



## ***Memoir Writing with a Growth Mindset***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
5th Grade Talent Development students.

**Keywords:** writing, memoir, genre study, peer editing, craft/structure, writing process, journal, Growth Mindset, Social Emotional Learning, inferences, character traits, theme

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

**Synopsis:** This unit will help 5th grade students develop their writing skills as they read, analyze and discuss a variety of memoir styles. Using mentor texts to develop an understanding of memoirs, students will also learn about and begin to analyze the craft and structure of texts. Growth Mindset will play a key role as students go through the writing process to create their own memoir in a style and structure of their choice, which will be published in a classroom book of memoirs. Typically, 5th grade students have little interest in revising, editing and improving their writing. Peer editing is particularly challenging, not only due to the lack of skill in analyzing and critiquing writing but the reticence students feel about making corrections or suggestions about a peer's work. Having a classroom with a Growth Mindset will provide a framework and structure that will enable students to give, receive and value feedback as within a culture in which the students expect and accept that their writing is a work in progress and will take time, effort and often humility to go beyond their current knowledge and skills in order to improve as a writer.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 25 students in my 5th grade classroom.*

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## Introduction

“The greater the danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.”

- Michelangelo

Michelangelo's quote reminds me that all too often, we, as educators, aim low or perhaps in a different direction than it appears is best for our students who we are preparing for the 21st century. It is apparent that along with collaboration and teamwork, creativity and imagination, critical thinking and problem solving, when 21st Century Frameworks are reviewed, oral and written communication is not a part of most, if not all<sup>1</sup>. With so little known about the lives our students will lead, as evidenced by the incredible and rapid changes in our world, it is imperative to focus on skills that we know are critical for their future. As an experienced teacher, who has been in education for over 30 years, I have the hindsight to know that oftentimes the powers that be in education have missed the mark in their assertions about what is appropriate for our current students. My experience and knowledge give me the courage, and some may say, the audacity to decide when we teachers need to make decisions in the best interest of our students, even when, or especially when conventional wisdom and guidelines go contrary to our beliefs.

Writing in elementary schools is almost overlooked or ignored with the EOG focus that seems to have become the foundation for our curriculum. As a teacher, I am working diligently to incorporate writing across the curriculum for my students who need and love to write. I have been in education a long time and as always, the pendulum is swinging and fortunately bringing back many of the ideas I embraced as a new teacher. Restorative Circles now hold the place that Classroom Meetings once held. The importance of getting to know and educate the whole child is reflected in the new focus on Social Emotional Learning. Multicultural education, diversity issues and developing tolerance are once again being infused into the curriculum to address the many social chasms in our society. And in response to the negativity and malaise in our world and society, Growth Mindset is enabling us to help our students to learn and grow beyond the boundaries that often hold them back. I believe writing memoirs can be the cornerstone that connects and addresses all of the above. Through writing, we can continue the conversations begun in our circles. We can help students to know and understand themselves better and communicate who they are with their peers. Writing provides an excellent resource to help students give and receive feedback which is key to a growth mindset. And through sharing our stories, we learn about each other's histories, culture, family and life and in doing so, we expand our knowledge, increase tolerance and create a wider world view.

It is ironic or perhaps convoluted that though writing continues to be a critical 21st century skill, such little focus and emphasis is placed upon it in our elementary curriculum. And though I believe in all of the aforementioned initiatives, it is startling to think educators do not see the inherent connection between writing; expressing oneself as the essence of what these programs seek for our students. Growth Mindset is offered in workshops and seminars and all forms of professional development, yet workshops to develop teachers' skills as teachers of writing are few and far between. When classroom schedules are being made and often dictated by administrators, writing is seen as a part of English Language Arts, which is often seen as something students do in response to literature and nonfiction texts in science and social studies.

It is hard to believe that the value of writing is not recognized with regard to how it can enhance and extend reading and understanding literature and is not often seen as a tool to help students develop the skills needed in Social Emotional Learning.

The Power of Yet will provide the foundation of our Growth Mindset. Carol Dweck, explains how saying “not yet” to students instead of saying they failed a class is a much better way to show them that even if they have difficulties overcoming something now, the time will come when they will succeed if they continue tackling the obstacles from different angles. She says, “The use of “yet” shows there is a learning curve, and points to the process, not the outcome. This also tells children that they are not leaning for grades, but for their future.”<sup>2</sup> Posters with some of the basic precepts of Growth Mindset will surround the students, such as: *Mistakes are a Great Way to Learn, Be Inspired by the Success of Others, Challenges Should be Embraced, Success Stems from Hard Work and a Good Attitude.* A bulletin board with a tree and The Power of Yet will be filled by student made posters, sharing their understanding and ideas of what Growth Mindset means to them as well as the titles of texts in which the characters display a Growth Mindset. Activities and posters will help students recognize and change their language and attitude from a Fixed Mindset to a Growth Mindset, such as, “This is too hard.” changes to, “This is going to take some time and effort.” and “I’m done” changes to, “What can I do to make this better?” Ultimately, we know that often when we change our words, we change our mindset.

