



Teaching the Writing Processes through Memoirs

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Grades 1-3 in elementary school. This unit was written for German Immersion Language Arts with a cross curricular lesson in social studies. It can be adapted to fit English language arts.

Keywords: Writing processes, brainstorming, drafting, reviewing editing, publishing, memoirs.

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: This unit will guide students through their writing process. Students will discover that there are different processes that a writer must go through including: brainstorming, drafting, reviewing, editing, and publishing. Students will also discover how their writing process can be repeated or even started over. To make this more interesting and meaningful for students, this unit will focus on memoirs. In the beginning of the school year, the students will start their journey by journaling and hearing read alouds. They will start to analyze the book and find out what they are about. In the second quarter, the teacher will then guide the students through the writing processes. The children will write about their own experiences. Through this whole process, students will discover what a memoir is, write their own memoir, and share their published memoir with others. The goal of this unit will be to make the whole writing process interesting, fun and more accessible to the student. The final product will be the child's own journey to share themselves with others.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 24 students in a 2nd grade German Immersion classroom.

I give permission for Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

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Introduction

Even in my younger years, starting in elementary school, I have found the idea of journaling fascinating. I loved to write down important things about my life. Back then I especially liked gluing trinkets in my diary to illustrate my adventures. To this day, my journals or memory boxes are filled with movie tickets, pictures, and brochures.

Looking back, I believe journaling helped me share my thoughts, even though I was the only person who read them. It gave me the opportunity to talk about my life. Later on, it became a way to remember things. I especially like collecting admission tickets and brochures. I love to look back and remember all these adventures I experienced.

As I started my teaching career five years ago, I wanted to take my childhood experiences with me into the classroom. Each year, as a second grade teacher, I introduce my students to the world of journaling. These journals serve as the keeper of our memories of our lives.

Teaching writing to twenty-four individual, very unique students is just one of my tasks as their teacher. I have to get to know my class and identify their specific needs, take into consideration their different levels of writing, and also be sensitive to their social and mental state of sharing.

In this unit, I focus on two things: 1) teaching students how to craft texts using the processes of the writing cycle and 2) open students' minds to the world of memoirs.

This unit promotes journaling and personal experiences as a gateway to discover their own writing process. The following processes¹ are a part of this unit:

- Brainstorming
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

My goal is to teach students about the recursive nature of writing² through memoirs. These personal experiences can make writing more relatable and engaging for students. I want my students to think of writing as an outlet not just another task that they *have to do* in school.

I will share my unit with colleagues at my school and through the Charlotte Teacher Institute website. This is going to give other teachers access to more activities and ideas, which can be useful in their own classrooms.

After experiencing this unit, students will be able to understand and apply the different processes of writing (brainstorming, drafting, reviewing, editing and publishing). Students will start to understand that the writing process is ever changing and recursive in nature³. They will learn that their writing process can take many different shapes and forms. The stages are always present but can be repeated, lengthened, shortened or started all over at any given point. Through this project, I want students to: 1) feel fearless as writers; 2) try writing about different ideas; and 3) feel comfortable sharing their writing and personal experiences in the safe environment of our classroom.

I hope this unit engages students as authors and help them grow their knowledge of the writing processes.

Demographics

I love being a teacher and I love watching children learn. I graduated from Winthrop University with a Bachelor in Early Childhood Education in 2012. Right after graduation, I started working at EE Waddell Language Academy in Charlotte, North Carolina.

EE Waddell Language Academy is a K-8 countywide magnet school. Our school offers immersion classes in five languages: German, French, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish. In addition, most of our students also get instruction in English for a specific amount of time.

We have a student population of 1,400. Of that population, 959 students are at the elementary school level and 441 students are at the middle school level. The student body is diverse with 24% African-American, 4% American Indian, 5% Asian, 20% Hispanic, 46% White and 5% listed as others. Our teachers also represent a diverse demographic. The majority of staff is bilingual. Of this staff, 30% of teachers and teacher assistants do not have US citizenship.

EE Waddell Language Academy has been recognized as a Magnet School of Distinction by the Magnet Schools of America in 2016. Our school was a North Carolina Honor School of Excellence for several years. It was awarded the national 2012 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Melba D. Woodruff Prize for Exemplary Foreign Language Program. This prize recognizes schools that align their curricula with the World Readiness Standards for Language Learning and integrate languages with content areas. We also have an active, supportive Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO). They are helping us acquire different instructional materials through fundraising. They are also putting on several cultural events throughout the year to promote the uniqueness of our school.

I have taught in a second grade German Immersion classroom for five years. This year, my class consists of 24 students (12 boys and 12 girls). Most my students started their immersion journey as Kindergarteners. Even though, I have a few students with a German background at home, the majority comes from an English-speaking household. I also have two students who are Turkish speaking and three students who are Spanish speaking.

My students are in a full immersion environment. This means, I teach them language arts, math, science, and social studies in the target language—German. My students can speak, read, write and understand German on various levels. They will receive English instruction in third grade. Not only are my students culturally and academically diverse, they are also socioeconomically diverse. Currently, I do not have any children with exceptionalities, but I do have several students with behavior challenges. Two students get pulled out of my classroom for speech and one student gets pulled out for ESL instruction for 30 minutes per week.

Rational/Objectives

My curriculum unit is designed for a second grade German immersion class. This unit can be integrated with social studies. It can also be adapted for an English Language Arts classroom. I have written this unit to help second graders master the following writing skills: brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. These skills will be mainly practiced through writing about their own life (memoirs). To accomplish this major task, we will focus on these three big topics:

1. Reading memoirs to discover characteristics of this genre.
2. Brainstorming and journaling.
3. Writing and publishing our own memoir.

