



Exploring Moments in our Lives: Memoir Writing for Elementary Students

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
3rd -5th grade Elementary School classroom

Keywords: Writing, memoirs, visualize, descriptive, life, experiences, audience, author, feelings, structure, confer, annotate, edit, mentor text, time, write

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

Synopsis: Writing curriculum and instruction is scarcely experienced within the elementary school classroom. This curriculum unit will make a contribution to the English Language Arts and writing curriculum formerly established within the elementary school classroom. Within the unit, students will research events from their life in order to produce a written and digital publication. In this unit students will think back on their young lives, write from their own experience, and develop their voices through the craft of writing for an audience. This unit explores using mentor texts and mentor authors to develop clear a writing voice communicating with an audience effectively. Through this unit, the writing process will be taught with flexibility instead of each individual part taught in isolation as traditionally taught within an elementary classroom. The unit includes lesson in writing instruction students will apply and develop a memoir of an even from their life for a particular audience. The lessons are flexible and able to be shortened or expanded to fit the needs of your own classroom. Differentiated instructional suggestions are within the unit lesson outlines. The lessons offer opportunities for small group instructional practices in order to provide students with guided instruction differentiated for their independent working level.

I plan to teach this unit during the 2017 -2018 school year with fourth grade students.

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

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Janée Gregory

Introduction

Writing within schools is a lost art. Oftentimes writing is regarded as the first subject to go when there is more time needed within the schedule to cater to our fuel of teaching to “the test”. “American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts the power of language and communication in their proper place in the classroom” (Magrath 2003). Furthermore, if writing cannot take its rightful place within our educational system, it will be a lost form of expression for our children. Writing compelling bodies of work allows for all facets of literacy to become more developed. Allowing students to express themselves through writing can open many doors. Writing also allows teachers to make many connections and deepen their understanding of their students—who they are, and where they come from. The author explains, “They cannot write well enough to meet the demands they face in higher education and the emerging work environment. The problem is most students cannot write with the skill expected of them today” (Magrath 2003). This unit was created to allow students the flexibility to learn writing within the curriculum and do so in a meaningful and creative way. It aims to demonstrate the goal of developing a holistically literate child rather than one who only meets the minimum is required without maximizing full capacity.

Memoir writing is a written, sometimes digital, factual account of events in any person’s life. Memoirs allow students to make connections with significant parts of their young lives. Our experiences shape our beliefs and the people we become. What better way to get to know the students in our classrooms than to hear their perspectives of what has shaped their lives through their writing. Teaching them to write out their experiences from different accounts gives them opportunities to express themselves much like artists, musicians, and creative writers use to self-express.

I have written this unit for fourth grade students during the first four months of school. The unit should come after narrative writing, and the teaching of parts of the writing process review, as well as thorough paragraph writing lessons. I expect this unit to take approximately three to four weeks to teach (approximately twenty lessons). Some students may move through the unit more quickly depending on writing and critical thinking abilities. This unit allows students to reflect on their lives and important events that impacted their outlook on their lives. This unit also allows students to develop a meaningful piece to share with their audience. This unit was created in order to build self-reflection, cultural awareness and improve their knowledge of writing process. The unit

includes detailed outline of lesson plans, time-line of classroom activities, teaching strategies, as well as writing workshop models to use when teaching. The unit also includes mentor text for teachers to use when teaching writing techniques for third, fourth, and fifth grade students.

Background

I am a fourth grade teacher at J.H. Gunn Elementary school in Charlotte, North Carolina. Currently there are twenty-two students in my class. Of the twenty-two students there are seven students classified as Limited English Proficient, one student classified as an English Language Learner. Those students make up thirty-six percent of the class. There are two students classified as exceptional children, and one student with a 504 educational plan. Throughout the duration of the writing block, four students receive supportive services outside of the classroom within the subject of reading. Eighteen students will remain in my classroom during the 45-minute writing period.

J.H. Gunn is an elementary school where students from kindergarten through fifth grade learn; a place where all teachers believe children come first. Currently the fourth grade team is departmentalized in three teams of two teachers. I teach reading and social studies to two classes, my homeroom, and my team teacher's class. Each teacher is responsible for teaching their own writing and math workshop to their homeroom class. J.H. Gunn educates approximately 779 students from grades Kindergarten to Fifth grade. We are a Title One school serving students of low income families and aim to close the gap between our highest and lowest demographics. Our overall demographics indicate for the 2015-2016 school year include approximately 43% African American, 41% Hispanic/Latino, 11% white, 2% two or more races, and 2% Asian, and about 1% American Indian. Our largest gap we are trying to close is the performance of our Exceptional Children (EC) population and the performance of their White counterparts.

