

Name _____

Genre Focus: Realistic Fiction

Writing — including novels, short stories, plays, articles, and more — can be divided into two broad categories: fiction and nonfiction. **Nonfiction** writing, such as a newspaper article, a biography, or an informational guide, presents facts and information to the reader. The author's main purpose is to **inform**. **Fiction**, on the other hand, is imaginary. Some or all of the events, places, and characters can be invented. However, not all events, places, or characters must be made-up. When an author writes a fictional piece, his/her main purpose is often to **entertain**.

Literary works of fiction can be broken into smaller categories called *genres*. Each genre of literature has its own set of characteristics. *Realistic fiction* combines characters and settings that are true to life with events that could actually happen. In many realistic fiction stories the events, settings, and characters are made up, but sometimes one or more may be based on real events, places, or people. is considered to be realistic fiction. Some examples of realistic fiction include *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick, *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio, *Frindle* by Andrew Clements, *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo, and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* by Beverly Cleary. In all of these stories, the characters, settings, and events are from the author's imagination, but could happen in real life.

In a realistic fiction story, the characters face problems that could happen in real life. The solutions to those problems must also be solutions that could happen in real life. If a character in a story forgets to take his permission slip to school and the solution is that he call his alien friend to bring it to him, then the story is not an example of realistic fiction. Part of what makes realistic fiction exciting and fun to read is that the characters deal with problems that you may face in your life. Just like you, the characters must come up with solutions that are plausible and could be solutions that apply to your life. Realistic fiction can be funny, as in the book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney, or tragic, as in the book *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Patterson. Characters in a realistic fiction story deal with problems that are appropriate to their age. Realistic fiction can deal with very heavy topics such as death, abuse, or other tragedies. Whatever the topic, characters in a realistic fiction novel deal with the problems that arise in a way that reflects their age and is appropriate to the setting.

When good readers read realistic fiction, they try to imagine how it would feel to be in the character's place. A good reader imagines what it would be like to deal with the problems that the characters in the story face. They ask themselves, "How would I react?" Would I react like the character or differently? Is the character someone I would want as a friend? Why? There are many ways for a good reader to imagine him/herself in the story and make connections. Reading realistic fiction gives the reader a chance to imagine what it is like to deal with problems he/she may not have faced, or to read how a character dealt with a similar problem that he/she had faced.

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1. Compare and contrast the characteristics and purposes of fiction and nonfiction.

2. Define realistic fiction.

3. Give an example of a book or short story you have read that is realistic fiction. Justify your answer using details from the story.

4. Read the following descriptions and decide if the situation fits best into the genre realistic fiction or if it is not realistic fiction. On the line provided, write an R if it is realistic fiction and an N if it is *not* realistic fiction.

_____ A. Jasmine is new to school and wants to fit in. Before the first day she casts a spell that makes her popular.

_____ B. Darian is being bullied by his next-door neighbor and hatches a plan with his best friend to get the bully back by gluing his shoes onto his feet.

_____ C. Miles wants to be a ballet dancer when he grows up. His mom worries that he'll be teased by the other kids at school so she won't let him take dance lessons.

_____ D. It is the year 3047. Kevin's family has just moved to the moon. Kevin likes having a robot to clean the house and being able to ask the kitchen wall to make him anything he wants to eat, but he misses his friends from his old planet.

_____ E. Roger is no good at math. He tries really hard, but just can't get it. To help him, the teacher asks the best math student in the class to help him. The trouble is that the two boys are rivals on the soccer field. They have to learn to work together to help each other do better at math and soccer.

5. Create two questions, as in the last paragraph of the article, that you might ask yourself as you read a piece of realistic fiction. These should be original questions that you create.