



### ***My Voice in Words – A Memorable Moment Memoir***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
7th Grade

**Keywords:** Memoir, writer's craft, author's point of view, author's purpose, autobiography, biography, narrative

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

**Synopsis:** Introducing My Voice in Words- A Memorable Moment Memoir Curriculum Unit to my scholars will be a beacon of light. I teach middle grades English/Language Arts in a Title 1 school where standardize testing takes precedence over creative learning opportunities. In this curriculum unit, my scholars will learn the skills and process for writing formally and analyzing different pieces of non-fictional text. This unit will give an in depth understanding of how an author's style of writing and point of view develops and unfolds within a story. Scholars will discover the importance of formal writing and its purpose in writer's craft while gaining insight to developing their own writing. Teaching narrative writing through various non-fictional texts will offer scholars insight of how to capture specific events and moments in time. Building my scholars depth of knowledge pertaining to how an author writes will lead to the development of his or her own unique and different writing style. Infusing writing with literacy has proven to develop a scholar's knowledge, understanding, analytical and creativity. This in-depth look into memoir writing also exposes scholars to the author's writing style, perspective and purpose.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 120 students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.*

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

## **Introduction**

I am a Middle Grades English and Language Arts Teacher at James Martin Middle School. Indeed having the opportunity to teach a CU about nonfiction Genre focused on Memoir Writing will be phenomenal and especially advantageous for all of my scholars. Teaching at a Title I school leaves very little room for writing projects and a larger focus on preparing for standardized tests. However, starting this school year, as a whole CMS school district is including more writing within the curriculum for all schools. Certainly, this opens up a different avenue of learning for my diverse population of 120 scholars. I teach scholars from various ethnic backgrounds that include but not limited to African Americans, Hispanic, Mexican, Latino and Chinese. In my classes, the challenges sometimes presented for my scholars is having English as a second language. Further on many of my scholars are struggling to perform academically on or above grade level. Without question, I believe all of my scholars have a story to tell based on their culture, race, religion and even socioeconomic backgrounds. As the teacher, I have had to go beyond just teaching the academic content and encourage scholars to express their feelings through their literature response journal. I look forward to now being able to teach writing creatively through the memoir-writing curriculum.

## **Demographics**

I am a highly qualified certified Middle Grades Language Arts Teacher at James Martin Middle School in Charlotte, North Carolina. Currently I have been teaching full time in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools since August 2011. Prior to becoming a teacher I worked in various capacities within in CMS as a Teacher Associate in After-School, Substitute Teacher/ Long-Term Substitute Teacher and then a B.E.D. Teacher Assistant. I teach today with a team of two teachers, an MCL (Multi-Classroom Leader) and I am noted as the PLC Leader. Working at James Martin Middle School has afforded me opportunities to expand my teaching practice such as professional development to including PEAK Training, Reading Apprentices and Model Schools Conference.

The current enrollment at James Martin is 1,046 with 53.8% male and 46.2% female students. African American students make up 62% of the population followed by Hispanic students at 28.1%. White students make up 3.1%, American Indian students 0.8%, Asian students 4.0%, Multi-Racial 1.8%. There is 10.9% of the population that qualifies for exceptional children's services and 7.8% are Limited English Proficiency students. James Martin also has 2.4% of its students who are eligible for McKinney Vento and 3.8% under Section 504 Plans.

During this summer, writing about my life for this seminar disclosed the importance of giving each one of my scholars a place to record their voice. I am looking forward to sharing with my scholars the importance of writing down memorable moments, which help shape and influence their lives and events. My mother and grandmother instilled the importance of education to me growing up in the rural town of Denmark, South Carolina. My mother was adamant that education was key even though she was not literate. She

always encouraged me to write and of course read. It was through this fundamental practice I was able to control my destiny despite the odds I faced. Allowing my scholars to write will give a glimpse into their life. My Curriculum Unit will include the following texts: an autobiography and memoir: *Night* by Eli Wiesel and *Not Poor Just Broke* by Dick Gregory as the primary texts. It is essential for my scholars to view the different ways authors choose to write to tell their own story.

Scholars will complete the following performance tasks throughout this curriculum unit:

A Biographical Timeline and a Memoir. My scholars are often looking for mediums to express themselves and writing is yet the most powerful tool to use inside the English/Language Arts Classroom.

James Martin Middle School is a comprehensive middle school that sits in Northeast Charlotte and is a part of the Governors' Village. This marks the third year that MAP testing has taken place at JMMS, and MAP Reading and Math data will drive instruction and decision-making. Data from state tests drive all other components of the School Improvement Plan. James Martin is a Title I school with approximately 78% of its students qualifying free and reduced lunch.

#### Rationale

Working at James Martin Middle School has been a window into the many different facets of life my scholars endure. Some of my scholars are experiencing life challenges such as loss of a parent, abandonment, homelessness, poverty, incarcerated parents or siblings, bullying and mental illness. Knowing that my scholars have such vastly different backgrounds, I know that the learning experience must be captivating with hope for a better future.

