

Problem/Solution
Explicit Comprehension Lesson
Second Grade
Dole, 2004

Objectives:

- 1) Students will identify the problem of a story.
- 2) Students will identify the solution to the problem.
- 3) Students will understand that most narratives have a problem and a solution.

Introduction: Today we are going to learn something to help you think about stories that you read. Most stories that you read will have a **problem** (point to the board) and a **solution** (point to the board).

When you read a story, you soon find out that the character in the story has a **problem**. Something has happened that needs to be fixed. So, the character has a **problem**, and at the end of the story the problem is fixed, so there is a **solution** to the problem.

Why are we learning about **problems** and **solutions**? Finding the problem and the solution in a story can help you be a better reader. Good readers know the problem and the solution to a story. They know that the characters in the story have a problem. Trying to figure out what the problem is and what the character does to solve the problem will help you understand and remember a story better.

Modeling/Explanation: First let me tell you about what a **problem** is and what a **solution** is. [Teacher drops her pencil on the floor.] Oh, what just happened? Yes, I dropped my pencil on the floor. Now, I have a problem is I want to use my pencil. What is my problem? Yes, my pencil is on the floor, or, I dropped my pencil.

What is the solution to my problem? Yes, I pick it up.

So, my **problem** is my pencil dropped on the floor. My **solution** is I pick it back up.

A problem is something that happens that you need to fix. The solution is what you need to do to fix the problem.

Now, listen to this story and then, listen while I tell you the **problem** of this story.

Tomas wanted to ride his bike. He went outside his house to get on his bike. But when he got outside and looked at it, he saw that *he had a flat tire*. Tomas knew that he couldn't ride his bike with a flat tire.

So, Tomas wanted to ride his bike. But he couldn't ride his bike. Why? What is Tomas's problem? **His problem is that he has a flat tire.**

Now listen while I read the rest of the story. Then listen while I tell you the solution to Tomas's problem of his flat tire.

So Tomas found a tire pump in his garage. *He pumped up the tire until it was full of air.* Then, he rode off on his bike.

So, Tomas had a problem. He had a flat tire. How did Tomas fix his problem? What did he do to find a solution to his problem? **His solution is how he fixes his problem. He fixes his problem by pumping up his flat tire. So his solution is that he pumped up the tire until it was full of air.**

So, Tomas's **problem** was that he had a flat tire.

So, the **solution** to Tomas's problem was that he pumped up his flat tire until it was full of air.

Now, remember that trying to find the character's problem and solution will help you understand and remember a story better. So, it is a good thing for you to do as a reader.

Guided Practice: Now, we are going to read a story called, "*Prudy's Problem and How She Solved It*" (Armstrong-Ellis, 2002). This is a story about a young girl about your age called Prudy. Prudy has a problem and the story is about what Prudy's problem is and how she solves it.

I am going to hand out cards to you. On one side, the card has a "?" and says, "problem" on the other side the card has a light bulb and says "solution." When you think you know the question mark or the problem, hold up your card that says problem. When you think you know the light bulb or solution, hold up your card that says solution. Okay, are you ready? I'll help you. And, you can help each other as well.

As I read this story, I want you to listen very carefully. Are you ready? Hold up your cards when you think you know what Prudy's problem is.

(Problem is too much stuff—write on board).

Okay, now what do you think is going to be the solution to Prudy's problem? What could she do to solve her problem of too much stuff?

[Read rest of story. Raise cards at solution to problem—build museum. Write on board. Discuss solution and alternatives that might be better than Prudy's solution].

Paired Practice: Provide students with blank sheets of paper that are folded in half landscape-wise and have labeled on them “problem” on the left-hand side and “solution” on the right-hand side. On the left hand side, pairs draw picture of and write a sentence about Prudy’s problem. On the right hand side, pairs draw a picture of and write a sentence about an alternative solution to Prudy’s problem different from the one in the book.

Independent Practice: Provide students with same piece of paper with problem and solution labeled on left and right side of paper respectively. This time, students individually work on their own papers. Students draw and write about a problem they themselves have had. Then, on the right side of the paper, students draw and write about their own solution to their problem.

NOTES: This is the beginning of a unit on problem/solution in stories. Discuss with students that **not** every single **book** they read will have a problem and a solution. But every **story** they read will have a problem and a solution.

Read fairy tales and discuss problems and solutions. Tell students to look for characters in a story. Often times, characters will have problems and solutions. As they listen to stories that are read to them by their parents and teachers, see if they can find the problem and solutions.

Note to students that sometimes there is more than one problem. But they need to listen to the whole story because usually there is a main problem and a main solution to a story. Read and discuss the Three Billy Goats Gruff, the Three Little Pigs, Cinderella, etc.

Or, another approach is to show over time that sometimes stories have a main problem and then several attempts to solve the problem, with one final solution at the end. This is true for many stories and fairy tales. Sometimes it is hard for children to distinguish attempted solutions from the real solutions. This is gradually done over time.