



Who Are YOU?
Discovering yourself through memoir and literature

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
5th Grade ELA and Writing

Keywords: self-image, memoir, life, truth

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

Synopsis: *Who Are YOU?* This unit focuses on using writing to help children learn more about themselves in upper elementary school. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study states that it is essential for students to be able to write a narrative based on real or imagined experience or events. This unit will focus on the real aspects of this essential skill. Students will do this through discovering and uncovering their own history. Secondly, this unit will focus on how students can write their own personal memoirs. This unit will provide an insight of many different authors own personal lives, including myself, to help direct the students in revealing things in writing. The students will be able to determine the intended audience of the memoir. The students will also be able to analyze different memoirs to determine the message the author is intending to reach with their audience.

I plan to teach this unit in the second and third quarter of the 2018-2019 school year to 50 fifth grade students.

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

Overview

“Today you are You that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You.” - Dr. Seuss¹

“Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment, until it become a memory.” – Dr. Seuss²

These two quotes from Dr. Seuss speaks to this unit. This unit is all about YOU and your memories that turn into wild rides: Memoirs. Memoir is one of the hardest things to write because you have to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Introduction

This unit is intended to teach students how to talk about themselves. It seems to be a very daunting task to ask students to put a pencil to the paper and talk about who they are and who they possibly would like to be in the future. Everyone around the age of 9 or 10 seem to be consumed with their friends, TV, video games (e.g. Fortnite), and so many other things that it leaves no time for students to explore who they are. Pre-teens today deal with a lot of issues that teachers and parents in modern day are not equipped to handle and to add to the miscommunication between teachers and students, students are reluctant to speak on issues that trouble them.

Technology plays a major role in how pre-teens communicate and interact with others. A memoir does not have to be written about an emotion in mind but it would be a great way to build the relationships that are truly missing in schools and households. A memoir can help teachers listen to what their students have to say about their life and their perception of what is really going on. Because I follow the balanced literacy approach, this is also a way for the students to learn about the teacher and for them to see that you, the teacher, are a human and not a robot. This curriculum unit will be a marriage between two seminars. The students will learn about themselves and others but tell their stories the best way they know how.

The two curriculum units that will be married will be *Stay Woke: Exploring, Unpacking and Finding out Who I Am* and this unit which is named, *Who are YOU? Discovering Yourself through Memoir and Literature*. I made the choice to marry these two units because students start with exploring and unpacking but I found that students do not have the time within the unit to find out about themselves. Writing this unit will give them the chance to truly dive deep into either their heritage, personality, emotions, or anything they would like to discuss that pertains to them.

I would like to continue to bridge the gap between education of academic and self and make my students more conscious of who they are. Students have the ability to really change the way we communicate in the future if we teach them that talking about their challenges and victories can help some else in a positive way.

¹ "7 Dr. Seuss Quotes to Live By." The Odyssey Online. November 14, 2017. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/7-dr-seuss-quotes-to-live-by>.

² "7 Dr. Seuss Quotes to Live By." The Odyssey Online. November 14, 2017. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/7-dr-seuss-quotes-to-live-by>.

School / Student Demographics

Mountain Island Lake Academy is located in the Northwest Learning community of Charlotte Mecklenburg School system. The school was originally named Mountain Island Lake Elementary when it opened in 2002 but changed when the transition to a Pre-Kindergarten to eighth grade was introduced in 2013. It is the first school in CMS that transitioned from a regular elementary school into a Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade academy by community choice. Mountain Island Lake Academy is a STEM- focused Cambridge International Program school that uses balanced literacy as a foundation. MILA is a feeder school into Hopewell High school with the same Cambridge program. The school has an enrollment number of 825 students. Within the middle school, we offer dance, band, chorus, physical education, basketball, football, volleyball, cheerleading, soccer, and many other opportunities for students.

Based on the statistics that we have for the year of 2018-2019 there are currently 825 students enrolled. 15.3% are white, 63% African American, 12.2% Hispanic, 5.3% Asian, 3.4% Multi-Racial, and 0.9% other. Our Hispanic population has tripled since last school year. We have one principal, one assistant principal, and one dean of students. Our school scored a grade of a D for the 2016-2017 school year on the NC report card. Last year we moved from the D to the letter grade of a C. We currently have 774 staff members that assist or teach the students of Mountain Island Lake Academy. All teachers are certified and at least 45.8% of the teachers at Mountain Island have their Master's Degree.³

Grades 4-8 implement the Cambridge program within the classroom. The Cambridge Programme is an innovative and accelerated method of academic study offered solely through the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The program promotes academic rigor in English, math, and science. In a Cambridge classroom you will find that the teachers are flexible to promote creativity, they emphasize thinking outside the box, inquiry-based learning, prepare students for the high school Cambridge programs. The teachers present a global focus while also promoting cultural sensitivity. While students are in second and third grade, they participate in a pre-Cambridge classroom to see if they would like to participate in the program in 4-8 grade. Students apply for the Cambridge program and entry is based on a students' test scores, application, and teacher recommendations.⁴

On the elementary side of Mountain Island, the grade level teams have multiple days to perfect their craft through lesson planning with team members, facilitators, and administration. Within these meetings teachers analyze data from common and formal assessment, plan units, talk about possible academic or behavior problems with students, and share concerns with team or administration about anything.

As a teacher at Mountain Island Lake Academy I use the most valuable resources within the school which are my colleagues to help further my education as a teacher. I am a fifth grade teacher that has implemented the Cambridge program daily in the classroom. I teach ELA and

³ "Mountain Island Lake Academy Homepage." MILA Homepage. Accessed November 1, 2018. <http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/mountainislandlakeacademyES/Pages/Default.aspx>.

