

Voice, Vision, and View

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Background

Finally I am not afraid to teach writing. During the summer of 2006 I attended a writing workshop for two weeks that was taught by a professor from Gardner-Webb and a professor from UNCC. My participation at that workshop taught me the importance of writing with my students. They modeled for me how to facilitate a mini lesson, confer with students, and celebrate completed pieces. I learned that whatever I assign should be so important that I should be doing it with my students. Before that, I would give an assignment, and I would grade other papers, respond to emails, or prepare for the next lesson. Prior to this workshop, I always felt that I needed a mountain of knowledge before I introduced a new concept to my students. They helped me realize that I should be prepared but I do not have to know everything. As a result, I was apprehensive about teaching writing because I did not feel confident in my personal writing skills. They helped me realize that it was ok to be a learner. It was ok to be a writer alongside my students. Now I do not have as much fear as I used to. Now it is funny I will tell my students I am going to be absent because I am going to learn how to be a better writing teacher. I will remind them about a particular activity we did and tell them I am going to another workshop like that to learn additional activities that we can do. It gives me an opportunity to include my students in what I am learning. I want them to see me as a learner. I want them to see me excited about learning something new. I want them to model for them that being a learner is a lifelong job.

Now my students are encouraged and motivated to practice writing. We are writers. They do not moan, groan, or throw books when it is time for writing. When I say it is time for writing into the day my students willingly get out their daybooks to write. It is an enlightening experience to see students write independently on a topic of their choosing. When visitors or other teachers enter my classroom they are amazed when they see the students write. When I say “You have one minute to bring your thoughts to a close,” the students raise their hands and ask for another minute or two to continue. It makes me feel good that their creative juices are flowing and they do not want to stop. Now that we are writers, I want to enhance and extend our craft to include more diverse in depth rigorous writing.

Rationale

Based on my participation in the “Writing for Your Life” seminar, I want to motivate and encourage my students about the limitless possibilities for their life. Using novels I want

my students to be able to make connections to the characters. Making connections will hopefully enlighten them on the opportunities their future holds. I realize that some connections may have a devastating effect if students expose something personal. However, I always create a safe, trusting classroom environment where we all feel free to share our experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The goal for my curriculum unit will be for my students to read literature and respond in a variety of ways to the literature.

I teach in Charlotte, NC the largest county in the state and the twenty-fifth largest school district in the United States. My school district has one hundred seventy-six schools. I teach in one of the two separate schools for students with exceptional needs. My school focuses primarily on children with behavioral and emotional disabilities in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. Additionally, the entire school population is ensured a free appropriate public education through an annual review of individualized education plans and three year reevaluation assessments. Although the primary disabilities are behavioral and emotional, some children who have Autism, Other Health Impairments and Intellectual Disabilities are also served.

As I approach the tenth year of my career teaching children with behavioral and emotional disabilities I am ready for something new. I am empowered by the opportunity to immerse my students into rich literature that could possibly alter their life. It is a little ambitious for me to think that my selection of novels could somehow change a teenager's perspective on life. However, it is neglect for me to ignore the opportunity. Thanks to No Child Left Behind I was forced to take the Praxis in a content area although I was already certified in special education. While I was preparing for the Praxis in Middle School Language Arts I read so many novels that I had never known existed. At that point was when I realized that I had been failing my students. I have never been the teacher to adhere strictly to the literature book. However, I have never been the teacher who feels comfortable without it.

For the past three years I have moved from elementary school to middle school with several of my students. So attending workshops, seminars and reading independently have been the only way to enhance my craft and thus my curiosity in different books because although the traditional authors are irreplaceable, I also want to introduce my students and myself to who's hot now. So when it comes time to transition to the traditional author's text they will embrace it due to their new found respect for literature.

Definition of Literacy

The idea of literacy or what it means to be literate continues to evolve. If you could mark an x on a deed you were considered literate. The only prerequisite to register to vote was the ability to sign your name. In mid-nineteenth-century England, literacy was a tool for gaining better working conditions and political power. During slavery, literacy was used as a way to control African Americans by punishing them if they were caught

learning to read or write.

In 2002, the National Endowment for the Arts has reported an increase in reading in young adults between the ages of 18 to 24. One in seven people between that same age range are either unable to read or can only read simple messages according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy. Even though the U.S. has almost identical groups of readers and non readers the survey yielded an increase of 20% Hispanic, 15% African American and 8% Whites reading literature. Despite the growing evolution of literacy in the United States some of my students still do not realize the importance of the concept of literacy and what it means to be literate.

To be literate means you can read and write; speak, and listen; think critically, act creatively and collaboratively; manage, analyze and synthesize a variety of text. Although my students can read, write, speak and listen they are not performing those basic skills on the eighth grade level. Nor do they consistently think critically about the text they have read. Some of my students have short attention spans which makes it difficult to retain and transfer information from one subject to the next within the same school day. Not to mention some of my students are lazy and refuse to push themselves to exert energy for academics. They would rather exhibit externalizing behaviors, which makes it difficult for the students who are trying to be literate or increase their literacy skills. They fail to realize that reading is an indication of what society deems a positive individual. People, who are literate volunteer, attend arts and sports events, do outdoor activities and exercise at higher rates than nonreaders.