These three major steps will take place over an extended period of time. The first two steps will be introduced toward the beginning of the school year. The specific unit on the processes of writing will begin in the second quarter of the school year. By then, I will know the students better and, more importantly, the student will have gotten to know themselves on a deeper level.

The first step is to discover the characteristics of memoirs, how they are defined, and what can we learn from them. I want to expose the students to multiple read aloud. During this instruction, we will collect similarities and differences. I want students to discover what a memoir is. I will not feed them the definition before; rather, I will have them define the genre themselves through inquiry. Since it seems a little harder to find German memoirs for children, I will use some journal entries from my personal life. I will also take advantage of English speaking volunteers, middle school student volunteers and even our resource officer who comes to read to us. They will share some English examples of memoirs.

The second step will require students to frequently journal. I will give them various opportunities to write in their books. Since they are only second graders, they will need a lot of scaffolding in the beginning. That means, providing them with writing prompts. These prompts can be simple topics, inspirational pictures, personal pictures from home, or events. Depending on their writing abilities, they will also be able to support their writing with pictures. This is important because I don't want to limit their ideas by their

writing competency. I want them to share whatever is on their mind⁴. As an accommodation for students who struggle with writing, I will give the option to record their story using iPads. I think this could be a wonderful opportunity for them to publish their stories for wider audiences.

Then we will start the core unit of getting to know the different writing processes. We will already have experienced brainstorming and drafting. This will have shown them that these processes can take various amounts of time. It will also have shown them, that some topics are worth investigating more than others. I will now lead them toward choosing one topic to take to publication. Once they picked a topic, we will focus on drafting. It is important to give them a lot of structure/scaffolding for their writing so that they do not get frustrated with the process.

As a class, we will also learn about revising and editing. I will teach them strategies and give them checklists to revise their own and their peers' drafts. This will hopefully lead to good conversations and helpful revisions and edits of their drafts. As their teacher, I will also help to edit their drafts to weed out some of their spelling and grammar mistakes.

During the final phase, we will publish our memoirs. My goal is it to let them choose a way to publish. I will give them the following options:

- Writing a paper
- Writing a book
- Recording themselves with iPads/ digital stories
- Making a cartoon or drawing to support their writing

I hope to share these memoirs not only within my class but also to invite other German classes for a read aloud from my students.

Unit Goals

This curriculum unit will start with introducing a variety of memoirs to the students. The children will learn about the characteristics of memoirs and how they are important for the author to express him/herself.

The students will then write and publish their own narrative (memoir) in which they will recount a specific memory of their own lives. They will include details to make their story more reader friendly⁵.

To accomplish this goal, the students will have to go through the processes of the writing cycle. They will have to do research⁶ on examples of memoirs. They will also participate on several writing projects to understand the process. Furthermore, they will have to revise and edit their writing⁷. Their peers and teacher will support this process by implementing very structured processes.

In addition, this unit will also address a social studies standard. This standard will not be assessed in this unit. This unit will allow the students to identify contributions of

historical figures⁸. Some examples of memoirs will be those of for example a president. This read out loud will not only be a great piece to learn about memoirs but also to learn about the actual person. This standard will have to be broadened and extended further during social studies instruction.

Research

Teaching Memoirs seminar by Brian Kissel

Since attending the “Teaching Memoirs” CTI seminar by Brian Kissel, I have been able to dig deep into my own experiences as a child, a teenager and an adult. I have remembered a lot of experiences in my life that were hiding under the surface of everyday life. So many were full of love and fun, but a few were also sad. As a whole I have learned how important it is to make room for these memories in our lives, and to also have an opportunity to share them. I want to make writing meaningful for my students through the use of memoirs. It will allow me to capture my students’ attention and focus it into learning about the writing processes. At the end they will publish their own memoir and share them. That is why I have chosen this seminar and this topic for my curriculum unit. As for research, I will use some strategies learned in the seminar in my unit. The following resources helped me develop my knowledge for this unit:

Mentor Texts by Lynne R. Dorfman and Rose Cappelli

This book is a great resource for teachers to understand the writing process. It shows and explains many different strategies on how to teach the process and make it more accessible to students⁹.

The focal point of the book is how to use mentor texts to teach the writing process. “Mentor texts are pieces of literacy that we can return to again and again as we help our young writers learn how to do what they may not yet be able to do on their own.”¹⁰

This is exactly what I want to do in my unit. I want to expose the class to many different memoirs but then pick out one mentor text that will serve as clear examples of a memoir. We will be able to reference back to this throughout our writing processes.

To introduce a mentor text it is important to pick a text where the students can “hear and appreciate the story and characters as well as the rhythms, words, and messages.”¹¹ Only after we have read them and appreciated them, the students will be able to go back to the text and analyze it.

As second graders, the teacher cannot expect the students to just write a personal story without first connecting them to read-alouds¹². My unit starts out with introducing the students to many different memoirs. Dorfman and Cappelli mention in their book “because students have different backgrounds and experiences, their responses and the connections they make to a book will vary too”.¹³ To remember these connections and realizations, I will collect them on sticky notes and put them in a book. They will guide

us on our journey to understand what memoirs are. They will also guide us to making deeper connections with our own memoirs.

Dorfman and Cappelli go further by stating, “a teacher of writing must be a teacher who writes.”¹⁴ I strongly agree with their statement. For this reason, the teacher in my curriculum unit will be an active participant when venturing through the different writing processes. My writer’s workshop is set up so that the teacher will always model first before the students try themselves. I also promote for teachers to write an additional memoir as the children write their own.