My school and professional learning community is data-driven. This means we focus instruction on the needs of our students as determined by assessment data. However, with writing not being a tested subject area, it is highly integrated throughout all subjects with minimal time to exclusively teach the "how and why" of writing. This unit will be used to exclusively teach memoir writing with high integration of literacy comprehension through the use of mentor texts for model writing. The use of text complexity level will be analyzed for mentor texts in order to ensure the texts are at an instructional level. At the beginning of the school year (the beginning of September) students will take the MAP test which will determine the Lexile level and projected growth of the student. This test is taken 3 times per year; I will use the scores to aid in determining the activities and learning strategies for this unit. Other assessments such as anecdotal notes from one on one student conferences, guided reading groups, and other formative assessments taken during in class discussions will be used as well in order to

provide feedback and guide instruction for students will meet the child where they are and cater directly to their growth in writing.

As a fourth grade teacher at J.H. Gunn, I face the challenge of protecting the writing time during the day. As previously mentioned, teachers often replace writing time with test administration or other instruction needed to be performed for core subjects of English Language Arts and Math instruction. These other facets of teaching cater instruction towards test taking strategies or extra practice with test like questions. The ability to teach this unit will embed within students more meaningful instruction than simple test taking strategies and redundant language arts and math practice. Writing instruction offers more than just simplistic understanding of writing. Within this writing unit the exploration of authors writing techniques helps the comprehension of complex text. This unit is to help build community, and understanding of each other. Therefore, implementing this unit will be imbedded during the beginning of the course of the year; however, it could also be implemented toward the end of the school year as a culminating wrap up of the school year as well. Time for this unit is short limited by the uncontrolled scheduling allowed for allotted writing time throughout the school year, however, can be argued that it deserves more time due to the amount of lesson complexity and text analysis required to write a memoir.

Rationale

Empowering students is one tool I like to use within my classroom and within my teaching lessons. Having students write about events of their choice within parameters and giving them the tools to do so opens up a world for some and provides them with the power to express themselves and build connections with others. Bomer writes, “Writing memoir becomes an individualistic and community-minded act, engaging even the struggling writer” (Bomer 2005). Being able to write your own memoir empowers students to give life to their own experiences and helps shape them and see the likeness of their classroom community in which they thrive within.

Students learn concepts better and make stronger connections when they are allowed choice in their learning. Providing choice can open up windows of opportunity for young writer’s minds. “Students need to write daily to gain writing momentum. In addition, choice is an important staple in teaching writers” (Morgan, et al. 2012). They are able to creatively divulge themselves within the process when they have chosen what the topic is. “When you show students how to “read the world” by writing with them, you also demonstrate how to deal with many of these issues” (Graves 2013). Graves’ undoubted connection of identifying writing as a tool of communication in mentioned previously. Oftentimes we are asked as educators to bridge the gap between instruction and its application into the real world within our classrooms by allowing students to collaboratively learn, and express themselves in a variety of different way as according to 21st century learning. Choice in writing provides this opportunity. It allows students a

way to communicate with others openly and effectively, which ironically is lost sometimes in today's world. "Keeping this aspect of writer's workshop alive within a genre study reminds students they still retain ownership of their writing and they have a responsibility to make personal choices continually foster motivation and engagement and helps build their autonomy and confidence" (Gibney 2012). Writing choices provide an open and safe environment for students to explore within the time allotted during the day.

My underlying reason for writing this unit is to show writing does have a place within our curriculum. Through genre study of memoir writing, we are able to immerse children into the genre study of authors who have written memoirs. The immersion into specific genre texts provides a deeper understanding of the story as well as the author. When teaching students to use a particular genre of writing, an author states the following "they teach students to use a habit of mind experienced writers engage in all the time, they teach them how to read like writers" (Ray 2001). Often, teachers are expected to boost the level of rigor within our classrooms, what better way than to engage our young readers through learning what writer's do in order to write the stories they read. Through guidance it allows for children to see the motivations of the author, learn the messages authors are trying to convey. "The value of analyzing a work of literature from a writer's point of view saying, in the long run, such wondering nourishes the young writer far more than the ability to recapitulate what the book is about"(Bomer 2005). Through building up the writer we are also able to build up the reader. Specifically writing memoirs allows us as teachers to connect and learn from the children within our classroom walls.