In creating this Curriculum Unit, I find the ultimate challenge is presenting to my scholars an opportunity to express themselves in an environment that focuses on data and numbers only. My scholars rarely have the opportunity to explore any type of lessons that involve creativity.

During this summer, Writing About Our Lives seminar disclosed the importance of giving each one of my scholars a place to record their voice. I am looking forward to sharing with my scholars the importance of writing down memorable moments, which help shape and influence their lives. My mother and grandmother instilled the importance of education to me while growing up in the rural town of Denmark, South Carolina. My mother was adamant that education was key even though she was not literate. She always encouraged me to write and of course read. It was through this fundamental practice I was able to control my destiny despite the odds I faced. Allowing my scholars to write will give me as the teacher a glimpse into their life. My Curriculum Unit will include the following texts: an autobiography, biographical excerpt and memoir to include: *Night* by Eli Wiesel and *Not Poor Just Broke* by Dick Gregory as the primary texts. It is essential for my scholars to view the different ways authors choose to write to tell their own story.

Participating in the Charlotte Teachers Institute Seminar Writing About Our Lives: A Memoir Study has truly been full of insightful and enriching learning opportunities. Brian Kissel, a University of North Carolina at Charlotte Associate Professor has provided a wealth of sources and strategies to inspire the depth of teaching memoir writing to all ages and grade levels. As a teacher in a Title 1 School finding diverse learning opportunities to meet the needs of scholars is a priority. Exposing students at James Martin Middle School to different forms of literature will only enhance their performance academically. Professor Kissel provided different formats to encourage scholars to start writing and reading. In this seminar, he presented picture book memoirs, six-word memoirs, poetic memoirs and music memoirs.

Immediately upon learning of this professional development opportunity, I knew it would be an amazing resource to include in my teaching practice. Teaching English/Language Arts is a pleasure and I believe writing from personal experiences leads to a defining moment worth sharing. In this seminar, I have discovered the many different ways writing evolves and becomes a learning staple for scholars. During this seminar, Professor Kissel issued the challenge to give my voice a sound through words that focused on my childhood. Indeed, this lesson of identifying the defining moment prepared me to teach my scholars to focus on specific moments that influenced their life. I have learned how to capture specific moments by listening to music, recognizing the time and place of special moments. I can share with my scholars the importance of writing with a purpose to understand an author's point of view and perspective.

Many of the activities in the seminar included me completing the tasks as a teacher and I truly can see how these lessons can transfer to the scholars in my classroom. Learning how to create a six-word memoir will indeed engage my scholars due to the creativity of formatting a personal experience in six words. My scholars will find the opportunity to share their moment absolutely challenging but fun. I know that once a scholar is free to write with minimum restraints, he/she will flourish. Another assignment I learned that is definitely necessary is Free Writing in the Daybook. In every meeting, I began by Writing into the Day with my daybook. The Daybook served so many purposes such as a personal reflection tool, a journal of thoughts, projects, tasks and simply free writing space. Indeed, this allowed me to begin to chart my feelings, projects and ideas as I write into my daybook each meeting. This assignment will prove to be extraordinary because scholars in middle school have a lot to express. It is during this time of their life that clothes, hair, physical looks, and social presence begins to matter and a daybook will become their best friend for life.

Creating the musical memoir is a collection of songs or simply a song that represent a moment of time in one's life. I was fascinated to learn of this type memoir and the possibilities it brings into my classroom. My scholars love music and allowing them the opportunity to create a playlist to represent themselves will be one of the highlights for writing their memoir. In this lesson, scholars will study the lyrics of their favorite song and relate it to their moment in time.

Professor Kissel introduced a plethora of memoirs for all grade levels. The reading list was outstanding and engaging. Learning about the author and his/her story was enlightening and encouraging to share with my scholars. In the short story, *Not Poor, Just Broke* by Dick Gregory the author tells this story from 1<sup>st</sup> person point of view. The short story is so captivating and full of suspense that while reading it scholars will have no idea that Richard the main character is indeed the author. In *Writing About Our Lives* Seminar, Dr. Kissel clearly defines the distinction between a memoir, biography and autobiography. Learning this distinction is key to explaining to my scholars how to identify their memorable moment just as the main character Richard. Richard in the story does not have a lot, in fact, he is impoverished, and his mom works hard and struggles with little money. However, Richard did not learn shame until one day in school.

In the memoir, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, the main character is a child that experiences dismal in his world the day the soldiers showed up to his home. The text gives an account through the narrator of the father and son encounters in the camps. Yet, the day the soldiers showed up to his house, his life was never the same for him or his dad. Even though, the memoir details many different points in the life of Elie and his father; their travels as father and son is most captivating of his memorable moment.

