



***Our Stories Matter:
Enhancing Classroom Culture through Memoir***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
4th Grade

Keywords: memoir, nonfiction, narrative writing, personal narrative, writing process, balanced literacy, genre study

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

Synopsis: This unit is intended to be used at the beginning of the school year to help students learn to generate ideas, improve their writing stamina, engage in the writing process, and learn more about themselves and each other. Students write personal narratives with increasing skill and elaboration throughout elementary school. By fourth grade, writers are ready to examine their lives on a deeper level. With the addition of reflection, fourth graders can use the craft moves they've learned from personal narratives to compose thoughtful memoirs. Writing and sharing memoirs strengthen students' understanding of self and improve classroom culture. Students will also use the writing process to create a compelling memoir from one of their ideas. Every week highlights a step of the writing process and an element of narrative. Each lesson starts with students generating ideas, followed by a minilesson and ample time to write and share. The unit will close with a publishing party, where friends and family are invited to read memoirs and talk with the authors. Through the activities described in this unit, I hope to transform my students into more engaged, thoughtful, and sincere writers and listeners.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 26 students in 4th grade.

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

Introduction

Rationale

Fourth graders are going through many physical, social, and emotional changes. As puberty approaches, physical changes in their body may leave them feeling self-conscious. Friendships and relationships with their parents may become more complicated. They may test limits and succumb to peer pressure. At a time when kids are growing rapidly, it is important that we, as educators, teach them how to be more reflective, organized, and responsible.

I want to use this unit to build a classroom community at the beginning of the school year. This will be my first year teaching 4th grade, and the current curriculum suggests having students write a realistic fiction or narrative story. In my experience in 2nd grade, I've found that sharing personal is a great way to build community. Sharing personal stories allows students to connect with each other and create a more positive, inclusive classroom.¹ This year, my school is also using morning meetings to personalize learning and build a cohesive classroom. Sharing personal experiences and reflecting during memoir writing require some of the same skills that morning meetings seek to build. I think that teaching this unit in the first few weeks of school will allow me to establish routines, get to know my students, and still fit in the realistic fiction unit suggested by my school leaders. In the past year, the district has emphasized incorporating writing into all subjects through professional development organized by the Instructional Leadership Team. By encouraging daily written reflection in this unit, I plan to set the tone for the rest of the school year. While students will begin writing about personal experience and memoir, I would like to continue using a daybook and quick writing in other subjects throughout the academic year. For example, students may be asked to stop and jot questions after reading a science text, make personal connections to social studies topics, and explain what strategies they use in math class.

Adolescents crave autonomy and acceptance. Giving students an outlet for their thoughts can help them process any uncertainty in their lives. I hope that the predictable structure of this unit, along with the routine of writing throughout the school day, will lend a sense of stability. Students will have ownership over their work through choice of topic and execution. By balancing clear expectations with choice, I hope to provide writers with feelings of belonging and control over their academic lives.

Demographics

Beginning next school year, I will teach 4th grade at Davidson Elementary School. Davidson is a suburb of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Davidson Elementary serves 706 students in kindergarten through 5th grade. Davidson Elementary serves 701 students in kindergarten through 5th grade and will transition to a K-8 school in the next two years. The student population is 78% Caucasian, 6% African American, 2% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 1% Multi-Racial, and 1% other. There are 65 students with disabilities, 35 English Language Learners, and 109 students enrolled in the Talent Development program. In 2017, the school met expectations with an overall student growth score of 79% on reading and math end of grade exams. There is no school or district wide assessment for elementary writing.

Objectives

This unit will address North Carolina Common Core writing, reading, speaking, listening, and technology standards. In writing, students will learn to produce and distribute narrative writing. They will reflect on personal experience to create an original memoir. To address speaking and listening standards, students will share their writing with each other and present their experiences and ideas. Students will also be able to identify the craft and structure of a story, integrate art into their projects in meaningful ways, and read and comprehend appropriately leveled texts, in accordance with literature standards. They will use Chromebooks, Google classroom, and other technology resources to collect and present information. I aim to improve social and emotional learning in addition to the aforementioned academic goals. I hope for students to gain confidence in themselves by sharing their work and empathy through making connections with the work of others. After navigating the joys and sorrows of each others' experience, students should become more compassionate individuals in a more inclusive classroom.

Content Research

Memoirs are one of the most impactful genres of writing a student can engage in. Not only are students able to write about a topic they are an expert on, themselves, but the reflective aspect of memoir allows writers to consider how past experiences have shaped who they are.² Childhood experiences can shape who an individual becomes. Self-reflection and memoir writing can help children process their experiences and find value in both good and bad memories.³ According to Katherine Bomer, "Retrospection and reflection are crucial elements of the memoir genre."⁴ Students are familiar with using the writing process to create small moment stories and personal narratives from first, second, and third grade. However, personal narratives often lack reflection and are only part of what a memoir should be. Choice of topic is what can raise personal narratives to memoir, where the author considers the impact of events on their lives.⁵

Through memoir, individuals can take control of their own stories and identities. They can choose how to label and interpret their reality.⁶ Memoirs retell specific stories about themes, events, or relationships in an author's life with the advantage of hindsight.⁷ Memoirists must consider the events of their lives in connection with the outside world and their most intimate emotions.⁸ In this way, the sometimes-egocentric students in my 4th grade class can learn to consider their place in the world.