Students will keep a writing journal to jot down ideas, thoughts, feelings, quotations or doodles. Students will be given time daily to write in their journal and be assured that she will have privacy as needed/wanted. Before formally introducing students to memoirs, students will focus on the ‘me’ in memoirs as they write about themselves with a variety of prompts (See Appendix 2) to choose from. The journal will also be used for students to keep Memoir Memos (See Appendix 3) as students are exposed to a wide variety of memoirs in children’s literature that will be on hand in our classroom. In the Memoir Memos, students will analyze the craft and structure of the memoirs as they gain an understanding of the breadth and depth of memoir writing. In addition, students will be Growth Mindset detectives, noting characters that reveal a growth mindset. Student partners will discuss writing, share favorites of the memoirs recently read and compare the craft, structure and style of the memoirs. The journals will also be a place to share reflections, thoughts, ideas and questions about Growth Mindset.

Once students are immersed in the writing journal, reading memoirs and Growth Mindset, connections will be made as students will be asked to write a memoir in a style they choose based on their reading as well as classroom texts we have read and analyzed together. To encourage and build excitement about writing, students will be told that each of them will be a published author as we make a create a printed, bound and illustrated class book of our memoirs. Though some may be excited about this, there are those that are sure to be reluctant and here is where the blending and meshing of Growth Mindset will become critical. Through lessons incorporating Growth Mindset into the writing process, students will develop skills and understanding about how to positively impact their own writing as well as others. For example, peer revising is one of the most challenging aspects of the writing process for elementary students. Many students are fearful of both giving and receiving feedback about their writing and therefore the process, in my classroom, has been somewhere between a rubber stamp and tussle of angry feelings about perceived criticism of their work and more often than not, themselves. This leads to the burden of feedback on the teacher, which is demanding, less

effective and not as useful to the students. By melding the writing process with Growth Mindset, it is my intention to change some negative habits and attitudes my students have about how to be an effective writer.

Though students have a wide range of skills in writing, the one mindset I have faced consistently in my students over the years is that once they have written a piece, they are willing to do some editing of punctuation and grammar, but actual revision is much less appealing than their tried and true approach of either insisting their work is perfect/done as it is, or after any feedback given, the angst-filled balling up of the critiqued writing. Neither, of course, is acceptable. During both Circle Time meetings and writer's workshop, a major emphasis will be on finding alternatives to these responses that have tended to make writing an arduous and painful process for students.

### Rational/Objectives

This multifaceted curriculum unit is intended for fifth graders to help increase literacy skills; specific to write narratives; to share real experiences or events, using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. Students will develop and strengthen their writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach with guidance and support from peers and the teacher. Students will 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. Students will also develop skills in their ability to describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described and compare and contrast stories in the same genre on their approaches to similar themes and topics. Students will be exposed to various activities in order to fully understand memoir and the connection being made with their lives as well as the people and events that are a part of their classroom community. The meaning of memoir will be taught as students create their own memoirs after proper modeling through read alouds, self and peer exploration and analysis of mentor texts and daily journal writing.

### Demographics

I teach fifth grade in a large urban partial magnet elementary school in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. Barringer Academic Center is part of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and is unique because it has four instructional programs. We have a neighborhood component to our school (60% of our student population) who come from the West Boulevard corridor, which is a high poverty area with a large number of economically disadvantaged students. We also have a partial magnet (38% of our student population). This partial magnet serves the south portion of Charlotte and is from more affluent areas. Within this magnet, there are two programs – Learning Immersion designed as a pre-gifted curriculum that challenges students and prepares them for gifted certification. In addition, we have a Gifted Program. This is for grades 3 – 5 and provides students with a full day gifted curriculum. Our last program is the Horizons program (2% of our student population). This program is a county-wide program for students identified as highly gifted. Barringer Academic Center has a very diverse student population of 575 students: 56% African-American, 21% Asian, 4% Hispanic, 16% White and 3% other. Given the wide range of cultures, backgrounds and academic abilities are our school, it is important that we work

on developing a school wide culture of tolerance, acceptance and understanding. My classroom demographics/families this year: 2 from Africa, 2 African Americans, 10 from India, 8 Caucasian/American, 1 Hispanic, 1 Mixed African/Caucasian. Memoir writing will serve as a positive vehicle for students to learn about one another and gain insights into different cultures, experiences and perspectives.

Our school is in the second year of a pilot program for Restorative Practices. “Restorative practices cultivate a culture in which everyone feels like they belong. They build a particular sense of community in which every member--students, teacher, parent volunteers, aides--feel that they are seen, heard, and respected.”<sup>4</sup> As a member of the Restorative Practices Leadership team, I have been involved in workshops and independent study. The expectation is that teachers will have daily ‘circles’ that will build community, encourage open communication and dialogue and provide a more positive atmosphere in our school. The circles have already been an excellent vehicle to incorporate social emotional learning and explore our identities. This melds well with the second year of our district initiative of Social Emotional Learning.