Learning how to define a specific event involves different factors our, Professor Dr. Kissel points out for us to review. Factors to highlight when teaching scholars to write a memoir: time, cultural trends, news stories and places. In memoir writing most of the above-mentioned factors contribute to the truest part in your story and defining moment. This seminar, *Writing About Our Lives* exposed me to enriching resources for teaching writing in the nonfiction genre. Some of the books studied during the seminar:

### Unit Goals

In this Unit, the following goals are expected:

1. Scholars will gain knowledge of the importance of an author's style and purpose
2. Scholars will learn of the various reasons an author writes
3. Scholars will learn the impact of an author's style in a text
4. Scholars will learn the formal process for writing a narrative
5. Scholars will learn the importance of vocabulary acquisition when telling a story

Scholars will write a memoir detailing a specific moment or time in their life. To ignite the unit scholars will review samples of different types of memoir exemplars for insight of how to share a special time of their life in words. Without question, reading specific pieces of literature to include realistic fiction is essential to give scholars insight to the varying ways you may write about a special moment. Scholars will learn the process of writing a personal narrative. The ultimate goal and outcome of this unit is for scholars to acquire an in depth study of writing about significant moments and events. Scholars will explore the different ways memoirs describe a significant event in a person or character's life. Writing the memoir include identifying the specific moment/event, providing background information, details leading up to the defining moment, reflection/impact on

life today, time and place of the personal account. The personal narrative essay can be the most enjoyable type of assignment to write because it provides you with an opportunity to share a meaningful event from your life. Scholars may include funny stories or brag about a great experience that happened in their life. Middle School Scholars are comprised of many moments and providing a platform for expression through memoir writing will be exciting.

A personal narrative can focus on any event, no matter how long it lasted or if it spanned over a few years. Your narrative can reflect your personality, or it can reveal an event that shaped your outlooks and opinions. Overall, your story should have a clear *point* and accurate account most true to your story. Some topic starters for your memoir:

- a learning experience that is personal or school related
- write about something that hilariously happened to you
- share a lesson you learned and impacted your life positively

Planning the memoir will include a brainstorming session to jot down several memorable events from your life like:

- times you laughed the hardest
- times you felt sorry for your actions
- painful memories
- times you were surprised
- scariest moments
- life lesson
- accomplishment/reward
- achievement
- proudest moment

Finally, decide if your moment in time is clear and concise and then tell your story.

## **Content Research**

When I attended the first seminar with Dr. Kissel, I was excited. He presented the topic, the Daybook. Sitting in the room listening to him present how to set up, design and use the Daybook sent my brain into shock. I was in total awe of the Daybook. So many ideas began swirling around and I could not control my thoughts. As a lover of free expression in writing, I was eager to begin using the Daybook personally and in my classroom. As Dr. Kissel continued to describe how we would use it in every seminar and I honestly believed it be just a little taste of heaven for me because I had no idea the Daybook was so versatile. Learning that the Daybook could travel with me and not as a conventional planner or agenda but a composition book or even a journal. He shared that he has a lot of them personally and encourages his students at UNCC to use them as well. He actually keeps them for reflection, ideas, thoughts and projects. Throughout the seminar discussion, he stated once you fill them up, you could start a new one. My mind is literally racing – I can use a notebook of all sorts to create a space to write my thoughts, appointments, dreams and goals. I became so excited that all I could think of after Seminar 1 – The Daybook; I am off to search for my Red Notebook to get started.

Now that I have this new discovery of capturing my thoughts, I can write again and even more, I find a way to encourage my scholars to write and make it meaningful. In our seminars, many resources presented for discussion and oh my how I learned the importance of telling a story; a story that is my own truth. One text that truly explained the art of telling your personal truth for me was *Making Meaning of Memoirs: Selecting, Collecting and Layering* by Katherine Bomer. It was in this text that confirmed what Dr. Brian Kissel explained during our seminar – there is a true distinction between writing an autobiography and a memoir. In her book, Katherine Bomer states that more than anything else, writing the memoir is an act of the self; creating on the page almost an imitation of self.

Immediately I knew after reading about the Daybook it might very well be transforming for my scholars once they knew the requirements would be minimum. In my school, writing is a very small component of our daily lessons and I literally implement it through the Literature Response Journal. My scholars constantly complain about writing in their journal about their independent reading book. Now with the opportunity to write about themselves and receive a grade they will love it. In the book, *Making Meaning of Memoirs* the author stated when young people think about the meaning that their life holds, they can look to their affections for affiliations with others as important mirrors on who they have been and who they are becoming.

Bomer, Kathy. Making Meaning of Memoirs: Selecting, Collecting and Layering

In essence, my scholars can put their life experiences on paper and as I discovered in class presentation is not priority but giving them the space is of major importance. Journaling when they first come to class will be one of the most important parts to developing their own personal memoir. Sometimes scholars come to my class with so much to share and our lesson does not allow it. However, knowing that when they come to class they can write or draw their thoughts before beginning work will be rewarding in itself. I learned through reading Katherine Bomer book, sometimes I do not give student options. I ask them to hold off on selecting a topic so that they can practice interpreting their memoirs from a variety of perspectives. I know that providing a writing prompt and following the curriculum is best practices but giving scholars an opportunity to develop their own thoughts and create a formal or informal piece writing definitely takes learning to a new level.

