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## Developing Voice Through Narrative Writing

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Developing Voice Through Narrative Writing

Katherine Gaskill

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College  
at Bowling Green State University in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS

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No matter what we write throughout the course of our lives, from journal entries to literary analysis papers on symbolism in the *Scarlet Letter* to research papers on the voyages of Christopher Columbus, “all writing is personal” (Burke 65). All writing is an expression of our thoughts, our ideas, and our very selves displayed on a page for others to read. What we write is inextricably linked to us not just as writers, but as human beings, and yet time after time we are told to remain objective, keep our opinions out of our writing, and never ever, under any circumstances, use the word “I.” In *Western Subjects*, autobiographical writer Patricia Hampl says, “I can remember even in college having my papers with the first-person pronouns circled: ‘No!’” (43). From college students writing research papers to high school students still stuck in the miry depths of writing five-paragraph essays, most writers have probably seen similar red marks on our writing at some point in our lives. What possibly well-intentioned teachers may not have realized as they bled red pen onto the page is that by demanding their students to remain objective, they have often robbed them of the opportunity to develop their own personal voice in writing. Just as teachers have had a role in diminishing student voice, it is the teacher’s duty to take on the role of helping students rediscover this voice and perhaps one of the best ways of doing so is by having students engage in the craft of narrative writing.

Voice is an important aspect of all writing. Without voice, a narrative becomes nothing more than a retelling of chronological events and a research paper becomes no more than a compilation of someone else’s words and thoughts. Though voice is a vital factor, a great deal of student writing lacks necessity [this factor.] This lack is due in part to the way in which students are taught to write. In *Western Subjects*, Patricia Hampl says, “I grew up in a world where you weren't supposed to talk about yourself, and you weren't supposed to think out of your own head if you expected anybody to believe you” (43). Students are told so often to remain objective and

keep their opinions out of their writing that when they need to draw upon voice to make their writing stronger, they don't know how to do so. In *Teaching Students to Write*, Beth Neman suggests that although one of the goals of writing a research paper is to, "add to the world's accumulated scholarship," some students may question this goal and wonder, "how can *their* papers advance scholarship" (325). Students put little stock in their own thoughts and ideas because of the way they have been taught to write and, therefore, voice is virtually impossible to find in their writing.

Narrative writing can be a useful tool in helping students develop voice. It can serve as the stepping stone students need before they begin to explore other types of writing. Students may cringe upon hearing the words, "literary analysis essay," or "research paper," but few would find writing about their own lives to be quite so daunting. It is a subject which requires no further research. Students can simply pull information from their own memories and experiences. The simplicity of the subject matter makes narrative writing an ideal place to start in helping students find a voice in their writing.

Author Bernard Harrison suggests narrative writing as the preferred starting place as well in his book *Learning Through Writing: Stages of Growth in English*. Harrison explains that students come to the writing process with a need to "tell." Before students venture into any other types of writing, they need to be provided with an outlet to express themselves. They have stories that they wish to share. Teachers should be cognizant of this fact and should allow them to share those stories. Allowing students to approach the writing process by telling their own stories first will be beneficial when they begin other types of writing. He says, "the desire to 'tell' is not merely superseded by 'higher' intentions, but is the primary impulse of all later achievement in

learning” (59). Students have a desire to talk about themselves and their own lives and so starting the development of voice in this area of writing seems the most logical choice.

Some scholars doubt the usefulness or appropriateness of teaching narrative writing in the classroom. In *Narrative Writing* author George Hillocks speaks of critics who suggest “that schools focus too much on narrative writing and that, in doing so, they fail children in other areas of writing” (8). Some worry that students will leave high school without the proper training in the types of writing they will use most in college and the workplace beyond the four walls of a classroom. Other scholars, however, argue that without a strong foundation in narrative writing, there can be no success found in these other areas. In *Writing at the Edge: Narrative and Writing Process Theory*, author Jeff Park refers to the work of another author, Turner, when he says, “story- is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend upon it”(46). Students cannot fully engage in the complex thought processes necessary for other types of writing until they have a grasp of narrative writing. Narrative writing, “can become a base for other kinds of writing” (Hillocks 9).