## **Content Research**

According to Katherine Bomer in her book, *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning and Triumph Over Tests*, memoir is a mere slice of ordinary life. It is a certain time period, a special relationship, a theme or angle on life written about the author of the pieces. It is a “slice-of-life” story. Memoir interprets experience. For young writers, memoir acts as a record of something that has happened. Memoir is capturing and revealing memories in reading and writing. By directly teaching memoir and various writing strategies, along with modeled reading skills and thinking aloud with the read aloud, students can increase his or her reading and writing abilities in and out of the classroom setting.<sup>2</sup>

In *Teaching Memoir in the Elementary School Classroom: A Genre Study Approach*, Tara Gibney’s suggests that one of the tenants of students writing in the classroom is to protect writing from the distractions of the day.<sup>5</sup> I think it is important to set aside a time that is specifically and only for writing. Gibney also suggested five-minute partner writing discussions for students to bounce ideas back and forth during. She found it strengthens the writing community of the classroom and students begin to get used to expressing their ideas in smaller settings. This will lead to better peer editing as students are accustomed to sharing and analyzing text together.

## Rationale/Objectives

This interdisciplinary curriculum unit is intended for fifth graders to help increase literacy skills in reading and writing as well as develop social emotional awareness and understanding. In reading, students focus on making inferences, identifying character traits and themes through reading appropriate memoir text, writing narratives. Students will gain a better understanding of Craft and Structure as they identify how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described as they compare and contrast stories in the same genre. In writing, students will develop real experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. Students will develop narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations. Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

With guidance and support from peers and adults, students will develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach to produce and publish a memoir. Throughout this unit, students will increase their Social and Emotional Learning, the process through which students acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.<sup>6</sup>

## Instructional Implementation

Community Building: Growth Mindset/ Restorative Circles/Read Aloud/Social Emotional Learning

Carol Dweck's **Growth Mindset** research highlight's factors that make a difference for all children, especially disadvantaged students. In a Growth Mindset oriented classroom, your intelligence is something you can and will develop; students feel a strong sense of belonging and students know they will be supported to meet high standards. As students and teachers change their vocabulary, it will help everyone see and feel *The Power of Yet*, since we, as humans, are all works in progress, learning and growing from one another and capable of doing things we once thought unimaginable. As we discuss *The Power of Yet*, students will create and share Mini Posters relating this to their own lives and encouraging others to have a Growth Mindset.<sup>2</sup>



**Restorative Circles** are the cornerstone of the precept of restorative justice, which is an alternative to using punishment to manage misbehavior.<sup>4</sup> Circle Time is the key to building a positive, supportive, student-centered classroom where children feel safe and are willing to take risks. As in the writing process, circles often begin with a prompt to open the dialogue. Through prescribed and detailed practices for daily circles, students develop and enhance positive and supportive connection and communication with peers.

**Read Aloud** gives students and teachers a time to interact around a relevant text. Read alouds are powerful because they serve many instructional purposes—to motivate, encourage, excite, build background, develop comprehension, assist children in making connections, and serve as a model of what fluent reading sounds like. During a read aloud, a teacher reads a text aloud, and students are enveloped in a risk-free learning environment that removes the pressure of achievement and the fear of failure, allowing the freedom to wonder, question, and enjoy material beyond their reading abilities. It is important for teachers to read aloud even though classroom time is limited because it is another way of building community by creating an avenue for students to make and share personal connections to their own lives as well as develop skills of good readers such as making inferences, character analysis, making predictions (a student favorite), analyzing structure and determining themes.

**Social Emotional learning (SEL)** is the process through which children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Although this is something teachers traditionally have been doing in classrooms, it is the intentionality and articulation that is critical. Developing these core life abilities through social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to a child's development, as it directly correlates to success and happiness as an adult. For many children, school is the only place where deficiencies in these abilities can be addressed before they become active members of society. Developing SEL is critical to a child's development since it directly correlates to success and happiness as an adult. Combining these skills with the academics creates high-quality learning experiences and environments that empower students to be more effective contributors in their classrooms today and in their workplaces and communities tomorrow.<sup>6</sup>

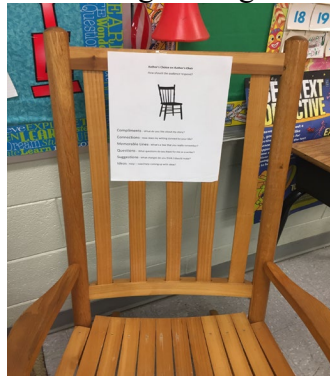
## Genre Study

The unit will begin with a Genre Study of Memoirs. Genre Study is an inquiry-based approach to teaching in which students are actively engaged in developing genre understandings as they think, talk and read texts with deeper understanding. The first step is to collect and introduce students through a variety of texts. Implicit instruction is provided by immersion in a variety of rich texts. Set the stage for students by telling them that we will study genres and identify the structure of the genre to prepare them for a writing in this genre. As students read texts, individually and then collectively, they will focus on what they are noticing, wondering and seeing in the texts. Explicit instruction produces the conclusions students draw as they analyze and experience many texts via the inquiry process, with the scaffolds teachers provide. Students are asked to identify topic, purpose, audience, tone and point of view. As students are reading and exploring, then a working definition of the genre is developed and then revised as students study more examples. Students collaborate to discuss common features and structures. Genre

study helps students develop as writers. They read to learn how to write. They learn about writers from writers who become their mentors and then apply this knowledge to their own writing. Mentor texts provide the foundation for understanding and producing writing in the genre.<sup>7</sup>

