



## **Finding access to writing through memoirs**

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This curriculum unit is recommended for third grade German Immersion Language Arts with implementations in Social Studies lessons and can be adapted to English Language Arts.

**Keywords:** Brainstorming, writing workshop, writer's café, drafting, viewing, revising, editing, publishing.

**Teaching Standards:** For a list of Common Core State Standards used in this unit, please see [Appendix 1](#).

**Synopsis:** This curriculum unit looks at how the nonfiction genre of memoir can be implemented into a German immersion classroom. Furthermore, it shows various steps students undertake before creating their final pieces of writing. As a first step, students review the structure of stories and read multiple memoirs. During this time, students find the structure of memoirs as well. In a brainstorming activity, students collect writing ideas and create a journal in which they write first drafts of memoirs about topics based on their life events. Students will use one of their drafts to go through several stages of revising and editing with the help of the teacher and other students. This will be supported by classroom strategies like a writing workshop with a writer's café and one-on-one meetings with the teacher. After this writing process students have the opportunity to publish their memoir in a class book and read it to parents and other students during an *Afternoon full of memoirs*. This curriculum unit should motivate students to write for themselves with meaning by creating a memoir which integrates a personal life event.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 25 students in German Immersion/English Language Arts.*

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

## **Finding access to writing through memoirs.**

*Sylvia Holper*

### **Introduction**

Every person has their own history which is marked by positive as well as negative events. These events make us the person we are today because they impact our lives, whether directly or indirectly. Events provide stories everyone can tell about themselves. Some of these events may be more deeply hidden than others, but when we write, many of these events come back to us. Memoirs provide one way to talk about those life events.

Memoirs are factual stories about someone's life and are part of the non-fiction literary genre. When writing memoirs we remember events from our lives often showing a different experience than our sibling, parent, friend, neighbor, or other people even if they were present at the same time. This is based on our feelings and our thoughts in that particular moment. Very popular samples of memoirs are *A Moveable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway, *Running with Scissors: A Memoir* by Augusten Burroughs, and *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion.<sup>1</sup> In the section *Rationale* I will explain memoirs in more detail.

When I was younger, I used to make collages all the time and collect personal memories by sticking pictures into an album and writing diaries. This writing process helped me improve my writing skills through an inner motivation of talking about topics that mattered to me. As an elementary teacher my goal is to help students find access to writing and love it. At our school, third grade students just begin English instruction. Thus it makes it often difficult for students to find the passion for writing. This is why talking about their own lives is one approach to make writing easier for them as students can often relate better when they have experienced these events.

I strongly believe every child has a story to tell, but often does not know how to tell it. It is my hope that my students will be excited about writing stories in English as well as in German. This is especially important for children learning a second language. They face barriers that might hinder some of them to write passionately. Even though it might not be realistic to have every student become a great writer, it is my goal to make them share their personal life events with us anyway.

In order to reach students from all backgrounds, it is important to identify a common ground. Therefore, it is my understanding that the children have to write about something that they can easily relate to. Often such topics are school, friends, family, and their personal interests/hobbies. In this unit I will cover multiple steps of writing. These are the

introduction and explanation of memoirs, followed by the brainstorming of writing ideas, students' first drafts of writing, several stages of reviewing and editing, as well as a possible publication of my students' work.

## **Demographics**

I am a German Immersion teacher who graduated with a Masters' degree in Elementary and Secondary Education from the University of Education in Ludwigsburg, Germany. My school's name is EE Waddell Language Academy and is located in Charlotte, North Carolina. The school belongs to the Eastern learning community of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). CMS is the second largest school district in North Carolina and the nineteenth largest school district in the United States.

Waddell Language Academy is a nationwide certified K-8 magnet school that has 940 elementary and 447 middle school students. The school was recognized as a Magnet school of Distinction by the Magnet Schools of America in 2016. We have a very active PTSO and the majority of the staff is bilingual. Our school has many different ethnicities attending. We have 24% African-American students, 4% American-Indian, 5% Asian, 20% Hispanic, and 46% Caucasian students. But not only our students have various cultural backgrounds, also 30% of our teachers and teacher assistants are not US citizens.

I am a German citizen who teaches German Immersion for third grade students. German is only one of the five languages our school offers. We also teach Japanese, Chinese, Spanish and French. Every grade level has two classes for each language, except for Japanese with always only one class. Hence, I teach on a team of seven third grade teachers, which provide a great support system because of our multi-cultural backgrounds that bring extensive experience. Waddell Language Academy has been a North Carolina Honor School of Excellence for several years and was awarded with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Melba D. Woodruff Prize for its Exemplary Foreign Language Program in 2012. The ACTFL prize recognizes schools that have their curriculum aligned to the World Readiness Standards for Language Learning and include various languages into their content areas.

The concept of our school is to teach children in a full Immersion environment. This is why many of our teachers and teacher assistants come as exchange partners to Waddell and bring their culture closer to the students. All students should be exposed to the target language the entire school day, which means that my students are taught in German in every subject. I have been a professional teacher for 5 years and this is my third year at Waddell Language Academy. My third grade German class consists of 10 girls and 15 boys in the age of 8 and 9. Only four of them have a German background with either one or both German parents. The majority of the class is English speaking and a few also speak Spanish at home. In all they are very communicative. This school year there are

many children who are diagnosed with ADD and ADHD. All students come from different socio-economic backgrounds that all have to be accommodated.

### **Rationale**

This Curriculum unit is mainly designed for third grade German Immersion classrooms. The unit may be integrated into Social Studies and English Language Arts. As I am the English teacher of third graders from two different German classes this year, I will most likely include this unit partly in my English instruction as well. This unit will be based around reading comprehension and writing skills through the usage of various memoirs. Therefore, I will have my students write their own memoirs and collect these in a book that I am going to use for close reading instructions in my English and German class. This guarantees an appropriate reading level as the stories were written by the same students.

I have been attending the “Exploring Memoirs” seminar instructed by Brian Kissel. Under his guidance we started writing our own memoir pieces that we shared with others. I decided to attend this seminar because I think my third grade students would benefit from improving their writing skills in German and English by talking about their personal life experiences. Often, as teachers, we choose topics that students cannot properly relate to, but everyone has some sort of story to tell about their own lives. Children just need to find a way how to express them. Memoirs offer means to do so.

The first step of this curriculum unit is to understand what memoirs are and how to write them. A memoir focuses on key aspects, themes, or events from someone’s life and can start anywhere in time and place. It feels more personal and strives for emotional truths<sup>2</sup>. When writing a memoir you are the author, researcher, the subject and storyteller, as well as narrator and audience at the same time. A good way to start writing a memoir is to have a list of memorable life events ready. These should be moments of life that have an “emotional resonance” and smaller moments that you value<sup>3</sup>.

While writing memoirs the students are supposed to write the truth of their life. Even though they might lose the affection of someone else, the children will feel “something real”<sup>4</sup>. The students should write with purpose and intent to create a piece of their life that they may rediscover and fill with meaning.

