

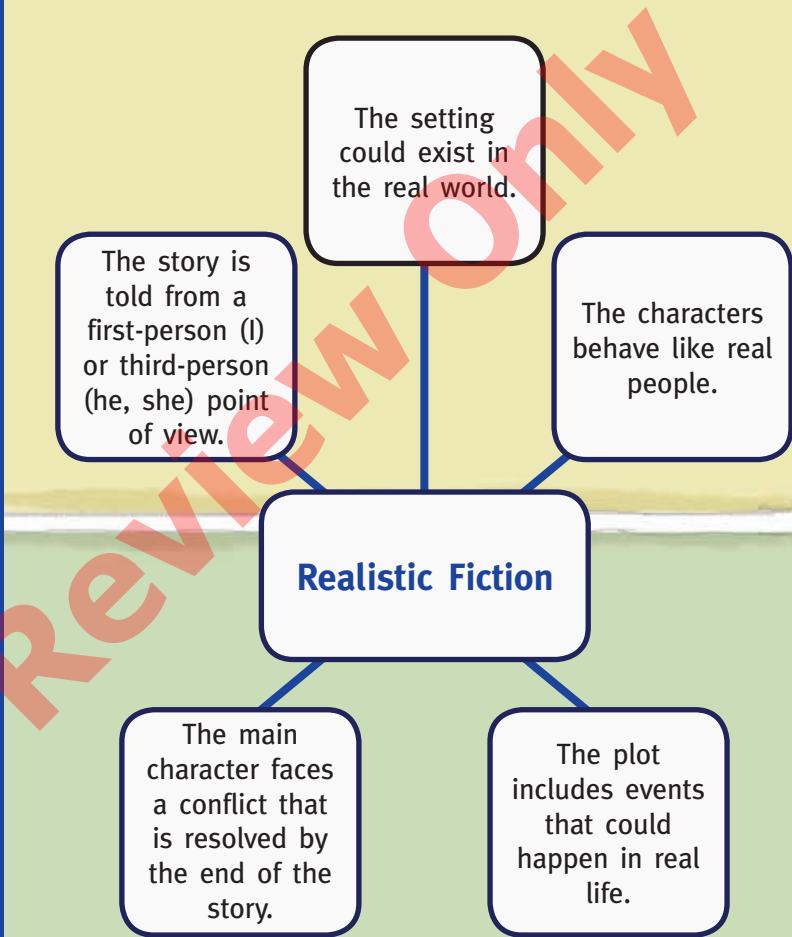
Elliot's Pen Pal

by Katia Novet Saint-Lot • illustrated by Andy Rowland



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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Pen Pals

Elliot hid behind his hair at dinner. His mom started hassling him.

“You need a haircut. We can’t see your face,” she said.

Elliot scowled and his dad changed the subject. “So how were soccer tryouts?”

“Coach made me goalie,” Elliot grumbled. “I wanted to be a striker.” He hung his head even more.

“So nothing interesting happened at school today?” asked Mom.

Elliot shrugged. “I have a new e-mail pen pal from Haiti.”

“Really? That is interesting!” his parents said together.

“Yeah, but you know I don’t like writing.”



The next day in class, Miss Fran talked more about the Digital Pen Pal Project.

Elliot raised his hand. “I don’t know what to write,” he complained.

“Start by introducing yourself,” Miss Fran said. “Ask questions. Get to know each other.”

Everyone else pecked away at the keyboards. Elliot sighed and wrote the first things that crossed his mind.



To: Alexis <alexis@yourmail.com>

Dear Alexis, I'm 8 years old. I live in New York. I don't like to write. Do you? I love soccer but the coach made me goalie. Who wants to be goalie?

Elliot

Send

Discard







At the end of the day, the class checked their e-mails. Elliot had a reply.



Reply | ▾

Dear Elliot, I'm 8, too. I don't like to write either. I love soccer but we call it football. I'm a goalie too. Why don't you like it? My Uncle Toto lives in New York—in Brooklyn.