### Journal Notebooks/Author's Chair

As part of classroom supply list at the beginning of the year, each child will have a composition notebook. Students are told on the first day of school to bring in items to decorate their journal. Beginning the first day, students are given time to record their thoughts and feelings about the new school year. As fifth grade students, it is important for the students to know the journal is confidential and it will remain private as desired. Each day, to begin with, we will have a six minute write when we all write; all put pen to paper and write whether it makes sense or not. Students who struggle with what to write will use Memoir Moments (See Appendix 2), a list of prompts related to their lives that ultimately will serve as a resource for memoir writing. Students may include doodles, pictures and graphic additions. Another initial activity is the creation of a page by page timeline of their lives with items about events in their life. as well as what was happening in the world at the time. Parents are encouraged to help children fill in with specifics. Sometime students will be asked to write in response to a classroom or current event, piece of literature or a circle time discussion. After the six minute writing, students will partner share as comfortable. Each day one student will get the opportunity to be in the Author's Chair on a rotating basis. The 'author' will decide how the audience will respond: with compliments, connections, memorable lines, questions, suggestions, ideas.<sup>8</sup> The 'author' will call on and respond to up to three classmates. The six minute write is a judgment free time to help students see the fun and enjoyment of writing and sharing writing with one another.



### The Writing Process - Real Products for Real Audiences

**Pre-writing** - brainstorm all possibilities, ideas, themes, structures. Once you have narrowed it down to one or two possibilities, use planning graphic organizers such as the Hamburger Model, Bubble Map, Five Fingers/Who, What, Where, When, How, etc.

**First Drafts** are the time for students to write without concern for grammar, spelling or punctuation. Begin with free writing but with more direction, using graphic the organizer as a guide.



**Peer Review** refers to the many ways in which students can share their writing with peers for constructive feedback and then use this feedback to revise and improve their work. The use of rubrics and checklists is effective, including self-review in the process.

**Revision** is the stage in the writing process where the author reviews, alters, and amends the text, according to what has been written in the draft. One strategy for student revising is **ARMS**: **A**dd words and sentences (be descriptive, capture all ideas). **R**emove words and sentences (be concise). **M**ove words and sentences (sentence fluency, organization) **S**ubstitute words and sentences (word choice, voice).

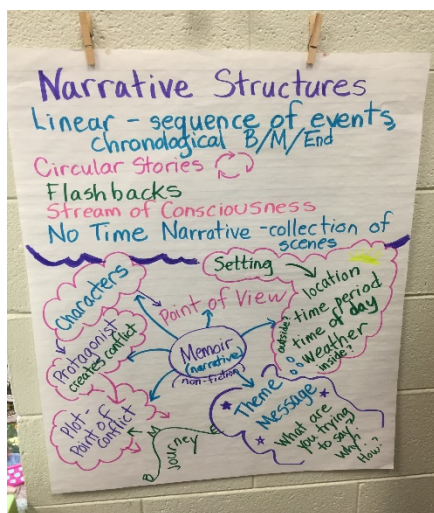
**Editing** involves looking at each sentence carefully and making sure it's well designed and serves its purpose. Editing involves checking for grammatical and punctuation errors, spelling mistakes, etc. One strategy for editing is **CUPS**: **C**apitalization, **U**sage (Verbs and nouns—does it make sense?), **P**unctuation, **S**pelling. Editing checklists and rubrics are useful tools.

**Publishing** is the final stage of the process once all of the revisions and edits have been reviewed, incorporated and the writing is presented in its final form.

**Celebration/Sharing** is an important time to recognize and celebrate writing and often includes sharing with one another, other classes, administrators, teachers, parents and the public. Celebrations include refreshments, student read alouds and author signing of book or bookmarks.