The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser

Boushey and Moser have a section on trust in their second chapter ‘From Management to Principled Habits: Foundation of the Daily Five’.¹⁵ This is exactly what I want to instill into my students from the very first day of school. I want them to feel loved and valued in our classroom. According to Boushey and Moser:

“We believe positive relationships are the first and most vital element of our children’s learning process. Meaningful learning requires respect between the teacher and students as well as among the students themselves. We treat children as valuable individuals, each one unique and worthy of respect and caring.”¹⁶

I believe that without this trust there will not be any true meaningful writing happening in the classroom. This trust will have to be built on the first day of school by forming personal relationships with each and every one of my students.

In a later chapter the authors also describe the ‘work on writing and word work’. This chapter will be a huge help in launching my writing workshop. Boushey and Moser describe the urgencies of the writing; the expectations of students while writing and also explain the teacher’s role in it all.¹⁷

Journeys: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms by Carolyn L. Piazza

This book is a great resource on how to guide the class through writing assignments as the teacher. This will go hand in hand with the things I learned from “Mentor Texts”.¹⁸

The third chapter is focused on ‘Personal Writing’. Piazza describes how a teacher can model the selection of a topic. She explains in think out louds to the class why she would choose one topic over the other. For example, she describes that she would rather write about her pet than her doll, based on the amount of material she has and the knowledge of the audience.¹⁹

Piazza also shows the use of a storyboard in her book.²⁰ This would be a great way to get students started that don't like to or don't yet really have the ability to write. They simply draw all their detail on the paper. Depending on the child, they can add words, phrases or sentences. Piazza mentions "For a young child, the storyboard is a production its own right; for older students it is the starting point or plan for further explorations."²¹ This can be an accommodation for a child with that specific need. It compliments my choice of making a comic book as their publication method.

The Writing Cycle R. Fletcher and J. Portalupi

This article by Fletcher and Portalupi, describes the writing process as being a circle. It indicates that the process can take on many different forms for individuals.²² The cycle may go on and on till the actual publishing takes place. In this article, I found an even deeper purpose for my unit. I do not only want to teach the students writing and its processes but also to let each child find their own process. Fletcher and Portalupi say it perfectly, "We don't want to teach our students the writing process; rather, we want each one of them to find a process that works for him or her. This process will inevitably differ from student to student."²³

The Author's Chair by Donald Graves and Jane Hansen

Graves and Hansen tried to find the relationship of reading and writing in this article. They have found out that children go through "three phases marked the children's growing understanding of the author concept: 1) Replication, 2) Transition, and 3) Sense of Opinion."²⁴

In my unit, I will also follow these three phases. We will replicate and take a part many stories. We will transition by practicing learned skills as a class. And in the end, each student will have their own sense of opinion and purpose by writing and publishing their own memoir. This whole process will not be possible if the student's do not see the relationship between reading and writing.

"The Author's Chair is where the reader sit."²⁵ This will be one of the strategies that will help students to gain better understanding of themselves, of their audience, and of ownership of their pieces. The author's chair will be introduced in this unit and kept as a constant in the classroom throughout the year.

Through sharing not only published pieces here but also processes in between my goal is for children to "change from imposing their own understandings of process and content upon authors, to realizing various authors can use process and content differently."²⁶

Classroom Activities

First Quarter

This unit is building on a lot of items that must have already been introduced to the class from the beginning of the school year. The following lessons will take place during the first couple of weeks of school and carried on till the start of the official unit.

Journaling:

The teacher will show the book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney²⁷ to the class. This is a familiar text for many of my students. Through a teacher-guided class discussion, the class will talk about journaling. They should have started to discover how and why a journal could be important to a writer. These ideas should be collected throughout the unit. In the end, this will help the students begin to define *memoir*.

Each student will have his or her own journal throughout the school year. As part of our schools' supply list at the beginning of the year, each child should have brought a composition notebook. As a class, the notebook should be labeled with each child's name. I would also give them time to decorate the first page to make the journal already more personal and create an excitement about it. This will also be the perfect time to encourage a first journal entry. Always stress to include a date.

As homework, the students are allowed to take the journal home and decorate the outside. They can use pictures from their families and friends, pictures from magazines and newspapers, postcards, or drawings. Not only will this make it their own journal, but it will also give them ideas to write about on a day where they need inspiration.

This journal should be their constant in every school day. Morning work is a good time to let them use it. They can write about the previews day, or about things they want to do today. I will also let them draw in it. This should be an outlet for their thoughts. The goal, especially in second grade would be for the entries to get much longer over time.

Class Journal

This year, I will also introduce the idea of a class journal. This book will be open for everyone to write in. They will be able to write special memories in it. In second grade students still love the idea of show and tell. I will use their enthusiasm to share and refocus it to the class journal. They can share their adventures through writing and drawing in the class journal.

This activity should also be introduced fairly early in the school year. I will introduce it as a follow up on their personal journals. This journal should be special. It could be a simple notebook that the class decorated together. It could also be a notebook with the pictures of each student on it. There are many different ways to make a simple notebook special. This can be a great activity as a whole class to find the best way to make it special. It should be student lead.

Read Alouds/ Book Studies

As already mentioned, reading various memoirs and biographies are going to be essential to this curriculum unit. Read alouds are an important component in every classroom²⁸, but it is especially necessary for an immersion classroom. It is a building block to vocabulary acquisition. Read alouds will help students learn new words, gain a better understanding of the spoken language and activate reading comprehension in the target language.

My goal for this unit is to have a read aloud from a memoir about once a week. Doing this even more frequently would be ideal.

[Appendix 2](#) will list a variety of age appropriate texts to use during this time of the unit. Since there is a limited amount of German examples, I have collected student work from years before and will use them as examples as well. You will find these in German and translated into English in the same [appendix](#).