Gender Differences

Teaching students with behavioral and emotional disabilities, I normally have a classroom of all boys. However this year I have two girls in my class. Between reading research and daily observations I am learning more and more about the differences between the genders in terms of their literacy practices. According to the Educational Testing Service the gap in writing between eighth grade males and females is six times greater than the differences in math. In 1985, the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement concluded that gender added with home variables were the most powerful predictor of performance on academic tasks. Females outscored males on all writing tasks, both narrative and expository, and the gap is even larger in persuasive writing. The data from writing evaluations may explain why there is a substantial difference in the way boy and girls view reading which has a direct correlation on their scores from the writing test.

Research was compiled to gain insight on the differences in achievement, attitude, choice and response on their respective views on literacy. However, I would like to survey my students to gain insight on how they perceive their literate abilities (Appendix 1). This would be important because I disagree with most of the findings I researched.

My observations indicate that all children are laughing when they read the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. Boys and girls enjoy the science fiction collections of *Twilight*, *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games*. Boys and girls alike in my classroom embellish their reading levels because they don't want to be the one reading what they call the easy books. Additionally I have one student who is reading *Odyssey* by Homer for pleasure. Obviously boys and girls will enjoy reading different things and most boys may not enjoy poetry as much as girls. None of my boys would consider themselves nonreaders. After my students take the survey I will show them their results and the results from the survey in *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys*. At times my students do not realize how essential abstract concepts like literacy are until you prove it to them. It is my desire that showing them this data will motivate them to be the exception. Not just to be the exception but to help them realize that this will be the key for their future whether they are reading a book, writing a book or just journaling. I think it will be an important realization for my students to capture that reading will either open or close doors in their life.

While reading *Boy Writer's* by Ralph Fletcher I hate to admit I am just like some of the teachers he referred to in his book. I am the teacher who tells my boys what they can and cannot write. While I encourage the writings that my girls are doing, I am telling my boys that their particular kind of writing is not appropriate for school. Guns, drugs, war, violence, aggression, and gangs are the topics I normally prohibit my students from writing about. However, what I failed to realize is that although it may not be appropriate for school it is an integral part of their social development. As a result of that conclusion, it is essential that teachers get to know their students. Since I have great relationships with my students and their respective parents and guardians, it enables me to differentiate between reality and fiction of their reading and writing interests. According to Donald Graves teachers need to encourage our students to bring their obsessions into the classroom. Oddly enough the code between genders is so strangely different. Boys are discouraged from being weak and vulnerable, whereas it is permissible from girls. Not to mention the violence in some boys stories are what they are living when they turn on television, play video games, watch the news, go to the movies or play an imaginary game with friends in the back yard. So it is only natural that that is what they write when they are given an assignment.

Not only is the academic data alarming the behavioral data indicates that boys need an outlet that the school is not accommodating. The statistics note boys are four to six times more likely to commit suicide than girls; more than twice as likely to get into physical fights; three times more likely to be suspended from school; four times as likely to be diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, depressed, emotionally isolated or suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder and fifteen more times likely to be perpetrators of violent crimes. Even though the thought of the aforementioned statistics are alarming it unfortunately mirrors the students in my classroom as the reason they are being educated in a public separate school instead of what society calls a regular public school.

Importance of Choice

For my unit, I am trying going to peak my students' interest in reading with the hopes that it will inspire creativity in producing a multi genre project. This year I am committed to ensuring my students enjoy reading because that is the only way they will continue to do it in life is if they have had pleasurable experiences with it as a child. Prior to school starting, I called friends with teenage boys and went to several books stores to get insight on what middle school boys are reading. I was told authors like Jeff Kinney, Jonathan Stroud, Walter Dean Myers, Suzanne Collins, James Patterson, Michael Ledwidge, D.J. MacHale, Eoin Colfer, Mike Lupica and Rick Riordan just to name a few. I want to make sure I choose books that are current high interest topics that their friends in the neighborhood are reading. Often students will question if the instruction they are receiving is identical to lessons in traditional schools. So I am trying to make them aware of what their peers are doing traditional schools. I also want them to see the books they are reading when they go to Walmart, Target, Sam's, Costco or any book store.

Prior to just placing the books on the shelves in the classroom, I have mini book talks about a different books daily to spark their interest, Teri Lesesne calls it Read and Tease. Before I have a book talk I read the book and look for passages that will make my students yearn to read it independently. I feel it is also important for me to read the books on the shelves so I know what my students are reading. Before a student commits to reading a particular book, I need to make sure he or she is mature enough to handle the content if any of a questionable nature. In addition to book talks, I also read aloud to my students. By reading aloud, I want to model fluency, motivate students to read the books, and develop skills in listening and reading comprehension. Research indicates that students who were read aloud to on a consistent basis scored higher on tests of word usage, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Additionally this year, I am making sure that I model literacy for my students. I have an instructional assistant in my class and every time we do a writing activity or start book club we both make sure that we are reading and writing alongside the children. The students also know that it must be an emergency to interrupt either teacher or student while we are reading or writing because it is a daily essential practice. Since it is such an important practice as a class we have committed to thirty minutes daily for book club. I have been impressing upon my students that they must look at playing video games, football and basketball the same way they view writing and reading. It is a skill that only gets better with practice.