Throughout this unit, I would like students to take responsibility for their learning by choosing the topic, purpose, and audience of their writing.⁹ In many aspects of schooling, objectives are dictated to students. Choice empowers authors to engage in the act of writing about topics of interest and passion. When students self-select writing topics, they are more committed to writing and foster a sense of ownership of their work. Instead of writing to a prompt or a teacher-assigned task, students experience the power of choice as they capitalize on their individual backgrounds and experiences.¹⁰ By becoming authorities on their writing, I believe students will become more invested in their learning. Student engagement increases academic outcomes.¹¹

Students writing memoirs must interpret events in their lives, using many of the same strategies that would help them make inferences about texts. They may start with asking questions, making statements, and looking for connections with their own lives or other texts.¹² Students may reflect in their writing or through conferring with the teacher or peers.¹³

Sharing personal stories allows students to connect with each other and create a more positive, inclusive classroom community.¹⁴ In my experience, many children have trouble learning to speak up for themselves. They want to tell their own stories, but have trouble finding their voice. Memoir allows young people to discover who they are and learn to reflect.¹⁵ By listening to the stories of peers, students may gain greater insight into the experience of others. They can find commonalities and accept the differences of others.

Instructional Implementation

Teaching Strategies

Anchor Charts

Anchor Charts are created with students and placed strategically around the classroom. Students can quickly reference the charts to review concepts and expectations.¹⁶ Anchor charts are rotated to reflect the most current learning and behavior goals.

Author's Chair

The author's chair is an opportunity for students to share their work whole group. To make student authors more comfortable, they can choose how the audience responds to their work. At the author's discretion, the audience may compliment, make a connection, share memorable lines, ask questions, give suggestions, or share ideas.¹⁷

Daybook

Daybooks are journals in which students can record ideas, make lists, compose drafts, and reflect. They are used throughout the day to give students a chance to reflect on their learning and organize their thoughts through short bursts of writing.¹⁸ I plan to differentiate sections of daybook for different genres of writing. If a student feels stuck, they should have a variety of ideas to draw upon in their daybook. You may also confer with struggling students to provide them with topic options, but allow them to choose what to write about.¹⁹

Elements of a Story

This unit will address the following elements of narrative writing:

- Characters: protagonists and antagonists, including inanimate forces like weather
- Setting: location, time period, time of day, weather
- Plot: beginning conflict, climax, turning point, events, resolution; a scene with a repeating line; a flashback cycle between present and past
- Point of View: must be 1st person "I" or "me" in memoir

- Theme: what is the story about, why it matters to the author, reflection

Flexible Seating

As long as students are being safe and productive, they are able to work wherever they choose. In my classroom, this includes at, on, or under their desks. Clipboards, carpet squares, wobble seats, and chairs are also available to students at all times.

Graphic Organizer

Graphic organizers allow students to collect their thoughts and plan their presentations.

Mentor Text

Mentor texts are examples used to demonstrate a writing skill or inspire student writers. These published texts are read during the mini lesson. Students are asked to pause and reflect during the reading using “Think, Pair, Share.”

Peer Conference

Peer conferences give students a chance to share their work and receive suggestions. Students must sit next to each other with the work between them while conferring. The writer reads his or her work aloud. If the listener has a suggestion, they should ask the writer to stop. The listener will suggest feedback and both partners will discuss. Only the writer will make changes to their work. They are not required to make suggested changes. Peer conferences should be held after independent work time at least once per week. My intention is that they are held each day that time allows. They should last 10-14 minutes, about 5-7 minutes for each partner to share. Alternatively, 5-7 minutes can be set aside each day for one person to share, with the other partner sharing the following day.

Read Aloud

Read aloud is used for mentor texts, which promote writing skills the teacher wants reflected in student work. During this time, students must also practice listening standards, such as facing the speaker and sitting quietly. Students must listen carefully during read aloud, because they will frequently be asked to reflect on the readings and adjust their writing accordingly.

Technology

It is increasingly important that students be technologically literate. Students will be encouraged to use Chromebooks and the school’s computer lab throughout the unit.

Turn to a Partner

“Turn and talk” or “think, pair, share” is a teaching strategy used to promote teamwork and thoughtful reflection. During and after a mini-lesson, students are encouraged to turn and talk to a partner. Students will be asked open-ended questions about a text or concept. When the teacher says, “think,” students will formulate their own thoughts silently. At “pair,” students will

turn to face their partners. They will then “share” their thoughts, being careful to split the time equally between partners and listen carefully to their partners’ thoughts.²⁰ When signaled, students will turn to face the teacher. They are then randomly selected to share their partner’s thoughts, using the following sentence frame, “My partner, _____, thinks that _____.” At the close of the lesson, responses are discussed as a whole class.