As the teacher is reading each memoir, the children should be active listeners. Before the book is being read, the teacher can get the students to start thinking about the text by only reading the title or only revealing the cover picture. Questions like “What do you think this story will be about?”, “Why do you think this picture shows...?”, or “Can you tell me a personal connection to the title?” can be asked. After the read, these questions can be picked up again and discussed further. Wonderings, connections and/or comments about the story should also be addressed.²⁹ These can be collected on post-it notes and hung on a white board. At the end, the teacher should collect the notes and keep them in a separate journal. It becomes a collection and can later be referenced again. (See picture in [Appendix 7](#).)

Second Quarter

Starting in the second quarter the main focus of this curriculum unit should take place. Below is a series of lessons that will guide students through the different writing processes. I specifically did not put an exact time frame on the lessons, because it all depends on your students and their emotional and academic level. As mentioned before the writing process is such a delicate and ever changing cycle that time can vary for all kinds of different reasons.

Lesson 1—Introducing a Mentor Text

Meeting on the carpet to do a read aloud should by now have become a common practice. In this first lesson, all students are gathered on the carpet to listen to another read aloud.

The read aloud can be found in [appendix 3](#). The text is a personal memoir I wrote. It is written in an age appropriate way that appeals to second graders. I chose to write about my dog back when I was in elementary school. This will serve as anchor text in our journey to publish our own memoirs. Such a text is called a mentor text. According to Dorfman and Cappelli, “Mentor texts are pieces of literacy that we can return to again

and again as we help our young writers learn how to do what they may not yet be able to do on their own.”³⁰

As the teacher reads the memoir, the same pattern as in previews read alouds should be followed. First, the students should make predictions based on the title. Collecting the ideas, the teacher will then proceed to read the memoir to the class. After, the class will respond with wonderings and connections. To activate the target language, this should be done as a turn and talk. The students can share their ideas with each other first before collecting some of their ideas on the board.

The conversation should then be geared toward how the teacher chose this particular story to write about. Some questions to guide the class may be:

- Why do you think I chose this story?
- How did this story make me/you feel?
- How do you think I was able to remember that story?
- What can you do to remember important/funny/scary things in your life?

This prompting should lead to finding out that our journaling is a way to collect these stories of our lives.

This is the point where the teacher should introduce *brainstorming* as a vocabulary word.³¹ It can be defined as a gathering of ideas. As an example, the class could brainstorm about things, events and people they could write about in their memoir.

The main focus should then still be the students’ own journals. So as an exit ticket ([appendix 4](#)), students should explain why their journals are good examples of brainstorming.

Lesson 2—Choosing a Topic

Choosing a topic to write about is one of the most important steps in our process. It might also be a step that can be repeated many times.³² Some students might find this easy and they know exactly what to write about. There will also be students who will struggle the hardest with this. This being such a delicate subject, using the following mini lesson might help students to find the perfect topic for themselves.

The class will gather on the carpet with their journals. The teacher will tell the class that they will choose their topic for their own story today. The teacher will have to make this step as exciting as possible for the students because they will need a purpose for their writing. In my classroom, the purpose will be that the students will invite another class so that they can share their stories. Since my classroom is a German immersion setting, it is usually best to share with other classes who also speak the language. For an English-speaking class it would also be a great option to invite the parents.

After, getting everyone excited, the teacher will give the class five minutes to look through their journals and find three entries that they like the most. They can fold a corner over on these pages so that they do not lose the page. After they have found their

three pieces, they will make groups of three to share. During this sharing, they should eliminate one of their choices with help of their peers. This will give them a chance to see what topic seems most interesting to their audience. Once the students are back on the carpet, this process will be repeated but with only one partner this time that cannot be one of their previous ones. During that time, they can make the final choice on their topic. I believe that this time is not only important to hear other opinions but also a time to reflect. Students could also defend a certain topic to his or her peers. This will give them a certain level of passion for that particular topic and hopefully make their writing stronger.

Lesson 3—The Writing Workshop

My literacy block is structured in a way that twenty minutes are set aside for a writing workshop.³³ I will introduce a certain topic in a whole group setting. I will explain and demonstrate a specific skill (setting, character, plot, etc.). Then we will practice it together on our class story. The last ten minutes are reserved for the students to try the specific skill on their own.

Part A: Brainstorming and expanding our ideas

Whole-group lesson: Teacher will review what the definition of brainstorming³⁴ is with the class. Then, the class can choose a topic. It would be the best to find a special day of the year. (See picture in [Appendix 8](#).) Then as a class, the brainstorming begins. The ideas should be collected on an anchor chart (labeled with “brainstorming”).

Individual task: The students write in their journals. The topic that they already have selected should be written down as a title. Since they have already written some on this, they can add details or expand during this brainstorming exercise. They should write as much as they can (or even draw pictures) to get ideas about their topic.

Part B: Drafting

Whole-group lesson: Now it is time to really start writing on the personal stories. First continue to practice this skill on the class story. Referring back to the brainstorming chart, gather ideas on how to write the stories. Write the student’s sentences unedited on a second anchor chart. This should not take longer than ten minutes. Explain to the class that this is the time to put the story on the paper. It does not yet matter if there are spelling or grammar errors, it does not yet matter if it all makes sense.

Individual task: Now, it is time to work on their own narrative. Refer them back to their brainstorming page. They should get about fifteen minutes to write their stories. This part may have to be taught multiple days, to give everyone a chance to finish their writing, or if they need to choose a different story to start over.

Side note: As mentioned before, the writing process is different for everyone.³⁵ It may take some much longer than other, or some will have to still work on brainstorming, whereas others need to start all over again. The purpose of the writing workshop is to expose and explain the different processes to the class. In second grade it is important for them to understand the ‘how-to’ of the processes. When there is not enough time for some students, I try to carve out some time for them during snack, clean up or morning work to finish what they have started. I have also had students before that have asked me to take the story home to work on it more. Make sure you know your students and to accommodate them as best as possible.