In addition to changing the reading practices of myself, I also have to alter the way I facilitate writing. Throughout my independent studies and workshops I have attended I am pleased to report that although I have been making some mistakes I am starting to right the writing wrongs like Kelley Gallagher mentions in *Teaching Adolescent Writers*. I am giving students more time to practice writing. I am modeling writing by showing students how I think through my writing drafts. We are studying other writers using them as mentor text by reading them aloud and self selected reading of the individual students

choosing. However, there are two writing wrongs that I would like to address during this curriculum unit.

I need to do a better job of letting the students write for authentic purposes and for authentic audiences. The authentic purpose for this unit will be studying and writing individual memoirs. Although the audience will be determined when we explore the different activities in the unit making sure students understand the importance of determining audience is essential. Especially since it will determine the kind of language one will use. Now my students are starting to realize that not all writing assignments have to be written in one standard way because your audience is not one standard way. This also goes back to the importance of choice. Giving students a choice on how their written work is published makes the creation process meaningful. Not only should students be able to choose what they read they should also be able to choose how they publish their work. Keeping in mind who your audience is or if your audience is the state writing test your published work will look different from work that is going to the school newspaper or is an apology letter to your little brother. I also need to do a better job of giving meaningful feedback from myself and peers. After attending a writing workshop sponsored by the district, I learned about a Readers Response Journal. The purpose of this journal is for students to respond to what they have read. Since we have started doing this, students look forward to my comments just as much as I look forward to reading their responses.

Memoir

Memoir comes from a French word that means memory. Even though traditional memoirs span the course of an individual's life contemporary memoirs focus on a slice of life history. This slice does not have to start with birth date, time, or place but in the midst of a situation. The writers focus should be to tell as much of the truth that he or she can recall. Depending on the slice of life one focuses on will determine what is relevant. Using various mentor text will give students examples of either a particular part or the entire story.

Reading memoirs helps give you a different perspective that you would not be exposed to. You learn about different places, time periods, and cultures. People also have an opportunity to realize that they are not the only ones who feel particular emotions or endured difficult situations. Reading and writing memoirs will give students an opportunity to travel to other places and live across other times. They will help students understand social and political realities that may be foreign while watching the news. However when we read the stories of human beings making decisions, falling in love, having babies, and hurting, just like we do, it will enable us to make a clearer connection with the people and circumstances.

Daily people grow and gain knowledge, perspectives, and understandings from

situations that inadvertently open new interpretations to similar stories or situations. So how a situation affected an individual at the age of 7 may affect that person differently at the age of 17. Not to mention over time memories fade, shift, and change shape depending on the lens at that time. Memoirs assist people in preserving, recreating and reminding us of what must never be forgotten. That is why sharing memoirs is a powerful sharing experience.

When children and teachers share their personal stories they resonate with others in the classroom. We can build a community of persons who know how life is for one another as human beings, not merely as test scores, reading levels, competitors, freaks. Outside of the classroom doctors and psychiatrists may prescribe journal writing as one therapeutic tool for a patient. One of my girls has a journal that she is supposed to write in when she gets upset. It gives her the opportunity first to destroy the silence about who they are and what has happened in their life and then to try to make meaning for themselves.

However, back in the classroom students should never feel that the writing that is most valued in their classrooms, or that most pleases their teacher is the writing of neglect, grief, or humiliation. The craft of memoir involves writing from the inside out, but that inside can be full of light; it can be funny, inquisitive, sweet or cautious. I want to immerse my students in a wide variety of memoirs so they have a firsthand account of the differences in topics, lengths, purposes and audiences.

I will start teaching this curriculum unit at the end of April. While reading *Writing for Your Life* Katherine Boomer talks about the importance of building a community so all the writers in the classroom are comfortable with sharing. By waiting until the end of the year the students are used to conferencing with one another and they are accustomed to receiving feedback from peers and teachers. During the first two weeks of the unit students will be immersed in a wide variety of memoirs. The read-aloud books that are featured will all be memoirs. Then we will spend another two to four weeks working on activities that help us generate ideas for memoirs we want to explore. During this time we will also examine unique features about memoirs good leads, endings, play on words and figurative language in children's books. Using books as mentor text will give students examples and or suggestions on ways they could revise their drafts. The following week we will work on drafting and revising the pieces we have been exploring and want to publish. Then on the last week we will edit, publish and celebrate our memoirs we have created.

Although for this unit we will primarily use memoirs as mentor text we will also use some autobiographies. For the purpose of this unit I will explain to my students that the difference is an autobiography normally spans a person's entire life whereas a memoir is just a slice of life. When I show students examples of memoirs I want them to see that they are not all traditional novels. Some are short stories turned into children literature

books. Some are poems turned into an entire collection. Some explain a touchy aspect of life that the author feels is necessary to share with the world. Doing this I want to model for my students how a memoir is so vastly different from other genres we have studied throughout the school year.