Unit Goals

The unit encompasses lessons that are designed using multiple teaching strategies and covers many skills involved within memoir writing. Through the genre study of memoir writing my students will be able to read many memoirs both textual and pictorial in an effort to make connections with the authors of these memoirs and use skills learned from those texts in order to convey their own personal message through the writing of a memoir of their own. Moreover, students working in this unit will have a goal of learning how exploring different literary works can influence them as a writer. "Writers know the small moment, the tinier the detail, the more it resonates with readers and the more it surprises" (Gibney 2012). Developing strong writers through their research of mentor texts and embedding technology within creates an engaging unit builds students understanding of why authors write and more specifically why they write memoirs.

An overarching goal for this unit is to help me build connections with my students while keeping them engaged through writing. Learning who they are as people allows more transparency within the classroom and builds trust and community in a classroom. "When you delve into a genre study such as memoir, not only do you have the opportunity to

teach your students skills in a meaningful manner, but you also learn about who they are as people and as young authors” (Van Horn 2001).

Memoir writers seek to engage readers by writing their perspectives about a person, place, or event from their lives. When children write memoirs, they write about their own experiences. Using this in-depth skill can build skillful readers. Once the unit is complete, hopefully students will engage with texts differently to see through the perspectives the author presents. “The memoirist takes a slice out of the pie of life and writes about it in a way that makes others care and want to read it” (Gibney 2012). When students recognize this aspect of writing, it will impact their understanding of texts.

Teaching Strategies

Defining the Genre

In this unit I focus on 3 key questions: 1) what is memoir? 2.) How do we classify writing as memoir? 3) What are the literary elements of a memoir? Through examining the genre of memoir writing, I will examine what specific writing conventions are used when writing a memoir by comparing authors of memoirs. Having mentor texts to help during the exploration of memoir writing will be critical during this time.

Through this unit we will use a variety of mentor texts to examine text characteristics of memoirs and how they are different from other forms of writing. We will read a variety of authors including short stories from Patricia Polacco, Eve Bunting, and other various short stories in order to gain an understanding of common traits memoirs have. We will look at the definition of what a memoir is and try to come up with concrete boundaries of how we will consider a memoir for the purposes of this unit. The overarching purpose is for the students to view memoir as a type of writing focuses on the relationship of the writer to a particular place, person, object, or animal. Memoirs explain the relationship through writing and examine the impact the relationship has made on their lives.

Making Text Connections

Providing students with various types of mentor texts and reading them aloud will give them knowledge about memoir writing features. Once students dive into the memoir texts, they will need to build connections with the text in order to see the purpose of their writing. Having students use mentor text to make text-to-text connections, and text-to-self-connections allows the students to deepen their understanding and build their purpose for reading. Furthermore, the process of making connections to your reading is very much about you as the reader relating to the character actions or their response because you have had a similar experience.

Text-to-text connections allows for a reader to see similarities of books they have read to other books or stories they have read. This builds understanding of how writers write memoir share certain techniques of their writing; it builds understanding of how authors write in a certain tone or voice. Text to self-connections allows writers to build understanding of how the writing is relevant to their life. Allowing students to build these types of connections helps them generate writing topics and events from their own lives. To build connections, I will demonstrate, through reading aloud, the think aloud strategy to show students how this will help them develop writing topics to jot down in their established writing ideas tank.

With this teaching strategy, students will be able to conduct mini writings they can use and expand off of through the course of the unit. Allowing students to free write after the mini lesson will be important, it will allow students to release ideas they have been thinking about and put into context what they have just connected with author. It can serve as short story or opening of future memoir writing.

Narrowing Topic

Once students have a clear understanding of characteristics of a memoir and we have looked at authors writing memoirs, they move into examining their own lives and narrowing down topic to explore for their personal memoir. “Writing is a skill on that level, but it is also a craft and an art; it satisfies an essential need of the human animal” (Ray 2001). Developing topics students love that come from their own personal lives builds a community within the classroom and builds a passion for that comes from within for students. I would like to do activities where families are heavily involved. I would like for students to examine culture, traditions, and or important things they feel as though have impacted their lives in order to develop topics for them to think about for their memoir. “But writing is a way of knowing, and the knowing, the understanding, is healing. We can all learn from the needs of writers—the act of writing is constructive, helpful, and for most of us, a necessary process” (Ray 2001). Developing within the unit, I would like for my students to interview someone else who knows about the topic they are writing about to see differentiating perspectives.

Being able to choose a writing topic can be very difficult for students. It is important for students first choose a topic to write about that serves as a strong connection for them. However, we have to model for them how to choose this topic. Once students have generated a list of memoir ideas, through mini writings, brainstorming, and making connections, I will model thinking aloud using a list of questions to show students how they might ask themselves similar questions. If they cannot answer the basic questions, they may not remember enough to generate a strong account of the story. The guiding questions are as follows: Is the topic important to me now or in the past? Do I feel strongly about this topic? What stories do I have to tell about my past? Will I enjoy this piece of writing? Would I enjoy reading this piece?