⁴ "Cambridge Programme." MILA Cambridge Programme. Accessed November 01, 2018. <http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/mountainislandlakeacademyES/Pages/Cambridge-at-MILA.aspx>.

science to 50 students. At Mountain Island Lake Academy, we use the latest North Carolina standards and other research based techniques to help us provide the best education possible to students. This is my third year teaching at Mountain Island Lake Academy and one of the biggest challenges is self-identity. I see students who have grown up wealthy, well-exposed, and have the best of the best but I also see the other side where students are living under the poverty line, never travel, and sometimes are homeless. No matter the economic standard they are living, each one of these students struggle to understand themselves and would rather be like someone else than to be true to themselves. This is a growing pain but also a reality that no teacher ever addresses.

Rationale

Students have many distractions in life that detract from fostering their relationships with friends and family members. Videogames, social media, and other digital media serve as barriers between a child and a rich relationship with others. My goal as a teacher is to make sure that we are building a nation of children whom are culturally aware of themselves and others. My goal is to also teach students to learn about themselves internally and to become better communicators.

Opening up their learning to writing memoirs can change the way that students express themselves and being open to expressing difficult situations that occur during their life. “A memoir invites different kinds of thinking it asks the writer to immerse himself (herself) in memory and to manipulate it. Unlike other types of nonfiction, the memoirist works with largely unverifiable material that by definition belongs solely to the writer.”⁵ Understanding self is one of the most pivotal things that we as people need to do and teach our children. Students are going through so much at a young age that we dismiss their “puppy” feelings because we think, “I made it through so they can also.” Based on the goals for the last unit, *Stay Woke: Exploring, Unpacking and Finding out Who I Am*, my goal is to always help students figure out who they are, who they want to be, and how they would like to be perceived. Giving the students in fifth grade the opportunity to create a memoir will be life changing for some and others a way to continue to build their creativity. “More than anything else, writing the memoir is an act of discovering the self, creating on the page almost an “imitation of the self” (Olney 1980, 19)”⁶ Sometimes students need to “step out of their bodies” to express themselves through writing. Giving the students the chance to express their voice will give the students back the power that they crave to have all the time.

This unit is important for my students to learn because if we make the choice to wait, we take the chances away for the students to communicate their true feelings and show the experiences that they have encountered in their short time on this earth. As discussed before, when we give students the time to write their own memoir we, as teachers, give students their voice and choice back. “For me, allowing students to choose their own topics helps me to move

⁵ Bomer, Katherine. Rafting Down Rivers of Memory: Getting Ideas Going in the Memoirist’s Notebook. In *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning and Triumph over Tests* by Katherine Bomer, 49-84. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

⁶ Bomer, Katherine. Making Meaning of Memories: Selecting, Collecting, and Layering. In *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning and Triumph over Tests* by Katherine Bomer, 85-109. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

my students beyond the artificial assignment and toward writing that has more meaning.”⁷ I want my students to be able to connect with the information that they are writing and show that they are more than just students and numbers that we put on data charts. Students are people with real feelings and real issues.

Finally, this unit is important for my students to learn because they get the chance to explore their experience through the different ways to write memoir. Students get to see that talking about yourself has a place in the curriculum and that writing is important. Students also get the chance to see the reflection process that authors go through to write a story. “Students should never feel that the writing most valued in their classrooms, or that most pleases their teacher, is writing about abuse and neglect, grief, or humiliation. The craft of memoir involves writing from the inside out, but that inside can be full of light; it can be funny, inquisitive, sweet, and cautious.”⁸ This type of writing can go cross curriculum and engage students in topics through materials they love to learn.

Objective

This unit is designated for fifth grade ELA and science classes. Students will be able to write a memoir using their own personal experience. This unit will support the students’ writing, analytical, and reflective skills. Students will explore, discuss, evaluate/analyze, and write about different experiences in their lives. This unit will incorporate projects, in school and outside of school that will require research, technology, and analytical skills.

I teach two blocks a day and each of the classes stay together between the two switches that they make. This unit is designated for both classes but some of the activities will have modifications to accommodate the differences between the classes and of future classes. Each of the activities will be incorporated into the different classes that I teach.

This unit will focus on the students learning about themselves, how to write memoir, how to analyze memoir texts, and how to use different styles within the genre to create a memoir. “The essence of a memoir is that it tells the reader something personal.”⁹ Learning how to become a critical memoir reader and writer will help the students find out how others have expressed themselves through writing and give the students examples on how to write their own memoir. What style did the author use to write their memoir? What word choice did the author use to express their experience? What details and images does the author use to tell the story and make it come alive? What lines of dialogue impact the story? What is the personal truth the author is conveying? What is the meaning the author intends? How is the memoir honest and what makes it honest? All of these questions will help the student see what they need to do while writing their memoir.

⁷ Beaton, Anne M. "Student Choice in Writing." *Schools*7, no. 1 (2010): 111-21. doi:10.1086/651296.

⁸ Bomer, Katherine. Why Teach Memoir? Reasons that will Change your Teaching and your Life. In *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning and Triumph over Tests* by Katherine Bomer, 1-25. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

⁹ Bomer, Katherine. Rafting Down Rivers of Memory: Getting Ideas Going in the Memoirist’s Notebook. In *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning and Triumph over Tests* by Katherine Bomer, 49-84. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

After learning the different components of memoir by reading mentor texts, the students can start to write their own memoirs. The students will learn through modeling from the teacher and using graphic organizers to help with the process of writing. At the end of the unit the students will present their project to the classroom which is a movie trailer to their memoir. The students will have to find different ways to convey their memoir along with the movie trailer. The movie trailer and all memoir writing will be put into a portfolio and titled: My Life up to Fifth Grade.