Learning of the different types nonfictional and fictional pieces that can be used to tell a story, talk about a specific moment in time or event has truly lead me to inspire my scholars to share in expressing their personal experiences. My scholars unfortunately come in with so much sometimes relating to family and friends concerns that their voice is lost. I introduced writing the narrative to my scholars and learning that their words have meaning proved to insightful to each of them. My scholars shared about helping a friend who was in need and what it meant to him even though he did not have much. Another scholar shared how depressed she was attending school this year because it was new for and she did not have friends. A scholar shared that writing about her dad made her feel close to him even though he is in jail. Wow! The voices poured out in their personal narratives because it was not restricted to just a format. In the text, *The Site of Memory* by Toni Morrison, I heard then the approach that's most productive that moves from the image of the text ; not from the text to the image and I was astounded. Indeed, providing our scholars a topic, theme and a format is essential but the design and content needs to be relevant to how the author sees it and writes it first. I absolutely agree that there is truly a distinction to writing your memoir and my scholars can relate because it is their voice in words telling how they saw their experience.

In writing this text, Toni Morrison made it clear that telling the slave narrative was important to detailing their truth of their experiences. The slave narratives came through them from their own memory and experiences. I thought about this when I was giving my scholars the criteria for writing their narrative. I decided to name it a special moment in time so that it could reflect something important and meaningful to them. I wanted them to know it was truly what they know the moment to be which included when and where it happened. *The Site of Memory* focused on the truth of those who are speaking and writing, as they know things to be and not what you might think it should be. Toni Morrison stated I must trust my own collections. I must also depend on the recollections of others.



Bomer, Kathy. Making Meaning of Memoirs: Selecting, Collecting, and Layering Morrison, Toni. *The Site of Memory*, p. 4, 5

Thus memory weighs heavily in what I write, in how I begin and in what I find to be significant. As we go through the unit, my scholars will recall what was going on in the world, their community and family to ignite the memory of their special moment.

I learned in the book, *Exploring Inquiry as a Teaching Stance in the Writers Workshop* to be helpful. Often times when we do write in my class scholars give a written response for an answer to a question. In this text, the author says when teachers give students a simple way to write something, not only are thoughts true to the product, they are not true to the process. Of course, I was compelled to read further to truly gain insight as to how that is possible. The author Katy Ray says, outside of school when faced with tasks that require composition, writers have to figure out how to write things. No one gives them a formula and the struggle to organize and make everything work is there every time. I am now excited all over again because I realize the Daybook can truly become a staple in my classroom. Providing my scholars with structure is important so teaching the writing process is never extinct. I know now that there is an approach that will require my scholars to engage in high order thinking which leads to profound skills for communicating.

My scholars will be able to ask questions that will lead to interpretation and a writing masterpiece well crafted- Writing is an Art. Noted in this text, Inquiry stance method help children explore different alternatives for how to write something and then they let them do what writers really have to do- make decisions about how their pieces will go. I know that giving them the opportunity to read and study mentored texts will open their eyes to the many different ways to talk about their own special moment. Scholars will read *Not Poor Just Broke* and *Night* both memoirs of a specific moment and experience of the character's life expressed differently. Now as my scholars read the text they can decide if they will tell their story as seen in the texts or create their own way to put their account and voice in words. Katy Ray stated in the book also, taking the inquiry out of teaching would diminish students need to read and think like writers and would most likely diminish their understanding as well. Exposing scholars in my class to literature opens up their mind to learn and grow beyond their own environment.

In the book, Katy Ray says so often as teachers we do not even realize how limited our knowledge base is until we engage in inquiry with our students. I know teaching at a Title 1 school incorporate socioeconomic issues however, I did not discover the up close and personal weight my scholars carry until they started writing. She goes on to say further, but recognizing that we do not have to limit our teaching or our students learning. The question for me now becomes how I can bring this to the forefront of lesson planning at my school. Instructional frameworks help teachers plan and implement generative inquiries to study any aspect of writing.

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Ray, Katy. Exploring Inquiry as a Teaching Stance in the Writers Workshop. P. 243, 244

Further on, taking inquiry out of teaching would diminish students need to think, read and think like writers and would most likely diminish their understanding as well. They would think of their writing instruction as business as usual and simply wait for the teacher to tell them what he or she knows, never understanding how that knowledge came to be.

I have learned through reading this text in the seminar that exposure to all of these beautiful pieces of literature as a student I can only imagine that presenting this to my scholars will aid in their learning. Dr. Kissel presented so many different formats I never imagined or even knew could be used to tell a personal story and have fun all at the same time. I am in awe of how this impact learning and change the dynamics of how I will teach my scholars using anchored texts with writing. In the book, stated boldly when quality texts anchor teaching. Students do not need their teachers to create a model of what the writing should look like; but it does not mean modeling is not important. I know that modeling is important; scholars will create a timeline, complete a characterization graphic organizer and participate in the writer's workshop. While completing the important tasks used to help develop the scholars' narrative, creativity and free expression is still pertinent to telling their story.