Writer’s Workshop

The format of the writing workshop correlates with the Common Core State Standards. All writing workshops follow the same basic structure. In “Becoming a Writer,” the typical daily lesson includes preparing to write, independent writing time, and sharing and reflection.²¹ Fountas and Pinnell suggest modeled writing, thinking aloud through demonstration, and using mentor texts in their Continuum of Literacy Learning.²² Lucy Calkins formats her lessons with a mini lesson, followed by teaching and demonstration, finished with active engagement, where students apply what they learned.²³ Others suggest that teachers develop background knowledge, discuss texts, model writing, memorize steps, support students, and ask students to perform.²⁴ Regardless of the number of steps or phrases used, all of the curriculum I encountered suggest a scaffolded writing lesson where the teacher slowly releases control to the students, beginning with an example and ending with individual work time.

Writing Process

Each week of this unit will focus on a new step of the writing process: prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and publish. Students will choose one of their ideas and use the writing process to develop it into a cohesive memoir.

Activities

My lesson plans will follow the format used by the Writing Units of Study Series by Lucy Calkins with a few modifications. First, I added 5 minutes at the beginning of each lesson to help students generate ideas. In the past, I have found that figuring out what to write about is one of my student’s biggest obstacles to producing a story. I also encourage my students to add ideas into their writing journal throughout the day. I’ve also added suggestions for mentor texts that you may or may not choose to use. In my classroom, Fridays are used for assessment. Some days, we are able to fit in a full writing lesson, but there is normally not enough time. Therefore, I have made every fifth lesson a ‘flex day’ that you can use for extra writing time, conferring, or skip altogether. Lessons address steps of the writing process and items on their student checklist in sequential order. Unless otherwise noted, the general format of my writing lesson is as follows:

Generate Ideas (5 minutes):

Every lesson will start with three minutes of free writing or an assigned task to generate writing. After three minutes, students have the option to continue writing or share with a partner for two minutes.

Mini-lesson (10 minutes or less):

Connection (1- 2 minutes):

Connect today's lesson with ongoing work. Remind students of what they worked on the previous day. Then share excerpts of student work highlighting "glows" and "grows".

Teaching Point (1 minute):

A goal and a strategy to reach it.

Teaching (3-5 minutes):

Teacher demonstrates the strategy needed to reach the teaching point.

Active Engagement (1-3 minutes):

All students will practice the strategy alone or with a partner.

Link (1 minute):

Link strategy to the work students will do before sending them off to continue editing on their own.

Writer's Workshop (35-34 minutes):

Independent Writing:

Students find a comfortable place to work around the room. They should have their writing journals, checklists, and two pencils with them. Students may work alone or with partners during this time.

Small Group Work:

I meet with small groups based on pre-assessment scores and formative data collected through conferences, checklists, and observation. These groups will focus on particular skills or may write around the same level. For example, students that write run on sentences may be grouped together during revision or skilled writers may be grouped together to develop stronger characters while drafting.

Conferring:

I meet with each student individually once a week. I allow them to lead the conversation by reflecting on their checklist and weekly writing goal. I go over

the week’s focus on the checklist, and highlight where I think their writing falls (not yet, starting to, yes).

Mid-Workshop Teaching (3-5 min):

Halfway through the workshop, I call for students’ attention and revisit the teaching point. This is also a great time to address any misconceptions you’ve observed or remind students of good writing habits.

Share (3-5 min):

Students share their work with a partner or whole group. When time allows, I make this time longer. If the class has difficulty sustaining work for 35-45 minutes, you may choose to share mid lesson.

Mentor Texts (Optional):

Each writing lesson should last about one hour. However, you may shorten or lengthen independent writing time based on your schedule. If time permits, you may want to read mentor texts that feature the craft moves you’d like your students to emulate. These picture books can showcase the way descriptive details, precise vocabulary, and figurative language can paint a vivid picture through words. When possible, I read a portion of the mentor text each day after naming the teaching point. While reading, I stop to note how the author demonstrates the skill we are working on as well as past skills. Alternatively, you could use mentor texts in your reading workshop and note the writer’s craft. The following books compliment this unit: Owl Moon by Jane Yolen, Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts, The Leaving Morning by Angela Johnson, Thunder Cake by Patricia Polacco, and The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant. More information about each text is available in [Resources for Students](#).

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1: Generate Ideas: Map out special places Stage of the Writing Process: Prewrite Story Element: Setting Suggested Mentor Text: <u>Owl Moon</u> by Jane Yolen				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Generate Ideas: Introduce the daybook/ writing journal. Teaching Point: Writers use their lives for	Generate Ideas: Map out a special place. Teaching Point: Writers reflect on meaningful times, places,	Generate Ideas: Add people to the map. Teaching Point: Writers use descriptive details figurative	Generate Ideas: Add objects to the map. Teaching Point: Writers hook their reader’s attention at the	Flex

<p>inspiration.</p> <p>Assignment: Each student will need to bring in 3 meaningful objects by Day 6.</p>	<p>and people in their lives.</p>	<p>language to paint a vivid picture in the reader's mind.</p>	<p>beginning of the story a question, dialogue, onomatopoeia, or a description of the action.</p>	
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Week 2: **Generate Ideas:** Write about meaningful objects
Stage of the Writing Process: Draft
Story Element: Point of View
Suggested Mentor Text: Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts

Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
<p>Generate Ideas: Choose an object and write about why it is important, share writing or story with partner, select partners share out with class.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers introduce the setting and characters in the beginning of their story so the audience understands what's happening.</p> <p>Assignment: Choose weekly writing goal.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Choose and write about one object, share writing or story.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers use transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Choose and write about one object, share writing or story. Add descriptive details.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers write an ending that makes sense for their story.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Create timeline with students. Add important days in their lives.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Students should use new paragraphs to organize their writing.</p> <p>Assignment: Students should interview parents if they forgot dates or want more details.</p>	<p>Day 10 Flex</p>

Week 3: Generate Ideas: Reflect on important life events Stage of the Writing Process: Revise Story Element: Plot Suggested Mentor Text: <u>The Leaving Morning</u> by Angela Johnson				
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
<p>Generate Ideas: Add landmark events to timelines</p> <p>Teaching Point: Authors use craft moves to make their stories more interesting.</p> <p>Assignment: Choose weekly writing goal.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Add exciting events to timelines</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers keep things interesting by making some parts of the story go quickly and some slowly.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Add upsetting events to timelines.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Sensory details and precise words help the reader visualize the story.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Add changes in location, like trips and moves, to timelines.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Every writer has a voice that makes his or her writing unique. Authors choose description, phrasing, and thoughts that set the tone for their story.</p>	Flex
Week 4: Generate Ideas: Think about ethnicity and culture Stage of the Writing Process: Edit Story Element: Character Suggested Mentor Text: <u>Thunder Cake</u> by Patricia Polacco				
Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
<p>Generate Ideas: Add events related to culture, such as traditions or ceremonies, to timelines.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers add dialog, actions, and thoughts to</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Create a timeline for the year. Add class-wide events like the start of school and breaks.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Memoir writers share their reflections in</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Add holidays and birthdays to the timeline. Discuss different holidays students may or may not share.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers are like detectives and</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Add family traditions to yearly timelines. Discuss family differences, even amongst shared holidays and traditions.</p> <p>Teaching Point:</p>	Flex

<p>make their characters come to life.</p> <p>Assignment: Each student should bring in photographs of people that influenced their lives by next week. Choose weekly writing goal.</p>	<p>the story so the reader can understand why this story matters.</p>	<p>search their writing for COPS (Capitalization, Order, Punctuation, and Spelling).</p>	<p>Punctuation and capitalization can help emphasize certain parts of the story and make it more interesting.</p>	
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Week 5: **Generate Ideas:** Describe relationships with influential people
Stage of the Writing Process: Publish
Story Element: Theme (with an emphasis on reflection)
Suggested Mentor Text: The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25
<p>Generate Ideas: Add important people from their photos to either timeline.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Writers choose materials that make sense for their published work.</p> <p>Assignment: Choose weekly writing goal.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Add changing relationships to the timeline. Place positive relationships above the timeline and negative below, or draw lines from the person to indicate their standing.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Authors choose pictures that go along with the tone of their story.</p>	<p>Generate Ideas: Explain how a person from the photos has influenced who you are.</p> <p>Teaching Point: Even the best writers must proofread their final work.</p>	<p>Publishing Party!</p>	<p>Flex</p>

Day 4

Generate Ideas (5 minutes):

Student will add in object to their maps. For my map of the classroom, I will add supplies like pencils, tape, erasers, and paper to the writing corner. I will then talk about the importance having supplies in order.

Mini-lesson (10 minutes or less):

Connection (1- 2 minutes):

Have students flip to the first page of novels they've been reading. Ask them to share the first line of their novel with a partner. Have a few partners share or show the following quotes on the board.

“Crack! When baseball superstar Barry bonds hits a homerun, most baseball fans would consider the ball a goner.” -Dogs on the Job by Christopher Farran

“Ramona Quimby, brave and fearless, was half running, half skipping to keep up with her big sister on their way home from the park.” -Ramona the Brave by Beverly Cleary

Teaching Point (1 minute):

Writers hook their reader's attention at the beginning of the story a question, dialogue, onomatopoeia, or a description of the action.

Teaching (3-5 minutes):

Add a hook to personal writing sample.

Before:

I've always been afraid of heights, but today was different. My friend said I could do it. I looked up at the wall. I put the dry chalk on my hands and grabbed the first hold, then the next. Soon, I was near the top of the wall. My left leg was stretched out against the wall. My right toes were perched on a rock. I could see the last hold, but it was out of reach. I would have to hold on with one hand and swing my body to reach the top.

After:

Woosh! I felt the air rushing past my ears as a flew through the air. I've always been afraid of heights, but today was different. My friend said I could do it. I looked up at the wall. I put the dry chalk on my hands and grabbed the first hold, then the next. Soon, I was near the top of the wall. My left leg was stretched out against the wall. My right

toes were perched on a rock. I could see the last hold, but it was out of reach. I would have to hold on with one hand and swing my body to reach the top.