Content Research

Students will learn how to write a memoir based on their time in school. The students will need to know what a memoir is and the process it takes to write a memoir. Students will also learn how to show not tell what they are trying to convey to the audience. The students will end the unit by publishing their memoir and having a celebration.

As I was reading research to figure out how to write a memoir myself, I found that there are many things that you must think about before you take the time to sit down and write. The first thing that you want to think about is: What point of view should you write from? Should the students choose a time in their lives from before or should they choose a time that is happening right at that moment? This can be a very hard question to answer for all students because this can only be answered by the author. Students in my classroom are dealing with issues that some adults have not experienced so leaving the choice up to the students will help with the authenticity of the memoir. So, first the students should make a list of things that they are comfortable speaking about. You can refer to some of the activities below to help foster the ideas in your students.

The next thing is to help students understand that no matter who they talk about in their memoir or what situation they talk about, **THIS IS THEIR STORY**. Writing a memoir can help students physically and psychologically. Per the article, Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing, it is said that writing about traumatic, stressful, or emotional events has been found to result in improvements in both physical and psychological health, in non-clinical and clinical populations.¹⁰ Children need a way to express themselves creatively but also to communicate and feel comfortable expressing themselves freely in the classroom. Texting, social media, and video games have taken students away from verbal communication and turned them into technology junkies. Children whom are 8 and under are spending around 2.19 hours on some type of technology.¹¹ Just imagine how that could increase based on the age and type of technology that the child has access to. This makes me think of the quote by Allen Ginsberg, “*To gain your own voice, you have to forget about having it heard.*”¹² My goal is to have the students

¹⁰ Baikie, Karen A., and Kay Wihelm. "Emotional and Physical Health Benefits of Expressive Writing." *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 11, no. 5 (September 2005): 338-46. Accessed November 1, 2018. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1192/apt.11.5.338>.

¹¹ Kamenetz, Anya. "Young Children Are Spending Much More Time in Front of Small Screens." NPR. October 19, 2017. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/10/19/558178851/young-children-are-spending-much-more-time-in-front-of-small-screens>.

¹² Pullen, Kate. "Allen Ginsberg." Eye on Design. February 06, 2015. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/allen-ginsberg-design-quote-gain-your-own-voice/>.

engross themselves in their craft to make powerful pieces of writing in the form that they choose to display their memoir.

The next thing that I would like the students to do would be to narrow down their choices to a period in their life. With older students, this could be difficult based on the culture that students deal with but when you are speaking about fifth graders, it is easy for students to understand that their choices are going to be limited to a small-period. When you are writing a memoir, you do not want to take on too many things because you can overload yourself and the goal in a memoir is to highlight a small moment in your life. On this same note, students have to understand that this not a made up story and they are telling the story. The students must never give up that control. Students must always kept the story going and sometimes they will be able to include everyone or everything. This story will be told form their point of view and again, this is their story. This will be the hardest task for the students to grasp because memoir writing is about you telling your story.

One of the things that I am going to ask my students is: How has media influenced your memoir? I believe that often we forget that media has a huge impact on the things that students do and how they respond to different situation in and out of the classroom. According to Erik Erickson, students are in stage 4 of the developmental stages. Students are looking for competency. The child's focus switches from home to school. Children care about the opinions of others more and their self-concepts are developed based on grades, social interactions, and now media.¹³ Based on California Department of Education, "Children from nine to eleven are like the socks they buy, with a great range of stretch."¹⁴ Some are still "little kids" and others are quite mature. Some are already entering puberty, with body, emotions, and attitude changes during this stage."¹⁵ Knowing that students are already dealing with these without even introducing the content in the classroom, we have our hands full. Did I forget to mention that this is also without media's influence put on the students to be a certain person based on the different advertisements and television shows?

Megan Reynolds wrote an article called Minorities in Children's Television Commercials: An Examination of Representation and Status. This text provides insight into the effects of children being exposed to commercials in which minorities are usually underrepresented and portrayed negatively.¹⁶ I found this article interesting because after reading it I became a more critical viewer of commercials. While watching television I could see how commercials were showing other races in a more positive light compared to people of minorities. For example, the advertisement from H&M that dressed the young African American boy in a shirt that said, "Coolest monkey in the jungle." Based on the negative connotation that goes

¹³ California Department of Education. "Ages and Stages of Development." Definition of MTSS - Multi-Tiered System of Supports (CA Dept of Education). 2000. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/caqdevelopment.asp>.

¹⁴ McLeod, Saul. "Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development." Simply Psychology. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>.

¹⁵ California Department of Education. "Ages and Stages of Development." Definition of MTSS - Multi-Tiered System of Supports (CA Dept of Education). 2000. Accessed November 01, 2018. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/caqdevelopment.asp>.

¹⁶ Reynolds, Megan. "MINORITIES IN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION COMMERCIALS: AN EXAMINATION OF REPRESENTATION AND STATUS." *TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship* 16 (April 2014). Accessed November 19, 2017. <https://joss.pages.tcnj.edu/files/2014/04/2014-Reynolds.pdf>.

along with a black male being called a monkey it makes me wonder if this is what our young males see every day that they look on the television. As a critical viewer since being awakened from a previous seminar, I realized that a lot of our minorities are shown as criminals, unwanted children, or simply portrayed in a negative light compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Let me rephrase my question from earlier, how can media influence or change the memoir of our students? How does media influence or change your memoir every day that you watch the news, social media, or television?

Below you will find novels that were used to help understand different types of memoir. These novels can be used to help you during your unit as a teacher resource or a resource to help your students understand the different genre. You can take excerpts from the text to help the students grasp the concepts better.

