg,” he said, pointing to a boy who raised his hand.

“I wish I could meet whoever invented basketball,” Greg said, smiling.

Everyone laughed.

“I’d like to meet and thank Abraham Lincoln,” said Ethan. “When he was president, he signed the Emancipation Proclamation and helped free many people who were enslaved. And that’s huge.”

Mr. Campbell agreed. “I’d like to meet him, too, Ethan,” he said.

“Now you may be wondering why I am asking this,” Mr. Campbell continued.



“Not another big project,” Eric said. “Please, Mr. Campbell. Baseball is starting.”

Mr. Campbell pretended he didn’t hear Eric. “Well, at the end of the month, our class will be performing at an assembly called ‘I Was There.’”

Several students groaned.

“You will choose a person you admire from history, and you’ll research his or her life. For the assembly, you’ll deliver a one-minute speech in that person’s voice,” he said.

“What do you mean by ‘that person’s voice’?” Tim asked.

“Well, you might give a speech your subject gave,” said Mr. Campbell. “Or you might act the part of that person and say something that person might have said. You might carry something, a prop, that shows your subject’s interests. You might even wear the kind of outfit that person would have worn.”

Some of the students cheered, others sighed.

As the class was leaving for lunch, Mr. Campbell pulled Eric aside. “Eric, is there something going on you want to talk about? You don’t seem too excited about the new project.”

Eric looked down. “Sorry Mr. Campbell. It’s just that ... baseball is important to me.”

"I understand, Eric. It's not good to judge too quickly, though. You just might like the project."

During lunch, Tim, Eric, and their friends sat at their regular table. The group exchanged lunches, talked, and told jokes, as they did every day. Tim glanced up as Will, the new boy, walked by the table.

"That's right, folks. Nothing to see here, move on," Eric said.

"That was kind of mean," said Emily. "We could have made room for him."

"Well, do we want new people at our table?" asked Eric.

Tim looked sideways at him.



After school, Ginny said, “Mae Jemison was the first black woman to travel in space, you know.” She spun around in circles. “That’s who I’m going to be for the assembly.”

Tim, Eric, and their other classmates stopped at the bus stop.

“I want to be a suffragette,” said Brianna. “My great-great-aunt was one. She carried a sign and marched in a parade to help women get the right to vote.”

“I’m going to be Lincoln,” said Ethan.



“Yeah, you’re skinny enough,” Eric sneered.

Ethan looked down at his sneakers. He tried to pretend that he wasn’t bothered by Eric making fun of him, but Tim could see that he was.

Eric finished a granola bar and crumpled the wrapper just as Will passed by.

“Hey, newbie!” Eric shouted. “Since you probably won’t make our baseball team, don’t worry, you can go dressed as the school mascot!”

Tim tried to shush Eric. “What’s with you? Stop being so hard on him. Come on.”