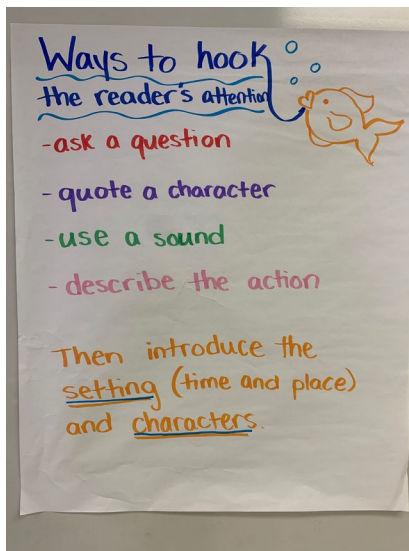
Active Engagement (1-3 minutes):

Students will think of 2-3 possible hooks for their story, then share with a partner.

Link (1 minute):

After getting feedback from partners, students will add a hook to their own writing to interest their reader.

Anchor Chart:



Day 16

This lesson pairs well with *Thunder Cake* by Patricia Polacco. As a class, we read and annotated *Thunder Cake* for the characters words, thoughts, and actions. Then students used this evidence to determine the narrator's character traits.

Generate Ideas (5 minutes):

Have students write about character traits they exhibit with examples from their lives.

Mini-lesson (10 minutes or less):

Connection (1- 2 minutes):

Ask students to share their favorite book with a partner, then have a few partners share out with the class. If any of the books were made into a movie, ask students which they liked better and why. Point out that what makes books great is that we can get into the

mind of a character. Movies show a character's words and actions, but a book also shares their thoughts. This gives us a much deeper understanding of the character.

Teaching Point (1 minute):

Students will add dialog, actions, and thoughts to make their characters come to life.

Teaching (3-5 minutes):

Add dialog and thoughts to personal writing sample.

Before:

Woosh! I felt the air rushing past my ears as I flew through the air. I've always been afraid of heights, but today was different. My friend said I could do it. I looked up at the wall. I put the dry chalk on my hands and grabbed the first hold, then the next. Soon, I was near the top of the wall. My left leg was stretched out against the wall. My right toes were perched on a rock. I could see the last hold, but it was out of reach. I would have to hold on with one hand and swing my body to reach the top.

After:

I've always been afraid of heights but today was different. You can do it. You're ready! Jen exclaimed. Jen was an expert rock climber, but I wasn't sure if I believed her. I looked up at the wall. I didn't feel ready. I was nervous and my heart was beating fast, but I also felt excited. I had been practicing and I felt strong. I put the dry chalk on my hands and grabbed the first hold, then the next. It seemed easy. Soon, I was near the top of the wall. My arms were tired from pulling up the weight of my body. My forearms ached and my hands were cramping. I wanted to stop but I'm so close I thought. My left leg was stretched out against the wall. My right toes were perched on a rock. I could see the last hold but it was out of reach. I would have to hold on with one hand and swing my body to reach the top. It was risky. I was afraid of falling, but if I didn't try I knew I would regret it.

Active Engagement (1-3 minutes):

Students will look through their work for dialogue, thoughts, and actions. They may annotate, by underlining the narrator's words, highlighting their thoughts, and circling their actions.

Link (1 minute):

Tell students you care about their memoirs because you want to learn more about who they are. The magic of words is that they can share their innermost thoughts on paper through words, actions, and thoughts.

Day 18

Generate Ideas (5 minutes):

Add holidays and birthdays to the timeline. Discuss different holidays students may or may not share. For example, some students may not celebrate Halloween or Christmas. Others may celebrate Dia de los Muertos or Hanukkah.

Mini-lesson (10 minutes or less):

Connection (1- 2 minutes):

Remind of the revision they've been doing on their writing. Discuss some of the ways they're made their writing stronger. Introduce the next step of the writing process, editing. I teach my students that revision is done with your ears. They should ask, "Does this sound right? How can I make this sound better?" Editing is done with your ears; "Does this look right?"

Teaching Point (1 minute):

Be a detective and search your writing for COPS (Capitalization, Order, Punctuation, and Spelling).

Teaching (3-5 minutes):

Annotate your own writing for errors in capitalization and punctuation.

Before:

I've always been afraid of heights but today was different. You can do it. You're ready! Jen exclaimed. Jen was an expert rock climber, but I wasn't sure if I believed her. I looked up at the wall. I didn't feel ready. I was nervous and my heart was beating fast, but I also felt excited. I had been practicing and I felt strong. I put the dry chalk on my hands and grabbed the first hold, then the next. It seemed easy. Soon, I was near the top of the wall. My arms were tired from pulling up the weight of my body. My forearms ached and my hands were cramping. I wanted to stop but I'm so close I thought. My left leg was stretched out against the wall. My right toes were perched on a rock. I could see the last hold but it was out of reach. I would have to hold on with one hand and swing my body to reach the top. It was risky. I was afraid of falling, but if I didn't try I knew I would regret it.