With narrowing the writing focus, students go from a broad story, maybe from when they get up in the morning to when they go to bed, to a small moment within their day really zones in on what they are trying to get across. Or, they may find a person, place, or event from their pasts they want to explore further as a writer. The goal of this strategy is to help students to understand the zoomed-in view of their moment. Here I would have students examine writing shows a broad focus, rather than a topic has a narrowed focus to generate some overarching differences.

Model Writing

Referring back to mentor authors previously covered, I will use mentor texts as a strong source of model pieces for students to use. Through writing mini lessons, students will see how an author writes, and develop writing as a class, as well as their own writing to learn techniques other authors use in their writing. This strategy is teacher-guided in the teacher will demonstrate and provide explicit instruction with writers individually and with small groups on approaches they are able to take with their memoir piece. Model writing as a strategy to teach will happen often throughout the course of the unit as students develop their understanding of memoirs and different perspectives in writing them.

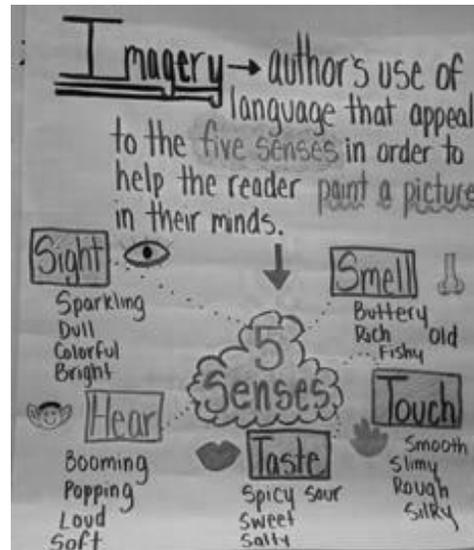
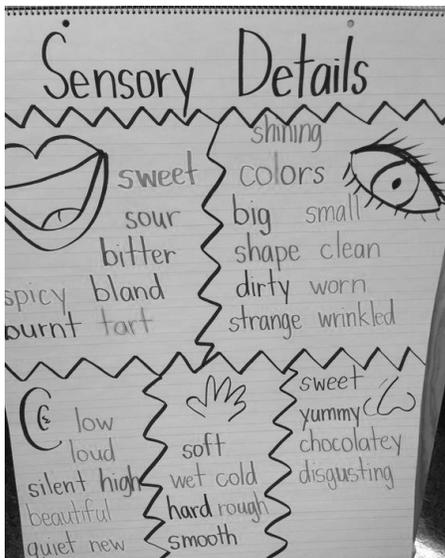
Interviewing

The interviewing process can show a different perspective and open writers' minds to their writing topic. The purpose of the interview is to interview someone who knows you and examine aspects of the writer's life might provide information for various memoir pieces. Through the interview process, writers will ask this person questions about themselves to gain a different perspective of the small moment. Through the process of interview, it also serves the purpose of helping the writer remember more about the subject they are writing about. In order to demonstrate this, I will video tape a model of an interview I conduct for my memoir. I will use an interview recording sheet I complete with relevant details from the interview to show students their goal of a finished product. Have a sample interview sheet allows students to practice with classmates before they go home and interview their family. Allow students to share interview results with classmates once assignment is completed and to save their results of their interview for when they are writing their memoir. Below you will find an example of student's forms for interview protocol questions. Complete questionnaire can be found in [Appendix 2](#)

1. Where were you born?
2. Why were you given your first and last name?
3. What is your first memory of me?
4. Did you have any events to change your life?

Descriptive Writing

Imagery and figurative language are writing concepts students may be familiar with but may not recognize explicitly. These writing concepts will be taught by using explicit examples of imagery in writing, descriptive writing within the text, and finally using figurative language. The primary purpose of descriptive writing is to capture an event through paying close attention to the details by using all of your five senses as seen in the example anchor charts below.



The use of descriptive writing will be used as a teaching strategy. Students will use mentor texts, as well as building understanding of figurative language, and the use of precise language choice during the writing mini lessons in order to develop their own writing.

Students will have mini lessons focus on: descriptive language, using sensory details, and painting a picture with words for readers. Moreover, showing writers the difference between descriptive writing, having them change non-descriptive writing into becoming descriptive, will also be used throughout mini lessons. Throughout the time students are learning about descriptive writing, I will conduct conferences with students in order to help struggling writers. Teaching students to write more descriptively will improve their writing by giving the reader more detail and creating themselves a voice as a writer to help get across to their audience what they are specifically trying to say or put in their audiences mind. It can make their writing more interesting and engaging for themselves and for others to read.