During the first two weeks when we are studying different mentor text about memoirs, I am going to give students questions to think about as they read over the books. The questions topics will cover identity, voice, relationship, truth, memory, time, structure and purpose (Appendix 2). Using the questions students will be able to uncover what makes that particular text so unique. We will also use the aforementioned question as a starting point to add our own questions to help us learn more about memoirs. It will also be my hope that they will be interested in borrowing some of that uniqueness for their own piece.

In an effort to generate ideas we will explore several different topics to help us think of things we make have forgotten over the years. The writers in my class will be asked to think of people, places and objects that they have special memories of. During this we will dive into why is this person place or object is worth remembering. If for some strange reason students have trouble recalling a memory, I will sit with them and throw out random topics to help get their creative juices flowing. Some of the topics maybe getting students to sit and think about the birth of a sibling, getting a pet, or telling about a time when you needed courage, or were lost, or won or lost a competition. Once topics are generated the writers will have to give details, think about who their audience is and creatively let their voice be heard in words.

Once students have generated ideas and stretched them with vivid captivating details, the rest of the class will help one another conference to make sure the writer is saying is actually what is on paper. Over the years, conferencing continues to be a work in progress for me to facilitate. I no longer tell the students what needs to be changed with a red pen. I will sit and let them read their work to me and ask questions with the hopes that the writer will feel like they have found the missing piece to the puzzle after the conference. So many times it is difficult for me to conference with students because I don't always understand their teenage language. Currently I am trying to encourage students to conference with one another. That way they do not always see me as the audience. Additionally they might be able to help one another creatively explore something that I might overlook.

A conference is a powerful meeting. As the teacher I know what I expect to obtain from the assignment and the student wants his or her voice to be heard but not trampled by the adults. In the past that is where I have made so many mistakes I have been so consumed by changing what the student says to what I think he or she means that I am oblivious to the fact that it is no longer the student's work; it is mine. Now when I conference with students I try to remember that I am a guest in this person's life. So I

should not be rushed to go to lunch or an IEP meeting, I should sit back and let the student tell me his or her story; keeping in mind they are probably just as nervous as I am listening as they are telling me the story. While listening I need to ensure that I am listening to the details about the event but also I need to listen to how the writer felt going through the event. During conferences I can ask students what they thought and felt during the event or memory, what they think or feel about it now years later, how it has shaped or changed them, and how it fits into a pattern in their life.

During some aspect of conferring with students we will also look at the revision process. It is funny how Katherine Bomer talks about revision like it is a second chance. Bomer compares the revision process to changing your hairstyle, friends, school, residence, or beliefs. At times when my students have a misunderstanding with a peer they are worried about returning to the class because they think the peer will not understand or accept the apology. I try to tell my students that we all make mistakes and no one is perfect. Everyone at some point in their life needs a second chance. So that is how I will get students to visualize the revision process as a second chance to retell, relive or revise the memoir they are sharing. During this process we will still be listening carefully to one another to ensure that we hear what the writer is trying to share.

I realize that for me to think a writing unit on memoirs will alter the way a teenager thinks about life is ambitious. However I revised to think that at least one of my students will not have an enlightening moment during this unit like I have had at the workshop I referred to earlier. In conclusion, I want my students to expand themselves and grow individually and collectively as a class because next year when they enter high school they will encounter so many different people and circumstances that will challenge and inspire them to change their vision, voice, and view. I want them to leave my middle school language arts class with a better understanding of a couple of memories they value so they will be better prepared to place themselves within the world of high school versus high school influences placing them where it wants them to be (peer pressure).

Strategies

Turn and Talk

Students will turn and talk to one another about parts of the memoir or particular parts of their writing. Peer feedback is essential for students to be comfortable with one another. Their feedback is imperative for the writing process. Peers have just as much impact on each other's growth. So it is important that they are comfortable receiving peer feedback. Additionally peer feedback gives them the opportunity to learn how to take and use constructive criticism.

Book Club

This strategy is used when I want to challenge students to read independently. Depending on the reading level of the students they will be placed into reading groups. While in the groups they will be given either a novel to read or a basket of books to read to explore a genre or topic that we have been discussing on.

Daybooks

Ralph Fletcher states a daybook is your personal space to write badly. My students use daybooks as their safe space to record thoughts, feelings, highlights, low lights, newly learned concepts, notes from the board, formulation of plans for potential writing pieces, handouts from class etc. the national writing project also uses a daybook in an effort to help student validate their thoughts. So when a student wants me to see or respond to something in the daybook I respond on a post it note or the student makes a draft of the piece for me to see so their daybook is still their safe space.