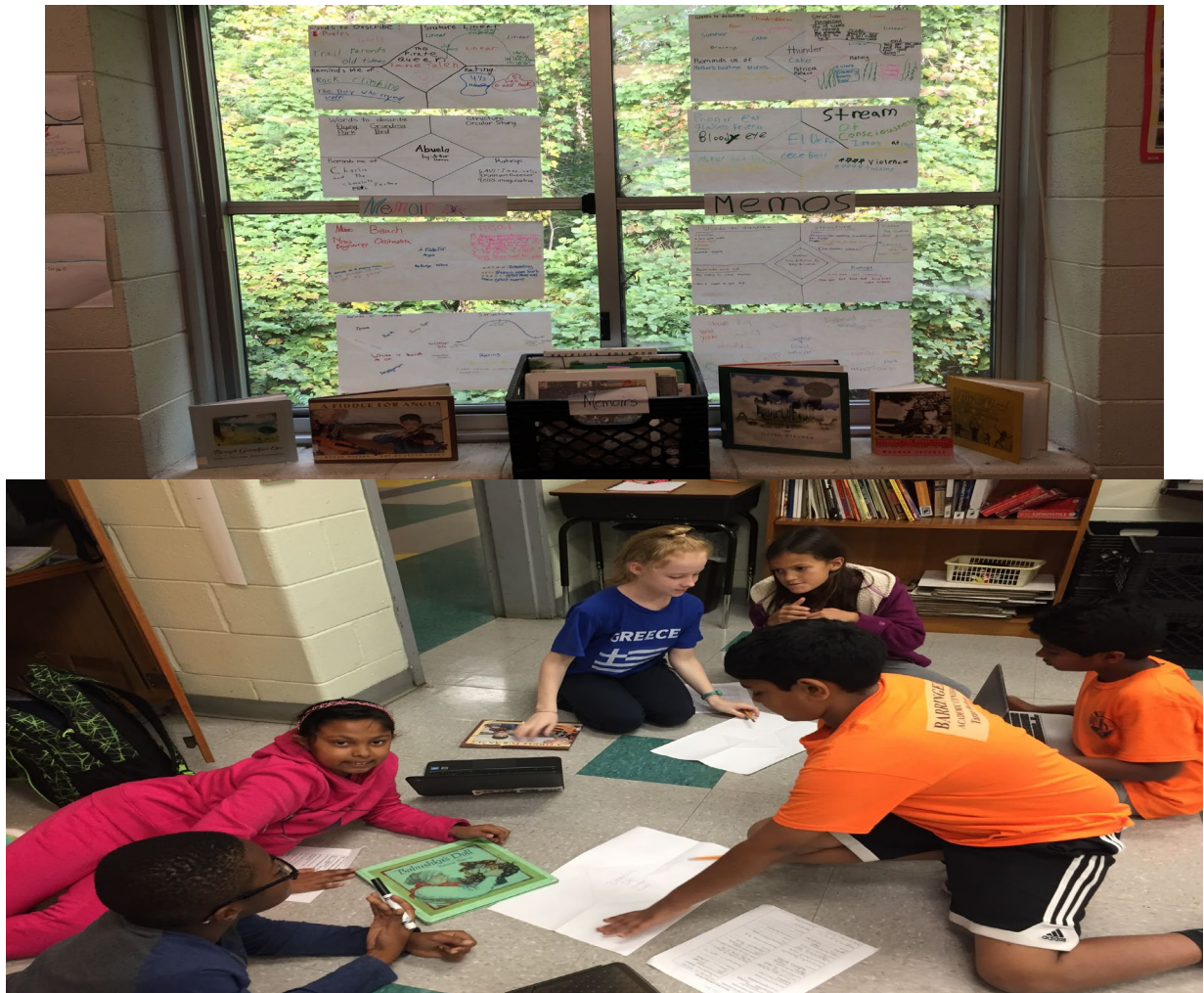
## Introductory Lesson

Our Memoir Writing Unit began the first day of school as students began their writer's notebook/journal. To introduce the genre study, students are asked to create a Venn Diagram, comparing Autobiography to Memoir, using the Internet as a resource. After a brief discussion, students view and discuss a short video, “What is a Memoir?”<sup>9</sup> explains that a memoir is a subjective work of literary non-fiction about the writer's experience and usually includes a setting, action, relationships between characters, dialogue and a theme/purpose. Students use the video and discussion to improve their Venn Diagrams as we create one together as a class.



Students are then introduced to the Memoir Memo (See Appendix 3). Students are shown the crate of about 25 memoirs in our Memoir Mentor Text Crate (See Appendix 4), reflective of the demographics of the classroom. Students will read and analyze texts using the Memoir Memo, noting, along with the title and author, 4 words to describe the book, the structure, what it reminds the student of and a rating. After a read aloud of *Aunt Flossie's Hats (and crab cakes later)* by Eleanor Fitzgerald (10), we discuss and fill in the Memoir Memo as a class, modeling what students will do independently. In addition, a mini lesson about the structure of memoirs is taught using the Anchor Chart below. Students read four memoir texts from the crate over the course of the next week. In pairs and triads, students

use a graphic organizer to discuss and analyze texts. Students share highlights of their discussion and posters. Once displayed on a bulletin board, in a later lesson, students will discuss the Growth Mindsets they noted in each text along with the theme/purpose.



### The Writing Process Begins

Simultaneously, students use a list of prompts related to their lives to prepare for their own memoir writing. From duo and triad sharing and our Author's Chair, students get to know one another, noting different aspects of each other's writing. To formally introduce the writing process, *When I Was Young In the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant<sup>11</sup> will be studied as the next mentor text. The structure of this novel is a no time narrative with a repeating line with an emotional/reflective/defiant ending. We begin this writing process with brainstorming using their journal to help determine the setting, characters, location and theme of the memoir they will write. Students will determine a repeating sentence. A teacher model of this helps students see how to transform the mentor text and make it their own. Once students have completed their pre-writing using a graphic organizer of their choice, first drafts are begun.

## Revising and Growth Mindset Lessons

As students proceed with their writing, this lesson lays the groundwork for peer revision.

Goal: Developing a growth mindset around peer revising in writing will help students give and accept constructive feedback in a positive environment.

Anticipatory Set: Students will view and discuss: Austin's Butterfly<sup>12</sup>, in which a kindergarten classroom helps a classmate dramatically improve his drawing of a butterfly with specific and positive feedback. This will be used as a model for peer revision in writing.