Ugly is a memoir written by Robert Hoge who, when he was born, had a tumor the size of a tennis ball in the middle of his face and short, twisted legs. Surgeons removed the tumor and made him a new nose from one of his toes. He survived but with a face that would never be the same as everyone else's. Strangers would stare, kids would call him names, and adults would be cruel in their own way. This memoir is about overcoming bullying and thriving with disabilities.¹⁷

I am Malala is a memoir by Malala Yousafzai. She writes about her life as a ten-year-old girl when the Taliban takes control of her region. They said that girls could not go to school, women cannot go to the market, and that music was a crime. Though Malala was raised in a peaceful area of Pakistan it was transformed by terrorism. Malala was taught to stand up for what she believes and so she fought for her right to be educated. On October 9, 2012, Malala almost lost her life for the cause by being shot point-blank while riding the bus home from school. Malala's powerful story will open reader's eyes to another world and will make them believe in hope, truth, miracles, and the possibility that one person – one young person – can inspire change in her community and beyond.¹⁸

Becoming Maria is a memoir written by Sonia Manzano who is a child at the time living amidst the squalor of a boisterous home filled with noisy relatives and nosy neighbors. Each day, she is glued to the TV screen that blots out the painful realities of her existence but also illuminates the possibilities that lie ahead. But click... when the TV goes off, Sonia is taken back to real life- the cramped, colorful world of her neighborhood and an alcoholic father. But her dreams are the things that keep her afloat. This memoir teaches resilience as the author grows up to become an inspiration to millions.¹⁹

Bad Boy is written by Walter Dean Myers who was a quick-tempered and a physically strong child who was always ready to fight. Although he was aggressive, he also loved to read. He would check out multiple books and hide them in brown paper bags so that the other boys

¹⁷ Hoge, Robert, Keith Robinson, and Kelley Brady. *Ugly*. New York, NY: Puffin Books, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2017.

¹⁸ Yousafzai, Malala, Patricia McCormick, and John Gilkes. *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood up for Education and Changed the World*. Waterville, ME: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2018.

¹⁹ MANZANO, SONIA. *BECOMING MARIA: Love and Chaos in the South Bronx*. S.I.: SCHOLASTIC (US), 2017.

wouldn't tease him. Though he was being taught morals and values like all young men are, he decided that they were not for him and he turned to the streets. This memoir teaches that education is important and that no matter the situation you are in; you still have the power to change your circumstances. Every situation is temporary.²⁰

A Child Called It is written by Dave Pelzer who was brutally beaten and starved by his emotionally unstable, alcoholic mother. This book details serve abuse and is one of the most severe child abuse cases in California history. His mother played tortuous, unpredictable games that nearly left him dead. Dave had to learn how to play the game to survive because he was no longer considered a child but a slave. The only thing that kept him alive were his dream of someone taking care of him, loving him, and calling him their son. This memoir teaches to not judge a book by its cover because though we may not see it, that person could be dealing with more than we know. There are additions to this book that memoir his entire life but this book is powerful for teacher to read.²¹

Teaching Strategies

Students in fifth grade are tasked with the health standards to learn about mental and emotional health. I believe that learning about yourself can help with these tasks. As we have learned earlier, students are looking for opinions based their peers and teachers. If we teach students that you can listen to the opinions of others and take suggestions but do not let them define who you are. You say who you are. It is hard to do this with students at this age but one thing that would help students realize that you are genuine and care is to build a relationship with them. If you pair this with memoir, some not all of their many problems will change for the better.

I want students to take the information they are going to learn in the unit and help themselves throughout their time in fifth grade and middle school. A great way to start this unit is to have class meetings that will build students confidence each day. The students can also use white board activities to help themselves and others learn about how great they are and how much they have to learn. The students will start to learn through this unit second quarter. This unit will take roughly six weeks.

Here are some of the teaching strategies that I will use to help facilitate this unit:

Cooperative Learning: Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy in which small groups use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject

Presentations: Presentations are speaking engagements in the classroom. The students will speak with a group and alone.

Media: Creating media is a way for the students to use technology to help them create a piece of a piece of critical media.

²⁰ Myers, Walter Dean. *Bad Boy: A Memoir*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.

²¹ Pelzer, Dave. *A Child Called "It"*. London: Orion Books, 2014.

Classroom Discussions: Discussions are interactive conversations between two or more people. This is a way for the students to share ideas and collaborate.

Jigsaw: Jigsaw is a method to organize classroom activities. This method breaks down the information and the student groups.

Inquiry-Based Learning: Inquiry based learning is active learning that starts by posing questions, problems/scenarios, instead of giving a straight path to the knowledge.

Direct Instruction: Direct instruction is explicit teaching. This teaching strategy is needed to teach specific skills.

Close Reading: Close Reading is a critical analysis teaching strategy. The students will take a text and “read between the lines” to think deeply about the text over multiple readings. Each reading the students read deeper and deeper within the text.

Modeling: Modeling is a way to show the students what you would like them to do with the assignment or with a piece of literature.

Summarizing: Summarizing and note taking is a teaching strategy for students to find the main idea and use details from the text to help them understand what is happening.

Socratic Seminars: Socratic seminars are facilitated conversations that continue through open-ended questions being asked to further the conversation. Students are listening closely to the conversation in order to form their rebuttal or own thoughts.

Graphic Organizers: Graphic organizers are a visual demonstration of facts. These charts and graphs help to guide the student’s thinking as they fill in the visual maps.

Accountable Talk: Accountable talk is meaningful, respectful, and speech that helps the listeners. This kind of talk is used to stimulate higher-order-thinking.

Academic Vocabulary: Academic vocabulary is used to help the students understand the information taught.

Gallery Walks: Gallery Walks are walks around the classroom or room to look at the work of others. Students can do this strategy to help them see others ideas or to comment on the other students work in a respectful manner.