Dialectic Journal

Using two pages side by side in the student's daybook, the student is instructed to fold two pages to the center so there are four columns to write in horizontally. In the first column the student will take notes on the taught concept. In the second column the student will write question, comments or reactions to the notes they took in the first column. Then in the third column the student will pass their daybook to a buddy who will respond to information in the second column after reading it. Finally the peer will pass the daybook back to the original owner who will then respond to what the peer wrote. This strategy will give students an opportunity to sort through their ideas prior to asking the teacher questions. It will also give the student an opportunity to figure out answers to their questions or make connections to what the peer said and their questions may be answered or it may be an opportunity for further research

Mentor Text

At the beginning of the school year, students are tested to obtain their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD gives each child a range of books that are appropriate for them to read to increase fluency with just the right amount of difficulty to challenge them to learn new words and grow to another range within the ZPD.

Since I have students reading on a variety of different reading levels I try to prepare book baskets for students so they will be comfortable previewing text on their reading level. Sometimes when students who are reading on a low reading level pick up a book they are unable to read. Sometimes they are proud to admit that they are unable to read it. However I have some students who are comfortable reading books that are below their

reading level as well. So preparing book baskets also helps me govern accessibility to appropriate reading level books and still incorporates choice. They will explore, compare and contrast the differences between the memoirs they study. Using these as mentor text as a model when they prepare to write their own.

Reader's Response Journal

Although we use the daybook as a space for us to work through the written work we want to compose, we use the Reader's Response Journal as a place for us to respond to text we have read. It is a small space for students to respond in a variety of ways to questions I pose on the board. Sometimes I ask them to write an answer in a poem, draw a picture or respond in only one sentence. To make the Reader's Response Journal we take 10 sheets of notebook paper place one sheet of colored paper on top and fold staple it in half on the folded crease.

Activities

Day 1- 14: Make connections with memoirs

Students will preview several memoirs in their reading leveled basket to gain insight on what a memoir is. After previewing the memoirs, I want the students to draw conclusions about characteristics of a memoir. A memoir focuses on the relationship between the writer and either a person, place or object. Throughout the text it should explain the significance of the relationship. The memoir should be written in first person point of view. At the conclusion it should leave the reader with an understanding of whom or what the author's relationship is with.

In an effort to get students to understand the purpose of why the author wrote the memoir we will place the memoirs into the following different categories express and reflect, inquire and explore, inform and explain, analyze and interpret, or evaluate and judge. If they place a memoir under "express and reflect", it means that the writer is talking about his own life experiences. If a memoir is placed under "inquire and explore", the writer is trying to work through a question or a problem. If a memoir is under "inform and explain", the writer is trying to explain something. If a memoir is placed under "analyze and interpret", they are trying to explain something difficult. If a memoir is placed under "taking a stand", they are trying to get the reader to see their particular point of view about the topic. If a memoir is placed under "evaluate and judge", the writer is trying to describe a person, place or object.

After the student has found a text to go in the purpose column, students need to make a connection to the text. There are three different ways to connection to the text; text to self, text to text and text to world. If the student makes a connection with the text to self they have something that happened in the text that they can relate to. If they can make a

connection using text to text they have something that they can recall that they have previously read that is similar. If they make a connection to the world they are thinking about something they have learned in social studies or on the news. After looking at various memoirs students will be asked to make connections to any of the memoirs in their reader's response journal.

Purpose	Definition	Text Example	Connection
Express and Reflect			
Inquire and Explore			
Inform and Explain			
Analyze and Interpret			
Evaluate and Judge			

We will answer the question, what is a Memoir? We will dedicate a bulletin board to answering this question. At the end of every activity we will ask ourselves the same question. With the hopes of gaining a better understanding of what a memoir is.

Day 15-16: Appreciate Places

The objective of this lesson is to model what a good writer does to get the reader to visualize what is happening in the story. Prior to reading students will be asked to close their eyes and visualize what is going on in the story. Teacher will read *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant. Now students will be asked to listen to the story for a second time but this time students will be asked to write down words, phrases or sentences that help them visualize what the story is about. Teacher will get students to use a clean sheet in their daybook and setup a Dialectic Journal. Teacher will read *When I was Young in the Mountain* for a second time. After the second reading of the story students will be asked to write questions about what they visualized during the second reading. Then students will exchange daybooks with a peer who will respond to the question in the second column. Finally students will return daybook to owner who will then respond to the comments from the peer.

For a concluding activity I would like the students to free write for a couple minutes about places they could write a memoir about. Students will be asked to think about the following questions to help them free write about places. In an effort to help them free write I will ask them the following questions and give students three minutes in between to respond and prepare to respond to the next question. What are your feelings when you think about this place? When was the first time you went to this place? What's your favorite thing to do in this place? Who else comes to this place? If you could change one thing about this place what would it be? How often do you go there? Does everyone feel the way you do about this place? Is this place the same as it was in the past? What's the most important object in this place?

Once we have had a couple minutes to answer the last question I will ask students to draft one of the following pieces. They can either draw a picture about their special place, or write a summary at the bottom. They can print pictures from the Internet or cut pictures from a magazine to make a collage about their favorite place and attach a summary.

Day 17-18: Appreciate People

Materials- 6 different colors of index cards for each student

The objective of this lesson is to model what a good writer does to get the reader to connect to the text. Teacher will read *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco as an example of a memoir about a person.