Some argue that narrative writing is not just the basis for other types of writing, but it should be an integral part of all of the writing we do. In *Liberating Scholarly Writing*, Professor Robert Nash makes a case for the inclusion of narrative writing in what is otherwise considered scholarly work. In speaking of his time as a college professor, Nash says that the student work which often stands out to him is the work which has an element of personal narrative. Nash touches on the subject of voice when he says, “the inclusion of the self in research and scholarship is inescapable” but students and other writers “have earned the right to put themselves into their scholarship” (26). Writers cannot avoid letting their own opinions color

their writing. Once students learn to embrace this fact, they will produce writing which is stronger as a result.

But how should we teach narrative writing? In the debate about the importance of this particular branch of writing, Hillocks argues that spending time on narrative writing is not the real issue with which teachers and schools should be concerned. He says, “the problem is that teachers do not spend time teaching the strategies that enable writers to generate the kinds of concrete detail that make writing effective” (9). Hillocks goes on to say that many teachers simply present their students with examples of good writing and expect them to produce similar work with little or no instruction on how to go about producing this work (9). Good writing is not something which simply springs spontaneously from the mind of each and every student. Writing is a skill which must be taught and developed through years of practice. Part of this development should involve teaching students the strategies needed to generate ideas. Students should be taught how to engage in the prewriting process even if they think they don’t need it. If students take the time to think about each aspect of their subject before they begin writing, they can create a much fuller and more meaningful final product.

Beyond encouraging students to think more deeply about the subject they are writing about, teachers should also teach their students to think about the audience to whom they are writing. George Hillocks asserts that “sound instruction in writing narrative should help students be more aware of writing for an audience, a requisite for all kinds of writing” (10). Though students should be taught to develop their own voice in writing, they should also be taught to recognize how this voice should be adapted to meet the expectations of a particular audience. Though student voice should be just as apparent in a research paper as it should be in a narrative, it should conform to the standards of the genre. Students must be taught the importance of

audience so that they may strike the balance between expressing their own thoughts and ideas and maintaining the style necessary for a particular type of writing.

Students should also be taught to think critically as they write. Because writing is, as Beth Neman says, “a material manifestation of the very processes of thought,” students should be encouraged to engage in complex thinking as they write (3). Writing prompts should be designed to cause students engage in reflection and contemplation in order to produce more thoughtful writing. Critical thinking should be an integral part of any writing unit.

The following lesson plans are designed to put the theories and propositions of the preceding research into practice and to help students develop voice in their writing. The lessons were designed to be taught in an eleventh grade classroom and were based upon my own observations of three different eleventh grade classrooms over the course of the past year. The students in these classes produced many different writing samples for me during this time and as I read through them, I noticed a pattern; students had difficulty asserting a position on a particular topic and they had trouble integrating their own thoughts with the thoughts of others. Developing a plan to help them develop voice seemed to be a beneficial avenue to pursue. Consequently, the plans begin with activities constructed to teach students what voice is and to show them what their own narrative voices might look like. The activities that follow then help students practice using this voice.

These plans were designed not only to address the major concern of developing voice in writing, but to address some of the struggles students might face in pursuing this goal. Earlier in the year, the students in these classes were given a writing day to begin writing an essay about a short story we had just finished. As I walked around helping the students, the question I was asked most frequently was, “How do I start?” Students had completed graphic organizers to help

them organize their thoughts, but when they were faced with the dreaded blank page, their minds became just as blank. Even experienced writers have this same struggle. They think, “how do I take all of this information and actually start to make something with it?” To combat this issue, the following unit has students spend a great deal of time in the prewriting stage of the writing process. Students will spend time generating ideas and thinking about the best ways to grab a reader’s attention with an opening line. Students will also spend time generating details; an important step of the writing process according to George Hillocks. In completing one of the handouts accompanying this lesson, students will come up with details related to each of the five senses in order to make their narratives more vivid for readers. By spending more time in the prewriting stage, students will be better prepared to actually write their narratives.

