

The Problem Solution Game

Stories need conflict, and *The Pencil* by Allan Ahlberg wonderfully illustrates the push-pull of conflict and resolution. What are the conflicts (problems) in this story? What are the resolutions (solutions)? Talk about them with your student. Examples are listed for you on the chart.

Problem

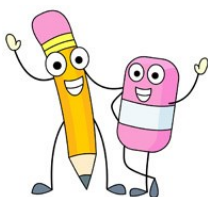
Banjo, Bruce, and Mildred need food.

The food is black and white. They don't want to eat black and white food.

Everyone is complaining about things they don't like.

The eraser rubbed out all kinds of things—too many things!

The eraser erased the cage.



Solution

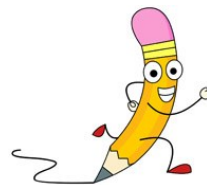
The pencil drew food.

The pencil drew a paintbrush.

The pencil drew an eraser.

The pencil drew a cage.

The pencil drew another eraser; the erasers rubbed each other out.



If your student needs more practice, read another story. Analyze the story. What are the problems? What are the solutions?

Time to Play

Take turns playing a simple game. Ask your student to imagine a problem (big, small, crazy, or silly!). The student describes the problem. Then it is your turn: you have to answer with a solution. After your solution, it is your turn to create a problem for your student, and your student needs to determine the solution. Even though you aren't pushing pencils, this is fantastic problem solving practice for story writing.