Comparing and Contrasting: Comparing and Contrasting is a way to tell the similarities and differences between two things. This is important because the students will have to use this strategy to understand multiple characters within the book and also show how these characters are the same and different.

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a teaching strategy to help the students think through the problems they are having.

Think-Pair-Share: Think-pair-share is a way for the students to collaborate and share their ideas with other people in the classroom.

Comprehension Questions: Comprehension questions is a way see if the students are understanding the information that come from the books or the content that is taught to the students.

Activities for the Unit

The purpose of each activity is to teach the students how to develop their writing skills, investigate themselves on a deeper level, and to also help them develop a sense of how a memoir is written.

Entire Unit Timespan: Writing into the day

Purpose: Help students become more comfortable with writing

Objective: The students will gain an understanding and comfortability with writing each day that it will become second nature.

Procedure: The students will develop a habit of writing about anything that is on their minds for at least 5 minutes a day. This time will help build their creativity and to open up the lines of communication. Writing every day for students will help them to become comfortable with writing. Most people are terrified of writing because it brings out a lot of emotion and makes people feel vulnerable but the goal is to help students feel comfortable to share their moments.

Entire Unit Timespan: Vocabulary

Purpose: Understand the language that is used throughout the unit.

Objective: The students will understand and use the vocabulary words throughout the unit and interconnect these words from one activity to the next.

Procedure: Before starting the unit, the students will need to learn different vocabulary to help them through the unit. Some of the words are voice, flashback, illustration, metaphor, story structure, memoir, personification, foreshadowing, simile, symbolism, person vs person conflict, person vs nature conflict, person vs society, and person vs self. This will help the students clearly understand the book and the activity. A vocabulary activity that I will do with the students is to have them create an action to go along with the word to help them remember the meaning. Once we have collaborated with the entire class to share the best movement, the students will play a game of charades with the vocabulary words mainly from the book.

Entire Unit Timespan: Mentor Text for students and teachers to reference

Purpose: Understand the genre they are going to write in.

Objective: The students will understand what is needed when they start to write their own memoir.

Overview: During the entire unit, the students will be introduced to different types of memoirs. The students will use these mentor text that we read in the class to help understand the genre, analyze the characteristics of a memoir, and then write their own memoir. The lesson below can be used multiple times but change the language if you use this multiple times.

Day 1 [Appendix 2](#)

- Connect: Previously, we have looked at different mentor text that helped us understand the different units that we were focused on. Today we are going to start a new unit and it is called memoir.
- Teaching Point: The first thing that I want to ask you is: Do you know what a memoir is? (Give the students a chance to talk with their tables to discuss what they think a memoir is.) Well a memoir is a narrative written about an important event in the author's life that affected them in some way. When you write a memoir, you will find that it is written in 1st person, tells the feelings of the writer, more about the author's experience verse the event, and shows what the author learned from the experience. This week we are going to focus on learning how the author writes their memoir by analyzing each on that we read together, as a small group, and individually.
 - Teacher will choose to read the book aloud to the student, small groups, or individually have the students read the book. Mentor text for the first day is *Superpatriot* by Avi and edited by Jon Scieszka²²
- Active Engagement: The students will listen attentively to the teacher while it is read the first time.
- Assessment: Students will use 3 sticky notes and write down three things that caught their attention from the mentor text.
- Link: For the next couple of weeks we will be looking deeper into this genre of writing to help make us better writers.

Day 2 [Appendix 3](#)

- Connect: Yesterday we read our mentor text *Superpatriot* by Avi. Today I want to analyze the different components the author provided so that the reader would want to read more of the story.
- Teaching Point: First, let's re-read the text again so that we can refresh our minds on what is happening in the text. (students will re-read for the next 5-7 minutes) Now let's look at our analysis paper and work together to breakdown how the author captivated us with their words and amazing story.
- Active Engagement: The students will work with the teacher to fill out the graphic organizer as they are analyzing the mentor text used. (teacher could do half of the paper with them and leave specific parts for the students to complete on their own) You are looking for:

²² Scieszka, Jon. *Guys Write for Guys Read*. New York: Viking, 2011.

- How did the author catch the reader's attention?
- What one event does the author focus on?
- What feelings does the author provide?
- What is the setting?
- Who are the characters?
- What is the plot?
- What is the theme?
- What brought the story to life?
- Assessment: Students paper and questions that are being asked
- Link: Do not forget that you could also do this on your own and I want to see if you could do this later today and during the rest of our unit.

Day 3- End [Appendix 3](#)

- Connect: Yesterday we analyzed our mentor text that we used *Superpatriot* by Avi. Today I want to review what we did yesterday and give you the chance to take another one of our mentor text and analyze them with your table groups.
- Teaching Point: (The teacher will review everything they did the previous day and clarify any questions)
- Active Engagement: Students will work with their groups to complete the mentor text analysis
- Assessment: Observation and students work sample
- Link: Today and every day that we read our mentor text, I want you to think about how the author is writing the memoir and how could you take the techniques they used to help you write your own memoir.

Six Word Memoir [Appendix 4](#)

After the students have learned about what a memoir is they will describe themselves in exactly six words. This is a way for the students to get the juices flowing about information they know about themselves.

Brainstorming [Appendix 5](#)

Purpose: Brainstorming tool to help the students see important events in their life

Objective: The students will make different brainstorming activities to help them to create different topics to help them write their own memoir.

Overview: During the first 1-2 weeks, the students will create different brainstorming activities to help them see things in different ways. There are going to be 5 different activities that I will use in the classroom to help the students brainstorm ideas to write their memoir. The five are: timeline, pictures, playlist, graphing their life, and who am I.