The majority of the following unit is focused on teaching students to develop voice through narrative writing, but is also designed to teach students that the voice they use in writing will need to be altered somewhat to accommodate the requirements of other types of writing. Students will learn about audience and how it can affect the way we write. Several activities in the lesson plans will show students some of the different audiences for whom writers might produce work.

In learning about audience, students will also focus particularly on the fact that a narrative will differ from a research paper even if they are written by the same author. I realized that this might be a point of confusion for students which might need to be addressed. Narrative writing can only serve as a stepping stone which leads to other types of writing if teachers show students how to apply its elements to these other writing forms. The last day of the lesson plans is meant to teach students that an author’s voice can still be evident in a research paper, but one’s writing style should change somewhat when approaching this new type of writing. Students will



look at how different authors can write about the same research topic and produce writing which is very different. Students will then work on putting research into their own words. Students will have been prepared to engage in this activity by engaging in the lessons prior to this final lesson.

Students are also meant to engage in critical thinking during the course of this unit. As they write narratives about their childhoods, students will ponder the implications of perspective on memory. As students begin narrative writing, they may be confronted with the fact that their memory could be faulty. Mary Clearman Blew says, “Everyone who has written memoir is struck by the surprise of having family members and friends remember it differently, and by the unreliability of memory” (42). What this unit is designed to teach students is that they may not have the clearest memory of an event, but it is their memory, and it is their story. In realizing this, students will be able to grasp the concept of developing their own unique narrative voice.

As with any unit, the success of these lesson plans depends largely on the cooperation of the students in the classroom in which the plans are meant to be implemented. Several of the activities included in the lesson plans require students to share their work with peers. Because of the personal nature of writing, some students may find it difficult to share their work. For this reason, it is important to develop a writing community prior to the implementation of these plans. Students need to feel comfortable in their learning environment before they feel comfortable sharing their work. It is important for teachers to create a safe learning environment in which students will not be judged for the mistakes they make in their writing.

Teachers can work to create a safe learning environment by setting up clear guidelines for students concerning small group collaboration and participation at the beginning of the year and encouraging students to engage in these small groups throughout the year so they become more accustomed to them. For example, one might set up the writing groups with which students will

engage throughout the course of the year early on so students may develop trusting relationships with these peers and, therefore, be more willing to share writing samples with them. In my own observations, I have seen this method applied in a creative writing class and found it to work well. Students worked in “writing families” in which their peers helped them improve their writing. Students traded writing samples and reviewed them as objective readers. Students seemed to find little difficulty in sharing their work in these “families” because they had become comfortable with one another and with the idea of working as a team to improve their writing abilities.

Just as one might expect students to adapt the voice they use in their writing to accommodate an audience, so we as teachers need to be willing to adapt our lesson plans to accommodate our own audience, the students within our classrooms. The following lesson plans are simply a basis for teaching students to develop voice through narrative writing and may be adjusted according to the needs of a particular group of students.

## Lesson Plans

### Day 1

#### Standards:

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

#### Objectives:

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to explain the concept of voice and its significance in the writing process.
- By the end of this lesson, students will be able to differentiate between the voices of different authors and explain what distinguishes one author from another.

#### Procedures:

##### Readiness [10 min.]

- As students walk into the room, they will be asked to take out a sheet of paper and number from one to five.
- Students will be asked to listen to a series of audio clips featuring the voices of different actors, actresses, and politicians. As students listen to these clips, they should try to guess who the speaker is.
- Students will listen to the following clips:
- Clip of Morgan Freeman from *March of the Penguins*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCM0NEzQOvk>
- Clip of Arnold Schwarzenegger from *Kindergarten Cop*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ucfgdFrlho>
- Clip of Robin Williams from *Aladdin* from 0:10 to 0:28  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLQLFJrV\\_o4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLQLFJrV_o4)
- Clip of Oprah from “Oprah’s Ultimate Car Giveaway”  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CAAscBCdaQg>
- After listening to all clips, students should reveal their guesses for each clip.

Transition Statement: Just as we can hear the difference between different speakers, we can also see the differences in the writing of different authors. Each author has his or her own unique voice.