Lesson One: To review role of peer revision in the writing process - re-watch Austin's Butterfly with a focus on guidelines for peer revision connecting back to the clip and using a portion of Lucy Calkins's 5th Grade Narrative Writing<sup>13</sup> rubric (See Appendix 5).

### Lesson Two: The "Perfect" Principal

- a. Listen to The Perfect Nanny from Mary Poppins (available on YouTube)
- b. Share a simple paragraph written by the teacher describing an ideal principal. (below)
- c. Student will collectively review the paragraph, making suggestions to the teacher to improve the paragraph. The teacher will follow suggestions until the class is satisfied with the improvements.

#### The "Perfect" Principal (before revision)

My 'perfect' principal loves me and my class and everyone in the school. She helps everyone and is friendly. She smiles at me as I arrive in the morning to start my day and gives us treats. I loved when she was in the dunking booth at our fall festival. She lets me and my students do interesting and challenging stuff and have parties whenever we want. She is awesome, good and supportive.

### Lesson Three: The "Perfect" Friend *Independent Practice*

- a. In pairs, have students discuss what makes a good friend
- b. Students write The "Perfect" Friend Paragraph
- c. Peer Revision in pairs
- d. Writing conference/assessment with teacher and rubric

## Theme/Author's Purpose

Six Word Memoirs allow people to succinctly share the writer's message/essence. Students will be exposed to a variety of six word memoirs on this site:

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/01/09/six-word-memoirs-students/><sup>14</sup>

Students will share favorites and link those to messages or themes. Different structures will be noted and modeled:

- **Target word:** “Funniest word I know is *zipper*.”
- **Change of pace:** Never, never, well, not never, now.
- **One-two punch:** “Forgot homework, yep dog ate it.”
- **One-two-three:** “New friend, old friend, we friends.”
- **Inventory:** “Determined, detailed, decided, dared, DID it!”
- **Root Word:** Memory, memoir, memorabilia, memorable, me, meme

Additional scaffolding is available with How to Write A Six Word Memoir that is Worth a Thousand Words, <https://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/><sup>15</sup>

Students will share one six word memoir on a Padlet, which we will use to identify and analyze themes and messages. The six word memoir may serve as a guide for students to use as they begin the writing process. In addition, six word memoir writing will be incorporated into our novel and literature study as student write six word memoirs that will reveal their depth of understanding with regard to character development and theme.

#### Student Memoir Writing: Brainstorm to Publishing and Celebration

Students will brainstorm all types, structures and styles of memoirs they have read. Students may bring in additional memoirs to share and discuss. Before students decide the structure of their memo, one more Memoir is done as a class with the first chapter of *Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood In India* by Jaffrey Madhur<sup>16</sup> since almost half of my class is of Indian descent, with many who were born there. This text is appropriate as it relates to the Indian culture as the author reminisces about childhood in India but it brings in the element of foods, which are often central to our memories and can be an important part of memoirs. Ten minute writing and sharing is done about the foods that bring forth memories for each child (best done before lunch because it makes us all hungry).

Now the students are ready to begin the writing process for their memoirs. Students begin to brainstorm ideas for their own memoir. It is critical students know that their memoir structure is their choice, including a graphic novel format. According to Brian Kissel,

“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.”<sup>17</sup>

Students meet with the teacher to present their memoir structure and share prewriting graphic organizers to begin the formal writing process. Students will work at their own pace with weekly check ins with the teacher, using the Lucy Calkins's 5th Grade Narrative Writing rubric, which includes rubrics from grades 3 - 6 and the Narrative Writing Checklist Grade Five<sup>18</sup> (See Appendix 5) , which helps the students to see their progress in a student friendly, illustrated format progressing from *Not Yet*, *Starting To*, to *Yes*, that goes well with our Growth Mindset. Peer revision conferences are held using the same rubric. Following revisions, student will meet with the teacher to review and discuss editing, which will vary based on the skill of the students. At the end of this lengthy and sometime challenging, students will type their final draft for review and grading by the teacher using the 5th Grade Narrative Writing rubric.

With teacher approval, the memoir will be printed and ready for our Class Memoir book that will be created with Student Treasures, a student publishing program, that creates a free hardback class book, which is also available for parents at a cost of about \$20. Books also include individual illustrations, a table of contents and of course, "All About the Authors". All decisions regarding creation of the book are done by the students, with teacher approval and all students have a completed piece of writing included. Once the book is sent off for publishing, plans are made for the celebration and sharing of the book by the students. Since this is a collection of memoirs, students may invite people mentioned in their texts as well as parents, school administrators and teachers and students in other rooms. Celebrations include author signing of the books and bookmarks for students who do not purchase the book, food, of course, and sharing excerpts in the Author's Chair, following the format for feedback established throughout the writing process.



## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

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

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.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.5.3.B

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 5 [here](#).)

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.6

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 two pages in a single sitting.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1.