Timeline

During the unit, the students will create a timeline of their lives, marking down anything that they feel was significant to them at this period in their lives. They will need to interview their parents, relatives, and friends to get more information that will help them fill out their timeline completely. Organize the timeline so help the students stay organized. For example: on the left side, positive things, right negative. One day so only events. Then people. Then places. Etc.

- Connect: Yesterday we started learning about what a memoir was. Today I am going to teach you how to brainstorm ideas to help you build up your ideas on what to write about.
- Teaching Point: We are going to create a timeline that goes through the years of your life. While we are creating this memoir, we will need to interview different people to help us remember things because sometimes we forget things. (teacher will show students timeline that they created to help students see what it will look like; teacher will also provide students with timeline)
- Active Engagement: Students will take 7-10 minutes to put down any good or bad events down on their timeline based on the number of years they have been alive.
- Assessment: Student engagement, observation, student work sample
- Link: Today we may not have finished our timeline that shows everything that we need to complete but you will have time to complete this activity and you also need to interview people in your family or friends to help you build your timeline. Also, be reminded that you will continue to add to your timeline based on the things that we do in fifth grade.

Graphing ourselves

- Connect: Yesterday we started working on our timeline. Today I want to add another technique to help you express or figure out some of those important events in your life.
- Teaching Point: We are going to graph our life and rank those events based on if they were high points or low points in our lives. We have the choice to write in new things that are not listed or we could take the suggestions that are provided to us. (Teacher will provide example)
- Active Engagement: Students will take 10-15 to complete the graph with the teacher walking around helping different groups.
- Assessment: Student engagement, observation, student work sample
- Link: Today and every day we have the opportunity to look inside ourselves and bring out the best or the worst. Today might have been a hard day but this is a great starting point to help us choose the right piece to write about.

Playlist Brainstorm

Students will create a timeline based on a small period in their life. For example, I made a college playlist. The students will then add songs and give an explanation as to why they choose that specific song to go along with an event in their life.

Pictures Brainstorm

Students will bring in pictures that are important to them and choose one of them to describe the picture with their five senses. (Sight, smell, taste, feel, sound)

Who Am I?

Students will write down their favorite things, important people, and memorable places. This will help the students when they are trying to choose what to write about.

Object

Students will bring in an item from home that is important to them and everyone will share their item. The students will write reflections about the objects the other people bring that makes them think of something in their own life.

Planning the Writing: [Appendix 6](#)

Students will, around the third week into the unit, start choosing the memoir topic that they would like to write about and start planning their memoir with the plan sheets.

- **Connect:** Last week we were brainstorming a lot of ideas that we could write about. Some of you have already started writing about some of those things that you brainstormed about in your writing into the day time. Today we are going to start narrowing down our choices.
- **Teaching point:** As writers, we have so many ideas in our heads that it would take us all our years to plan but today we are not going to be indecisive. I am going to look at all my brainstorming ideas and choose 3 things that I would love to write about. When I am choosing my topic, I must remember that the memoir I write about should have all the components that are stated in the rubric. After I have chosen 3 of the many things I have on my list, I am going to talk with a partner to help me with my decision. When I talk with my partner, I am going to quickly give them a six-word memoir on each of my topics. (maybe have the students write this down before) Then I am going to make the final decision by writing it at the bottom of my page. Once I write that at the bottom of my page, I cannot change my topic.
- **Active Engagement:** Students will complete the activity. Teacher will give the students 10-15 minutes (students have already made stars beside some of ideas)
- **Link:** Tomorrow we are going to start planning our memoir into detail. This will take us time and you will need to dig deep to show not tell your story.

Graphic Organizer

Objective: Students are going to use the graphic organizers to help them show not tell every little things from their memory. This will take the students 3-4 days to make sure they are using vocabulary to express themselves thoroughly.

Revising and Editing [Appendix 7](#)

The students will take the next two weeks to revise and edit. Take the first week to just revise what they have written through group and one on one conferences with the students. The next

week, the students will be working on editing their memoirs. Take this time to check in with students whom are still struggling.

Publishing [Appendix 8](#)

Students will have different ways in which they can publish their memoir. Some of those ways are:

- Writing
 - Students will take their moment and write a narrative.
- Thumbprint self Portrait
 - Students will create a thumbprint portrait but the thumbprint will be a story about themselves. The students will also have pictures under the writing to bring illustrations to the moments within the text. The students will then frame their writing and display it somewhere in the room.
- Poetry Memoir
 - Students will use different forms of poetry to imitate the style and create their memoir.
- Digital
 - Students will create a *Draw my Life* video that tells their memoir.
- Playlist
 - Students can take the playlist that they created earlier and expand to explain why they choose that particular song. This will be written in article form.

Appendix 1

Standards addressed in this unit

Common Core Standards for Literature:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; supporting details and ideas

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 5 topic or subject area*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.5

Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6

Analyze multiple accounts of the same vent or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

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

Appendix 2

"Superpatriot"

by Avi

from
Guys Write for Guys Read
edited by Jon Scieszka

Superman. Batman. Robin. Wonder Woman. The Flash. Hawkman. Plastic Man. Green Lantern. Captain America. Captain Marvel Junior. Mary Marvel. Uncle Ma Best of all, Captain Marvel. To name only the important ones.

They may have been comic book characters to some people, but they were role models. Hardly a coincidence that all these superheroes went through life pretending (like me) to be normal. With a quick change of costume (better than underwear) or, in the case of Billy Batson, at the utterance of a magic word ---*Shazam!*--- they turned into superheroes. They didn't just right the wrongs in the world; they always thought of other people. Not one selfish or self-serving bone in their muscular bodies. No wonder that, having worked hard to defeat our enemies during World War II, they were great patriots.