Mentor Text

Using mentor texts is imperative when teaching writing, and can be helpful when teaching students how to write a memoir on a personal level. Craft and structure in writing is hard to teach when students do not have solid models. Model for them and using mentor text of various backgrounds, levels, and structure can spark and resonate with students more sometimes than we can with our own PowerPoints or follow me style in teaching students how to write for their audience. “While we can’t really have authors there in our classrooms to confer with us, we can do the next best thing; carry their poems and memoirs and essays around with us as we confer, especially the ones we’ve read with our class” (Anderson 2000). Below are mentor texts mirroring my classroom make up.

Books that students relate to are best:

- *26 Fairmount Avenue* by Tomie dePaola
- *A Birthday Basket for Tía* by Pat Mora
- *Abuelo* by Arthur Dorros
- *Amelia’s Road* by Linda Jacobs Altman
- *Bippity Bop Barbershop* by Natasha Tarpley
- *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Polacco
- *EL Deafo* by Cece Bell
- *Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco
- *My Nana’s Remedies* by Roni Capin Rivera-Ashford
- *My Rotten Readheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco
- *Rosa* - Nikki Giovanni
- *Ruth and the Green Book* - Calvin Alexander Ramsey
- *Tar Beach* - Faith Ringgold
- *The Bracelet* by Yoshiko Uchida
- *The Other Side* - Jacqueline Woodson
- *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *Thunder Cake* by Patricia Polacco
- *Uncle Jed’s Barbershop* by Margaree Mitchell

Crafting a Lead

A catchy lead will often hook the reader. Most time students will begin their story from one specific moment. Due to small amounts of exposure to writing, students often craft stories of “one day” and “the end”. Rarely do we see the vast creativity bloom from free writes because they have not been taught how to hook their reader in. The teacher can show students types of leads they are able to develop for example, starting with a conversation, starting with a strong description of the setting, beginning with shock factor. Show students through an anchor chart leads of this style. Reading some familiar text to student with leads will embody the examples they have been taught. Once students

have seen a strong lead, students will be shown non-examples will demonstrate the difference between a catch lead and a boring lead. “The development of leads allows students to see the effectiveness of a strong lead. “... Develops their understanding of audience awareness, but also teaches about the importance of word choice in writing in any genre”(Van Horn 2001).

Crafting a Conclusion

“An effective lead attracts readers, but a powerful conclusion allows your words to linger with the reader long after they have finished reading” (Bomer 2005). Ending your story has a lasting effect, crafting a strong ending provides the impact will keep the reader coming back for more. Through this strategy teaching students of the types of endings will allow them to choose between how they will want to make a lasting impression on their audience.

Developing an ending can come in the form of a summary, dramatized ending, ending as if you were older, or relating directly back to the beginning. Teaching them how to craft a strong ending is so students will gain confidence in their writing. Lasting impressions make a strong difference, and no one likes a weak ending. Giving the choice after they have learned how to write through examples, will allow the students to decide the type of ending they want to have for their memoir piece.

Conferring

While students are independently writing, provides the teacher the ability to pull small groups of students aside addressing specific writing strategies that have previously been discussed or a specific skill set all the writers have in common they need to strengthen. Using this time wisely ensures all students are making gains and grow from one on one or group conferring with the teacher. “We make several decisions which have major impacts on the quality of conversations we have with students” (Anderson 2000). This author notes this because conferring has to be done with precision and meaningful intention; it requires planning on the part of the teacher, if forgotten, could turn into an editing session rather than growing the writer’s ideas, craft, and ability. Within [Appendix 3](#) you will find some examples of how you are able to keep records of conferences with students.

Providing students with a conferring schedule allows anticipation of one on one meeting with the teacher. One on one conference times will be done during independent writing time. The conference times provide flexibility depending on what each student needs and where they are specifically in crafting their piece of work. Be sure to record your conferences and take anecdotal notes for all students you are meeting with to keep track of their progress, and to use for student record keeping. This can be data used in conferences and helps you as the teacher to scaffold and differentiate the learning of your classroom and meet the individual needs of your students. “The records help us keep

track of when we conferred with students, what we talked about, and what we learned about students as writers” (Anderson 2000). You may also be able to notice connections with students as readers through learning about them as writers.