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

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Memo Moments for your Writing Journal**

An important family member  
A special gift given or received  
Something I lost  
An important friend  
A time I escaped  
A particular piece of clothing  
Being outside at night  
Trying to fix something  
Secrets  
What I didn't want to know  
Something I know by heart  
A big change  
A big day  
A time you were scared/worried  
A big choice/decision  
A big lie  
A time you stole something  
A time I got in big trouble  
Something I am proud of  
Someone famous  
A big vacation/trip  
Death  
Going on a train/plane/boat  
A trip to a hospital  
Sleepover experience  
Someone made me really mad  
Someone that embarrassed me  
Something I love to eat, drink, sing, say, do  
Scary events  
My favorite place to go  
A discovery  
A new friend  
A big sporting event  
A special day at school  
A doll/toy I love

## Appendix 3

### Memoir Memos/Rating of Books

<p>Title <u>Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crabcakes later)</u></p> <p>Author <u>Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard</u></p> <p>4 Words to Describe the Book:  <u>Hats</u>      <u>Baltimore Fire</u>  <u>Great War Parade</u>      <u>Crab Cakes</u></p> <p>Structure <u>Hats bring flashbacks</u></p> <p>Reminds me of: Mom's Stories</p> <p>Rating (out of 5 Stars): 5 Stars  <b>SAMPLE</b></p>	<p>Title _____</p> <p>Author _____</p> <p>4 Words to Describe the Book:          _____          _____</p> <p>Structure _____</p> <p>Reminds me of: _____</p> <p>Rating (out of 5 Stars): _____</p>
<p>Title _____</p> <p>Author _____</p> <p>4 Words to Describe the Book:          _____          _____</p> <p>Structure: _____</p> <p>Reminds me of: _____</p> <p>Rating (out of 5 Stars): _____</p>	<p>Title _____</p> <p>Author _____</p> <p>4 Words to Describe the Book:          _____          _____</p> <p>Structure _____</p> <p>Reminds me of: _____</p> <p>Rating (out of 5 Stars): _____</p>
<p>Title _____</p> <p>Author _____</p> <p>4 Words to Describe the Book:          _____          _____</p> <p>Structure _____</p> <p>Reminds me of: _____</p> <p>Rating (out of 5 Stars): _____</p>	<p>Title _____</p> <p>Author _____</p> <p>4 Words to Describe the Book:          _____          _____</p> <p>Structure _____</p> <p>Reminds me of: _____</p> <p>Rating (out of 5 Stars): _____</p>



## Appendix 4

### Memoir Texts for Intermediate Grade Students (for Mentor Text Crate)

In My Momma's Kitchen by Jardine Nolen  
Owl Moon by Jane Yolen  
The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant  
Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges  
Thunder Cake by Patricia Polacco  
My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother by Patricia Polacco  
Chicken Sunday by Patricia Polacco  
Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco  
Thank you, Mr. Falker by Patricia Polacco  
Through Grandpa's Eyes by Patricia MacLauchlan  
Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold  
The Art Lesson by Tommy di Paolo  
A Boy and Jaguar by A. Rabinowitz  
A Chair for my Mother by V B Williams  
Shortcut by Daniel Crews  
Big Mama by Daniel Crews  
Fireflies by Julie Brinkloe  
Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain by Peter Sis  
Year of the Jungle by Suzanne Collins  
A Birthday Basket for Tía by Pat Mora  
Abuelo by Arthur Dorros  
My Nana's Remedies by Roni Capin Rivera-Ashford  
Rosa - Nikki Giovanni  
The Bracelet by Yoshiko Uchida  
The Other Side - Jacqueline Woodson  
The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats  
El Deafo by Cece Bell  
Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab cakes later) by Elizabeth Fitzgerald  
When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant  
Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood In India by Jaffrey Madhur

## Appendix 5

Lucy Calkins' Teacher Rubric for Narrative Writing Fifth Grade (for teacher conferences)

[http://www.richfield.k12.wi.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_5626897/File/Richfield%20school%20district/Literacy/5th%20narrative.pdf](http://www.richfield.k12.wi.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_5626897/File/Richfield%20school%20district/Literacy/5th%20narrative.pdf)

Lucy Calkins' Narrative Writing Checklist Grade Five (for self/peer revision)

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m7suNr2THF3Gp7vcJj\\_lysXnp\\_54o1eZ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m7suNr2THF3Gp7vcJj_lysXnp_54o1eZ/view)

## Resources for Students

“When Authors Drive the Author's Chair.” *Brian Kissel*, [www.briankissel.com/brians-blog/when-authors-drive-the-authors-chair](http://www.briankissel.com/brians-blog/when-authors-drive-the-authors-chair). Accessed 10 Nov. 2018.

Learn how the Author's Chair can help you be a better writer and supporter of writers.

### Memoir Texts for Intermediate Grades **Appendix 3**

An extensive list of recommended genre texts to help you see the wide array of types of memoir and the variety of text structures.

Popova, Maria. Illustrated Six-Word Memoirs by Students from Grade School to Grad School.”

*Brain Pickings*, 18 Sept. 2015 <https://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/>

Wide variety and fun examples of illustrated Six Word Memoirs

Ragan, Trevor. “Growth Mindset Introduction: What It Is, How It Works, and Why It Matters.”

*YouTube*, YouTube, 6 Nov. 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=75GFzikmRY0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75GFzikmRY0).