I never could read enough about them. But then I was aiming to be a superhero. After all, I had mastered half the role ---being, like Clark Kent, mild mannered. Then I learned the truth about myself.

It happened in 1946. Right after the war. I was nine years old. Hospitals were full of wounded military personnel. Somehow I learned that they, too, liked comic books. They convalesced, they would enjoy some.

I decided to hold a comic book drive at my school, Public School Eight. During the war, there were many such patriotic collection efforts. Newspapers. Scrap metal. Even string. So when I asked my teacher if I could organize a comic book collection drive for "our boys" in hospitals, I received an enthusiastic "OK."

To announce this drive, I went from class to class and spoke about how our heroes had sacrificed a lot for us. How unselfish they were. That by giving them our beloved comic books, we, too, could be unselfish patriots. I spoke at the weekly assembly, making

rousing patriotic speech. I was praised. My parents were praised. And the collection came pouring in.

Hundreds of them. Sure, there were some Little Lulus, and Archies ---girl comic books--- but so what? I read each and every one of them. I read them the morning before school. After school. At night. I read them under the covers of the bathtub. At the dinner table. On the toilet.

"Don't you think you should send them off to the hospitals?" my mother asked. She had found a place to send them---along with an address and a willingness to pay the postage.

"I haven't finished reading them all," I said.
"Who are they for?" she asked.
I was too busy reading to answer.

A month later, I came home from school and discovered she had scooped them up, packaged them, and sent them off.

I was mad. "They were mine!" I protested.
"Oh?" she replied, with a lift of one eyebrow.

A few weeks later I received a letter from the hospital. They thanked me. Told me how much the boys enjoyed the gift. The last line read, "America is grateful because of unselfish patriots like you."

Soon as I read that line, I knew---as sure as I knew anything---that my gift had not been pure. I wanted to read those comic books myself. I had been self-denying, not going to be a superhero.

Oh, I kept on reading about superheroes. But I was reading about them. It was clear even to me that I was doomed to remain just....mild mannered.

Appendix 3

»» Memoir Listening Form

TITLE: _____
 AUTHOR: _____

MEMOIR TRAITS	EXAMPLES FROM THE	
Beginning catches reader's attention		
Focuses on ONE event		
Reveals the feelings of the author		
Narrative Elements	Setting	Characters
Theme / Lesson learned by the author		
Description brings story to life		

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KEY for "Superpatriot" (in case you end up reading this for the listening activity)

»» Memoir Listening Form

TITLE: "Superpatriot"
 AUTHOR: Avi

MEMOIR TRAITS	EXAMPLES FROM THE	
Beginning catches reader's attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lists superheroes Incomplete sentences; just na 	
Focuses on ONE event	Comic book drive for military person	
Reveals the feelings of the author	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire to be a hero like superhero Realizes that he's not so superhero 	
Narrative Elements	Setting	Character
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avi (9 years old)
Theme / Lesson learned by the author	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even the best intentions can be flawed It's better to be selfless than selfish 	
Description brings story to life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Rousing patriotic speech" Various places he enthusiastically reads comic books 	

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Appendix 4

» Six-Word Memoir «

Think of an event in your life. Write a six-word memoir below about that event.
(Example: radishes, potatoes, digging; time with Grandma)

Unit Start...

Unit End...

Appendix 6

Interview

You will need to interview someone who can provide you with more information about your memoir topic. Sit down with or call this person. Explain that you are writing a memoir and you need their help to gain more details about the subject. Tell them what you will be writing about. Take notes as you talk.

I plan to write about _____
 I interviewed _____

1. What do you remember about _____ (memoir topic) _____?

2. Share details (when, where, what was happening, sensory images - sounds, textures, smells) about this topic.

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Selecting Your Topic

The key when choosing a topic is ensuring that you have enough information and to write your memoir. To help with this decision, first you will review your writing notebook and the pre-write activities graph, map, and "Who am I?" planning page.

- LIST THREE POSSIBLE MEMOIR TOPICS BELOW:**

- TALK IT OUT**
 Spend a few minutes talking to a partner about your topic choices. Your partner will ask you what happened, what you learned from the experience, and why this experience was memorable/important.
- REVIEW CHARACTERISTICS OF A MEMOIR**
 Consider which topic idea will be able to fulfill the criteria of a memoir.
- DECIDE**
 Choose the topic that you had the most to talk about and that contains the elements of the memoir.

MY MEMOIR TOPIC IS _____

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PRE-WRITE PLOT

WHAT is your memoir about?	_____
WHO was involved?	_____
WHEN did the event take place?	_____
WHERE did the event take place?	_____
WHY did the event take place?	_____

Sketch what happened right before the important event.	Sketch the MOST important event.	Sketch what happens after the important event.
_____	_____	_____

PLOT EVENTS

- _____
- _____
- _____
- (CLIMAX)
- _____

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PRE-WRITE SENSORY DETAILS

Describe what you SAW	_____
Describe what you HEARD	_____
Describe what you could SMELL	_____
Describe what you could TASTE	_____
Describe what you could FEEL	_____

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PRE-WRITE CHARACTERS

CHARACTERS	Me	_____	_____
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	_____	_____	_____
PERSONALITY TRAITS	_____	_____	_____

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PRE-WRITE SETTING

DESCRIPTION:

WHAT YOU HEARD:

WHAT YOU SAW:

TIME OF YEAR:

TIME:

SETTING:

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Appendix 7

REVISE

DIALOGUE

Dialogue is a conversation in writing. When writers incorporate dialogue in their pieces, it makes the story seem more believable. In addition, dialog helps to move the story forward, reveals character relationships and increases the emotion of a story.