While I know allowing my scholars to write daily will be one of the best things I learned how to do in this seminar I look forward to teaching the writers workshop. Katy Ray explained in the text, Understanding the Essential Characteristics of the Writing Workshop, one of the main goals teachers have is to help students find reasons to write. Teachers feel nothing else matters if students are not finding writing projects in which they can become deeply involved. Teachers invite children to do all things a writer really does- research, explore, collect, interview, talk, read, stare off into space, co-author, and yes, pre-write, draft, revise, edit and publish. I am so elated while reading this because I know my scholars will benefit from fully participating in a writers workshop. Allowing my scholars to conduct peer review in class is exciting, engaging and makes room for higher level thinking to take place. In the workshop, scholars will read each other's work, provide and receive feedback. In this book, Katy Ray says too often we defend writing as a skill, saying writing should be taught so that scholars can fill out a job application or write a letter asking someone to buy a cemetery lot. Writing is an art. The art of writing is constructive, helpful and for most of us a necessary process.

Reading these books during the seminar opened up so many learning opportunities for my scholars and me. I am so excited that it will not require a lot of supplies but very good anchored texts, excerpts from different memoirs and last but not least a composition book. Oh my, scholars are excited to present their work and having literacy night will be new at my school but oh so rewarding.

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Ray, Katy. Exploring Inquiry as a Teacher Stance in the Writers Workshop

Dr. Kissel shared in the seminars that giving the students an opportunity to read a graphic memoir, listening to music and the lyrics is a great way to introduce students to different types of writing. In *Understanding the Essentials of the Writers Workshop* the author Katy Ray states from time to time we have a curricula for our students to write in a certain genre. We can still teach strategies, technique, conventions and understanding about writing. In m school standardize tests and test scores are priority. The focus on my lesson is to teach a skill and never to invite creativity in hopes of igniting a higher level of learning. Giving my scholars a front row seat to learn and express themselves is rewarding. During the workshop, just like the text the only requirement is that they write and write daily. While scholars have choices during the writing workshop, choosing not to write is not one of their options.

Without question, I agree with Katy Ray, teachers must make a safe place in their classrooms where it is okay for everyone to write where it is safe for everyone to write no matter what it looks like. It needs to be okay for a student who is not yet proficient in English as a second language to write in his or her best work and we should have high expectations for that. We must also realize that best work may look different for different scholars. I was touched while reading this because my scholars writing is so different and challenging to interpret. Too often, I hear that my scholars cannot write and I become upset because truly in middle school we do not help to develop their writing skills. However, if only we can conduct a writer workshop will our scholars writing change. I have noticed after writing their narrative my scholars are writing more in their Literature Response Journal. Writing is an art that truly complements my personal philosophy Every Child Can Learn.

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## **Teaching Strategies**

In this curriculum unit, there are two main parts: writing through literature and writing a memoir. Scholars will learn the different ways to express thoughts, feelings and ideas using free writing and graphic organizers. Scholars will also learn the distinction between an autobiography and memoir.

In Part 1 – Writing based on Literature, introduces various memoir texts to provide exemplars for scholars to study. Scholars will read a class memoir, short story memoir, and view video clips depicting memorable moments. Along with reading memoirs, scholars complete an analysis graphic organizer. Free Writing is an essential component to the study of Memoir Writing. In this section, a key component is the Daybook.

The Daybook records your personal thoughts, feelings and ideas. Scholars will learn to jot down projects, assignments, and events as a part of writing daily. Scholars will personalize their Daybooks with pictures or images and illustrations of their choice. As scholars begin to use the Daybook, the two requirements are to date each entry and to make an entry every day. The Daybook is the keeper of the writer's most intimate thoughts and reflections. Teacher will only grade the Daybook based on writing daily and not on what or how much the scholar writes. Writing based on Literature, introduces various memoir texts to provide exemplars for scholars to study. Scholars will read a class memoir, short story memoir, and view video clips depicting memorable moments. Along with reading memoirs, scholars complete an analysis graphic organizer.

In Part 2 of the Curriculum Unit Writing the Memoir is the focus. A memoir is clearly a personal account of a specific moment in time. An autobiography gives a full account of one's life that includes dates, facts and research. Teacher will introduce the Writer's Workshop with a focus on Narrative Writing.

### **Steps To Writing A Narrative Essay**

- A Narrative Essay is telling a story about your personal memories
- First, identify the experience that you want to write
- Second Identify and Think about why the experience is significant.
- Third, brainstorm, write an outline and plan your draft including the background details leading up to the experience
- Write Your Narrative Essay

The curriculum unit involves class discussions, peer turn and talk relating to the writer's craft, purpose and writing style. Understanding the nonfictional genre memoir study enables scholars to acquire skills to write formally.

## **Instructional Implementation**

My Voice in Words is an eight-week curriculum unit with a focus on Memoir Writing. To express thoughts, feelings and events scholars will use a composition book to write. Scholars free write for the first week of the unit in their daybook describing moments from their life. This indeed is a free writing exercise for scholars to share their own personal thoughts and ideas. While writing scholars are monitored, but given privacy to express their thoughts without restraints or specific guidelines. In the second week of the unit, scholars will continue the free write exercise in their journal but work diligently to narrow down the specific event that is indeed their memorable moment.

### **Week 1 Introduction to Writing Freely- Day Book (Free Write)**

*Lesson Objective:* To engage scholars in writing their feelings and thoughts daily in a journal or notebook

**I Do** -Teacher will introduce to scholars the Daybooks. Scholars will learn the meaning and uses of the Daybook in English/ Language Arts. To chart feelings and emotions scholars will write in their Daybooks.