On the first card teacher will ask the student to brainstorm about people in their life they could write about and why are they important to them. Students will have four minutes to brainstorm. After the four minutes students will share with a partner. The partners will listen to one another and ask “what appeared on the page that you did not expect?” Students will be asked to pick what surprised or interested them and then free write about it on a card for two or three minutes. When the time is up they will be able to share with a partner and ask one another what they intend to do next. Now on card three, the teacher will ask students to explore an image from Card 1 or 2 and continue writing or make a new start for three minutes. When the time is up students will be asked to share with a partner and ask one another “what is the piece of writing telling you?” Then on Card 5 students will be asked to insert dialogue, words, conversation that was a part of the experience, continue on, or make a new start for 3 minutes. When the time is up and students share with a partner, they will ask each other “what do my readers need to know that I haven’t told them?” Then, with Card 5 they will try to change the point of view, continue on or make a new start for three minutes. When the time is up and it is time to share, they will ask the reader what questions, do you have of me? On Card 6, they will write for three minutes about what they learned from this person, what did this person teach them, why did they value this person, why is this person so meaningful to them? When the time is up, this final card is read to their partners.

Now that students have ideas for a person, I want them to pick one of the following assignments for a person memoir. Either they can write the person a letter describing or explaining why the moment they shared with this person is so special, or they can write a friend a text message explaining why the moment they shared with this person was so special.

Day 19-21: Character Traits

Teacher will read *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox and *Miss Nelson Is Missing* by Harry Allard to get the students to think about how the personality traits of the character help to visualize what happens in the story. While listening to the story students will need to listen to see how the character is described using character traits. Using the character traits you also understand the importance of what the character is going through.

Students will be asked to respond to the following question in their Reader's Response Journal. Using an example of character traits how is the main character described in the story. How did the author use the character traits to help describe the person?

Day 21-23: Appreciate Object

While listening to the *Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Bianco students will be asked to question why the rabbit is so important to the little girl. Teacher will read the story and students will complete the object biography activity. The purpose of this activity is to give students a creative way to discuss the object in the text you are reading. As a class we will draw a picture of the Velveteen Rabbit. We will then use the object to answer important questions. We will draw pictures to symbolize important events that surround the object. We will include visual symbols of the object. We will include original text about the object. We will include at least 2 sentences that clearly represent the object. Once we are finished with the Object Biography as a class students will be asked to think of an objects that are important to them. On a clean sheet of paper in your daybook brainstorm or draw your favorite objects. Then students will be asked to pick a favorite object and draw it on a poster. They will be asked to include the important events that surround the object. They will be asked to use original dialogue that surrounds the object. They will be asked to include virtues and vices about the object. They will be asked to use colors that are symbolic about the object. They will be asked to create an acrostic poem about the object. You take each initial and write in vertically and then using each initial you find a similar word that start with that initial. For example if I do an acrostic poem with the word book it might look like.

Blue
Old
Original
Knowledge

Day 24-25: Making words move

Teacher will read *Epossumondas* by Coleen Salley, and *Max's Words* by Kate Banks as mentor text to give examples of how to make words move. Teacher will highlight certain text within the text that model the importance of word choice. Students will be asked to go back in their day book and look at either example of a person, object or place to see if

they can change or add different words to make the words move. Once students have had the opportunity to make revisions they will be asked to turn and talk with a partner for feedback.

Day 26-30: Figurative language activity

The objective of this activity will be for students to add figurative language to a piece that they are working on. Figurative language is an interesting way to make the reader think without telling the reader exactly what you want to say. It may evoke emotion from the reader if that same figurative language has been used previously in their life either in a text they love to read or a saying from a relative. The examples of figurative language are alliteration, metaphor, personification, hyperbole and simile. Alliteration is defined as the same use of a consonant to the first syllable of each word in the phrase. Metaphor is defined as a comparison without using the words like or as. Personification is defined when you give a nonhuman humanlike qualities. Hyperbole is defined when you use exaggerated language to get attention. Simile is defined as a comparison using the words like or as. Students will be paired with a book basket of books that feature examples of figurative language. Students will be carefully placed in groups so you have a balance of reading abilities. In pairs students will go on a word or phrase hunt for the examples of figurative language. Then they will be asked to look at either piece of writing they are drafting and an example of figurative language to the piece. While students are going through the conference and revision process they will be asked to highlight the words or phrases of figurative language so it will be easily identified.

Day 31-33: Good Beginnings and Good Endings

Teacher will read examples of mentor text that have good beginnings and good endings. Students need to preview books from good writers so they will get ideas on how to ensure that their memoir has a good beginning and good ending. Students will be asked to make a chart of 3 good beginnings and 3 good endings and explain why. Students will be asked get in groups and share their beginnings and endings from either activity about object, person or place. After students have share they will be asked to look at their chart and revise either beginning or ending. Then students will be asked to share once more their revised beginning or ending.

Day 34: Timed Response Prompt

The learner will use what they have learned about writing a memoir to respond to a memoir prompt. Students will pick one prompt to respond within 90 minutes. They must generate ideas and respond to the prompt.