Lesson 3—The Author’s Chair

As soon as the majority of students are done with their drafting, the author’s chair should be introduced.³⁶

In my classroom, I have a rocking chair in my carpet area. The students are always drawn to it, probably because they are not allowed to sit in it. Since this chair already has this wondrous aura it will be perfect as an author’s chair. The teacher should start by asking the following questions to the class:

- Why do you think I have this chair?
- Why do I always sit in it?
- What do I do when I sit in it?
- If you want to sit in my chair, what should you be doing?

The majority of the time, I sit in the chair to read to them or to share other things. The teacher proceeds by saying: “To sit in this chair, you have to be an author!”³⁷ This should get the attention of the class. You may discover that some students recognize themselves as authors right away, and others get a discouraged look on their face. Be mindful of these students and proceed by asking, “What do you think an author is?” and “What does an author do?”

With enough guided prompting the class should come to the conclusion that everyone is an author. Now the teacher should explain that the chair is a safe zone, that when you are in the chair, you are there to share and not to be criticized. It is also important that the person in the chair can decide how they want the class to respond to him or her. Here are the choices on how the class could respond:

- By telling the author what they liked about the story.
- By telling the author what may have been unclear/confusing.
- By telling the author additional ideas/ expansions.
- By not responding at all. (I like to give this option to the class. I sometimes have students that do not want to share at all. And although, I never

make them share, I do encourage them to read it out loud anyway. To make it safe for them, they can ask the class to only listen, nothing else.

Every day, a handful of students can sit in the author's chair and share their drafts. The teacher should sit in the back, writing notes that the class gave to the author. This can then be handed over to the student to help him/her remember everything.

I especially like the author's chair because it makes the students read their story out loud. This is so beneficial for any classroom but especially for the immersion class. It makes them read, listen to and respond in the target language. This is a great vocabulary builder. It also makes the reader think about his or her own writing. I had students who were so excited about sharing their story, but once they tried to read it, they noticed that some things didn't make sense and there were able to use this and correct it.

Lesson 3 will have to be extended over several days, so that everyone has a chance to share. This is also the start of the revising process. (See picture in [Appendix 9](#).)

Lesson 4—Revising

Whole-group instruction: The teacher will refer back to the class story that has been started. The teacher is sitting in the author's chair and reads the story out loud. After, the teacher asks the class what they liked and what we could have done better on our story. Taking these notes down, the teacher will continue by introducing the vocabulary word 'revising'. The students will learn that revising means to take a closer look at ones story and to make it even better/stronger/more interesting.³⁸

Partner work: The students get paired off. Personally, I would let them chose their own partners first, so that they are comfortable sharing their stories. I would also suggest doing this activity at least twice, so that they can have different opinions. Using [appendix 5](#) the students will revise each other's drafts.

Whole-group instruction: Coming back to the carpet, the teacher will use the class story to model revision. This should be done on a third anchor chart labeled 'revision'.

Individual task: With all this new information, the students now get time to work on their own stories. They should use notes form the author's chair and their partner revision worksheets.

Lesson 5—Editing

Whole-group instruction: Back at the carpet, the class will again look at the class story. Since the teacher has written exactly what the students suggested, there will be grammar and spelling errors. Together, these errors will have to be found and edited. 'Editing' is the new vocabulary word.

Student-teacher conferences: Since errors in second grade are very common, the teacher should meet with each student individually to go over their story.³⁹ During the conference, the student can read the memoirs with an editor's eye. This is again a very delicate step. Be very careful not to discourage your students. Choose which errors to correct and which ones you do not. Especially in the target language German, there are a lot of grammatical mistakes. I would concentrate more on spelling, capitalizations and punctuation with a second grader. The editing should also be done by the student and not by the teacher. The teacher can talk but the student will write. That way it is more personal and it does not feel as if you correct the student, but that the student corrects himself/herself.

Lesson 6—Publishing

This will be the favorite part for most students. They get to choose the medium to publish their story.

Whole-group instruction: Going back to our class story, we can decide on how to publish it. The conversation should be geared toward who the audience is and what they might prefer, how the story would sound best, or what our personal preference is.⁴⁰ It is also important to mention the neatness of the final product. It should be something that we can be proud of. (Neat handwriting can be still a big challenge in second grade. It is also important to think of paper options here.)

Publication options for the students:

1. Writing a paper and making an illustration: Students can use a white or lined paper to write down their story. At the end they could make an illustration on the bottom of the paper or chose to make it on a separate paper.
2. Making a book: Students can choose to illustrate portions of it.
3. Drawing a comic: Students may also choose to make a comic strip out of their personal story.
4. Recording themselves with the iPad: I would also give them the option to record themselves reading/telling their story. If you have the resources, you can also let students make a digital story.

This process might take an extended period of time. I suggest using the time set aside for the writing workshop each day. Students that finish early could help their peers or work on a different project.

In [appendix 6](#), you can find a rubric for assessment of their final memoir.

Lesson 7—Sharing

Having finished our personal stories, it is time to share them with each other first. We will take the time to listen to each other's stories. Once everyone has shared, the teacher will ask what each and every story had in common. What were all of our stories about? Coming to the conclusion that we all shared something that happened in our lives, that all of the stories were one specific time in our lives, the teacher will reveal that we call such personal stories 'memoirs'. Ending the unit with making up our own definition of memoirs brings it all full circle.

The very last task in our curriculum unit is to share our stories beyond the classroom.
⁴¹ Here is a list of ideas that could be done depending on your children, school and possibilities:

- Inviting other classes to read our stories to them.
- Posting the stories on a bulletin board.
- Displaying them in the library.
- Inviting the parents for a read out loud.