**We Do** - Scholars will receive a journal, a composition notebook or writing notebook to start charting thoughts, sketch images and illustrate special moments and events encountered. Scholars will use the opportunity free write about any topic or time period with in their life. The writing experience for the scholars at this point will require the scholars to leave all journals at school and allow positive teacher feedback.

**You Do**- Scholars will begin writing in their Daybook.

**Assessment:** Entries in Daybook (Minimum of 5)

### **Week 2 All About Me – Brainstorming: Web Map**

*Lesson Objective:* Scholars will learn how to identify and analyze the theme within a text.

**I Do** - Teacher will present the scholars individual clips from the films Mister& Pete/ Annie identifying the significant moment and events leading to the defining moment that presents change in the main characters life. Introduce to scholars the importance of understanding the meaning or moral lesson an author wants the reader to know.

**We Do** - Scholars will to take notes in their Interactive Notebook in the format of a list, chart, organizer or paragraph form. The notes will include events in the scholar's life and maybe taken from their Daybook entries.

You Do - Teacher will provide scholars with the Web Map Graphic Organizer (Appendix) to begin recording their personal significant moments.

Assessment: Scholars will complete the Web Map Graphic Organizer (Appendix 5)

### Week 3- My Life in a Poem – A Six-Word Memoir

*Lesson Objective:* Scholars will learn the importance of using words to express the author's style of writing. In this lesson, scholars will learn vocabulary acquisition

I Do: Teacher will share a six-word memoir to scholars. Teacher will discuss with scholars how to create and develop the six-word memoir using specific personal details and vocabulary to describe a specific event.

We Do: Teacher and scholars will read aloud various Six- Word Memoirs and discuss examples aloud with elbow partners. Scholars will work together in pairs to discuss their significant moment and prepare a Six Word Memoir on chart paper.

You Do: Scholars will create their own six-word memoirs and share with peers in class.

Assessment: Six Word Memoir

### Week 4: The Great Impact- Identifying the Significant Moment

*Lesson Objective:* Scholars will read the memoir text, "Not Poor Just Broke" and identify the events within the text that leads to the defining moment for the main character Richard. Scholars will also read during this unit a memoir text, Night by Elie Weisel and identify the significant moments, which led to the time his life changed forever.

I Do: Teacher will present to the scholars the text Not Poor Just Broke. This memoir will take approximately 2-3 days to complete reading. Teacher will share with scholars the importance of identifying why the author writes the story and from what perspective. Teacher will give insight to how the author's purpose shapes the development of the memoir. Night is a class read that will continue to the end of the quarter.

We Do: Teacher and scholars will read aloud the Not Poor Just Broke memoir text and complete the Text Analysis Graphic Organizer: Background Events, Significant Moment, Impact in Life and Reflection.

You Do: Scholar will complete the Text Analysis Chart.

Assessment: 3 Column Text Analysis Chart (Appendix 6)

Week 5/6, Why My Voice Speaks – Author's Purpose/Perspective

*Lesson Objective:* Teacher will provide scholars with the specific reasons an author may choose to write: Inform (Explain), Entertain, Persuade and Describe.

**I Do:** Teacher will explain the importance of an Author's Point of View when writing. The author's purpose and point of view influence the development of the idea for the audience. Scholars will introduce during the memoir text, *Night* by Elie Weisel and identify the significant moments, which led to the time his life changed forever.

**We Do:** Teacher will give background information to scholars describing the book, its influence and impact on the author's life. Teacher will give scholars a Venn/diagram to compare similarities of the various texts read in class at this point.

**You Do:** Scholars will complete the Venn Diagram comparing reasons the authors wrote their memoir texts.

**Assessment:** Scholars will complete Venn Diagram

#### Week 7 My Moment in Time - A Personal Account/ My Story

*Lesson Objective:* Teacher will share with scholars how point of view and perspective helps to tell the story. The different perspectives are social, political, or religious.

**I Do:** Teacher will introduce the author's point of view when writing a memoir and explain the author's perspective that shapes the text development. Teacher will give scholars a planning chart to aid selecting the significant moment in time.

**We Do:** Teacher and scholars will use the planning chart to analyze the significant defining moment in their life. Scholars will review all organizers thus far used in the unit to help define their specific time or event.

**You Do:** Scholars will complete the planning chart and then create a Biographical Timeline.

**Assessment:** Planning Chart /Time Line (Appendix 3 /4)

#### Week 8: A Memorable Moment – Narrative (My Memorable Moment Memoir)

*Lesson Objective:* The scholars will participate in a two-day (60-minute blocks) writing workshop with a focus on narrative writing.

**I Do:** The teacher will introduce to scholars the Writer's Workshop. The Writer's Workshop focus will include the parts of an essay, style of writing, vocabulary acquisition and organization of the essay.

We Do: Teacher and scholars will discuss writing the narrative essay and organizing the specific events in order. Scholars will write their draft and present it for peer review. Teacher will work with peer groups to complete revisions. Peers will turn and talk to each other about their Narrative Drafts.