Write a composition about the worst day you ever had.

Write a composition about a time when you learned a life lesson

Write a composition about a sport or game performance you have participated in.

Day 1-40: Conferencing

The learner will give and receive feedback from peers and teachers. During the writing process it is important that we learn how to accept feedback to help expand our work. Students will be able to request a conference from either the teacher or the student. During the conference students will be guided through a question stems or they will be able to ask their own individual questions. The question stems below will give the students who are not comfortable in peer questioning s base line to start. However in the last nine weeks of school all students should be comfortable in conferring with one another.

Why do you say that.....?

Could you say more about.....?

Do you think that would work better here.....?

What seems most important here is.....?

Here's what I see you say.....?

In my experience.....?

Day 30- 45: Publishing and Celebration

The learner will observe and respond appropriately to peers work. Each student will have a station to publish work they want to share. If a student feels that something is entirely too personal to share they will not be forced to share. During the celebration students and guests will walk around to each station with post it notes. On the post it notes people can write responses to the work they read. Students will also be asked to place drafts in a notebook on station so individuals can reflect on the progression of their work.

Day 45: Reflection

Throughout this unit we explored memorable places, people and objects. I would like for you to reflect on what your favorite activity was? What was your least favorite activity? Was anything revealed that you were not expecting? Was anything revealed that surprised you? If you could alter any of this unit what changes would you make?

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, HYPERLINK
["http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/newcomers/Pages/default.aspx"](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/newcomers/Pages/default.aspx)
<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/newcomers/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed November 1, 2010)
 Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, HYPERLINK
["http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/aboutus/pages/default.aspx"](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/aboutus/pages/default.aspx)
<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/aboutus/pages/default.aspx> (accessed November 1, 2010)
 Smith, Michael and Wilhelm, Jeffrey. *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* Literacy In The Lives of Young Men. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002
 HYPERLINK ["http://teachingliterature/2009/01/ncte-inbox-blog-what-does-it-mean-to-be-literate.html"](http://teachingliterature/2009/01/ncte-inbox-blog-what-does-it-mean-to-be-literate.html)
<http://teachingliterature/2009/01/ncte-inbox-blog-what-does-it-mean-to-be-literate.html>
 (accessed November 15, 2010)
 HYPERLINK ["http://teachingliterature.typepad.com/teachingliterature/2009/01/nea-reading-is-on-the-rise.html"](http://teachingliterature.typepad.com/teachingliterature/2009/01/nea-reading-is-on-the-rise.html) <http://teachingliterature.typepad.com/teachingliterature/2009/01/nea-reading-is-on-the-rise.html>
 (accessed November 15, 2010)
 Smith, Michael and Wilhelm, Jeffrey. *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* Literacy In The Lives of Young Men. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
 Fletcher, Ralph. *Boy Writers Reclaiming Their Voices*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006.
 Smith, Michael and Wilhelm, Jeffrey. *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* Literacy In The Lives of Young Men. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
 Lesesne, Teri. *Reading Ladders Leading Students From Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2010.
 Lesesne, Teri. *Reading Ladders Leading Students From Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2010.
 Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching a Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning-and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.
 Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching a Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning-and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.
 Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching a Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning-and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.
 Gallagher, Chris and Lee, Amy. *Teaching Writing that Matters Tools and Projects that Motivate Adolescent Writers*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2008.

Annotated Bibliography for Students

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man and Life's Greatest Lesson*. New York, NY: Random House. 1997. This book will be used as a Mentor Text for students on an eighth grade reading level as an example of a memoir.
 Allard, Harry. *Miss Nelson is Missing!* Sandpiper. 1985. This book will be used as a Mentor Text to give students an example of characteristics of a character.
 Allsburg, Van. *Stranger*. Houghton Mifflin. 1986. This is an example of a good ending.
 Andreae, Giles. *Love Is a Handful of Honey*. Wilton, CT: Tiger Tales. 2001. This book provides a good example of metaphor for younger students.
 Banks, Kate. *Max's Words*. Douglas & McIntyre Ltd. 2006. This book will be used as a

Mentor Text to teach students how to make words move on paper.

Bianco, Margery. *Velveteen Rabbit*. Ideals Children's Book. 2006. This book will be used as a Mentor Text to give students an example of a memoir about an object.

Birdseye, Tom. *Look Out Jack the Giant is Back*. Holiday House. 2003. This is an example of a great beginning.

Bunting, Eve. *Fly Away Home*. Houghton Mifflin. 1991. This is an example of a good ending.

Burleigh, Robert, and Young, Ed. *Tiger of the Snows: Tenzing Norgay: The Boy Whose Dream Was Everest*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books. This book contains examples of adjectives, similes and metaphors.

Chall, Marsha Wilson. *Up North at the Cabin*. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. 1992. This book contains examples of figurative language, verbs and personification.

Clement, Rod. *Grandpa's Teeth*. Harper Collins. 1999. This is an example of a great beginning and ending.

Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius*. Puffin. 1985. This is an example of a great ending.

