

Memoir Writing

Objective: Read pages 51-53 of *A Look Back in Time*, by Bernard N. Lee, Jr. Use the handout to define and identify the key components of a memoir. Brainstorm your own ideas for a compelling memoir based on your own personal experiences. Use the rubric to score your work.

Applicable Common Core Standards (Fifth Grade ELA)

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.5.3.C

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.E

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4

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

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.

Essential Questions:

1. How can I make my writing more powerful and impact my audience?
2. What am I trying to show about myself through my memoir?
3. What life lesson did I learn and want to share with my audience?
4. How did I change as a result of this experience?

Student Worksheet

Name _____

Memoir- a narrative, written from the perspective of the author, about an important part of their life. A memoir tells a compelling story using truth, theme, voice, and a 1st person point of view narration.

1. **TRUTH.** Since you're relying on memory to tell your story, this can be tricky. You may not remember conversations word-for-word. But readers are expecting your memoir to be truthful, so don't embellish to make it sound more exciting or dramatic.

2. **THEME.** Memoir is different from an autobiography which spans a person's life. A memoir focuses on one theme/time period/or major event in a person's life.

3. **VOICE.** This is the chance to share what is unique about you. The slang and expressions you use in daily life, the sensory images you include in your story, and the rhythms of your sentences are all a part of your author's voice.

4. **Point of View- First Person.** ex: "I held my breath—unable to rip my gaze from the enormous dog's bared teeth." In a memoir, you are the main character (protagonist) as well as the narrator. Everything the reader experiences is coming directly from you.

Mine your Memories. Ask these questions about events you remember:

What is important/significant about a particular set of events?

What do you remember about a certain event? Why?

What did you think when it happened?

What do you think now?

Could I create a compelling story that would interest readers who don't know me?

Start jotting down your own stories. What defining moment in your life could be told as a story? Decide what the theme of the story is. Themes can include loss, moving, changing schools, an unusual experience, birth of a new sibling, or something complete unique to you.

Write the story down.

Things to include for a compelling memoir:

- 1) Your perceptions, including things you saw, smelled, heard, tasted, etc.
- 2) Any dialogue between yourself and others to the best of your memory.
- 3) What about this event makes you remember it still—try to convey the power of the event in your story.
- 4) Make sure you give your story a beginning, middle and an end.

Scoring Rubric for Memoir

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Memorable Moment	Memoir focuses on a single moment that seems significant to the author's life.	Memoir focuses on a single moment that seems kind of significant to the author's life.	Memoir focuses on a single moment that does not seem significant to the author's life.	Author does not seem to be aware of the significance of the moment.
Structure - Events <i>before</i>	Author clearly "shows" attitudes and feelings numerous times through the thoughts, action and dialogue of the characters.	Author's attitudes and feelings before are evident & occur numerous times through the thoughts and actions of the character.	Direct statements indicate the author's feelings and attitudes and/or some events are not necessarily significant.	Memoir includes irrelevant events that cause the reader confusion in trying to determine the <i>before</i> feelings and attitudes.
Structure - Events <i>after</i>	The memoir clearly "shows" how the learning changed the author's life.	Although word choice does not always "show", it is clear to the reader how the learning changed the author's life.	Change is evident; but is "told" to the reader through direct statements.	Memoir includes irrelevant events that cause confusion when noticing the change in the author's life.
Style & Technique	Author consistently "shows" the significance of the events through engaging details, compelling language, and a balance of action, thoughts, and dialogue.	Author sometimes "shows" the significance of the events through details, compelling language, and a balance of action, thoughts, and dialogue.	Author "tells" the significance of the events through direct statements.	No effort is made to reveal the significance of the events to the reader.
Format	Memoir is neatly done and published in an appropriate and attractive format and could be used as a model for others.	Memoir is neatly done and published in an appropriate format.	Format of memoir may or may not be appropriate. Memoir may or may not be neat.	Format of memoir is not appropriate and piece is not published neatly.
Conventions	Memoir is error-free.	Memoir contains minimal mistakes that do not interfere with meaning.	Numerous minor errors often make memoir difficult to read.	Many errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation often interfere with meaning.

Name _____ Score _____