- **When a new speaker speaks, start a new paragraph.**
"What do you want for dinner?" Dad asked.
"I'm in the mood for pizza," I replied.
- **Always put punctuation marks (commas and periods) inside the quote.**
"I wonder," she said, "what I will be getting for my birthday."
- **Introduce or follow dialogue with dialogue tags (such as said, replied, commented, yelled) along with the speaker's name.**
"I don't know," said Mike in a puzzled voice.

Review your draft. Find existing dialogue that could be improved or a section of it would benefit from dialogue. Re-write your draft here, including new and improved dialogue.

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REVISE

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Similes are figures of speech in which two things are compared using **like** or **as**. For example: *Sally ran as fast as the wind*. Writers use similes to describe characters, action, and settings.

You will need to create a simile for two characters.

CHARACTER: _____

Physical Features	Personality	Actions
SIMILE (compare to animals, objects, or events) Use like or as.	SIMILE (compare to animals, objects, or events) Use like or as.	SIMILE (compare to animals, objects, or events) Use like or as.

CHARACTER: _____

Physical Features	Personality	Actions
SIMILE (compare to animals, objects, or events) Use like or as.	SIMILE (compare to animals, objects, or events) Use like or as.	SIMILE (compare to animals, objects, or events) Use like or as.

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REVISE

REVISION TASK LIST

1. Rewrite your lead sentence below. Make improvements so that it is extremely engaging.
2. List three sensory details from your memoir that will capture your interest.
 -
 -
 -
3. Have you clearly explained:
 - Who was involved?
 - When the event happened?
 - Where the event took place?

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REVISE

REVISION TASK LIST

4. Find repetitive information. DELETE IT!
5. Have you organized your memoir in a logical order?
 - Beginning:
 - Middle:
 - End:
6. Write down a few lines of dialogue that you included below.

CHECK ALL DIALOGUE PUNCTUATION!

7. List three transition words you included:
 -
 -
 -

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REVISE

REVISION TASK LIST


8. Have you clearly explained the significance of this experience? Why you write this memoir?
9. Are the sentences throughout your memoir clear and direct as we varied in length and structure?
 - Clear sentence:
 - Long sentence:
 - Short sentence:
10. Does your memoir share your thoughts and feelings? List three below.
 -
 -
 -

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EDIT

EDITING CHECKLIST

1. Check for spelling errors. **Circle** any words you are not sure you spelled correctly. Find the correct spelling.
2. **Trace over** capital letters in:
 - Names
 - Specific Places
 - First words of sentences
3. **Draw an arrow** to show indentation for:
 - Paragraphs
 - New speakers in dialogue
4. **Trace over** the end punctuation after every sentence.
5. Check your commas. **Circle** the commas you used in:
 - Lists of items
 - Compound sentences
 - Direct address to people
 - Setting off interjections
 - Dates
6. **Use apostrophes** to show ownership.
7. Check and **underline** these words:
 - They're / There / Their
 - Your / You're
 - It's / Its
 - To / two / too
8. Did you stay in **PAST tense**?
9. Did you stay in **FIRST PERSON**?



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Appendix 8

Name _____

Memoir Writing Rubric

	5	4	3	2	1
GENRE CHARACTERISTICS	The writing meets the characteristics of a memoir. There is a clear and unifying theme that focuses the details on the subject's life.	The writing meets most of the characteristics of a memoir, but the unifying theme needs to be stronger and more explicit.	The writing simply catalogues events from the subject's life. There is no unifying theme to the memoir.	The writing does not meet the characteristics of a memoir; or the writing is incomplete.	No evidence of this requirement.
VIVID DETAILS	Details in the memoir provide background and insight on the subject's life. The memoir includes vivid details.	Details in the memoir provide background or insight, but there are places where more vivid details would improve the piece.	Few details are included about the subject's life. More detail is needed.	Little detail on the subject's life is included. The memoir lacks vivid details.	No evidence of this requirement.
WRITING CRAFT	The memoir includes powerful elements – strong lead, showing sentences, dialogue, images and so forth. The memoir is strong and powerful.	The memoir includes some powerful elements, but could be stronger.	The memoir's elements need to be stronger and more memorable.	Little attention has been given to strong or memorable elements.	No evidence of this requirement.
SPELLING AND MECHANICS	No spelling or mechanical errors.	Fewer than 3 spelling or mechanical errors.	Fewer than 5 spelling or mechanical errors.	Mechanical errors impact readability of the memoir.	Little to no effort made to adhere to spelling or punctuation rules.

Total _____ x 5 = _____/100

Students Resources

Hoge, Robert, Keith Robinson, and Kelley Brady. *Ugly*. New York, NY: Puffin Books, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2017.

Students will read excerpts from the book.

MANZANO, SONIA. *BECOMING MARIA: Love and Chaos in the South Bronx*. S.l.: SCHOLASTIC (US), 2017.

Students will read excerpts from the book.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Bad Boy: A Memoir*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.

Students will read excerpts from the book.

Scieszka, Jon. *Guys Write for Guys Read*. New York: Viking, 2011.

Students will read an excerpt: Superpatriot by Avi.

Yousafzai, Malala, Patricia McCormick, and John Gilkes. *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood up for Education and Changed the World*. Waterville, ME: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2018.

Students will read excerpts from the book.

Teacher Resources

Grandits, John. *Blue Lipstick: Concrete Poems*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Sandpiper, 2007.

The teacher will read the book to see an example of a memoir.

Obama, Michelle. *Becoming*. London: Viking, an Imprint of Penguin Books, 2018.

The teacher will read the book to see an example of a memoir.

Pelzer, Dave. *A Child Called "It"*. London: Orion Books, 2014.

The teacher will read the book to see an example of a memoir.

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