After:

I've always been afraid of heights, but today was different. "You can do it. You're ready!" Jen exclaimed. Jen was an expert rock climber, but I wasn't sure if I believed her. I looked up at the wall. I didn't feel ready. I was nervous and my heart was beating

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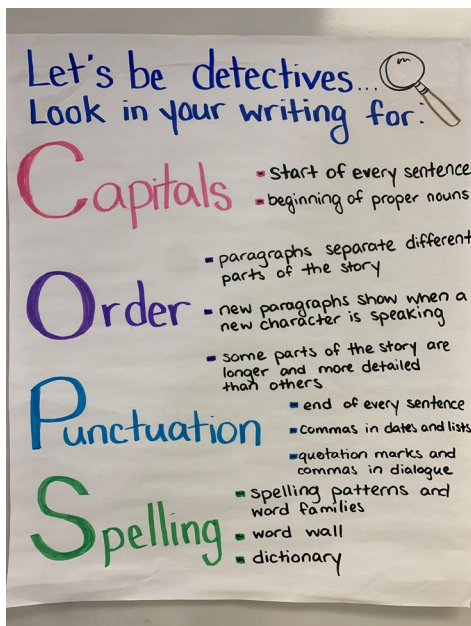
Active Engagement (1-3 minutes):

Students will edit their work for capital letters and punctuation.

Link (1 minute):

Remind students that punctuation tells readers how to read a text. Once they have edited for capital letters and punctuation, they should have a partner double check.

Anchor Chart:



Day 24

Publishing Party (45-60 minutes)

Students, staff, and families gather to celebrate student work at a publishing party. During this celebration, students share their finished books. I encourage students to plan and assemble their finished work as they wish. They may be typed or handwritten and illustrated with photographs from the student’s life, stock images, or original artwork. The celebration typically lasts about 45 minutes. Before visitors enter the classroom, I discuss the goals of the writing unit and share

anchor charts and exemplars. Without this information, parents sometimes struggle to give constructive feedback to students. I also have students volunteer to share their work with the whole class, choose a volunteer to go first, and randomly assign the order in which others will present. I want all students to feel comfortable during the celebration and know what to expect. Depending on time and the number of volunteers, students may share their entire story or an excerpt. As parents enter, they are given pens. After students share whole group, everyone shares in smaller groups around the classroom. Student authors carry pens, clipboards, and a “compliment card” where listeners can write feedback. Students are encouraged to share their own work and respond to the work of others. After the publishing party, student work is added to my classroom library.

Assessment:

You may use the On-Demand Writing Assessment Prompt from Lucy Calkins as a pre and post assessment²⁵. The rubric can be used to grade both pre and post assessments. However, if you are short on time, you can also use the student’s first draft as a pre-assessment or use the checklist for scoring. I often use the student’s final published work as their post assessment, though using the On-Demand Prompt would yield a more objective assessment of student growth. The benefit of using the checklist is that students can keep it with them throughout the unit. I use it as a live document that can track student progress each day. See [Appendix 2](#) for the rubric. See [Appendix 3](#) for the student checklist and writing goals worksheets.

My principal goal is personal growth. To that end, I review the pre-assessment and corresponding rubric in my first conference with each student. Through leading questions, the teacher can provide input on the goals while the student takes leadership. Having the student create the goal makes it much more relevant to them. Formative assessments are made using writing checklists, during conferences, and in informal observations throughout the unit.

Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

Text Types and Purposes:

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.4.3.A

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.C

Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.D

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.E

Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

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. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 4 [here](#).)

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.

Range of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Appendix 2

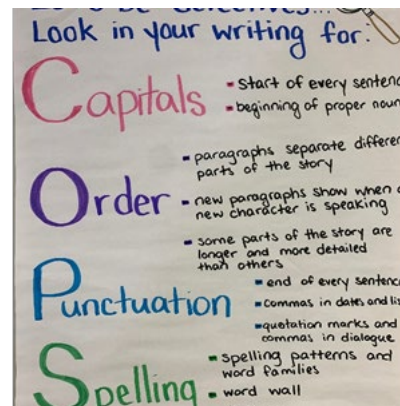
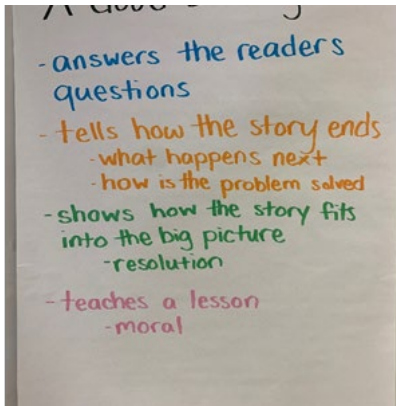
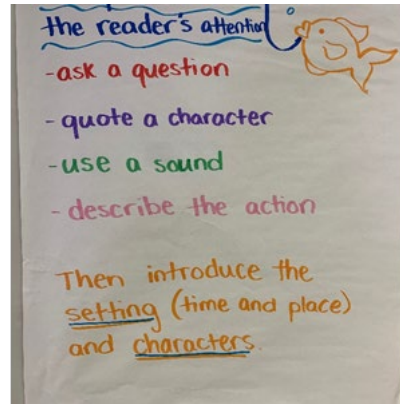
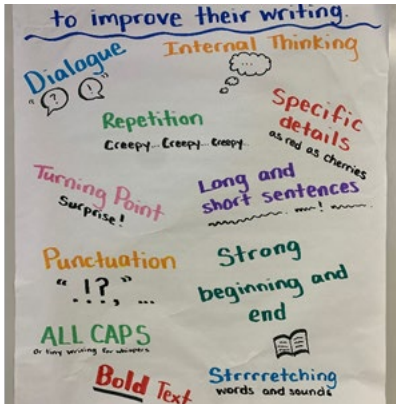
Name: _____