When conferring with students and small skill groups, I will need to keep track and records of who I meet with and what conferences and groups I teach with specific students. Teachers can carry a binder or folder with a schedule blocks the size of a post-it note. When meeting with groups or students record students and the skills addressed. Use mentor text within small groups and individual conferences in order reinforce skills taught. Keep track of the progress students make and the examples of the writing done. Leave examples with students of the objective you teach to them in the mini lesson during their conferring period. Having personal time with the teacher gives every student the opportunity to show their work, and ideas, their strengths, and weaknesses. It provides the teacher a look at each student and builds relationship and level of comfort with them will develop their writing.

Rubric

Rubrics are helpful when focusing on specific aspects of a skill. Students are able to know exactly what they need to complete and their criteria of success for the assignment presented. “Rubrics give students a guideline to expectations of them and help the teacher assess their final product” (Brookhart 2013). For example, if the goal or purpose of the assignment is Peer edit with a partner, a rubric can be used to assess this. Students would receive a 4 if they participated and respected the ideas of their partner and provided constructive feedback as modeled for them 90-100% of the time. They would receive a 3 if they participated and respected the ideas of their partner 70-80% of the time, etc. Students will also be able to use rubrics to self-assess. Reflections are a huge piece of learning, allowing time to reflect on their work and evaluate them provides a more meaningful purpose. See example rubric in [Appendix 4](#).

Instructional Implementation

Week 1: Understanding the Characteristics of Memoir

Objective: As a writer, students will understand the characteristics of a memoir that focuses upon the relationship of the writer and another person, place, animal, or object.

Materials Needed: Chart paper, Writer’s Notebook, mentor text that show relationships with other people—Possible examples include: *Uncle Jed’s Barbershop* by Margaree Mitchell, *Through Grandpa’s Eyes* by Patricia MacLachlan, *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco

Tasks: Choose a mentor text that you have already read to the students for their enjoyment and discussion. Explain to the students that you are going to reread the story and that they should “listen as a writer.” Writers listen to stories differently than others. They listen for the choice of words an author uses, punctuation use, and word choice.

Ask the children to listen for what they believe is the writer's purpose for writing this story--the one main thing that the author wanted the reader to know about the subject that he is writing about. After rereading, point out that this particular piece is called a memoir. It focuses on the writer and a special, memorable, important person in the writer's life, either in the present or past (you can have students take notes during discussion) or have students put an anchor chart within their notebook for memoir writing.

Guiding discussion Questions:

Who is the story about?

What is the relationship between the person and the author?

Who was the audience for this author?

After reading, discuss significant people in your own life. Begin by creating a list of people through leading a class list on chart paper of significant people. Students can create a list of significant people, places, or things within their own life. For each person, place or thing that you write on the chart, tell who it is what his /her relationship is to you, and why this person is important to you. Have the students make a personal brainstorming list of important people in their lives in the writer's notebook.

Week 2: Brainstorming and choosing a topic

Objective: As a writer, students will choose a memoir topic and discuss about this subject with a partner.

Materials: Writing Notebook, smartboard, mentor texts from previous lessons

Tasks: Through previous lessons, students have brainstormed and written mini drafts about people places and things of their choice that they have deemed important to them. In this lesson, the students choose the one that they want most to tell others about. Review mentor texts read in the past. Discuss the purpose the author these memoirs, discuss the potential audience the author wanted to reach with these stories. Model the process of choosing your own writing topic aloud for students. Have students complete a short drafting of their memoir. Allow students to get thoughts on paper, write different stories about their topic, person, place, or objects. Once students have created small mini draft writing, have them discuss their topic in depth with classmates. Use time to also pull small groups of students and confer with them on their topic. To foster safe practice with partner discussion, model the acts of the listener and the person who is talking. Also be sure to model how to respond to reading with questions or connections made with the writing. Have students share their rough story drafts with a partner using the strategies mentioned previously. Begin meeting and supporting writers within your classroom with short individual conferences. Be sure you keep a schedule of students met with and what was discussed.

Week 3: Drafting

Objectives: As a writer students will be able to interview and discuss their memoir topic with someone else familiar. As a writer, students will be able to begin writing their rough draft of the memories that are included on their Memory Web.

Materials: Interview protocol questionnaire, writing notebook, memoir web, smartboard, and chart paper

Tasks: From their topics chosen students will have the opportunity to interview and see a different perspective of their topic in order to gain more details. The purpose of the interview is for a student to someone (an adult or someone older) who knows the student or their topic of writing. They will ask that person questions about the subject. The person they interview could be a parent, friend, neighbor, extended relative. Before sending students out to interview, model in class how to conduct an interview and the best way to record answers from the interview (voice recording, taking notes, etc.). Allow students to watch interviews with family (teachers you may want to record you conducting an interview). Have students use practice questions to interview each other before going to interview family. Once interviews are completed students begin drafting their and weaving into their draft information gathered from their interview.