Dicamillo, Kate. *Because of Winn Dixie*. Candlewick. 2009. This is an example of a great beginning.

Edwards, Pamela Duncan. *Some Smug Slug*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. 1996. This book contains examples of alliteration.

Fox, Mem. *Wilford Gordon McDonald Partridge*. Kane/Miller Book Publishers: 1989. This book will be used as a mentor text to give students an example of characteristics of a character.

Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha*. New York Random House 1997. This book will be used as a mentor text for students on a ninth grade reading level as an example of a memoir.

Greenfield, Eloise and Little, *Lessie. Childtimes a Three-Generation Memoir*. New York. Harper Trophy. 1971. This memoir is for students who are reading on fifth grade reading level.

Ketteman, Helen. *Bubba the Cowboy Prince*. Scholastic. 1997. This is an example of a great beginning.

Krull, Kathleen. *Harvesting Hope the Story of Cesar Chavez*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2003. This is an example of a children's literature memoir.

Nguyen, Kien. *The Unwanted A Memoir of Childhood*. New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2001. This book is a mentor text for students who want to read a memoir about a child during the Vietnam War.

Mitchell, Margaree. *Uncle Jed's Barbershop*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperback Books,

1993. This book is an example of a children's literature memoir.

Myers, Walter D. *Bad Boy: A Memoir*. New York. Harper Collins 2001. This book will be used as mentor text to give students on a sixth grade reading level an example of a memoir.

Polacco, Patricia. *Chicken Sunday*. New York, NY: Paper Star, 1992. This is an example of a children's literature memoir.

Polacco, Patricia. *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1994. This book will be used as an example of a Mentor Text to give students an example of a memoir about a person.

Rylant, Cynthia. *Night In the Country*. Atheneum. 1991. This is an example of a good beginning.

Rylant, Cynthia. *When I Was Young In the Mountain*. Puffin: 1993. This book will be used as a mentor text to give students an example of a memoir about a place.

Salley, Coleen. *Epossumondas*. New York, NY: Harcourt, 2002. This book will be used as a mentor text to teach students how to make words move on paper.

Zolotow, Charlotte. *The Seashore Book*. Harper Trophy. 1992. This is an example of a children's literature memoir.

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching a Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning-and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005. This book helped me understand how a memoir would fit into the curriculum I already teach.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Boy Writers Reclaiming Their Voices*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006. This book will explain why boys are different than girls in reference to academic assignments.

Gallagher, Chris and Lee, Amy. *Teaching Writing that Matters Tools and Projects that Motivate Adolescent Writers*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2008. This book contains high interest ideas that teachers can include in their lesson plans.

Gallagher, Kelly. *Teaching Adolescent Writers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006. This book will give teachers ideas on how to teach middle school and high school writers. It gives ideas on activities that are easily transferred to the classroom.

Kirby, Dan, Kirby, Dawn, and Liner, Tom. *Inside Out Strategies for Teaching Writing* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004. This book helped me understand how to get my voice written on paper.

Lesesne, Teri. *Reading Ladders Leading Students From Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2010. This book will help teachers understand how to transition students from reading and enjoying popular novels to traditional literature.

Smith, Michael and Wilhelm, Jeffrey. *"Reading Don't Fix No Chevys" Literacy In The Lives of Young Men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002. This book will enlighten teachers on what students are possibly thinking. It also explains the reasons why, how and what students think about reading.

Appendix Implementing District Standards

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study Objectives for Language Arts is written in student friendly language below. Writing the objectives in that manner makes it easy for students to understand what they should accomplish before, during and after the assignment.

- 1.02 The learner will make connections between works, self and related topics
- 1.02 The learner will reflect in the reading response journal
- 1.03 The learner will interact in a book club to discuss memoirs and how they could be used in their writing.
- 4.01 The learner will evaluate the author's purpose of writing the memoir.
- 5.01 The learner will discuss figurative language
- 5.02 The learner will evaluate the impact of the character, place or object in the memoir.

Appendix 1

How often do you see people writing in your home?

Daily Occasionally Rarely Never

How often do you see people reading in your home?

Daily Occasionally Rarely Never

How often do you write at home?

Daily Occasionally Rarely Never

How often do you read at home?

Daily Occasionally Rarely Never

How many books are in your home?

Less than 5 Between 10 and 20 Between 21 and 30 More than 30

Do you have a computer in your home? If no do you go to the public library to use the computer?

How do you feel about writing?

How do you feel about reading?

Why do you write?

Why do you read?

What is the purpose of your daybook?

How many drafts to you go through before you publish a unit?

Why do you attend school?

Do you think the writing and reading you do in school has any relationship to your success after high school?

Appendix 2

Identity, voice and relationship

What kind of person is the author?

How important is the influence of others to the author?

Truth

Do you think there is any truth in this memoir?

What makes you believe or disbelieve?

Memory

Does the author use anything to help him or her remember?

Time

How is the text organized?

Structure

How does the text begin?

Does the author use any letters or photographs to help tell his or her story?

Purpose

What did you learn from this memoir?