Introduction to Growth Mindset from a student's perspective with examples of how we can change our language to change our mindset.

Shmoo Editorial Team. “What's a Memoir? Video.” *Shmoop*, Shmoop University, 11 Nov. 2008,

[www.shmoop.com/video/whats-a-memoir](http://www.shmoop.com/video/whats-a-memoir).

This video helps you understand the difference between biography, autobiography and memoir and explains the structure of a memoir.

## Resources for Teachers

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

This is good guide on teaching memoirs beyond the craft and structure. It also offers strong reflective points for teachers and demonstrates the purpose of this genre specifically.

Calkins, Lucy, et al. *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades K-8*. Heinemann, 2015.

Source of excellent rubrics for teachers and students alike, including the two that I cited as the assessment I used for this unit.

Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: the New Psychology of Success*. Random House, 2016.

Overview of Growth Mindset from the Growth Mindset guru.

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

Clear, concise and very specific how to directions and theory for your writing lessons and ideas.

Lerner, Tali. "Critique and Feedback - the Story of Austin's Butterfly - Ron Berger." *YouTube*, YouTube, 8 Dec. 2012,

Offers a powerful message about Growth Mindset about students helping to improve a peer's butterfly picture that excellently parallels with peer revision in the writing process.

TLDSB. "Restorative Practice." *YouTube*, YouTube, 13 July 2011,

A look at an elementary school circle in action go get an idea of what Restorative Circles are like.

Student Treasure Book Publishing Company

A student book publishing company that provides a simple format, teacher guidelines and provides a free hardbound book for your classroom of your students' writing, as well as opportunities for parents to purchase books for about \$20

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> “13 Essential 21st Century Skills for Today’s Students.” *The Benefits of Experiential Learning*
- <sup>2</sup> Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: the New Psychology of Success*. Random House, 2016.
- <sup>3</sup> Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning-- and Triumph over Tests*. Heinemann, 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> “Chapter 3. Restoring Community: The Impact of Restorative Justice Circles on Student Feelings of Connectedness.” *Re-Engaging Disconnected Youth*,
- <sup>5</sup> Gibney, and Tara. “Teaching Memoir in the Elementary School Classroom: A Genre Study Approach.” *Journal of Research in Education*, Eastern Educational Research Association.
- <sup>6</sup> Merrell, Kenneth W., and Barbara A. Gueldner. *Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom: Promoting Mental Health and Academic Success*.
- <sup>7</sup> See Note 5.
- <sup>8</sup> “When Authors Drive the Author's Chair.” *Brian Kissel*, [www.briankissel.com/brians-blog/when-authors-drive-the-authors-chair](http://www.briankissel.com/brians-blog/when-authors-drive-the-authors-chair).
- <sup>9</sup> Shmoop Editorial Team. “What's a Memoir? Video.” *Shmoop*, Shmoop University, 11 Nov. 2008
- <sup>10</sup> Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald., and James Ransome. *Aunt Flossie’s Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)*. SRA/McGrawHill, 2009
- <sup>11</sup> Rylant, Cynthia, and Diane Goode. *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. E.P. Dutton, 1985.
- <sup>12</sup> Lerner, Tali. “Critique and Feedback - the Story of Austin's Butterfly - Ron Berger.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 8 Dec. 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch](http://www.youtube.com/watch)
- <sup>13</sup> Calkins, Lucy, et al. *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades K-8*. Heinemann, 2015.
- <sup>14</sup> Popova, Maria. “Illustrated Six-Word Memoirs by Students from Grade School to Grad School.” *Brain Pickings*, 18 Sept. 2015
- <sup>15</sup> “Six Word Memoirs Home.” *Six-Word Memoirs*, [www.sixwordmemoirs.com/](http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/).
- <sup>16</sup> Jaffrey, Madhur. *Climbing the Mango Trees: a Memoir of a Childhood in India*. Vintage Books, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Kissel, Brian. *When Writers Drive the Workshop: Honoring Young Voices and Bold Choices*. Stenhouse Publishers, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> See Note 13.

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- Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning-- and Triumph over Tests*. Heinemann, 2005. Calkins, Lucy, et al. *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades K-8*. Heinemann, 2015. Source of excellent rubrics for teachers and students alike, including the two that I cited as the assessment I used for this unit.
- “Chapter 3. Restoring Community: The Impact of Restorative Justice Circles on Student Feelings of Connectedness.” *Re-Engaging Disconnected Youth*, doi:10.3726/978-1-4539-1776-3/13.
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- George Watson, Marshall University, One John Marshall Drive, College of Education and Professional Development, Huntington, WV 25755. e-Mail: [Eerajournal@Gmail.com](mailto:Eerajournal@Gmail.com);
- Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald., and James Ransome. *Aunt Flossie’s Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)*. SRA/McGrawHill, 2009. Jaffrey, Madhur. *Climbing the Mango Trees: a Memoir of a Childhood in India*. Vintage Books, 2007.
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"When Authors Drive the Author's Chair." *Brian Kissel*, [www.briankissel.com/brians-blog/when-authors-drive-the-authors-chair](http://www.briankissel.com/brians-blog/when-authors-drive-the-authors-chair). Accessed 10 Nov. 201