Week 4: Revising and Drafting

Objective: As a writer, students will be able to reread and revise the draft of their memoir.

Materials: Chart paper, scissors, glue, anchor charts, mentor texts

Tasks: Drafting and revision can go hand in hand. Teachers may want to explore different methods of student drafting and revising their piece of work. One activity teachers could do is to have students cut their writing into beginning middle and end or cut it by paragraph. Have students play with the order of their paragraphs. Sometimes students may find reordering their story makes more sense or provides a clearer voice for what they are trying to communicate. During this week of instruction, implementation of language lessons is required in order to help student choose different words to create a clearer voice. Lessons on figurative language, showing and not telling should be implemented here to provide students with ideas, models, and examples to revise their writing piece. Bring out mentor texts you've read as a class together and point out features of different authors.

Week 5 and 6: Revising, editing, and publishing

Objective: As a writer, students will continue to revise their memoir. Students will begin to edit, and publish their memoir.

Task: Continue conferencing with students providing them, with small group instruction based on skills needed such as leads, showing and not telling, descriptive writing, or strong endings. Present students with editing checklist as seen in [Appendix 5](#). Model for students how to use this editing checklist with your own piece of writing. Have the class listen to your writing, and discuss some purposefully placed errors within. Discuss with students how to provide peer constructive feedback. Provide them with model language

such as: “I like how you did..., or I think you could add more ... Creating a safe environment will allow students to be receptive to feedback. Have students practice and work through the process. During this time, meet with students individually to confer and check. Be sure to complete your conference notes in order to be purposeful with your time.

Week 7: Creating a digital story

Objective: As a writer, students will be able to compose a digital version of their story to present to a desired audience.

Materials: iPad, iMovie app, Chromebook, pictures, internet access, movie maker app, access to appropriate music.

Task: All students may not be ready, as the writing process is flexible and student centered. Provide students with a timeline in order to prevent stagnant behavior. This may require additional help within the classroom; you may want to consider requesting a parent volunteer while working with technology. Discuss with students the purpose for their writing, which should have been previously set. Explain to students they will be creating a digital version of their story. Similar to an online read aloud of their work, walk students through the creation of their projects. Provide students with examples of how to complete their memoir using iMovie or other technology available at your school. Students may benefit from watching you tube videos of step by step tutorials on how to implement fun techniques. Discuss with class how to choose appropriate music to support their writing, and discuss with students how tone in their voice can play an important factor and getting across a message to the reader. Allow students time to explore the digital story board, and create one that aligns with their memoir writing. Have a publishing party to celebrate students’ hard work. Have students create invitations to their particular audience members if they would like.

Appendix 1

Implementing Teaching Standards

Writing Common Core Standards

This unit will mainly focus on many a writing genre however it will implement and imbed the use of common core standards in reading and writing. By examining authors and indulging in the writing process, students will be presented with a challenge of writing their own memoirs and turning them into a digital story to publish and share with an audience of their choice. The digital story created from their writing piece will be published for the class to see at the completion of the unit.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8

Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

Interview Protocol Questionnaire
Interview Questions for my family

Name _____ Date _____

Choose 10 of following questions to ask and record your answers to within your writing journal. Be sure to take detailed notes, or voice record your answers so that you can use them later on in your writing.

1. What year were you born? On what date? What day of the week was it? Did your parents tell you anything about the day you were born?
2. Where were you born?
3. Why were you given the first (and middle) name(s) that you have?
4. What's your first, most vivid memory?
5. What was the apartment or house like that you grew up in? How many bedrooms did it have? Bathrooms?
6. What was your bedroom like?
7. Can you describe the neighborhood you grew up in?
8. What's your favorite story about each of your children?
9. What is something funny or embarrassing one of your children said at an early age that you'll never forget?
10. What's the most memorable family vacation you took?
11. What do you remember about holiday celebrations? Is there one holiday memory that stands out for you?
12. How did you feel about raising your children? What was the best part? The hardest part?
13. What makes you proud of your children?
14. How is my father/mother like me? Unlike me?
15. What do you remember about me when I was born? What about when I was younger than I am now?
16. What the best thing about being a parent? A grandparent?

Summary

I talked to _____ about _____.