You Do: Scholars will make edits on drafts and complete their Final Narrative Essay. Scholars will type and publish their Narrative in the Class Notebook of Memoirs.

Task: Draft/ Final Draft, Published Memoir/ Literacy Night

Assessment: Rubric (Appendix 7)

Teacher will host a Literacy Night for Parents/Guardians to come out and celebrate the accomplishments of scholar's formal writing. The Class Notebook of Memoirs will be on display during this event. Scholars will give a 3-minute presentation of their experience in writing and its contribution to their learning environment.



## **Classroom Resources /Materials**

Teacher and Student Copies of Night by Elie Weisel

Every scholar will receive a copy of the Night to read as a class and independently throughout the Unit to gain insight to how a writer tells his story.

Student Copies of Not Poor, Just Broke by Dick Gregory

Every scholar will receive a copy of Not Poor, Just Broke short story to read and discuss in class. Scholars will read aloud with teacher and peers to identify the main character's defining moment within the memoir.

A Class Set of Brown Girl Dreaming by J. Woodson

In my class, Independent Reading is a fundamental component of my class and having a set of memoirs in the class library for scholars to choose is essential.

Video Clips of Mister & Pete Movie (Google Classroom)

The scholars will be able to review video clip snippets inside of Google Classroom and respond to characters significant moment in their Interactive Notebook.

Chart Paper/Markers

This material is used as teacher is giving instruction during lesson to engage scholars independently and as a group

Composition Notebooks

Scholars will write daily journal entries in their composition book.

Notebook Filler Paper

Scholars will write narrative draft and essay on notebook filler paper.

Pencils/Color Pens

Scholars will use pens to write narrative essay and color pens to revise and edit narrative draft.

Chrome Book

The Chrome Book will be used to research, review text and notes in Google classroom.

Class Interactive Notebook

The Interactive Notebook is used for scholars notes, vocabulary and graphic organizers.

Highlighters

Highlighters are used to complete close reads of the texts assigned.

## Reading List for Students/ Teachers

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. (15<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York. Random House Trade 2009

In this text the author describes her growing up as a child and experiencing a terrible trauma that leaves her a mute. As a little girl and her brother are sent to live with their grandmother. In the midst of this Maya is raped and refuses to talk about it.

Gregory, Dick. *Not Poor Just Broke*

In this memoir, the narrator is speaking of his experience as a child. The narrator gives detail account of when he first learned shame. He was a kid that is described as less fortunate but does not acknowledge until he is embarrassed in class.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. New York: Hill and Wang 2008

This story is being told of Elie experience as young child during the time of the Holocaust. The memoir describes the father and son experiences on the train and camps which are actually prison camps upon their separation from the mother and sister.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. New York. Penguin Group 2014

In this book the author gives a detail account of her experience growing up in during South Carolina and New York during the time period of 1960 -70. During this time period life was different for an African American in both states.

## **Appendix 1: Teaching Standards (specific standards)**

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.A

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.C

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.E

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

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.5

Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

## Transition words and phrases

### Words or phrases to help sequence ideas or transition between sentences or paragraphs

- first... second... third...
- in the first place... also... lastly
- after
- afterwards
- as soon as
- at first
- at last
- before
- before long
- finally
- in the meantime
- later
- meanwhile
- next
- soon
- then

### Words or phrases to show location

- above
- across
- around
- behind
- beside
- between
- in back of
- in front of
- inside
- near
- outside
- over
- under

### Words or phrases to show time

- while
- meanwhile
- soon
- then
- after
- second
- today
- later
- next
- tomorrow
- afterward
- as soon as
- before
- now
- next week
- about
- when suddenly
- during
- until
- yesterday
- finally

### Words or phrases to indicate more information

- besides
- furthermore
- in addition
- in fact

### Words or phrases to help conclude a piece of writing

- in conclusion
- finally
- lastly
- to sum up



## Appendix 3

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Planning Chart

Circle or write your purpose for writing in the first column. Answer the questions in the second column.

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose	Audience
<i>Circle one.</i>	<i>Write answers to these questions.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● to tell a real story</li><li>● to tell a made-up story</li><li>● to describe a person, place, or thing</li><li>● to explain how to do something</li><li>● to find something out</li><li>● to give an opinion</li><li>● to ask something</li><li>● other</li></ul>	1. Who will read this? _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	2. What do they already know about my topic? _____ _____ _____
	3. What do I want them to know? _____ _____ _____
	4. What part of my topic would interest them most? _____ _____ _____

## Appendix 4

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Time Line

Write dates for each event in time order from left to right. Add details along the line.