APPENDIX 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

This curriculum unit focuses mainly on literacy lesson, which could have a connection to social studies standards. The literacy lessons address standards from the common core essential standards and the social studies implementation would address standards from the North Carolina social studies essential standards.

Common Core State Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3

Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure. ⁴²

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.5

With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing. ⁴³

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.6

With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers. ⁴⁴

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.7

Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations). ⁴⁵

North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard:

- 2.H.1.2

Identify contributions of historical figures (community, state, nation and world) through various genres. ⁴⁶

APPENDIX 2: List of Books and Student Examples to Read Alouds

-*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney

-*Ellen's Broom: A young girl discovers a family tradition* by Kelly Starling Lyons

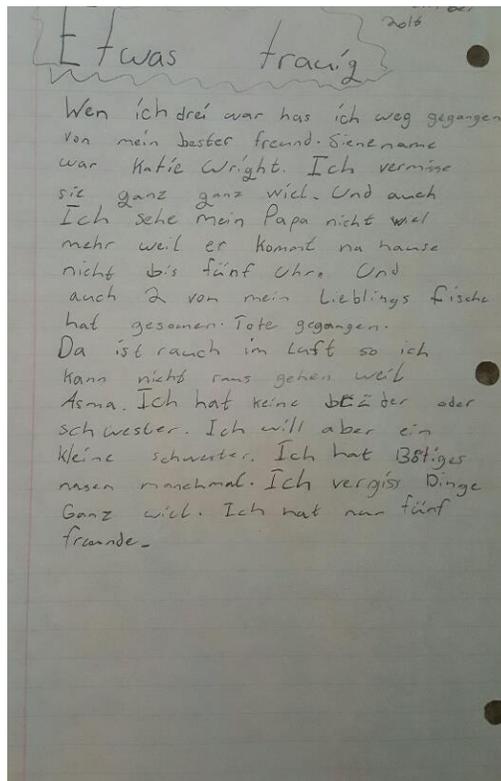
-*Big Red Lollipop* by Rukhsana Hhan

-What's the Big Idea Ben Franklin? by Jean Fritz

-Who was George Washington? by Roberta Edwards

-Memoir by my student: "Something Sad"

"When I was three, I moved away from my best friend. Her name was Katie. I miss her very, very much. Something else, I don't see my dad as much anymore because he comes home after five o'clock. And two of my favorite fish died too. On top of everything, there is smoke in the air, so I can't go outside because I have Asthma. I also do not have a brother or a sister. But I want a little sister. Sometimes I have a bloody nose and I forget things a lot. I only have five friends."



-Memoir by my student: "Hamster"

"So I have a hamster and once I didn't close her ball all the way. The top was loose but I still let her go. She got out of her ball and I started to look for her. I couldn't find her and I had to go swimming. Later my mom called me because she heard my hamster. We found her in the kitchen cabinet."

2. November Zele.
1 So ich hat ein hamster und
2 er hat ich hat sie in
3 ihre ball gemacht und
4 das hufe war nicht so fest das
5 so ich hat sie gelacht
6 zum geht. und sie hat
7 raus von ihre ball gegangen
8 und ich hat gekoch mit sie
9 aber ich hat so mich gefanden
10 aber ich hat geseh schrimesh
11 und mahe mahe hat mich
12 getut weil sie hat mahe
13 hamster gekott und kh hat
14 gekommen feih und lahm
15 sie outich in der kitchen
16 cabiti



APPENDIX 3: Rambo—How this tiny dog with such a big name became family

When I was about 8 years old, all I wanted was a dog. My little brother Kevin was 4 years old at the time, and agreed with my wish. After repeatedly bringing up the subject, my mom finally put her foot down and said: “Stop the whining! We will NOT get a dog! End of discussion.” I was crushed, my brother too. I guess we had to be happy with our rabbits and two cats. But they weren’t a dog, a fluffy, cute little, awesome dog. But mom said no, so we had to be okay with it.

Time passed, and even though my longing for a dog didn’t really go away it was soon forgotten in the life of a second grader. At the time my dad had switched jobs and was a sales representative for pet supplies. He regularly traveled around to pet stores to sell products. One day, my dad came home and told us that we would take a trip to this one particular pet store tomorrow. My mom was very suspicious but my dad just told us to wait and see.

The next day, all four of us drove to the store. The car ride seemed so long. We finally made it. My brother and I were the first ones out of the car. Finally inside of the store, my dad told us to wait there while he went to the back of the store.

Then the unthinkable happened. Two tiny dogs came running toward us with my dad and the storeowner behind them. Kevin and I dropped to our knees and embraced the puppies. We couldn’t believe it! Puppies!!! One was black with a fuzzy tail and the other white as snow. The only words escaping my mouth were: “Can we keep one???” Looking up at my mom, I knew the answer right away. She smiled! She actually smiled. She looked at my dad, shook her head, smiled at him and told us that we could take one home.

This was one of the happiest days of my childhood. On that day, we took Rambo home. He was the little black one. He had already received his name from the storeowner before we met him. At first, we couldn’t believe a name like Rambo would fit this little fuzz ball. But we soon found out why the storeowner had given him the name, so started to call him Rambo too. Our family was now complete: my dad, my mom, Kevin, myself and of course Rambo.

Rambo—Wie ein winziger Hund mit einem grossen Namen in unsere Familie kommt

Als ich acht Jahre alt war wollte ich einen Hund. Mein kleiner Bruder Kevin stimmte meinem Wunsch zu. Immer und immer wieder fragten wir unsere Mama ob wir nicht einen Hund haben koennen. Bis meine Mama endlich sagte: “Hoert auf mit dem Gejammere! Bei uns kommt kein Hund ins Haus! Fertig!” Mein Bruder und ich waren sehr traurig. Jetzt mussten wir uns mit unseren Hasen und zwei Katzen zu Frieden sein.