I will use the information gained from this seminar to build a foundation for my students to write about their own lives and thus have an intrinsic motivation for writing. My curriculum unit will be based on my own memoir pieces for the initial introduction to the topic and later, on memoirs written by my students and other authors (see [Appendix 2](#) – *List of classroom material*).

Unfortunately, most of the time memoirs that are in German talk about events of the Second World War. However, this is neither the right topic for young students like mine,

nor does it help the children to build a passion for writing as they cannot relate to it in any way. I will focus on topics that my students should be able to talk about as well. These are experiences from school, with friends, hobbies and interests, and my own family life. Not only will those topics help the students start writing, but the memoirs they create will form a community of young writers that share their ideas and find recognition amongst each other.

My plan is to review nonfictional texts with the students and what different ways of writing there are to express personal stories. This does not only include memoirs, but also biographies, autobiographies, and daily texts like newspaper articles and magazines.

Another focus of this unit shall be the introduction of memoirs as individual life stories. I will start the introduction to memoirs as telling about a small part of someone's life. Instead of retelling an entire life, the children should focus on one significant detail of their life that they can talk and write about. Bomer says that memoirs are a "mere slice of ordinary life – a certain time period, a special relationship, a particular theme or angle on a life"<sup>5</sup>. I am certain that some of the students will not come up with ideas right away which is why the introduction phase to memoirs will be followed by a period of collecting thoughts and memories. This process can be realized through a daily journal that students write into during one specific time at school. A good time for this is right before dismissal as it is easier for the children because they can write about the events of their current school day or during German class.

During the time of collecting thoughts and memories the students will bring in photographs or personal items that they have a special connection with and that they can talk and write about. Some students will write more and some less but this phase will only serve to make them aware of what has already happened in their short lives. In between the first drafts of writing their own memoirs, students will get the opportunity to share and to engage with others in small groups to talk about what they have written and to provide feedback. This feedback is not meant as critique of what the students wrote about, but rather about whether they kept the typical writing characteristics of a memoir.

At the end, I would like for all students to have the opportunity to present their memoirs with a picture they drew to support their story. In addition, I would want to put all memoirs of the children together and create a "memoir book" that they will receive at the end of the school year.

### **Unit goals**

This unit will be held throughout a longer period of time and covers the following Common Core State Standards (please see [Appendix 1: Teaching Standards](#) for more details):

During the brainstorming activity the students introduce a topic and group related information in class to find the topic they want to write about. They are also able to include illustrations when needed to help others understand their stories. This is especially helpful for students with difficulties expressing themselves.

Within the writing process, students write their personal stories and develop them by using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences throughout the entire curriculum unit. While they write their own memoir pieces, the children are going to establish a situation of their past or present and introduce themselves as narrator. Then the students organize their life events in a meaningful sequence.

For a more fluent reading of their memoirs, the students use a dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations as much as possible. Throughout the entire writing process the children need to strengthen their writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing with the guidance and support from peers and the teacher.

Furthermore, students engage in research, reflection, and revision to write routinely and use shorter time frames, like one-on-one meetings with the teacher or at the beginning/end of English and German classes to write about various topics of their daily life and for different audiences like their peers, parents and the teacher. This should be especially beneficial for all students to get as much writing experience as possible and to either add to the memoirs they started or to begin a new one.

In the Social Studies classroom, students can write about events, different people of their lives, as well as the places they visited over time. Memoirs can function as historical narratives too. As a differentiated activity for stronger writers, students can perhaps write their memoirs out of the perspective of another person in their personal histories.

## **Strategies**

For this curriculum unit I will be using various strategies from which I will explain the main strategies further here:

### Journal entries

Every student receives their own journal in the form of a composition book in which they enter all their thoughts every day. Before entries in their daybooks are possible, I will have a few mini-lessons in which the students can brainstorm ideas that they could write about. It will be most helpful for them if the students create a list at the end of their journal to which they can refer to whenever needed. Especially children that have difficulties coming up with topics on their own will benefit from it. Topics that the

children can write about could be for example, important people, places that they visited or like, and special events from their lives.

As part of their English class we already talked about logging their books into their reading log. This way, the children know about writing down what they have read. In this reading log they enter the author's name, the title of the book, the pages they read, and what they liked most about it. To start the actual journal writing I let the students choose to write about one idea that could be an article out of a magazine or newspaper, or picture of an event out of their personal life. What's more important is to get children into the writing habit. Once they start writing about something, they can deepen these stories at a later point and make a real memoir out of it. During this collecting or brainstorming phase students will find a topic they can delve into.

### Writer's café

In this unit the writer's café serves the purpose of giving the students feedback about their writing. Once they start writing their first drafts, the children will work with a few friends to read and talk over their ideas and they will work together to chart their observations <sup>6</sup>. The speaker can tell the listening children what kind of feedback he/she would like to receive. He/she can choose whether the other students can ask questions, give comments or can relate to their stories. The goal is not to judge the work of other children, but to create a writing community that supports each other and gives tips of how to improve their texts stylistically, not content wise (as other students do not have the same insight and experience as the person talking/writing).

There are several possible ways to provide feedback. First, the students listen to the first draft of their classmate and tell the writer what they liked and what he/she could improve. Often, students simply comment on how much was written or whether they liked the story. Sometimes this is even enough for many students to keep their writing going. However, the most vital thing is that the children as young writers get encouraged and positively reinforced. This is why it is important for teachers to model feedback so children can see how they provide feedback to peers.

Then, the students can go further and read the stories of their classmates and put sticky notes on places where they do not understand the meaning, intentions, or the content. On these sticky notes they write questions that might arise or even suggestions of words, sentences and/or ideas that the writer could use instead.

Another way of feedback is for all students to cut their texts into pieces and rearrange them to see organizational possibilities. Afterwards, the students can ask another person to rearrange it. This shows the students a different perspective that they may have not considered yet and could include in their writing. During this process the students shall not leave pieces completely out of the rearranged text as this should be made solely by

the writer himself. Only the writer of the story knows of the importance of all pieces in his/her writing. However, the partner can make suggestions of what could be left out to understand the story.

Students should be clear that giving feedback is not about criticizing another writer, but to support him or her in their different stages of writing. As teacher, I serve as another source of support. I will guide the students in their thinking process and offer small group meetings in which I will talk in more detail about the memoirs of each student. In these small group meetings I will teach the children “how to read, write, talk, recognize their thinking, and listen to one another.”. Mostly, I will record all this “thinking, reflecting, problem-posing, and discovery”<sup>7</sup> into my own daybook.

Questions that I could ask during the first small group meetings are:

- Why did you choose this topic?
- What material do you already have in your journal that could relate to your topic or help you enhance it?

In a second meeting I could ask students follow up questions such as:

- What strategy did you use to edit your memoir and why did you choose this one?
- Was there another draft of other students that helped you improve your story?
- What revision have you started? And did you change parts of your text while you wrote them?
- Have you read your piece to someone or to yourself out loud (to hear or to receive possible improvement ideas)?

In a final meeting, I might ask the children what they found out about their draft as they read it aloud to themselves. I might pose questions such as:

- What places of your writing did you revise?
- Why did you change them and what were you thinking during this process?<sup>8</sup>

Not only can I ask questions during the small group sessions that we are going to have, but also the students can ask questions to each other in the writer’s café. These questions could be:

- What do you want to express with your writing?
- What did you think while writing it?
- What part of your piece did you like the most (so you can keep writing on it or develop it)?

The students will certainly come up with more questions on their own, but these will provide them some guidance to focus on their writing rather than their grammar or style. This kind of guidance should also lead to the students becoming more independent writers that are able to support each other to establish a creative environment.



## Read Aloud

Every week I will read aloud memoirs of mine and others (see [Appendix 2](#) for examples). This will give them an idea of how memoirs sound and how they are structured. These memoirs shall not show the children what topics they should write about, but could give them some good ideas. Then I will work with the students on these memoirs and talk about the main idea (which is one concept of third grade Language Arts) and what the children wonder about. Afterwards, I will go over common characteristics of memoirs which do not have to be solely in text format, but can be picture stories as well. These common characteristics include:

1. The writer tells a personal story based on the truth.
2. The story is significant; it shows what the author learned from the experience.
3. The story shares the relationship between the author and another person, a place, an animal or an object.
4. A memory that is a description from the past.
5. The focus is on one event or point in the author's life.
6. The story tells about the author's experience, more than just the event itself.
7. The story is mostly written in the first person

With the help of read-alouds students can connect to literature on a personal level and understand that they may have experienced similar feelings that have meaning and are worth sharing<sup>9</sup>. For this reason, I will have to choose books that are “rich, enticing, and full of flavor”<sup>10</sup> and help create many personal responses in my students. According to Dorfman (2007) literature becomes “a part of the classroom community, when books are shared throughout the day and across the curriculum” so that it will have an influence on the writing workshop.

## Writing workshop

In the writing workshop that I will conduct with my students, I will include the steps that professional writers do: researching, exploring, collecting, interviewing other students/people, talking about their work in small groups, whole groups, or in one-on-one meetings, reading, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and lastly publishing. The main focus here is on the “writer who uses writing to do powerful things in the world they live”<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary that I will introduce the students to the writing workshop with all its' structures.

The goal of the writing workshop is to help the students begin to imagine what they are about to write. This can be done by providing them with read aloud examples of the sort of writing that I hope my students will produce by the end of my unit. The students need to get beyond the content of the story of a text, memoir, book, etc. before they can

focus on the craft of writing a story on their own<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, when students connect on a personal level, they can begin to understand that they have similar experiences or feelings which allows them to understand their everyday occurrences matter and are worth sharing.

“The books that our students connect with on many levels are the books they fall in love with and want to return to for many reasons. These are the books that become mentors for our writers”<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, I want to create memoirs that my students can connect to and that become their “mentor texts”. For me as their teacher, the writing workshop also provides the opportunity to make real connections with my students as writers.

It is crucial for students to know their goal for keeping a writer’s notebook is to write initial ideas and drafts. The children should be immersed in story writing by absorbing as much as they can from examples of good practice. This means that they can also include a list of story ideas all over their entries and that their narratives are written in a certain sequence. To have the children write without hesitation it is important to approach their writing with respect and to look past errors.

After the students met in their small groups and wrote their first drafts, I want to take the time to have individual conferences with them and talk about their ideas. Although it might be challenging to have a one-on-one conference with every student while all others may not have enough independence to carry on with their writing, this is a very vital step. All students should be able to work with their full concentration on their writing, otherwise it will be difficult to relieve the truth in all stories. Even if there are children that do not come up with good writing ideas, I can pull them together and help them as any topic can become a story.

In the following section I would like to go deeper into what exactly I am going to teach in this unit and how I will combine the activities listed above with my goal of students writing their own memoir pieces.

### **Instructional implementation**

The planning of my curriculum unit will be divided into several lessons that range from teaching about the characteristics of memoirs and reading about them to writing own memoir stories that will be published. Therefore, my lessons incorporate several mini-lessons that will not be described in further detail as it will vary based on students’ progress.

For this unit it is important that the students already bring pre-knowledge that they can use to write their stories. Such pre-knowledge would be the basic concept of how a story

is structured and what a good story looks like. Even though a memoir cannot be compared exactly with a regular nonfiction story like autobiographies, it is helpful for the children to understand that a good story needs descriptive words (adjectives), and tries to get the attention of every reader. To get the attention, the students have to write the truth that can be shocking, emotional, and surprising at the same time. Therefore, it would be helpful to review the characteristics of a nonfiction story and the sequence of a story which always has a beginning, a middle part with a possible climax, and an ending.

After reviewing the basic concepts of a memoir, the outline of my lessons that focus on the goal of writing and writing a memoir, is going to look like this:

### Lesson 1 – Brainstorming and free writing

The students and the teacher will collect ideas of what they could write about in a brainstorming session. Here, I will write down all thoughts of my students on the white board or for a faster process, on the computer that will be projected on my Promethean board. These first ideas should include “writing projects in which they can become deeply involved”<sup>14</sup>.

Then the students can copy these first ideas on the back pages of their journal. Any time the children think about new ideas to write about they can add them to these back pages. Thus, it will be helpful to leave a few pages blank in the back of their journal. This journal serves the purpose of keeping all thoughts of students whenever they want to add something. As it is not always possible to have free writing sessions every day at school throughout the entire school year, I will not ask the students to enter something every day. Their journal should be filled with ideas that can be continued over a longer period of time or simply dismissed as a thought of a moment.

To create a more personal journal, the students will not only have their names on them, but can make it their own decorating project. For that, they can glue personal photos or pictures of magazines and newspapers on it or even write famous quotes and mottos on the cover and back. This will help them make the journal their own and find topics to write about whenever they need inspiration.

Once the brainstorming session is over, I will ask the students to write about one of the ideas that we collected in their journal. I will encourage the students to simply keep writing, even if they do not come up with “good” thoughts about their topic. The goal of this is to get the children into the habit of writing and to not worry about what others might think about them or about their writing style. In this moment of writing I do not expect the students to create a perfect piece. Even after several writing, revising, and editing lessons it might not be their perfect writing, but what matters is that they free their thinking. This is only possible if I help the children lose the pressure of writing something for another grade.

While the students write their first pieces, I am going to write my own as well. It is important that the teacher models writing which is why I will also read out my piece to the students. This way they might lose the conception that their writing cannot include their true thoughts. Another way would be to tell the students in advance that they do not have to read out their text to the class.

The first draft of this writing can be seen in [Appendix 3](#) of this unit. If they want to, the children will get the opportunity to read their pieces out to their classmates. Here, it will be important that no comments about their writing or how they presented it are going to be made to not negatively impact their further writing process. Instead, other students can tell what they liked or what they connected with.

## Lesson 2 – Read-Alouds and finding characteristics of Nonfiction writing

The teaching of nonfiction writing is about “voice, structure, and the convincing balance of opinion and research in the writing”<sup>15</sup>. This means that students first need to research the topic they want to write about. They can use magazines, read other memoirs and about authors inspiring to them. If they want to they can even cut out pictures of newspaper articles or magazines and write about them. One of the most crucial things of writing is though that the students choose their own writing topic.

After we had our first experience of free writing we will now focus on the nonfiction genre. For that, we need to talk about characteristics of nonfiction writing. Based on Janovsky these are: The people, events, or places in the story are true and the facts that the story contains can be proven as true too. Some facts can be omitted, and others can be placed in a certain light, but there have to be facts present in the story. Mostly, the author’s purpose of nonfiction texts is to inform somebody or to express something. There are two types of nonfiction texts: informative and literary nonfiction. The latter includes nonfiction writing that reads like fiction because they can amuse the reader, as well as inform on true stories<sup>16</sup>.

As the focus of this unit is not a genre study of nonfiction stories, but the writing of memoirs, it will not be necessary to let the students write other nonfiction stories than memoirs. However, it will be helpful for the students to read a few other nonfiction stories to know that their stories need to be based on true events, people, and places. Often, students like to include fictional elements to enhance their story, but other memoir examples should show them that this will not be needed here. To better understand that the facts are true in these memoirs, they will read up on parts of the author’s biography.

Examples of memoirs that I will use in my English and German class will be: Sections of *Boy: Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl and parts of Eloise Greenfield’s *Childtimes* (German translations can be found in [Appendix 2](#)). For my German class I will use partly

my own and my students' pieces as it is difficult to find German memoirs that are age-appropriate. Read-alouds are very important for the students to make connections. "By allowing students to share their personal connections to read-alouds in whole-group discussions, we create a reservoir of new meanings from which our students can discover topics to write about"<sup>17</sup>.

I want to capture these topics and keep them safe where students can take them out whenever they need to. Therefore, I will hand out a copy of a treasure chest outline (see [Appendix 4](#) for it) to the students that they can glue into their journal as an addition to their topics list made at the beginning of the lessons. Then the children can always enter new ideas by writing them on sticky notes and putting them in their personal idea treasure chest. Here, these ideas can be small sentences, a few words or simply drawn pictures.

While I read out the memoirs listed above and the students read some on their own in small groups or with a partner, the children will also come up with common characteristics and collect them in their journals.

After we talked about the characteristics of nonfiction stories, read about the biographies of the authors mentioned above and read a few examples of memoirs, we will now go deeper into what memoirs are and start writing our first memoir drafts in the following lesson.

### Lesson 3 – Research and first drafts

At the end of the last lesson the students already began collecting ideas of memoir characteristics. As described in the Read Alouds part of this unit, we will now write a list of the characteristics we found and use this list to write our own memoir drafts. I also mentioned in the previous lesson that it is important that I do not tell the students what to write about, but that the students find their own topics. Real "memoirists determine what is relevant to tell, based on how they wish to represent their lived lives, and it might be the simplest story"<sup>18</sup>. I can only tell them the framework of a memoir. Otherwise, students will not write for themselves and will probably end up writing only a little to nothing. Even if a topic they found does not provide enough material to write about and the students keep discarding their pieces, it still helps them to collect a lot of writing experience. The most important thing is that in the writing workshop we conduct, everyone writes and gets better in it over time and practice. Therefore, it also needs to be okay for students to write their German memoir pieces mixed with their first language like English or even Spanish (based on my classroom students)<sup>19</sup>.

Once we finalized the characteristics list, the students start researching the topics they want to write about. For this, they can also bring objects or pictures to school that have a special meaning to them. As the students are already familiar with "show-and-tell" presentations, they can now present their item through writing instead of talking. Here,

the students already know to tell in the first person and talk about events or objects that are true. Mostly, the children will talk about their family and events that happened in the past. Afterwards, the students will have the opportunity again to read their stories out to their classmates if they want to. Such examples can be seen in the *Students writing about relevant things* images of [Appendix 3](#) in this unit. Now the other students can provide some form of feedback by asking questions or relating to what they wrote. If a classmate asks a question the writer thought he had answered in his text, it means he was not clear enough. But also relating comments could tell the writing student a part of his work was misunderstood or well interpreted.

To write about an object which has meaning to the students is always a little easier for them than to find a topic on their own. However, it is not impossible and can be done in various ways. One way could be that the students read other books of memoir authors, research in newspapers about current topics, or find inspiration in magazine pictures and articles. “In order for students to learn the purpose for writing, they need to find their own material”<sup>20</sup>. Even though I want the students to find their own topics, I will have to make sure that they do not write about inappropriate subjects or topics that could negatively impact other students. For the research process I will provide magazines, newspapers and books for students to work with. Most importantly, I will give the students enough time to write. Although many students might not write good stories at first, they will have spent the time writing and collecting experience to improve.

Now that the students researched their topics and wrote their first memoir drafts, I will describe the following steps in more detail in the next lesson.

#### Lesson 4 - Revision

The children have completed their first draft of a memoir and can now use this piece to continue working on it or disregard it and start a new one. If they decide to go with the topic and continue their story, the students can proceed to the next step of revising it. Therefore, I will show the students that there are several ways of revising a text. I will talk as a whole class activity about the importance of revising a story. Often, we may think it is clear what we are expressing in our story, but others may not understand our intentions and misinterpret it. Stories need to be revised to become easy to read and to capture the reader in the moment.

Not only will it be necessary to show the students how to revise a text, but the students need to keep reading other memoirs during read-alouds and guided reading, as well as during independent reading. In addition, I will have to share my own writings with the class to model the students that I am working on a memoir too and have them comment on my story or give me suggestions as well.

Then I will continue with small groups and one-on-one conferences to offer feedback and suggestions for the students' writing. Amongst themselves the students can also give feedback. However, it is crucial that the students learn to provide productive feedback that does not influence the other writer in a negative way. For this reason, I will start giving feedback to model one way that helps the student to improve his work. The goal is that the students share their techniques and strategies they are using to finalize their writing. To achieve this, the children can also write suggestions or comments and questions on sticky notes after reading a piece of another student or talk about it in partner or small group meetings.

One form of such meetings is the writer's café that I mentioned in the *Strategies* section of this unit. Here, the students come together and find a small group or partner that they can share their writings with. According to Ray, "writers just need to be heard; they need listeners who will nod or laugh or cry or wince at what they have written" <sup>21</sup>. A story wants to be told and needs an audience for it. Some students may decide not to publicize their stories, but usually there are always students that have friends in their class they would like to tell their stories to. Even if this is not the case, as a teacher I can listen to them and provide these students with enough positive and productive feedback that they will be encouraged to enhance their stories and eventually share it.

It might also help when a group of students sit together and read over their memoirs. There they can write notes about what they have discovered and what they would change. The children might take different colored sticky notes where one color means *suggestions*, another *questions/comments*, and again another color may say *stylistic comment*. I will talk more about the latter in the following lesson. Or the students can take their memoir drafts and cut them into meaningful pieces that they can rearrange. Sometimes they might discard a few pieces completely and therefore add another one or simply put their pieces in a different order. This way they see what is necessary and what can be left out or needs to be explained more. Other classmates can help them.

This lesson of revising the students' memoirs can go over a longer period of time as it is a long process for writers to find their writing good enough to proceed to the final step. Some students may never be completely satisfied with their work and it is my job as a teacher to encourage them to be less self-critical and view their writing as a first step towards becoming a great writer. These students may need more experience that they will develop over years to come. "In an increasingly crowded curriculum, it is essential that we still carve out blocks of time for a writing workshop and that we give our students opportunities to become authors" <sup>22</sup>. However, I will need to tie some grading and evaluation criteria to the publication of the students' memoirs. These will be explained more in the next lesson as well.

## Lesson 5 – Editing and Publishing

The students have written their first drafts of memoirs and used various strategies of revising them for a longer time. Now they will focus on editing their stories to have them stylistically correct. This means that they have to look for various text structures, aspects of the language system such as punctuation, and the point of view in the story that should stay in the first person. Therefore, another whole-class teaching session might be necessary. Then I will talk about the importance of the aspects mentioned to have a story that everyone is able to read fluently. In [Appendix 5](#) you can find the rubric I will use to assess their memoir.

Throughout the writing workshop I will talk in one-on-one conferences with the students about their drafts. This reflection of their writing will help me evaluate their work. For this, I will ask questions like:

- What did you think while writing it?
- Why did you choose this topic?

It helps me to know whether the student researched his topic and if he/she actually took a deeper look into memoir writing. Another evaluation method would be to look at the final memoir that the students wrote and see if they included everything they learned about memoirs and memoir writing.

After the children edited their memoir pieces, they will publish them. For this I will put the memoirs together and bind them as a book. The students will have another opportunity to present their memoirs to their classmates, as well as to their parents and other classes. Therefore, we will invite them to our class for a special event and I will ask the students to read their memoirs. If they decide that they do not want to read theirs, I will either ask them if I can read it out or if another student might read it to the audience. Sometimes, your own memoir gets a completely different perspective and meaning if someone else reads it.

During this time, I do not want to force the students to read their pieces, but I am certain that they have gained enough confidence to read their work. Otherwise, the audience will have the chance to read the memoirs in the published book. I would like to have a copy for all students to remember their first published memoir. It is to wish for that the students get passionate enough about their writings that they continue to write memoirs and even try themselves on other genres. But I am confident that the students will experience an event where the audience responds to their writing with laughter, wonder, astonishment, and perhaps even crying out of a personal connection to the story.



## **Appendix 1 –Teaching Standards**

### English Language Arts/German

The students can introduce a topic and group related information together in class which will be easier for them instead of finding a topic on their own. And they will be able to include illustrations when useful to help their comprehension (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2.A). The pictures can also support their memoirs as it often helps to understand them better. Especially when some students may have difficulties expressing exactly what they mean.

During the writing process, the students will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3). These techniques will be developed throughout the entire curriculum unit. While they write their own memoir pieces, the children are going to establish a situation of their past or present and introduce the narrator and/or character (mostly themselves), and organize their life event sequence that unfolds naturally in the text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.A).

To enhance their memoirs, the students use a dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations as much as possible in their writing (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.B). As writing is not a linear process, the children will need to strengthen their writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing with the guidance and support from peers and adults (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.5).

In addition, the students will have time for research, reflection, and revision to write routinely and use shorter time frames, like single sittings or a day or two for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.10). This should be especially beneficial for all students to get as much writing experience as possible and to either add to the memoirs they started or to start a new one.

### Social Studies

The events, different people of their lives, as well as the places they visited over time can be explained through the students' historical narratives. Memoirs can be these historical narratives too (CCSS.HISTORY.3.H.2.1). Indirectly, the students also show how much changed over time even if the students' lives has been not too long so far. This way, the children can also portray multiple perspectives through their narratives. Perhaps, this might be rather a task for the stronger writers, but at least one perspective (their own) will be shown (CCSS.HISTORY.3.H.2.2).

## **Appendix 2 - List of memoirs used in classroom**

The following are translations of memoirs from Eloise Greenfield's and Lessie Jones Little's "Childtimes", as well as Roald Dahl's "Boy: Tales of Childhood" which I will use during Read Alouds.

### **About My Mother's Mother (page 8)**

Mary Eliza Barnes would one day be my grandmamma, but when she was young, she was held a slave in Bertie County, a large farming area in North Carolina. She told my mama about it when Mama was a little girl, and Mama told me.

I don't know Grandmama's real last name. She wasn't allowed to use it. Slaves had to go by the name that the white family had, the family that the law said owned them, and Grandmama was held by the Barnes family. They made her work out in the fields all day, every day. Sick or well, good weather or bad, she had to work. And after slavery was over, she kept on working in those same fields for a little bit of pay and a place to live. She didn't know any other way to make a living, and she stayed there for a good while.

Some of Grandmama's children were born on that farm. One of them was named Martha Ann.

### **German translation: Über die Mutter meiner Mutter**

Mary Elizabeth Barnes würde eines Tages meine Großmutter sein, aber als sie jung war, wurde sie als Sklavin in einer großen Farmgegend in Bertie County gehalten. Sie erzählte es meiner Mutter als sie noch ein kleines Mädchen war und Mama erzählte es dann mir.

Ich kenne Großmutter's richtigen Nachnamen nicht. Sie durfte ihn nicht benutzen. Sklaven mussten den Namen annehmen, den die weiße Familie trug, also die Familie bei denen das Gesetz sagte, ihnen gehören sie. Und Großmutter wurde von der Barnes Familie fest gehalten. Wegen ihnen musste Großmutter den ganzen Tag auf dem Feld arbeiten, jeden Tag. Ob sie krank war oder nicht, ob es gutes oder schlechtes Wetter hatte, sie musste immer arbeiten.

Und nachdem die Sklaverei vorbei war, arbeitete sie weiterhin für ein wenig Geld und einen Ort zum Wohnen auf genau diesen Feldern. Sie kannte keinen anderen Weg um Geld zu verdienen und sie blieb dort für eine ganze Weile.

Einige von Großmutter's Kindern sind auf dieser Farm geboren. Eine davon nannte sie Martha Ann.

### **School (pages 33-35)**

The school we went to was a one-room schoolhouse, a little square building with a big old potbellied stove inside. In the winter, the boys used to take turns going to school early in the morning to start the fire in the stove. That fire would be just blazing when the rest of us got there, and the room would be so warm.

Our seats were long benches, and we didn't have desks. We wrote on slates in our laps with a little piece of chalk. Mr. Highsmith – that was our teacher – he used to walk up and down between the benches, smiling, while we studied our books. We had to study, study, study. We'd be some kind of glad when twelve o'clock came and we could go out for recess.

Most of the time we played in the schoolyard, but sometimes when the weather was nice and warm, we'd walk a ways from the school to a road where there were all these mulberry trees with ripe mulberries just waiting to be picked. We'd find some lightwood knots, those little pieces of pine wood you see lying in the woods sometimes, and we'd throw them up at the branches to knock the berries down. We had the best old times eating and getting our faces and hands all purple and sticky.

When recess was over, Mr. Highsmith would ring this little bell like the one Mama rang for us to come in to dinner. But if we were right in the schoolyard, he wouldn't ring the bell. He'd come to the schoolhouse door and call, "Books! Books!" He meant it was time for us to get back to those books and study some more.

### **German translation: Schule**

Die Schule zu der wir gingen, war ein ein-Zimmer Schulhaus, ein kleines quadratisches Gebäude mit einem großen, alten Pottkesselherd darin. Im Winter gingen die Jungen abwechselnd morgens früher in die Schule um bereits das Feuer anzumachen. Dieses Feuer würde dann nur so pusten wenn der Rest von uns käme und das Zimmer würde sehr warm sein.

Unsere Sitzbänke waren lang und wir hatten keine Tische. Wir schrieben auf Schiefertafeln auf unseren Schößen mit einem kleinen Stück Kreide. Herr Highsmith, das war unser Lehrer, lief gewöhnlich zwischen unseren Bänken hin und her, und lächelte während wir unsere Bücher lasen. Rechtschreibbücher, Lesebücher und Arithmetikbücher. Wir mussten lernen, lernen, lernen. Wir würden ziemlich froh sein wenn es 12 Uhr war und wir zur Pause raus durften.

Meistens spielten wir auf dem Spielplatz, aber wenn das Wetter schön und warm war, liefen wir manchmal von der Schule zu einer Straße voller Maulbeerbäumen mit reifen Maulbeeren die nur darauf warteten gepflückt zu werden. Wir würden Leichtholzknotten finden, diese kleinen Teile von Kieferbäumen die du manchmal in den Wäldern herumliegen sehen kannst. Und dann würden wir diese an die Zweige hoch werfen, damit die Beeren herunterfallen. Wir hatten eine großartige Zeit die Beeren zu essen und unsere Hände und Gesichter ganz lila und klebrig zu bekommen.

Wenn die Pause vorbei war, würde Herr Highsmith seine kleine Klingel läuten. Genauso wie die von Mama mit der sie uns immer zum Abendessen in das Haus klingelt. Aber wenn wir direkt auf dem Spielplatz wären, würde er die Klingel nicht läuten. Er würde an die Schulhaustür kommen und rufen: "Bücher! Bücher!" Er meinte damit, dass es Zeit wäre wieder zurück zu den Büchern zu gehen und weiter zu lernen.

## **Extract from Roald Dahl's "Boy: Tales of Childhood" (Pages 75&76)**

### First day

In September 1925, when I was just nine, I set out on the first great adventure of my life – boarding-school. My mother had chosen for me a Prep School in a part of England which was as near as it could possibly be to our home in South Wales, and it was called St Peter's. The full postal address was St Peter's School, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

Weston-super-Mare is a slightly seedy seaside resort with a vast sandy beach, a tremendous long pier, an esplanade running along the sea-front, a clutter of hotels and boarding-houses, and about ten thousand little shops selling buckets and spades and sticks of rock and ice-creams. It lies almost directly across the Bristol Channel from Cardiff, and on a clear day you can stand on the esplanade at Weston and look across the fifteen or so miles of water and see the coast of Wales lying pale and milky on the horizon.

On the first day of my first term I set out by taxi in the afternoon with my mother to catch the paddle-steamer from Cardiff Docks to Weston-super-Mare. Every piece of clothing I wore was brand new and had my name on it. I wore black shoes, grey woolen stockings with blue turnovers, grey flannel shorts, a grey shirt, a red tie, a grey flannel blazer with the blue school crest on the breast pocket and a grey school cap with the same crest just above the peak. Into the taxi that was taking us to the docks went my brand new trunk and my brand new tuck-box, and both had R. DAHL printed on them in black.

### **German translation**

Im September 1925, als ich neun Jahre alt war, machte ich mich auf zu meinem ersten großen Abenteuer: ein Internat. Meine Mutter wählte eine Vorbereitungsschule in einem Teil Englands aus, welcher so nah wie möglich zu unserem Zuhause in South Wales war. Der Name des Internats war St Peter's. Die komplette Postadresse war St Peters Schule, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

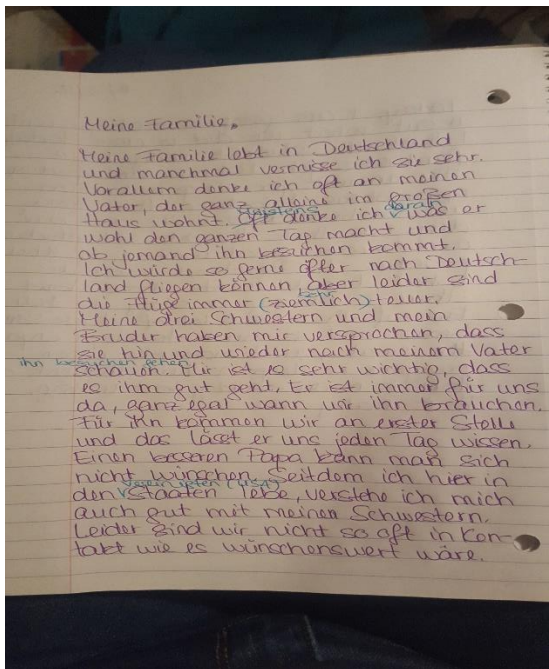
Weston-super-Mare ist ein etwas schäbiges Küstenresort mit einem breiten Sandstrand, einem riesig langen Pier, einer zur Küste gerichteten Promenade, einer Ansammlung von Hotels und Pensionen, sowie ungefähr 10 000 kleinen Läden die Eimer, Schaufeln und Stieleis verkaufen. Es liegt fast direkt gegenüber vom Bristol Kanal in Cardiff. An einem klaren Tag kannst du auf der Promenade in Weston stehen und über die etwa fünfzehn Meilen oder so an Wasser blicken und die blasse und milchige Küste von Wales am Horizont sehen.

Am ersten Tag meines ersten Semesters wurde ich von einem Taxi zusammen mit meiner Mutter gefahren, damit wir die Fähre von Cardiff nach Weston-super-Mare bekommen konnten. Jedes Kleidungsstück das ich trug war ganz neu und hatte meinen Namen darauf. Ich trug schwarze Schuhe, graue Wollsocken mit blauen Krägen, kurze graue Flannelhosen, ein graues Hemd, eine rote Krawatte, ein grauer Flannelblazer mit dem blauen Schulwappen auf meiner Brusttasche und einer grauen Schulmütze mit dem

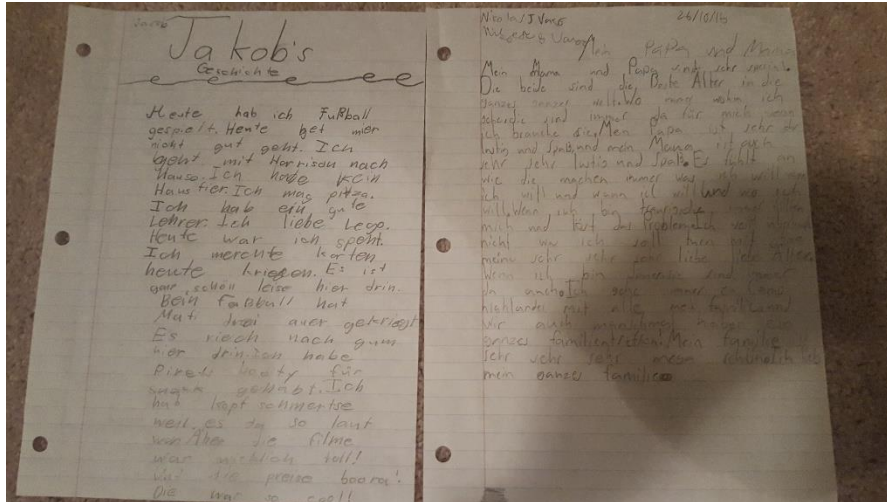
selben Wappen kurz oberhalb der Spitze. In dem Taxi welches uns zur Station fuhr, begleitete uns mein ganz neuer Koffer und meine nigel-nagel-neue Faltschachtel. Beides hatte den Namen R. Dahl mit schwarzer Farbe aufgedruckt.

## Personal memoir examples

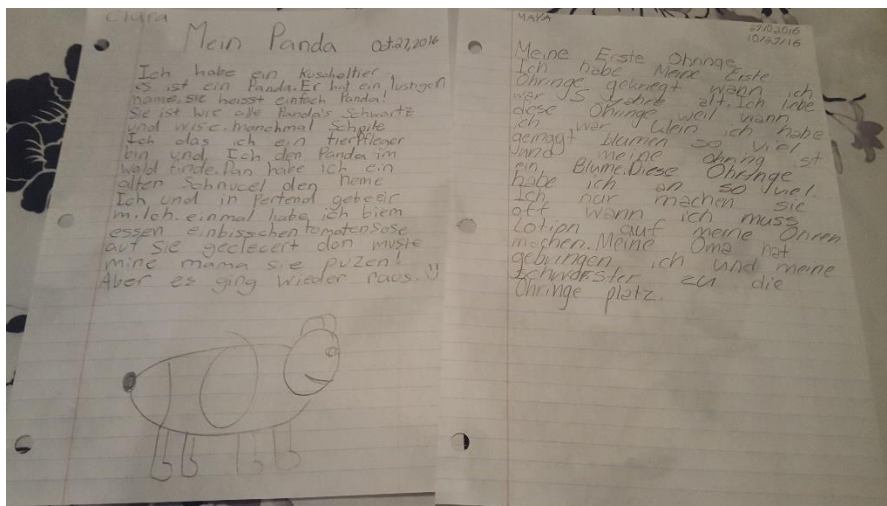
I am going to use several personal pieces like the following to model writing for my students. The first revising step can be seen as well.



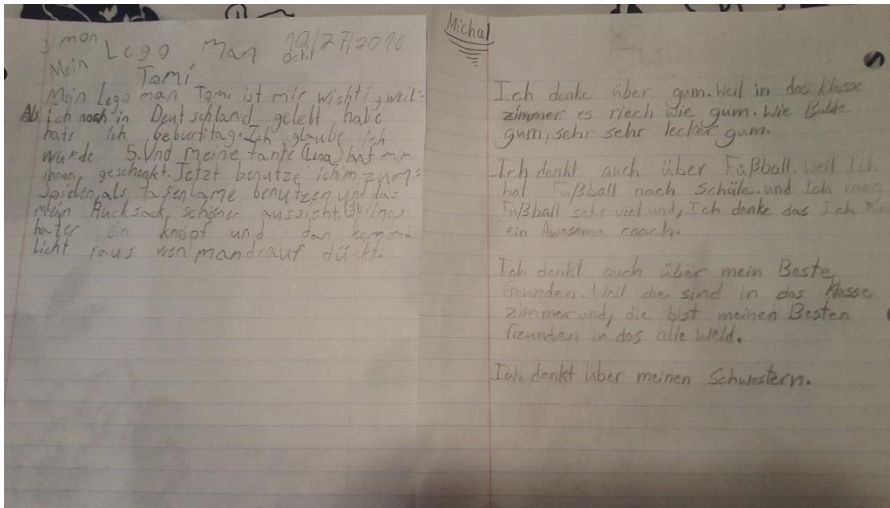
## Appendix 3 – Student Writing Samples



Student writing about their life events

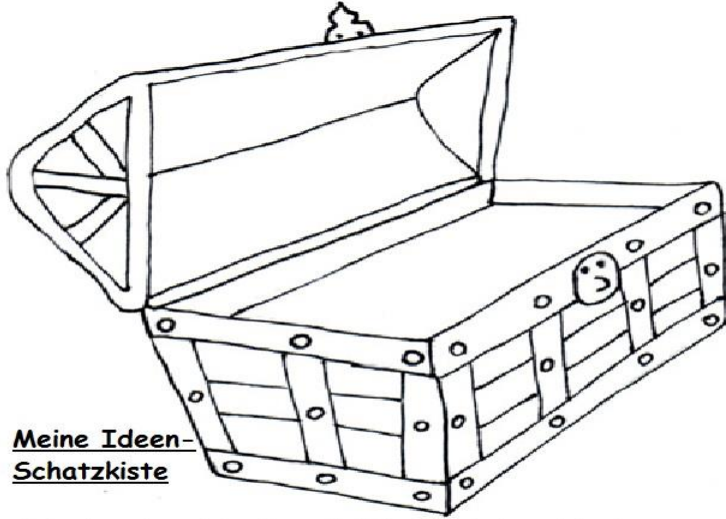


Students writing about valuable things 1



Students writing about valuable things 2

#### Appendix 4 – The Treasure Chest outline



Schreibe in diese Schatzkiste alle Ideen die dir beim Schreiben einer Geschichte helfen.

Students can write their ideas in this treasure chest.



### Appendix 5 – Memoir Rubric

To assess the memoir that my students created, I will need to use the rubric shown below. This is a helpful feedback to me and my students in order to see how much the children were able to implement what they have learned about memoirs.

<b>3 points/each</b>	<b>2 points/each</b>	<b>1 point/each</b>	<b>Points achieved</b>
Focus of story is on one personal life.	Focus of story is on two life events.	Focus of story is on too many different life events.	
The story is mostly written in the past.	The story is written in the past, but has many time changes.	The story is mostly written in the present.	
The story is written out of the author's perspective in first person.	The story is written in first person, but contains many changes in perspectives.	The story is not written out of the author's perspective and not in first person.	
The story states the relationship between all participating characters.	The story states the relationship between only a few characters of the story.	The story does not show the relationship between all participating characters.	
Enough descriptive words were used to show emotions etc. and to empathize with the author.	Descriptive words were used in the story, but emotions were not fully described.	There were barely any descriptive words used to show the emotions, etc. to empathize with the author.	
The text shows a clear structure with a beginning, main part and ending.	The text shows structures of a story, but they cannot clearly identified.	The text shows no sequencing of beginning, main part and ending.	
The event described is significant and shows what author learned from this experience.	The event described seems to be significant, but doesn't fully show what author learned from this experience.	The event described has no clear significance to the author and is randomly selected. What the author learned from this cannot be detected.	
		<b>Total points achieved:</b>	_____

## Supplies needed for this unit

Lined paper and composition books for student journals and memoir drafts, colored dry-erase markers and white board for teaching lessons, different colored sticky-notes for students to edit their memoirs, multiple colored pencils for revision of writings, and worksheets listed above.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Casano, Ann n.d. Web. 29 Oct. 2016 < <http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-memoir-definition-examples-quiz.html>.>

<sup>2</sup> Cleave, Ryan Van. Web. 29 Oct. 2016 < <http://www.dummies.com/education/language-arts/getting-published/memoir-writing-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/>.>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, Marion Roach. *The Memoir Project - A Thoroughly Non-Standardized Text for Writing & Life*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011: 4.

<sup>5</sup> Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning, and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005: 4.

<sup>6</sup> Calkins, Lucy. *Crafting True Stories*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2013: 7.

<sup>7</sup> Brannon, Lil. "From Workbook to Working Book." *Thinking out loud on paper; the student daybook as a tool to foster learning*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2008: 11.

<sup>8</sup> Ray, Katie Wood. "Exploring Inquiry as a Teaching Stance in the Writing Workshop." *Language Arts*, January: 238-247, Vol. 83 No. 3. National Council of Teacher of English, 2006: 246.

<sup>9</sup> Dorfman, Lynne R. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland: Stenhouse Publisher, 2007: 20.

<sup>10</sup> Harwayne, Shelley. *Lasting Impressions: Weaving Literature into the Writing Workshop*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992: 62.

<sup>11</sup> Ray, Katie Wood. "Understanding the Essential Characteristics of the Writing Workshop." *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001: 5.

<sup>12</sup> Dorfman, Lynne R. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland: Stenhouse Publisher, 2007: 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ray, Katie Wood. "Understanding the Essential Characteristics of the Writing Workshop." *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001: 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>16</sup> Janovsky, Angela. n.d. Web. 29 Oct. 2016. <http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-nonfiction-definition-examples.html#transcriptHeader>.

<sup>17</sup> Dorfman, Lynne R. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland: Stenhouse Publisher, 2007: 20.

<sup>18</sup> Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning, and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005: 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ray, Katie Wood. "Understanding the Essential Characteristics of the Writing Workshop." *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001: 14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>22</sup> Gibney, Tara. "Teaching Memoir in the Elementary School Classroom: A Genre Approach." *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 66: 243-253. International Literacy Association, 2012: 252.

## **Bibliography for teachers**

Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning, and Triumph Over Tests*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005: 4-6.

This book provides reasons why teaching memoirs is important and states the different stages that writers go through during their memoir writing. It is a good book to identify the meaning of memoirs for children and adults.

Brannon, Lil. "From Workbook to Working Book." *Thinking out loud on paper; the student daybook as a tool to foster learning*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2008: 11.

This section of the book shows the importance of a student daybook that is a powerful tool for remembering relevant content from our daily life. It also shows how helpful it can be to organize our life.

Calkins, Lucy. *Crafting True Stories*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2013: 7.

This book talks about the purpose of mentor texts and what can be used for this. In addition, it states read alouds as important model to guide students to the kind of writing that is asked for. It is a helpful tool in the decision making process of what book to pick for read alouds to students.

Casano, Ann. n.d. "What is a memoir? Definition and Examples." *Study.com*.

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-memoir-definition-examples-quiz.html>.

This website provides helpful information about what memoirs are and how they can be compared to other non-fiction writings like autobiographies. It offers a definition and possible examples of memoirs.

Cleave, Ryan Van. n.d. "Memoir writing for dummies cheat sheet." *Dummies.com*.

Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://www.dummies.com/education/language-arts/getting-published/memoir-writing-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/>.

This website offers good facts about memoirs and what aspects they have to include. It also shows the difference between memoirs and autobiographies so a mixture can be avoided.

Dahl, Roald. *Boy: Tales of Childhood*. New York: Puffin Books, 1984: 75-76.

Roald Dahl tells his personal life experiences in a humorous way. He explains how he nearly lost his nose in a car accident and how he used to be a candy tester for Cadbury's. This Chapter book gives plenty of opportunity to laugh and relate.

Dorfman, Lynne R. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland: Stenhouse Publisher, 2007: 20.

This book is a very good resource to find the right choice of books for read alouds and other classroom use. It especially focuses on how crucial it is to research before reading and what aspects need to be included in the decision making.

Gibney, Tara. "Teaching Memoir in the Elementary School Classroom: A Genre Approach." *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 66: 243-253. International Literacy Association, 2012: 252.

With the help of a writing workshop approach a teacher describes how she included a memoir study in his sixth grade classroom. This article also talks about the use of various mini-lessons for the stages of writing like brainstorming, planning, the use of senses in memoir writing, and strategies for revision.

Greenfield, Eloise, and Lessie Jones Little. *Childtimes. A Three-Generation Memoir*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1979: 8, 33-35.

This book provides details about growing up in times of slavery and depression. It tells with honesty about three generations of black women remembering their *childtimes* spanning a century of American history.

Harwayne, Shelley. *Lasting Impressions: Weaving Literature into the Writing Workshop*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992: 62.

In this helpful book stories of children are described that show how important it is to include many different genres and books into a writing workshop.

Janovsky, Angela. n.d. *Study.com*. Accessed October 29, 2016.

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-nonfiction-definition-examples.html#transcriptHeader>.

This website is a good resource to find the characteristics and types of nonfiction and offers examples of popular nonfiction stories.

Ray, Katie Wood. "Exploring Inquiry as a Teaching Stance in the Writing Workshop." *Language Arts*, January: 238-247, Vol. 83 No. 3. National Council of Teacher of English, 2006: 246.

This article talks about the inquiry stance that asks students to rather find their own topics and ask their own questions than the teacher providing all the information they need. This way students learn to be independent thinkers and are true to their product.

Ray, Katie Wood. "Understanding the Essential Characteristics of the Writing

Workshop." *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001: 4-14.

This article puts the focus on the writer and the writing and the steps that writers undertake throughout a writing workshop. Ray gives very good examples and guidelines on how to approach writing with the planning of time, how to teach students and the importance of structured management.

Smith, Marion Roach. *The Memoir Project - A Thoroughly Non-Standardized Text for Writing & Life*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011: 4.

This very engaging book is a great tool to understand memoir writing and offers interesting methods how to write with meaning. It also explains the role of memoirs in people's strive for self-examination.

I will use my students' memoirs for further reading comprehension activities.