##### Central Learning Task [30 min.]

1. Ask students to brainstorm. What makes one author’s writing different from another author’s writing? What might make my writing different from yours?
2. Students should list as many factors as they can which might make one author’s writing different from another’s.

3. When students have finished listing factors, they should come up to the Smart Board and write down items from their lists.
4. Explain that students will read two different stories today. As students read, they should try to determine what makes each story different and what makes each author's voice different.
5. Pass out copies of the stories, "Go Carolina" by David Sedaris.
6. Ask students the following comprehension questions:
  - What scenario does the author start out with?
  - How is this scenario relevant to his own situation in the story?
  - Why does the "agent" as him whether he likes State or Carolina?
  - What issue is the narrator dealing with?
  - How does he eventually cope with this issue?
7. Pass out copies of "The School Days of an Indian Girl" by Gertrude Bonnin or Zitkala-Sa
8. Ask students the following questions:
  - Where is the narrator going and who is the narrator going with?
  - What does the narrator mean when she says, "eating by formula"?
  - What does the cutting of one's hair mean in her culture?
  - What does the narrator say happens after her hair is cut?
  - How do the writing styles of these two authors differ?
  - How do you think their experiences have differed?
  - To whom do you think they are writing?

### **Closure [10 min.]**

1. Pass out a Think-Pair-Share handout to each student.
2. Students should take a minute to think about the following quote:  
"All great artists draw from the same resource: the human heart, which tells us that we are all more alike than we are unlike." -Maya Angelou
3. Students should then consider the question, are we all "more alike than we are unlike?"
4. After writing a few thoughts in the Think portion of their handouts, students should pair up with another student. Students should fill in the Pair portion of their handouts after speaking with one another and sharing their opinions.
5. Volunteers will be asked to share their opinions with the class.

**Homework:** In one paragraph, respond to the following prompt: How would you describe your own background? What are some experiences which have shaped you and which might have an effect on your writing?

## **Day 2**

### **Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3**

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### **Objectives**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to describe the effect an author’s life experiences might have on his or her writing style.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to define the concept of audience and describe the effect it may have on an author’s writing style.

**Procedures:**

**Readiness [10 min.]**

- Students should take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.
- Explain that today, we will begin with a writing activity. Students will be given the first line of a story and asked to continue the story. The line will be: “I will never make that mistake again.”
- Students should write for two minutes. After two minutes, students will be asked to stop writing and pass their papers to someone sitting next to them.
- Students should continue writing the story of the person whose paper was passed to them. Students should write for two minutes.
- Volunteers will be asked to read their stories. As they read, the other students in the class should try to guess when the story shifts from one person’s writing to the next.
- Students should snap when they think the story shifts.

Transition Statement: Today we will consider two different factors which might affect our writing and therefore be an integral part of our individual voices.

**Central Learning Task [35 min.]**

1. Students will be asked to open their notebooks and respond to three different prompts.
2. For the first prompt, students will be asked to write from the perspective of a five-year-old telling a friend about a party. Students should be given about five minutes to write.
3. For the second prompt, students will be asked to write from the perspective of a teenager telling a friend about a party. Students should be given about five minutes to write.
4. For the third prompt, students will be asked to write from the perspective of a 95-year-old telling a friend about a party. Students should be given about five minutes to write.
5. Volunteers will be asked to read their best response. The rest of the class will guess which perspective the student wrote from.
6. After several volunteers have had an opportunity to read, ask students the following questions:
  - How did you make each writing response sound different? What were some of the strategies you used?
  - Why might age be a factor in the development of a writer’s voice?
  - How might a writer’s experiences affect how he or she writes?
7. Students will be asked to turn back to a blank page in their notebooks and respond to two different writing prompts.
8. For the first writing prompt, students should write a short paragraph as if they were describing what they do during a typical day of school to a college admissions officer at a school they wish to attend.
9. For the second writing prompt, students should write a short paragraph describing a day at school to their parents or guardians.

10. For the third writing prompt, students should write a short paragraph describing a day at school to a friend who was absent.

- How did each prompt differ?
- Did you make different stylistic and word choices in each paragraph?
- What is “audience”?
- How do think audience might affect how we write?