Date: _____

4th Grade Memoir Writing Rubric

	1	2	3	4	
Overall	The writer wrote about when she did something.	The writer wrote about one time when he did something.	The writer told the story bit by bit.	The writer wrote the important part of an event bit by bit and took out unimportant parts.	
Lead	The writer tried to make a beginning for his story.	The writer wrote a beginning in which he/she helps readers know who the characters were and what the setting was in my story.	The writer wrote a beginning in which he/she showed what was happening and where, getting readers into the world of the story.	The writer wrote a beginning in which he/she not only showed what was happening and where, but also gave some clues to what would later become a problem for the main character.	
Transitions	The writer put her pages in order. She used words such as <i>and, then, and so</i> .	The writer told his/her story in order by using phrases such as <i>a little later and after that</i> .	The writer showed how much time went by with words and phrases that mark time such as <i>just</i> the and <i>suddenly</i> (to show when things happened quickly) or after a <i>while</i> and a <i>little later</i> (to show when a little time passed).	The writer used transitional phrases to show passage of time in complicated ways, perhaps by showing things happening at the same time (<i>meanwhile, at the same time</i>) or flashback and flash-forward (<i>early that morning, three hours later</i>)	
Ending	The writer found a way to end his story.	The writer chose the action, talk, or feelings that would make a good ending and worked to write it well.	The writer wrote an ending that connected to the beginning or the middle of the story. The writer used action, dialogue, or feeling to bring his/her story to close.	The writer wrote an ending that connected to the main part of the story The character said, did, or realized something at the end that came from what happened in the story. The writer gave readers a sense of closure.	
Organization	The writer wrote her story across three or more pages.	The writer used paragraphs to separate what happened first from what happened later in my story.	The writer used paragraphs to separate the different parts or times of the story to show when a new character was speaking.	The writer used paragraphs to separate different parts or time of the story and to show when a new character was speaking. Some parts of the story were longer and more developed than others.	
Elaboration	The writer put the picture from his mind onto the page. He had details in pictures and words.	The writer used dialogue and/or description to develop a central message through the use of characters' actions, thoughts, and feelings.	The writer added more to the heart of her story, including not only actions dialogue but also thoughts and feelings.	The writer developed characters, setting, and plot throughout his story, especially the heart of the story. To do this, he/she used a blend description, action, dialogue, and thinking.	
Craft	The writer used labels and words to give details.	The writer chose strong words that would help readers picture his story.	The writer not only told her story but also wrote it in ways that go readers to picture what was happening and that brought her story to life.	The writer showed why characters did what they did by including their thinking. The writer made some parts of the story go quickly, some slowly. The writer included precise, sensory details and used figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification) to bring his story to life. The writer used a storytelling voice and conveyed the emotion or tone of his story through description, phrases, dialogue, and thoughts.	
Spelling	The writer used all he knew about words and chunk of words (at, op, it, etc.)to help him spell. The writer spelled all the word wall words right and use the word wall to help him spell other words.	The writer used what he/she knew about spelling patterns to help him spell and edit before he/she wrote his/her final draft. The writer got help from others to check his/her spelling and punctuation before he/she wrote his/her final draft.	The writer used what he/she knew about word families and spelling rules to help him/her spell and edit. He/she used the word wall and dictionaries when needed.	The writer used what he/she knew about word families and spelling rules to help him/her spell and edit. He/she used the word wall and dictionaries when needed.	
Punctuation	The writer ended sentences with punctuation, a capital letter for names, and commas in dates and lists.	The writer used quotation marks and commas to punctuate his/her dialogue.	When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct.	The writer used commas to set off introductory parts of a sentence (one day at the park.). She also used commas to show when a character is talking directly to someone, such as "Are you mad, Mom?"	
A (100%)		B (89%)	C (79%)	D (69%)	F (59%)
33-36 points		29- 32 points	26-28 points	22-25 points	Below 21 points

Appendix 3



Resources

Materials for Classroom Use

1. Chart paper
Chart paper is used to create anchor charts. Anchor charts are available in [Appendix 4](#).
2. Computers or chromebooks and a printer
Computers allow students to type their published work and find stock images.
3. Craft supplies (markers, paper, pencils, pens, etc.)
Art supplies are needed for students to publish their work.
4. Interactive board or document camera and a projector
Projection is useful for modeling annotations and sharing exemplars.
5. Lined Paper
I prefer using lined paper for a student's second draft so that new pages can be added as needed.
6. Mentor texts
These texts support writing lessons by highlighting craft moves.
7. Rubric
The rubric, found in [Appendix 2](#), is used to formally assess student work.
8. Writing Folders
Students will store second drafts, checklists, and other resources in their writing folders.
9. Writing Journals
Student will generate their ideas, write drafts, and reflect on their learning in their journals.