Als die Zeit verging, rutschte der Gedanke an einen Hund immer weiter in den Hintergrund, aber ganz weg ging er nie. Zu der Zeit, fing mein Papa an also Vertreter zu arbeiten. Er ging von Zoohandlung zu Zoohandlung und verkaufte Tierzubehoer. Eines

Tages, kam mein Papa nach Hause und sagte uns, dass wir morgen mit ihm zu einer Zoohandlung fahren. Meine Mama wunderte sich sehr darüber.

Am nächsten Tag, fuhren wir alle zum Laden. Die Autofahrt schien so lang zu sein. Als wir endlich auf dem Parkplatz waren, sprangen mein Bruder und ich als erstes aus dem Auto. Im Laden sagte uns Papa einen Augenblick zu warten.

Dann auf einmal kamen zwei winzige Hunde auf uns zu gerannt. Mein Papa und der Verkäufer kamen hinter ihnen lachend hergelaufen. Kevin und ich schmissen uns auf dem Boden um mit den Kleinen zu spielen. Einer war Schwarz und hatte einen buschigen Schwanz, die andere war weiss wie Schnee. "Können wir einen mit nach Hause nehmen?" Als ich zu meiner Mama sah, wusste ich die Antwort. Sie schaute Kopfschüttelnd zu meinem Papa, lachte und sagte: "Natürlich nehmen wir einen mit!"

Das war einer der schönsten Tage in meiner Kindheit. An diesem Tag nahmen wir Rambo mit nach Hause. Er war der kleine schwarze Welpe. Er hatte seinen Namen schon von dem Verkäufer bekommen. Zuerst, fanden wir den Namen für solch einen kleinen Hund komisch, aber schon bald wussten wir, warum er ihn bekommen hatte. Jetzt endlich war unsere Familie komplett: Mein Papa, meine Mama, Kevin, ich und natürlich Rambo.

APPENDIX 4: Brainstorming Exit Ticket

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Name: | Datum: |
| Wie kann dir dein Tagebuch beim brainstorming helfen? | |
| Mein Tagebuch kann mir helfen, weil... | |
| <hr/> | |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Name: | Date: |
| How does your journal help you with brainstorming? | |
| My journal is an example of brainstorming, because... | |
| <hr/> | |

APPENDIX 5: Partner Revision Worksheet

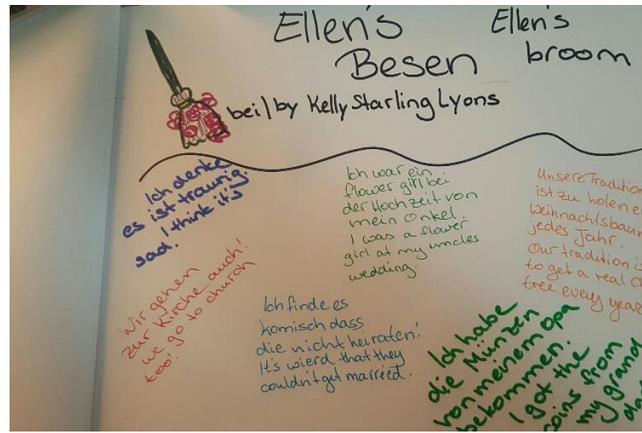
| | |
|--|----|
| Ich überarbeite die Geschichte von _____ | |
| Was mir am besten gefällt ist... | 1. |
| | 2. |
| | 3. |
| Dinge die du nochmal anschauen solltest... | 1. |
| | 2. |
| | 3. |

| | |
|---|----|
| I am revising the story of _____ | |
| What I liked the most was ... | 1. |
| | 2. |
| | 3. |
| Things you should check on again are... | 1. |
| | 2. |
| | 3. |

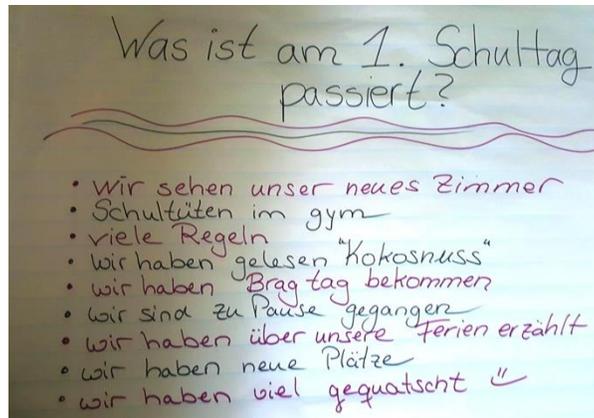
APPENDIX 6: Rubric for the Final Memoir

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Name: _____ | | Date: _____ | |
| Item | 3 (met grade level expectations) | 2 (is approaching grade level expectations) | 1 (has not met grade level expectations) |
| Outline of a narrative | Memoir has a beginning, middle and end. | Memoir is missing a beginning or an end. | Memoir has no clear outline. |
| Student writes a well-elaborated event | Uses more than 3 details to describe the event. | Uses 2 details to describe the event. | Uses only 1 detail to describe the event. |
| Event order | Uses temporal words to signal event order throughout the memoir. | Uses only some temporal words to signal event order. | Uses no temporal words to signal the event order. |
| <u>Additional comments:</u> | | | |
| | | | |

APPENDIX 7: Example of the collection of comments to a memoir.



APPENDIX 8: Example of a brainstorming prompt.