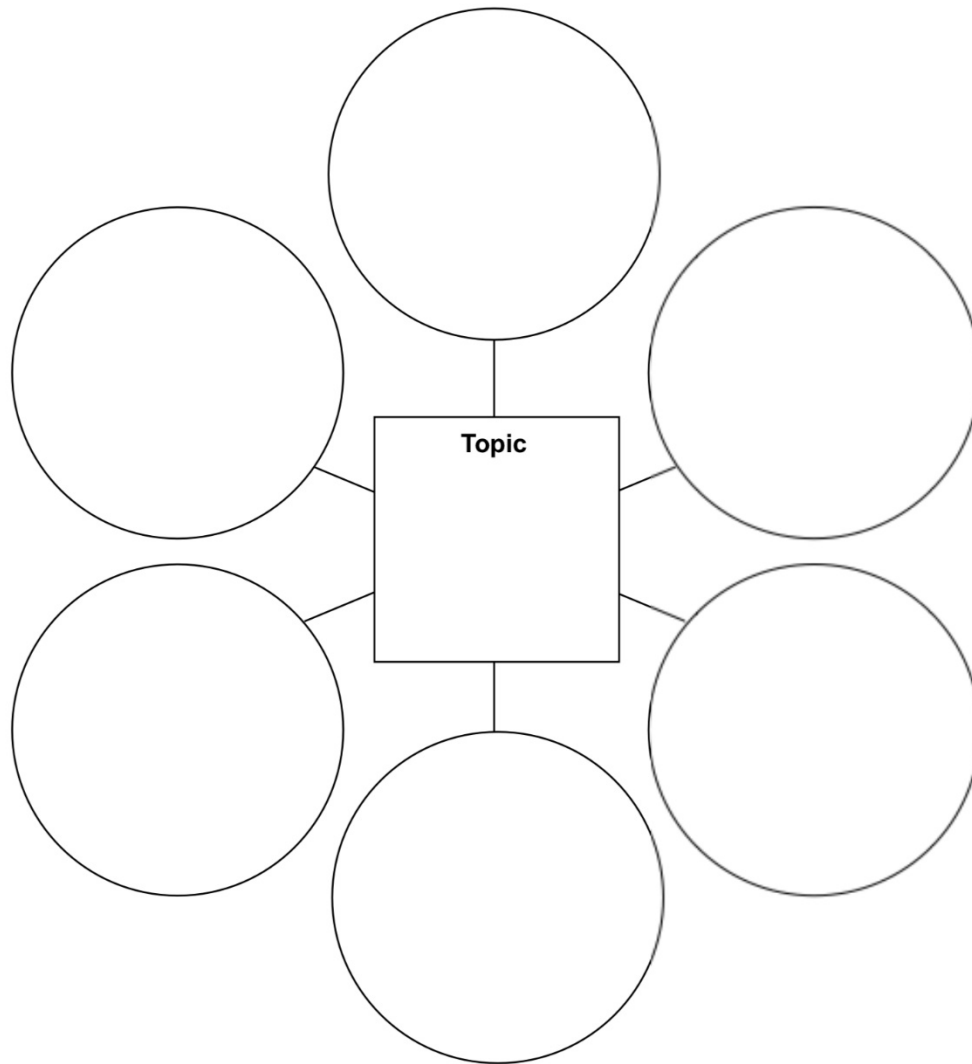


## Appendix 5

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Cluster/Word Web 3

Write details about your topic in the circles.



## Appendix 6

### Unit 2 Performance Task: How does our Identity Change over time?

Map out your life using a timeline or organizer. Identify a defining moment where you notice the course of your life changed directions. Compare your experience with another individual from the anchor texts we have read. What is the impact of this defining moment on the person who you are or who you aspire to be?

Teacher	Teacher/Class	Scholar /Independent Practice
Character/Individual	Character/Individual	Character/Individual
Background/Timeline of Events		
Defining Moment that shaped his or her identity		
Impact on Identity		
Reflections on experience/lessons learned		



## Appendix 7

### A Special Moment in Time- Writing A Narrative

Directions: Scholars will write a personal narrative detailing an account of a specific event or occurrence within their lifetime. Scholars will share a personal account with details that describe a moment of special reflection. The areas of measure will include organization; vocabulary, fluency, English Language Mechanics and Content.

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#### The Narrative Contents:

- Title
- Introduction (A Specific Event)
- Beginning (Setting, Characters, Time, etc.)
- Middle (Events or Conflict)
- End (Closing or Resolution)

#### Materials:

- Personal Timeline
  - Personal Items (pictures or mementos)
  - Notebook Paper
  - Pen/Paper
  - Exemplar
- 

#### Scoring:

##### Organization 25 Points:

- Response shows tightly organized story that includes a structure of beginning , middle , end
- The sequence of events unfolds naturally
- The narrative flows consistently using transitional strategies (And so forth, then, next, etc.)
- The response is clear and neatly written with clarity

##### Vocabulary, Fluency, English Language Mechanics 25 Points:

- Vocabulary is precise and appropriate
- Response demonstrates a thorough understanding of 7<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Mechanics
- Few errors in spelling, usage, punctuation or capitalization
- Demonstrate usage of a variety of simple, complex, and compound sentences
- Response is fluent and cohesive throughout the entire narrative

##### Content: 50 Points

- Narrative includes a specific event in the scholar's life and begins with a great hook
- Response in the narrative includes details and an account of specifics that lead up to the event
- Response is crafted with a skillful reveal and /or ending
- Response is skillfully well-developed single significant event
- Response is comprised of description, dialogue and/or thoughts and feelings throughout the narrative.

**Scholars Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

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