Resources for Students

Boelts, Maribeth. *Those Shoes*. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2009.

This piece is centered around an object. *Those shoes* serve as a catalyst for a story about friendship and generosity. It pairs well with the second week of this unit, where students are writing narrative inspired by objects. This text also works well when exploring character traits, theme, and reflection.

Johnson, Angela. *The Leaving Morning*. New York: Scholastic, 2013.

Not every life event is positive. In The Leaving Morning, a family is moving and the narrator experiences feelings of sadness, anxiety, and then hope. This book is a logical introduction to the third week of this unit, when students will write about important events on their timelines.

Polacco, Patricia. *Thunder Cake*. New York: Putnam & Grosset, 1990.

During week 4 of this unit, student will benefit from reading and annotating this. I recommend that students underline the the narrator's words, highlight her thoughts, and circl her actions. Students may then draw conclusions about her emotions and character traits based on text evidence. Students will use this experience to add dialogue, thoughts, and actions to their writing to make their characters come to life.

Rylant, Cynthia. *The Relatives Came*. New York: Aladdin, 1999.

This text works well with the 5th week of this unit. It reviews past craft moves and also features some reflection. It's told in the past tense, and though the relatives go back to Virginia, they dream of their summer with family. Elements of reflection and theme in this text can be used as an example for students.

Yolen, Jane. *Owl Moon*. New York: Philomel Books, 1987.

This personal narrative features wonderful examples of figurative language. It would be a wonderful mentor text during the first week of this unit, where students will focus on describing the setting of their story in detail after generating ideas through mapping.

Resources for Teachers

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

This resource introduces how and why teaching memoir is so important.

Calkins, Lucy, and Colleagues. *Comprehensive Overview: Units, Tools, and Methods for Teaching Reading & Writing*. PDF. Heinemann.

More detail regarding the structure of a writer's workshop can be found in this text.

Calkins, Lucy, Kelly Boland Hohne, and Audra Kirshbaum. Robb. *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades K-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2015.

Refer to this text or a plethora of information on assessment across grade levels.

Calkins, Lucy, and Peter Cunningham. *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop: Primary Grades*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2013.

This resource is a longer, more detailed version of the Comprehensive Overview and discusses how a writing workshop addresses common core standards.

Fountas, Irene C., and Gay Su. Pinnell. *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grade PreK-8: A Guide to Teaching*. Portsmouth, N. H.: Heinemann, 2011.

Fountas and Pinnell, known for the guided reading levels they devised, provide suggestions for teaching writing throughout grade levels. This knowledge helps teachers differentiate instruction to students who are writing above or below grade level.

Kissel, Brian. *When Writers Drive the Workshop: Honoring Young Voices and Bold Choices*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2017.

This text advocates letting students guide their work. It also suggests specific strategies for implementation in your classroom.

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- Being a Writer: Grade 2: Teacher's Manual*. Oakland, CA: Developmental Studies Center, 2007.
- Boelts, Maribeth. *Those Shoes*. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2009.
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- Johnson, Angela. *The Leaving Morning*. New York: Scholastic, 2013.
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- Klem, A. M. and Connell, J. P. "Relationships Matter: Linking Teacher Support to Student Engagement and Achievement". *Journal of School Health*, 74: 262-273. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2004.tb08283.x.
- Kucan, Linda. "'I' Poems: Invitations for Students to Deepen Literary Understanding." *The Reading Teacher* 60, no. 6 (2007): 518-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204498>.
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Notes

- ¹ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 18 and 23.
- ² Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 4.
- ³ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 13.
- ⁴ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 5.
- ⁵ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 10-11.
- ⁶ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 16.
- ⁷ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 4.
- ⁸ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 8-9.
- ⁹ Kissel, "Bringing Lives Into Literacy," 2.
- ¹⁰ Kissel, "Bringing Lives Into Literacy," 4.
- ¹¹ Klem and Connell, "Relationships Matter," 262.
- ¹² Bomer, *Writing a Life, Making Meaning of Memory*.
- ¹³ Bomer, *Writing a Life, Making Meaning of Memory*.
- ¹⁴ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 18 and 23.
- ¹⁵ Bomer, *Writing a Life*, 17.
- ¹⁶ Logue. *Anchors Aweigh!*
- ¹⁷ Kissel, Brian. *When Writers Drive the Workshop*, 40.
- ¹⁸ Brannon, Lil. *Thinking out Loud on Paper*, 14-15.
- ¹⁹ Bomer. *Writing a Life, Rafting Down Rivers of Memory*.
- ²⁰ *Being a Writer: Grade 2: Teacher's Manual*.
- ²¹ *Being a Writer: Grade 2: Teacher's Manual*, v.
- ²² Fountas and Pinnell, *The Continuum of Literacy Learning*, 104.
- ²³ Calkins and Cunningham. *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop*, 48-49.
- ²⁴ Harris, Graham, Mason, and Friedlander. *Powerful Writing Strategies*, 13.
- ²⁵ Calkins, Boland Hohne, and Robb. *Writing Pathways*, 354.