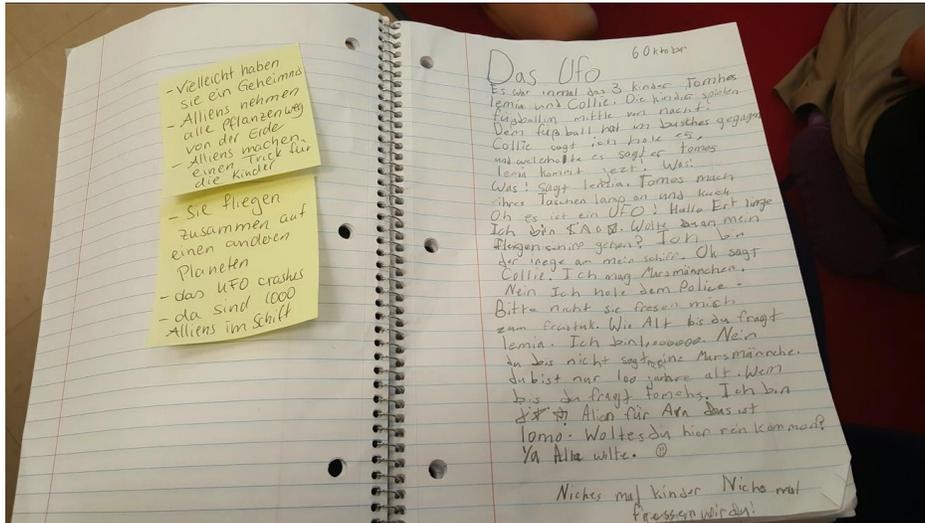


Translation of the example: What happened on the first day of school?

- We saw our new room
- Schultueten ceremony in the gym
- A lot of rules
- We read "Kokosnuss"
- We got brag tags
- We went to recess
- We told each other about summer break
- We have new seats
- We talked a lot

APPENDIX 9: Example of taking notes in the Author's Chair.

The students read the story he wrote to the class. He asked for suggestions on how to expand his story. I, as his teacher, took the suggestions down on sticky notes and gave them to him.



Supplies need for this unit

Paper, chart paper, markers, composition note books, colored pencils, post it notes, dry erase board, and markers.

Notes

¹ Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, page 62.

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003, page 117.

⁵ <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/2/>

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/curriculum/socialstudies/scos/unpacking/2nd.pdf>

⁹ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007.

¹⁰ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007, page 2.

¹¹ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007, page 5.

¹² Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007, page 8.

¹³ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007.

¹⁴ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007, page 8.

¹⁵ Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006, page 17.

¹⁶ Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006, page 15.

¹⁷ Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006.

¹⁸ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007.

¹⁹ Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003, page 109.

²⁰ Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003, page 117.

²¹ *ibid*

²² Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, page 62.

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Graves, D. and J. Hansen. *The Author's Chair*. 1983: 178. Web.

²⁵ Graves, D. and J. Hansen. *The Author's Chair*. 1983: 176. Web.

²⁶ Graves, D. and J. Hansen. *The Author's Chair*. 1983: 182. Web.

²⁷ Kinney, Jeff. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. New York, NY: Amulet Books Imprint of Abrams, 2007.

²⁸ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007.

²⁹ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007, page 20.

³⁰ Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007, page 2.

³¹ Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, 63.

³² *ibid*

³³ Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003, page 3.

³⁴ Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, 63.

³⁵ Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, 61.

³⁶ Graves, D. and J. Hansen. *The Author's Chair*. 1983: 176-183. Web.

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, 62.

³⁹ Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003, page 30.

⁴⁰ Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003.

⁴¹ Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, 62.

⁴² <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/2/>

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/curriculum/socialstudies/scos/unpacking/2nd.pdf>

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Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006.

Daily 5 are a way to structure your literacy block. This book is a well-elaborate guide on how to implement and teach this system.

Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007.

Mentor Texts provides many practical resources to teach writing with the help of literacy. Dorfman and Cappelli describe how a mentor text can become the outline to good writing.

Fletcher, Ralph J., and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001, 61-71.

This article describes how the writing process is a cycle. The teacher should not just foster the result but rather focus on the different processes. Each child will have their own writing cycle and their own approach to writing.

Fritz, Jean, and Margot Tomes. *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?* New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1976.

This book tells about the life of Ben Franklin. It describes his ideas and inventions. He was also the ambassador to England, and of course a politician.

Edwards, Roberta. *Who was George Washington?* Penguin Group, New York, 2009

The book describes George Washington's life and accomplishments as the first president of the United States of America.

Graves, D. and J. Hansen. *The Author's Chair*. 1983: 176-183. Web.

In this article, the reader will be guided through the development of the author concept. The authors describe how reading and writing go hand in hand. An author's chair is an effective strategy in the classroom to activate both.

Khan, Rukhsana, and Sophie Blackall. *Big Red Lollipop*. New York: Viking, 2010.

Rubinia has been invited to a birthday party. For her family from Pakistan it is normal that family members are invited as well, so Rubinia has to take her little sister. Not only was her little sister center of attention, but she also eats Rubinia's lollipop from the goody bag at home. The book describes the older sisters struggle with her little sister. At the end though, the whole scenario is repeated, but this time the little sister gets invited.

Kinney, Jeff. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. New York, NY: Amulet Books Imprint of Abrams, 2007.

The book describes the middle school adventures of Greg Heffley. It is a funny and witty novel about friendship and life as a tween.

Lyons, Kelly Starling., Daniel Minter, and Ryan Thomann. *Ellen's Broom*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2012.

This is the story of Ellen and her family. Slavery has just ended, and African Americans are officially allowed to get married. Before, a broom wedding was all slaves were allowed to have. The book tells the story of how this very special broom became a family tradition.

Piazza, Carolyn L. *Journey: The Teaching of Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003.

This book explains the teaching of writing in elementary grades. Each chapter talks about a different form of writing (journal writing, personal writing, story writing, poetry writing, expository writing and persuasive writing). The chapters are a guide for teachers on how to introduce these styles of writing and explain many different activities to use in a classroom.