### **Closure [5 min.]**

1. Pass out exit tickets.
2. Students should think back to the writing samples read in class during the previous day’s lesson.
3. On the exit tickets, students should respond to the following prompt:
  - Describe the audience to whom each of the author’s from the previous lesson may have been writing. How do you think each of their audiences may have differed?

## **Day 3**

### **Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.4.c**

Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.

### **Objectives**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to explain the effect of word choice on narrative voice by reading excerpts of stories on similar subjects.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to produce an example of their own narrative voice by creating a booklet of words they use frequently.

### **Procedures**

#### **Readiness [5 min.]**

- Students should complete the Entrance Activity worksheet as they walk in the classroom. This worksheet will ask them to read an excerpt from Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* and an excerpt from “Funny Hiking Stories.”
- Ask students: What can we learn about Thoreau from the first excerpt? What can we learn about the author from the second excerpt?
- Students should circle any words which lead them to believe certain things about Thoreau and the other author.
- Students should share the words they circled

Transition Statement: Today we will focus on developing voice through word choice.

**Central Learning Task [35 min.]**

1. Students should take three or four blank pieces of paper, stack them together, fold them in half, and staple along the fold in order to create a booklet.
2. Explain to students that they will fill the booklets with lists of words.
3. Students should put a title for the booklet on the front cover. Students should then open the booklet and write “Table of Contents” on the right-hand page.
4. Students should first list their favorite words on the first page. Any (school appropriate) words which come to mind should be listed.
5. Students should then turn to a classmate and ask what words they hear them use most frequently. As students spend a majority of the day together, they should have an idea of what their classmates say most often. Students should list these words on the second page.
6. Students should take out their cellular devices and look through text messages in order to determine which words they use most frequently in these messages. Students should list these words on the third page
7. Students should take out their laptops and look at their Facebook posts, comments, and messages. Students should list the words used most frequently on this site on the fourth page.
8. Students should look through assignments such as essays and papers they have completed for English and for other classes. Students should list the words they have used most frequently on these assignments on the fifth page.

**Closure [10 min]**

1. Students should look back through the lists they have generated.
2. Ask students: What do you think people could learn about you from your own word choices? Do you think others would be able to determine your age? Gender? Level of education?
3. Students should write three words which might be used to describe them after looking through their word lists.
4. Students should think back to the concept of audience which was discussed during the previous day’s lesson. Students should circle words included in their word lists which they would not use if they were writing to a college admissions officer.
5. Students should place a star next to the words they would use in a narrative.
6. Ask students: Do these words differ in any way?

**Day 4**

**Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2**

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.a**

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

### Objectives

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to identify the purpose of their narrative.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to produce a written example of their narrative voice by verbally telling a partner a story and having them transcribe said story.

### Procedures

#### Readiness [10 min.]

- Show the students the following clip in which Bill Cosby tells a childhood story about revenge:
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4i5195VBisQ>
- If I asked you to identify the point of this story, what would you say it was? What was the author trying to tell us about his or her childhood? What is the message you get?

Transition statement: Today you will identify the message of your own narratives.

#### Central Task [35 min.]

1. Students should begin brainstorming a list of childhood experiences.
2. Pass out the They Were the Best of Times, They Were the Worst of Times handout.
3. Students should list their best childhood memories.
4. Students should list the most frightening experiences they had as a child.
5. Students should list family vacations they took as a child.
6. Students should list times they got into trouble as a child.
7. Students should list times when they learned an important lesson as a child.
8. Students should take a few minutes to look over these lists and choose one which they think will serve as the best story.
9. Students should take out laptops or a sheet of paper and find a partner.
10. Students should take turns briefly telling their partners their stories.
11. As one person tells the story, the other person should try to write or type the story in the author's words to give students a written example of what their voice looks like.
12. After hearing a student's story, the student's partner should write a sentence describing what they think the main idea, message, or point of the story is.

#### Closure [5 min.]

1. Pass out exit tickets.
2. They should consider the question: Why is this story important to me? What is the message of this story?
3. On the exit tickets, students should write what the "point" of their story is.

### Day 5

#### