Say it with Words: Giving Your Voice an Identity

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Creative Writing, grades 9-12

Keywords: voice, creativity, authenticity, writing, audience, purpose, character, dialogue, journal, narrative

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: This unit is designed for a mixed grade, mixed level high school Creative Writing elective class. However, it could be altered for a writing unit in middle or high school ELA/Literacy classes as well. Throughout this unit, students will use a variety of writing exercises and readings to work towards identifying a writing voice of their own. Modeled after the 2016 CTI Seminar "Writing with Power: No Fear Here" led by Dr. Brenda Flanagan, this unit will help students overcome their writing fears and learn to use writing as a tool for self-expression. Too often in school, students are forced to write about topics they aren't interested in or in formats that may be cumbersome and repetitive. Through the readings and writing activities in this unit, students will be allowed more freedom and creativity, which is sometimes missing from other courses with strict standards or testing limitations. Their culminating project at the end of the unit will be a collection of original works selected by the student (with peer and teacher guidance/input) that portray the students' best representation of his/her writing voices.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 38 students in Creative Writing elective class, grades 9-12.

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Say it with Words...Giving Your Voice an Identity

M. Amanda Soesbee

"This is what I learned: that everyone is talented, original,
and has something important to say." ~Brenda Ueland

Introduction/Rationale
In today's education, students are often tested by standardized measures so much that they lose the ability to express themselves creatively, whether through music, art, or words. Standardized measures have their validity in many situations, and tracking data can be beneficial when trying to move students further along in their learning. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) measure specific, often linear objectives in core subjects where students learn to build upon skills they master. However, there is so much learning that can't be measured on a standardized scale and should be taught more holistically. In Creative Writing class, an English Language Arts elective, my ultimate goal is to provide students with an avenue through which to develop their sometimes suppressed creative talents. Even in teaching classes that follow the CCSS, I am guilty of spending too much time focusing on the tested objectives and neglecting to nurture the more abstract areas of a learner. I need to remember to teach more to the whole child. North Mecklenburg High School is an IB school, and structuring my units and lessons after the IB/MYP (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme) model allows me to plan and design conceptually. For instance, in the IB program, Learner Profile traits help students understand what type of learner and person they are; using words such as "reflective," "communicator," and "risk-taker," students can start to put labels on the ways in which they best approach their education.[4] They can shift from data-driven instruction to a more authentic approach. In the midst of test scores and numbers, the IB/MYP model reminds me to use scores and data as a necessary and useful tool for increasing student learning, but to allow the conceptual themes to drive education. In turn, students receive genuinely comprehensive learning.

By applying the IB/MYP conceptual unit design to a Creative Writing elective class, I was able to begin my planning with a key concept in mind and move toward an authentic formative assessment at the end rather than beginning with a standardized test at the forefront. For this specific unit, the conceptual idea revolves around an author's voice.

It is my aim to help students in Creative Writing learn to recognize and grow their inquisitive, creative natures alongside their more academically related skills. As Ueland says, everyone has something to say, and my goal is to provide the platform on which students can say it. I was delighted to be a part of Dr. Brenda Flanagan's CTI Seminar "Writing with Power: No Fear Here" as it was the perfect fit for what I am attempting to accomplish with this unit. Students should know that their voices matter, that their words are important. They should, at times, be allowed to think more about what they *want* to

say rather than what they're *supposed* to say. I'm weary of the often-asked question, "What do you want me to write?" I'd like to see students become so familiar and comfortable with their own voices that they don't need to ask that question or be told what to write.

The purpose of this unit, which can certainly be adapted for English Language or Literature classes as well, is to encourage creativity in students who sometimes lose their voices in the midst of standardization. Through units like this one, students will leave Creative Writing class, able to hold on to their individual voice while still striving for success and growth in their core subject areas.

I teach Yearbook classes as well, for which Creative Writing is a prerequisite, and I have seen a growing trend over the past few years of students lacking the creative skills and original styles in their writing to be able to produce news articles that are of much substance. Everything students write sounds the same; every story or feature reads as if it were written by a machine in any school, anywhere. With this unit on crafting an authentic voice, I hope to start changing that. I hope to begin noticing a movement back toward individualized style in writing.

Background/Demographics

North Mecklenburg, a Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District high school, is situated in northern Mecklenburg County in Huntersville, NC. It is a 65 year old school steeped in tradition and rich in history. However, most students who attend North Meck for the past three years are from nearby Charlotte as the boundary lines dictate. North Meck families are predominantly from low to middle class socioeconomic backgrounds. North Meck also houses three magnet programs: International Baccalaureate, Career and Technical Education, and World Languages. Our school follows the Common Core State Standards and the NC Department of Instruction standards. Student population is almost 2000 students, grades 9-12. From 2008-2016, our population has ranged from 200-2300, so we have not seen much fluctuation in the total number of students. However, the number of students on free and reduced lunch has increased from 17.7 to 57.5, showing the decrease in socioeconomic status of our families.[6]

My Creative Writing class is comprised of 38 students from 9-12 grades, 20 girls and 18 boys. Students are African-American, Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern. About ten of the students are in the IB/MYP magnet, three are labeled with learning disabilities, and one is diagnosed autistic. Differentiation will be key when designing lessons and activities for this class. Students can elect to take Creative Writing as part of their graduation requirements to fulfill their course requirements, so many have chosen to take this class. However, our master schedule does not have much flexibility, so others are enrolled in the class because there simply wasn't another choice. As Creative Writing is a prerequisite for Newspaper or Yearbook class, the units and lessons

taught are often related to journalistic reporting. My expectations are high for every student as I believe that this unit can help each and every one develop their voice in their writing, but I am sensitive to the obstacles or limitations students might need extra help in overcoming.

Last year, North Meck was reported as having a ranking of two out of five stars in the state of NC. According to our test scores from 2008-2016, we have fallen below average, from 66.88% to 34.21% in average state standard tests.[6] Therefore, our school-wide focus this year is on data-driven instruction and analysis. While Creative Writing, and specifically this unit, is less driven by data and more pliable in nature, I believe that strengthening a student's writing skills can benefit him in many other areas as well. Reading comprehension can increase drastically using writing as a tool: "Writing about a text enhances comprehension because it provides students with a tool to visibly and permanently record, connect, analyze, personalize, and manipulate key ideas in text."[5] So, while the initial focus of this unit is to help students find their own individual voice through writing, I believe as a secondary benefit, it will also help students show growth in other courses as well, especially where reading comprehension is a factor.

Objectives
Creative Writing class does not have its own list of objectives in the CCSS, so I have chosen one strand from the English Language Arts Standards for Writing from which to pull my unit objectives. These are a combination of the standards for grades 9-12. Activities throughout my unit will use, alone or in combination, these standards to give focus to the lessons.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A
Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.B and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C
Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole (11-12.3.C adds: and build toward a particular tone and outcome, e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution.)
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D
Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

In the next few years, North Meck is planning to move to a whole-school International Baccalaureate model. Therefore, I'm relying heavily on the IB/MYP style of unit planning for this Creative Writing unit. CW is not an IB/MYP labeled course, but it is my philosophy that the IB/MYP way of teaching is best for all students. When unit planning in the IB/MYP program, you begin with a Key Concept, which is the overarching abstract idea of your unit. The Key Concept for this Creative Writing unit will be "Identity." Related Concepts, the next step on the unit planner, are self-expression and point of view, which are closely tied to Identity and voice. Further, each IB/MYP unit plan has a global context. "Using global contexts, MYP students develop an understanding of their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet."[4] The purpose of this is to guide students in thinking outside of themselves and make connections to the world around them. There are six global contexts to choose from, and for this unit I have selected "Identities and Relationships." Combining the Key Concept, Related Concepts, and Global Context allows teachers to write a Statement of Inquiry that will drive the unit. For this unit, the statement is: An author's identity helps shape his writing voice by means of self-expression, changing points of view, and exploration of human nature and psychological and social development. Inspired by the Statement of Inquiry, the teacher uses Inquiry Questions to guide students through the various lessons of the unit. Inquiry Questions are in three categories: factual, conceptual, and debatable.

Inquiry Questions:
Some of my factual questions, which are content based, knowledge driven, and encourage recall/comprehension, are: What is 'voice' in writing? What are some factors that determine an author's voice? What is point of view? How does a reader determine point of view? What is tone?
Conceptual questions - which enable exploration, encourage contradiction, and lead to deeper understanding - for this unit include:
How can self-expression help an author develop voice and define a point of view? How can an author use voice to impact human nature? Does an author's tone lead to an understanding of his voice?
And finally, my debatable questions, which promote debate and discussion, explore issues from multiple perspectives, and encourage synthesis, are:
Does a person's psychological state of mind affect his voice or point of view? Should a writer use his voice to speak out for or against moral and ethical causes? Does a writer's voice evolve as his social development changes?

From the IB/MYP Language and Literature guide, four criterions are used as guiding objectives for unit planning. They are: A-Analyzing, B-Organizing, C-Producing Text, and D-Using Language.[4] From these criterion, I have selected four strands for this unit:

>Aii. analyze the effects of the creator's choices on an audience
>Bi. employ organizational structures that serve the context and intention
>Cii. make stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary, and visual devices
>Di. use appropriate and varied vocabulary, sentence structures, and forms of expression.

These four strands best exemplify the goals I'm trying to help students reach throughout this unit. The language for students will be from the IB/MYP curriculum as I will also use rubrics from that curriculum to assess student work.

Strategies

Journaling

Students will begin each class with a silent time of free-writing in their Creative Writing journals. I will provide a prompt, such as a quote or question, to which students will respond. Some journal prompt quotes include:

>A. "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." ~Will Rogers
>B. "Get it down. Take chances. It may be bad, but it's the only way you can do anything really good." ~William Faulkner
>C. "Why do writers write? Because it isn't there." ~Thomas Berger
>D. "It's none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think you were born that way." ~Ernest Hemingway
>E. "If I hold back, I'm no good. I'm no good. I'd rather be good sometimes than holding back all the time." ~Janis Joplin

I chose these quotes and others like them hoping that students will think about themselves as writers but also reflect on their lives outside of the writing classroom as well. In order to strengthen students' voices, I need for them to understand how writing has a valuable and purposeful place in their everyday lives. As this practice continues, students will be able to meaningfully weave their writing into their lives instead of viewing writing as an activity they have to complete for a grade.

Students are also allowed to veer off the prompt if they wish; these free-writes are to encourage creativity, promote self-expression, and help students get their writing juices flowing! I like for this to be a silent time of writing so that students can clear their minds, slow down from the hurried days they've had, or do whatever they need to do to be ready

for class. I've had students tell me in the past that the silent writing time is very beneficial, even if it's only four to five minutes long, so I chose to keep that practice for this unit. While students do have access to Google Chromebooks, I instruct them to write their free-writes in their journals by hand each day. "It's slower than you can type, but that means that you are connecting more with your words."[2] In my experience, students fight this practice at first, but begin to enjoy it as they slow down and really examine their thoughts. "The rhythm of writing by hand affords you the opportunity to weigh and measure your words, choose them carefully, all without interrupting the flow. Your words become more artful. Sometimes I find typing mechanical...Bursts of prose interrupted by long pauses of thought. The seamless, graceful dance of words is lost."[3]

    On occasion, I will use photographs as journal prompts. Students will be shown an untitled, un-captioned photograph such as the one below that is intended to invoke emotion and reaction. I ask them to tell the story of the photo, to attempt to know and understand the subject represented, and to express the message from their perspective. With the photos, I often use an activity called "I See, I Think, I Wonder." Students first list what they actually see in the photograph, then what they think might be the story behind the photograph, and then anything that they wonder about or question in the image.

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    No matter which type of prompt we use for the day, I will also make sure that I am modeling this strategy; I write in a journal also while the students are writing. That way, they see that I value this time enough to stop what I'm doing and write.

    After the journal time, we will have a sharing time called "Roses and Thorns." Students may share their journal writing or any good/bad news from the day. In past experiences, students are reluctant to participate at first, so again, I model by sharing something I wrote that day or by sharing a piece of news. It usually takes three to four class periods for students to warm up to this activity, so I start it early in the year to allow the class to be comfortable with it by the time I plan to use this unit. This practice builds on the PEAK Learning Key strategy of Safety that states, in part:

·   There is no sarcasm, there are no put-downs.
·   There is no undue fear of failure or embarrassment.
·   A level of concern is effectively maintained to ensure ongoing best efforts.[7]

Since this particular unit is about finding voice and identity, I need for students to know that the Creative Writing classroom is a place where they can safely express themselves and turn the thoughts in their heads into words on a page. Knowing my students is equally as important, so with the "Roses and Thorns" activity, I am able to learn more about each person and their lives outside of school. It may sound impossible, but with this simple practice, we all begin to build a level of trust that then translates into better peer editing practices. When learning to define a writing identity, it's imperative to have a support group, so taking the time to allow for sharing is invaluable.

Free-write Reflection

Each day, students reflect on their free-write with a practice I call "Circle-Star-Highlight." With this, they glance back through their free-write of the day and quickly note any words or phrases that, for whatever reason, stand out. Maybe it's the topic, maybe someone's name, maybe a powerful phrase they used - whatever they mark will be something they use as they revisit their early journals later in the unit. Here is an excerpt from a student's journal with his "circle-star-highlighted" phrases:

> *...I've gotten so attached to the life I live now. If it was switching minds, I wouldn't because I would miss everything about my old life, no matter how rich or happy the person I switched lives with was. If it was switching consciences, then maybe I'd switch, since I'd have no recollection of switching bodies, there would be no confusion, and if I would be happier in another life with my friends and all seeing me everyday with the same personality, it only makes sense to switch lives.*

From this activity, the student noticed how many times he had used a version of the word "switch," and as a result, started paying closer attention to his word choice in his other writings. He noticed that repetition as a purpose, but can be distracting if not used efficiently.

Almost like critical annotations in literature, the purpose of this activity is for students to be able to quickly glance over their work to identify similar threads throughout their free-writes. Maybe they mention a certain person five or six times. Maybe they notice that they write about anger quite a bit. I want them to begin to see trends in their writing

and notice how their lives affect their writing. This is part of the process of recognizing where their writing identities emerge.

Plus/Delta Peer Edit

The first time students peer edit each other's work, they will use a process called the "Plus/Delta Chart." This is a basic t-chart like the one below:

$+$	Δ

First, a member of the writing group will read the first draft of his assignment aloud to his group members. After he reads his piece, his peers will list at least three positive comments for him on the left side of the chart. I model this for students, but not as a whole-class. I briefly visit each writing group and listen to the readings for a few moments, then return after the reader is finished and give a positive comment so students will hear examples of what I'm expecting. I help them learn what might be helpful and encouraging for the writer ("I like how your character's dialogue changes as she gets angry with her mother," for instance,) and what comments aren't as beneficial because they are too vague and empty ("That was good/nice/fine.") Members of the writing group will share their positive feedback aloud with the writer. The writer can take notes about what his audience thought he did well; he will have at least nine to ten positive remarks on his piece that he can use going forward. On the right side of the chart, students list at least three things about the piece that the writer might consider changing. Again, I model this practice. I also explain the difference between 'bad' comments and comments that offer 'constructive criticism.' When students recommend changes, they should offer suggestions for the change as well. (For instance, someone might say, "I didn't pick up on your setting change very quickly. You might want to consider giving more details to let the reader know the characters have left the forest.") With this process, the writer views his piece through the eyes of his audience; he will notice elements of his writing that he hadn't seen objectively while he was still the 'sole owner' of the piece.

Self-Editing Practice: "How to Make a Salad"

The point of the exercise is to have students learn the importance of providing details and giving clear directions. They will be given a simple task – making a salad – and asked to teach the class how to perform the activity. Often, what's "in your head" doesn't translate to what you put on paper. This exercise forces writers to think clearly about each step and make sure their words are exactly what they mean for them to be.

I've thought about using different pieces of construction paper (green for lettuce, red for tomatoes/peppers, etc) as the "salad ingredients" and physically perform the task exactly as instructed when the student reads his instructions.

On a side note, I've seen this done in a class before with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, but I'm afraid to actually bring peanut butter into the class…all I need is a lawsuit over allergies! It usually ends up pretty funny, though; the people following directions often have PB&J all over the place, but the writer learns to check his words for clarity!

As the students read their instructions, they might have to self-edit. If the person following the instructions can't complete a task, for instance, because the previous task was unclear, then the writer might have to make necessary adjustments. If the salad doesn't turn out like the writer intended, then he will need to revisit his instructions to see where the "lesson" went off course.

I intend to translate this activity into a metaphor for writing. I want the students to understand that your words on paper will often be taken exactly as written and not perhaps as intended. I want to show that writing is a process that goes through several levels of change before the final version is complete and the writer's voice is clear.

Six Word Memoir

"Writing in Six Words is a simple, creative way to get to the essence of anything—from the breaking news of the day to your own life and the way you live it."[9] Near the beginning of this unit, students will practice concise, personal writing using the Six Word Memoir technique. We will read and discuss several from the website www.sixwordmemoirs.com/teens/. I also will show some Six Word Memoir samples from former students so that they can hear examples with which they can connect more directly. Students will take ten-fifteen minutes to explore the website and select three of their favorites. Since the website is fairly large, I would ask that students choose memoirs from a variety of the topics listed (life, love, happiness, etc) and be able to relate their choices to their own lives. As a class, we'll share our favorite entries, discuss why we're able to connect to them, and then practice by writing several of our own. I will give students categories such as the ones used on the Six Word Teen website to guide the practice if they need help getting started: family, friends, school, religion, favorite things, etc. The categories will reflect some personal aspect of their lives rather than being general lists. The goal is for students to express themselves, but in a concise, deliberate manner. Six word memoirs are difficult in that it's hard to narrow down your thoughts into just six words, but they are also powerful in that the writer must choose his six words very carefully. In many of their formal writing assignments, students have often been encouraged to provide detail, expand their thoughts, and add, add, add to their writing. This activity is completely opposite, so it will challenge them to take time to

really think about the words they're using. I will also model by writing memoirs as well. As a class, we'll share and discuss each time we write these memoirs. I intend to repeat this activity several times throughout the unit, showing students how their diction, tone, and purpose are all affected by their current mood and emotional state of mind, thereby affecting their writing voice as well. We will specifically discuss their use of language and word choice. My role will be to encourage students to examine the words others have used in their memoirs to see if they match the messages they wanted to portray with each memoir attempt.

Final Assessment

At the conclusion of the unit, students will present a portfolio of their work. They will be challenged to select work that they believe best represents their writing voice. The portfolio will also display the growth students have experienced over the course of the unit with the inclusion of peer edits, teacher comments, and drafts. The activities they will be encouraged to choose from will include: personal narratives, essays, creative writings based on prompts, reflections, short stories, and poems.

In-class writing activities that might go in the students' portfolios include:

    A.   *All About Me* - this is a version of a bio-poem in which students fill in blanks or complete phrases such as "Who loves _____" or "Who fears _____." It results in an eleven-line poem that is all about the student. I have students complete two versions. The first is a quick response where they list the first answers that come to their minds. Usually, responses are general and often impersonal, such as "Who loves ice cream and Drake" or "Who fears spiders and snakes." For the second version, I instruct students to challenge themselves by incorporating non-tangible, abstract ideas instead of things and by using figurative language. This results in more personal responses, such as "Who loves the fantastic feeling of getting an A in math" or "Who fears the emptiness of her heart when she's alone." Peer edits on this assignment are very general and conversational; I encourage students in their writing groups to help one another turn their tangible, general responses from version one into the abstract version two.

    B.   *I Am What I Am* - this activity is a form of personal narrative. We will read and discuss two very different examples of these taken from <u>Crafting Authentic Voice</u> by Tom Romano, one by a teacher and one by a teenage girl.[8] We discuss tone and diction, looking at what the authors are saying with their specific words and how they're using their words to display their personalities. I encourage students to decide whether or not they would like, respect, empathize with, or possibly be friends with each of these authors if they met in person. I then read a third example, which is my own, without telling students who the author is. I allow them to do the same for my writing; some often don't respond well to my blunt statements, while others appreciate my sarcastic musings. I ask them to

judge the author and decide what kind of person he or she is. After they're finished discussing, I tell them I'm the author. From this exercise, I show students that often, we don't come across in our writing as we do in "real life," that sometimes authors hide behind or inflate themselves with their written words. We, as a class, discuss how my writing could be edited to show more of my true personality and a voice that it more true to me.

C.   *The Book of Qualities* - Based on the book by Ruth Gendler, students use personification this activity to bring to life abstract qualities of their personalities. (See Appendix III)

D.   *Epitaph & Obituary* - In this activity, students reflect on how they hope to be remembered. They have to choose their words carefully, staying true to their character but also speaking about themselves through someone else's eyes. The purpose of this is for students to be aware of how they come across to others.

E.   *Extended Definition Essay* - Students choose an abstract term - such as love, peace, family, democracy - and begin the essay by providing a dictionary definition for the term. In the body of the essay, students define the term in their own way, providing real life situations and familiar examples to support their definition. They can start with the official definition, but should move to a more personal meaning that directly relates to them.

F.   *Lyrics Project* - This activity takes students through a process of deconstructing the words of others and reconstructing them according to students' own voices. First, students select 15-20 one line lyrics from songs that they like. Rather than listening to the songs in order to choose their lyrics, students read and annotate printed versions of the songs. The instructions are to select lyrics that are short, not repetitive (ie, the chorus), and somehow speak or connect to the reader (student). Next, the students write their lyrics on post-it notes, one line per note, and post them randomly on a large piece of poster paper. (I taped the paper on a hallway wall so there'd be plenty of room.) After everyone's lyrics are posted, we discussed what it means to deconstruct a text, taking the words and phrases away from their original composition and intended audience. Students then take their journals into the hallway and "shop" for phrases they like from the poster paper, disassociating the individual lyrics from the songs to which they belonged and writing them in their journals, one per line. (I recommend that they choose 12-15.) When they return to their seats, students cut the phrases they've written in their journals apart, making 12-15 separate strips. The final step is reconstruction; students take the phrases that "belonged" to other artists and arrange them into a poem of their own construction.

G.   *"Situation Story"* (short story based on a prompt - see Appendix II)

H.   *Epistolary Essay* - This is a modification of the first assignment we completed in the 2016 CTI Seminar "Writing with Power" with Dr. Brenda Flanagan. As writers, we were tasked with composing an essay in the format of a letter to someone about a concern we have. The letter was to be focused on no more than two issues, be personal and heartfelt, and convey meaning with

honesty. We were challenged to give specific examples to support our issues rather than drawing conclusions that were un-evidenced. The assignment for my students will be very similar. Depending on the needs of the students, it is possible that I'll need to alter this assignment somewhat, in which case I would consider limiting the topic choices and/or recipient options.

The assessment rubric I use will follow the IB/MYP criteria assessment:

Criterion A: Analyzing - Students should be able to:
1.   Analyze the effects of the creator's choices on an audience

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	LEVEL DESCRIPTOR
0	The student **does not** reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1–2	The student: 1. provides **limited** analysis of the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) and the relationship among texts 2. provides **limited** analysis of the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. **rarely** justifies opinions and ideas with examples or explanations; uses **little or no** terminology 4. Evaluates **few** similarities and differences by making **minimal** connections in features across and within genres and texts.
3–4	The student: 1. provides **adequate** analysis of the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) and

	the relationship among texts 2. provides **adequate** analysis of the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. justifies opinions and ideas with **some** examples and explanations, though this may not be consistent; uses **some** terminology 4. evaluates **some** similarities and differences by making **adequate** connections in features across and within genres and texts.
5–6	The student: 1. **competently** analyses the content, context, language, structure, technique, style of text(s) and the relationship among texts 2. **competently** analyses the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. **sufficiently** justifies opinions and ideas with examples and explanations; uses accurate terminology 4. evaluates similarities and differences by making **substantial** connections in features across and within genres and texts.
7–8	The student: 1. provides **perceptive** analysis of the content, context, language, structure, technique, style of text(s) and the relationship among texts 2. **perceptively** analyses the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. gives **detailed justification of** opinions and ideas with a range of examples, and **thorough** explanations; uses **accurate** terminology 4. **Perceptively compares and contrasts** by making **extensive** connections in features across and within genres and texts.

Criterion B: Organizing - Students should be able to:
1.   Employ organizational structures that serve the context and intention

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	LEVEL DESCRIPTOR
0	The student **does not** reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1–2	The student: 1. makes **minimal** use of organizational structures though these may not always serve the context and intention 2. organizes opinions and ideas with a **minimal degree of coherence and logic** 3. makes **minimal** use of referencing and formatting tools to create a presentation style that may **not always be suitable** to the context and intention.
3–4	The student: 1. makes **adequate** use of organizational structures that serve the context and intention 2. organizes opinions and ideas with **some degree of coherence and logic** 3. makes **adequate** use of referencing and formatting tools to create a presentation style suitable to the context and intention.
5–6	The student: 1. makes **competent** use of organizational structures that serve the context and intention 2. organizes opinions and ideas in a **coherent and logical** manner with ideas building on each other 3. makes **competent** use of referencing and formatting tools to create a presentation style suitable to the context and intention.
7–8	The student: 1. makes **sophisticated** use of organizational structures

	that serve the context and intention **effectively**
	2. **effectively** organizes opinions and ideas in a **sustained, coherent and logical** manner with ideas building on each other in a **sophisticated** way
	3. makes **excellent** use of referencing and formatting tools to create an **effective** presentation style.

Criterion C: Producing text - Students should be able to:
1.   produce texts that demonstrate insight, imagination and sensitivity while exploring and reflecting critically on new perspectives and ideas arising from personal engagement with the creative process

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	LEVEL DESCRIPTOR
0	The student **does not** reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1–2	The student: 1. produces texts that demonstrate **limited** personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates a **limited** degree of insight, imagination and sensitivity and **minimal** exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes **minimal** stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating **limited** awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects **few** relevant details and examples to develop ideas.
3–4	The student: 1. produces texts that demonstrate **adequate** personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates **some** insight, imagination and sensitivity and **some** exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes **some** stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating **adequate** awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects **some** relevant details and examples to develop

	ideas.
5–6	The student: 1. produces texts that demonstrate **considerable** personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates **considerable** insight, imagination and sensitivity and **substantial** exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes **thoughtful** stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating **good** awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects **sufficient** relevant details and examples to develop ideas.
7–8	The student: 1. produces texts that demonstrate a **high degree** of personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates a **high degree** of insight, imagination and sensitivity and **perceptive** exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes **perceptive** stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating **good** awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects **extensive** relevant details and examples to develop ideas with **precision**.

Criterion D: Using language - Students should be able to:
1.   use appropriate and varied vocabulary, sentence structures and forms of expression

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	LEVEL DESCRIPTOR
0	The student **does not** reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1–2	The student: 1. uses a **limited** range of appropriate vocabulary and forms of expression 2. writes and speaks in an **inappropriate** register and style that **do not** serve the context and intention 3. uses grammar, syntax and punctuation with **limited** accuracy; errors **often hinder** communication 4. spells/writes and pronounces with **limited** accuracy; errors **often hinder** communication 5. makes **limited and/or inappropriate** use of non-verbal communication techniques.
3–4	The student: 1. uses an **adequate** range of appropriate vocabulary, sentence structures and forms of expression 2. **sometimes** writes and speaks in a register and style that serve the context and intention 3. uses grammar, syntax and punctuation with **some degree** of accuracy; errors **sometimes hinder** communication 4. spells/writes and pronounces with **some degree** of accuracy; errors **sometimes hinder** communication 5. makes **some** use of appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.
5–6	The student: 1. uses a **varied range** of appropriate vocabulary, sentence structures and forms of expression **competently**

	2. writes and speaks **competently** in a register and style that serve the context and intention 3. uses grammar, syntax and punctuation with a **considerable degree** of accuracy; errors **do not hinder** effective communication 4. spells/writes and pronounces with a **considerable degree** of accuracy; errors **do not hinder** effective communication 5. makes **sufficient** use of appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.
7–8	The student: 1. **effectively** uses a range of appropriate vocabulary, sentence structures and forms of expression 2. writes and speaks in a **consistently appropriate** register and style that serve the context and intention 3. uses grammar, syntax and punctuation with a **high degree** of accuracy; errors are minor and communication is **effective** 4. spells/writes and pronounces with a **high degree** of accuracy; errors are minor and communication is **effective** 5. makes **effective** use of appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.

http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/

Appendix II: Situation Story

Directions: Craft a short story around the following situation. Display your own writing voice using 3rd person omniscient narration, and make sure you include all elements of a short story. Demonstrate the interaction of the characters below through dialogue and plot action.
>   What conflict(s) will you choose to develop?
>   What theme will emerge from your characters' interactions?
>   How will you use diction and dialogue to distinguish between the characters?
>   How will you distinguish your voice as the narrator?
>   How will you overcome any communication barriers?

Situation:
The following people are trapped in an elevator (in a building of your choice) for more than an hour during a power blackout. Although there is no real emergency, the people in the elevator do not know what's going on and have no contact with anyone outside the elevator. Cell phones don't have service. Your story must cover at least the whole hour. You may begin as soon as the power goes out, or choose your own opening.

Characters:
>   A "good ol' boy" who operates a local auto body shop. He is dressed in overalls and smells faintly of motor oil.
>   A young, highly educated, wealthy, successful, Asian lawyer dressed in a business suit carrying a briefcase.
>   A white male high school biology teacher in his late 60s. He's dressed in khaki pants and a polo shirt from the school where he works.
>   A homosexual hairdresser from the most elite salon in town. He's in his late 20s, dressed in all black, and is carrying his beauty bag for work.
>   A young refugee girl from Cambodia who doesn't speak English. She's wearing a simple dress and is carrying a map and dictionary.
>   A Caucasian female dump-truck driver in her late 40s. She's dressed in denim, smells like cigarette smoke, and coughs a lot.
>   An African-American male stay-at-home dad in his late 30s. He's accompanied by his 3 year old son. They are carrying their take-out lunch and chatting happily.

Appendix III: Book of Qualities

The Book of Qualities
Words and Pictures by J. Ruth Gendler (NY: Harper, 1988)

|				
Alienation	Confidence	Faith	Jealousy	Sensuality
Ambivalence	Confusion	Fear	Joy	Service
Anger	Contentment	Forgiveness	Judgment	Shock
Anxiety	Courage	Greed	Liberation	Stillness
Beauty	Creativity	Grief	Loneliness	Suffering
Blame	Criticism	Guilt	Longing	Terror
Boredom	Defeat	Harmony	Pain	Truth
Certainty	Depression	Honesty	Panic	Ugliness
Change	Despair	Honor	Patience	Uncertainty
Charm	Detachment	Imagination	Perfection	Unhappiness
Clarity	Devotion	Innocence	Perseverance	Urgency
Commitment	Discipline	Inspiration	Pleasure	Whimsy
Compassion	Doubt	Integrity	Power	Wisdom
Competition	Ecstasy	Intensity	Protection	Worry
Complacency	Excitement	Intuition	Resignation	

Pleasure

Pleasure is wild and sweet. She likes purple flowers. She loves the sun and the wind and the night sky. She carries a silver bowl full of liquid moonlight. She has a cat named Midnight with stars on his paws.

Many people mistrust Pleasure, and even more misunderstand her. For a long time I could hardly stand to be in the same room with her. I went to sleep early to avoid her. I thought she was a gossip and a flirt and she drank too much. In school we learned that she was dangerous, and I was sure that she would distract me from my work. I didn't realize she could nurture me.

As I have changed, Pleasure has changed. I have learned to value her friendship.
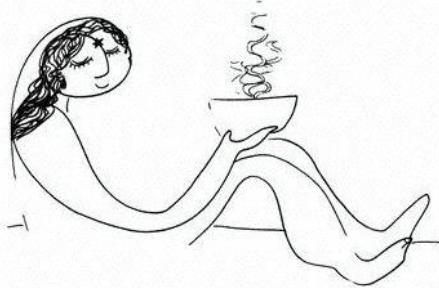
Courage
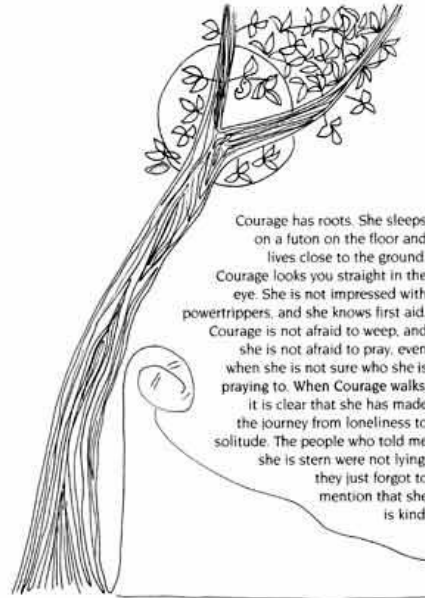
Courage has roots. She sleeps on a futon on the floor and lives close to the ground. Courage looks you straight in the eye. She is not impressed with powertrippers, and she knows first aid. Courage is not afraid to weep, and she is not afraid to pray, even when she is not sure who she is praying to. When Courage walks, it is clear that she has made the journey from loneliness to solitude. The people who told me she is stern were not lying, they just forgot to mention that she is kind.

Confusion

When Confusion's parents separated, neither one of them wanted him. Each claimed he most resembled the other. He is a tall boy, and lately he has gotten a bit plump. He is always trying to make people like him. His attempts usually backfire.

Confusion is very accident-prone. He lives from crisis to crisis. Even the clearest directions are impossible for him to follow. My friends shudder when they see him heading toward their studios. He is well-meaning, but not nearly as innocent as he seems.

Confusion is Patience's nephew. She is the only one who can sing to him.
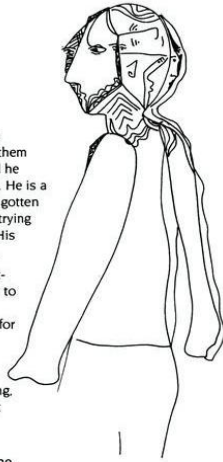
Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a strong woman, tender and earthy and direct Since her children have left home, she has embarked on an extended walking tour, visiting ruins and old monuments, bathing in rivers and hot springs, traveling through the small towns and large pulsing cities, tracing the current of sorrow under the stories she hears Sometimes the city authorities and officials don't want her within their gates If the people want her there enough, she always manages to find a way inside.

Forgiveness brings gifts wherever she goes Simple ones, a three-stranded twig with leaves turning yellow, a belt she wove on an inkle loom, a little song that grows inside you and changes everything She brought me a silver ring from the South with a pale stone, pink with a hint of brown When I had asthma, she taught me how to breathe.

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[1] "English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 11-12." English Language Arts
        Standards » Writing » Grade 11-12 | Common Core State Standards Initiative.
        2016. Accessed August 04, 2016. http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-
        Literacy/W/11-12/.

Aligning curriculum units and lessons with CCSS is generally an accepted requirement
for ELA/Literacy teachers. This site is an easy access guide for decoding the standards
and recognizing which ones to focus on within a curriculum unit or an individual daily
lesson.

[2] Garland, Dolly. "Hand-written Journaling versus E-Journaling." Kaizen Journaling.
June
        07, 2012. Accessed June 27, 2016. http://kaizenjournaling.com/hand-written-
        journaling-versus-e-journaling/.

When introducing journal writing in the classroom, especially to students in this
technological age where everything is digital, convincing students to write by hand in a
notebook for several minutes at a time can be a challenge. This article highlights the
benefits of slowing down one's thoughts by hand writing and makes a case for leaving the
computer alone until it's time for final drafts. It's written in a very conversational style,
easy for students to read and understand, and still takes time to recognize some benefits
of e-journaling.