We talked about the time that: (give an overall summary or list the questions you asked and answers or you can give an overview of events, times, and topics discussed)

Appendix 4

Sample Memoir Rubric

Criteria	4-90%-100%	3-89%-80%	2-79%-70%	1- 69% and below
Memorable Moment	Memoir focuses on single moment that is significant to the author's life.	Memoir is not focused on multiple moments that seem kind of significant to the author's life.	Memoir focuses on a single moment that does not seem to be significant to the author's life.	Author does not seem to be aware of the significance of the moment.
Style & writing voice	Author consistently "shows" the significance of the events through engaging details, compelling language, and a balance of action, thoughts, and dialogue.	Author sometimes "shows" the significance of the events through details, compelling language, and a balance of action, thoughts, and dialogue.	Author "tells" the significance of the events through direct statements.	No effort is made to reveal the significance of the events to the reader.
Published work	Memoir is neatly done and published in an appropriate and attractive format. Could be used as a model for others. Shared with desired audience.	Memoir is neatly done and published in an appropriate format.	Published memoir may not be appropriate and neat for display or sharing with others. No audience identified.	Memoir is not published for others to see or read. No audience identified.
Conventions	Memoir is free from errors.	Memoir contains minimal mistakes that do not interfere with meaning or voice of piece.	Numerous small errors and interfere with voice of the piece. Makes it difficult to read.	Many errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation often interfere with voice of writing and make it difficult to read.

Appendix 5

Editing Checklist

	Self	Peer
Cross out 10 words. Look through your writing and find 10 unnecessary words.		
Underline every: is, are, was, were, be, being, and been—Consider replacing them with an active verb		
Underline every: ly words. See if you can replace with a stronger more descriptive verb.		
Underline every: that Try rewording the sentence without the word that.		
Punctuating Quotes—Be sure your quotes go around the exact dialogue of the speaker.		
Identify 2 things you are doing well in your piece.		
Identify 2 things you would like to improve on in your piece		

List of Materials for Classroom Use

The mentioned materials list below is also within the unit instructional lessons. You may choose to use these instructional materials in order to prepare and complete lessons in their entirety. All materials are subject to change based upon lessons taught and availability.

- Mentor text to pull from (listed within above document)
- Day book or writing journal
- Smartboard
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Student technology (iPad or Chromebook)
- Access to iMovie, MovieMaker, or other site to create digital story
- Student interview questionnaire
- Rubric for self- assessments
- Anchor Charts
- Prepared writing samples

Resources for Students

How to Create A Short Movie Using iMovie . Directed by Digital Native. Performed by Digital Native. 2014.

This video resource is a tutorial presented by a child for how to make short iMovies. This will come in handy for students to use when publishing work. It provides a step by step video on how to create their own digital story.

Memoir: Writing Video Lesson. Directed by Akula. Performed by Akula. 2013.

This video provides a visual representation that is moderated and easy to listen to review of memoir writing. This video would be good for students to listen to in order to review the first few days of memoir writing.

Resources for teachers

Anderson, Carl. "Decisions Decisions: Choreographing Conferences." Edited by Bill Varner. *Decisions Decisions*, 2000, 155-70.

This text discusses the overview of how to implement meaningful conference times within your writing workshop blocks. It reviews methods of conferences and how to implement them within your classroom. The author provides examples of conference notes, and student results from conferring.

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

This text offers a guide on teaching memoirs beyond the craft and structure but also offers for teachers' strong reflective points, and demonstrates the purpose of this genre specifically. It offers itself as a reference guide on lessons taught within the genre study.

Gibney, Tara. "Teaching Memoir in the Elementary School Classroom: A Genre Study Approach." *Read Teach: The Reading Teacher* 66, no. 3 (2012): 243-53.

From a teacher's perspective the author gives an account of how they implemented a memoir genre study within their classroom through using a writer's workshop approach. This provides examples and ideas which translate from the author's sixth grade classroom account to your own classroom.

Magrath, Peter. "The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution." *The National Commission on Writing In America's Schools and Colleges*, April 2003, 1-44.

The text provides a rationale for how writing should fit into the ever testing rhythm that has been set by educational leaders of today's time. The author provides reasons and examples of the impact of how writing instruction if implemented with fidelity will be more beneficial within the modern classroom.

Ray, Katie Wood. "Understanding the Essential Characteristics of the Writing Workshop." *In the Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts (and they're all hard parts)*, 2001: 1-15.

Ray's article is an easily relatable book for teachers looking to begin implementing writer's workshop. With many picture examples and meaningful ideas, Ray provides a guide for teachers on how to implement writer's workshop within a classroom in today's twenty-first century centered world.

Van Horn, Leigh. "Reading and Writing Essays about Objects of Personal Significance." *Language Arts* 78, no. 3 (January 2001): 273-78.

Through this article the author provides vivid insight into how reading and writing about objects are of significant to the student will produce more meaningful work. Engaging students through their personal experience and relevant life events allows for stronger connections lessons and content being taught. The author explores the ideas building relevance through personal experiences and demonstrates how the two are significant within the classroom.

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