Alexis

P.S. Do you like riddles? In Haiti, we say *Tim tim* before telling one. If you want to play, you reply *bwa sèch*. If you don't know the answer and you give up, you reply *bwa sèch*.

Tim tim?



Just then, the bell rang and everyone flew out the door—except Elliot. Riddles! Now that was interesting! Elliot started typing.



To: Alexis <alexis@yourmail.com>

Dear Alexis,

Here football is a different sport. The ball is pointy at the ends. I don't like being a goalie because goalies can't run. They're stuck in the cage, waiting for the ball. Don't you get bored?

Elliot

P.S. *Bwa sèch!* I love riddles.

Send

Discard



Later that day, Elliot clicked the refresh button over and over. Finally, a message from Alexis popped up!

[Reply](#) ✓

Dear Elliot,

A goalie's job is difficult and important. We must be fearless and have quick reflexes. I like that only goalies can use their hands. I love diving for the penalty shots. It's like flying.

Alexis

P.S. *Tim tim?* Here's a riddle about me. I was born on a day when children dress up.



Elliot wanted to answer, but he had to get to soccer practice. He logged out and dashed off to practice.

Be quick. Be fearless. Alexis's words kept circling in his mind as he guarded the net. When a striker took a shot at the goal, Elliot dived for it. But not fast enough.

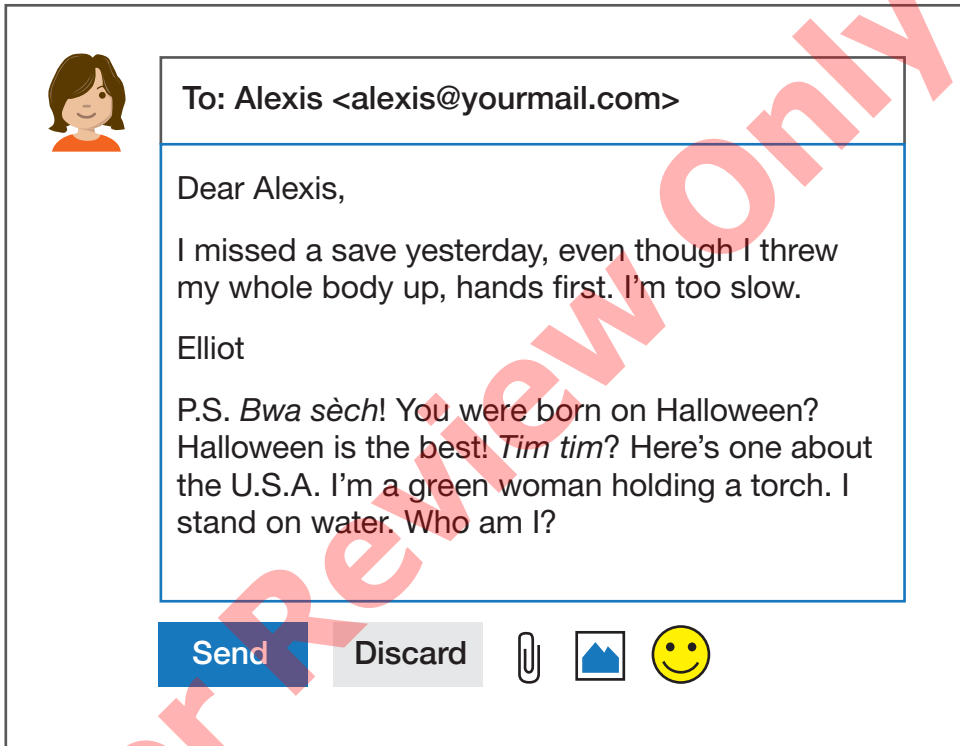
“Goal!” called Coach. “Elliot, keep your eyes on the ball and move faster, okay?”

Elliot's head sunk low.



Tiger Head

The next morning, Elliot raced to a computer before anyone else.



By recess, Alexis had not replied yet. Elliot asked to stay inside. But Miss Fran smiled and said, “Go get some fresh air.”