[3] Kristin. "The Magic of Journaling by Hand." Journaling Saves. Accessed June 27, 2016.
        http://www.journalingsaves.com/journal-writing-by-hand/.

Another article from a site very similar to a blog in which the author and creator makes
the case for journaling by hand. This site is also helpful in that it offers links to podcasts
and outside sources that guide a writer along the journey of creating a journal and a
writing portfolio. This article, as are others on the site, is very easy to read and offers
practical advice without being overly academic or pushy. I found this article to be helpful
for students who were just beginning a journal.

[4] "MYP Curriculum | International Baccalaureate®." International Baccalaureate®. 2016.
        Accessed October 10, 2016. http://www.ibo.org/programmes/middle-years-
        programme/curriculum/.

The IBO website is a comprehensive collection of resources for teaching the IB
curriculum. The methods of unit planning are applicable in any classroom, however, for
teachers who wish to follow a more thematic, global focus. Also, assessment criteria are
clearly outlined and explained and can be implemented as rubrics for writing assessments
in any classroom.

[5] "National Writing Project." New Report Finds That Writing Can Be Powerful Driver for
> Improving Reading Skills - National Writing Project. April 14, 2010. Accessed July 27, 2016. http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/3126.

This article explains how writing and reading success are connected and why teachers should consider using writing in the reading classroom to improve comprehension. It provides a few practical ideas for immediate implementation as well as links to further support. This is an excellent place to start for teacher in courses with state or federal testing mandates who are looking for alternative ways to increase literacy and reading skills. It's also a good source for ELA elective courses to support the recent push for increased literacy practices cross-curricularly.

[6] "North Mecklenburg High." SchoolDigger. September 01, 2016. Accessed November 01, 2016. https://www.schooldigger.com/go/NC/schools/0297001248/school.aspx.

With data compiled from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Census Bureau and the North Carolina Dept of Public Instruction, School Digger offers an insight into the performance rankings of the schools across any state. While it's best to investigate schools on a more personal level, School Digger is a good place to start for statistics and trends in different schools, counties, and states.

[7] Rogers, Spence and PEAK Team. *Teaching for Excellence 4th ed.* Conifer, CO: Peak Learning Systems, Inc, 2012.

The PEAK method provides practical strategies and concepts to use in the classroom so that all students receive quality education according to their individual learning styles. Many of the techniques presented by Rogers and his team are ready for immediate application in the classroom and can be modified across the curriculum. PEAK is not a method in which teachers have to use all of the processes for it to work; teachers can choose a combination of strategies that works best for their students and classes. I have found the "Six Keys" application most helpful in classes where I use writing groups or literature circles.

[8] Romano, Tom. *Crafting Authentic Voice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.
I love this book and wish I could teach the whole thing to a writing class. I specifically used two of the "I Am What I Am" examples by Andrea Bailey and Marie Romano. We read and discussed those in full, focusing on who we think the authors are as writers and as people. We'll try to analyze their personalities, their goals, their likes and dislikes, etc. and speculate on what motivated them to write what they did. These entries were most helpful in giving students a starting point in the process of crafting their own writing
[9] "Six-Word Memoirs." Six-Word Memoirs. Accessed September 10, 2016. http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/.

This website provides an introduction to the six-word memoir, following the example of creator Larry Smith, who got the idea for his Six Word Project from a challenge Ernest Hemingway received to craft an entire in six words. The site is arranged by topic and is divided into age appropriate categories. Readers are encouraged to participate and submit entries. I found this site helpful for students to explore, get ideas, and start with a small but powerful assignment. The practice of six-word memoirs is tough but thought provoking and provides a perfect way to encourage students to use precise wording to articulate their thoughts.

[10] "Travellers Image, Ireland | National Geographic Your Shot Photo of the Day." Photo of the Day. November 16, 2016. Accessed November 17, 2016. http://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photo-of-the-day/2016/11/irish-travellers-portrait/.

National Geographic photos are excellent for journal prompts. The website offers a variety of photos to choose from, but for Creative Writing class, I prefer the "Photo of the Day" link as it provides a different image everyday. I ask students to complete a journal activity called "I See, I Think, I Wonder" with these photographs. The images are vivid and provoking enough for students to make connections, yet global enough to provide a perspective outside of their usual zone.

[11] "Writing Across the Curriculum Handbook - Dpi." NC Public Schools. Accessed September 10, 2016. http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/languagearts/secondary/writing/writinghandbook.pdf.

An excellent source directly from the NC DPI, this handbook provides methods for incorporating writing across content areas, methods to support students through writing conferences, and information on teaching and guiding students through all stages of the writing process. Contributors included various teaching scenarios and assessment tools as well.

Resources for Teachers and Students

Estepa, Andrea and Philip Kay. *Starting with "I": Personal Essays by Teenagers.* New York: Persea, 1997. Print.

Freese, Cris. "Voice in Writing: Developing a Unique Writing Voice." Writersdigest.com. Writers Digest, 12 Sept. 2013. Web. http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/there-are-no-rules/voice-in-writing-developing-a-unique-writing-voice.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft.* New York: Scribner, 2000. Print.

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        http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/.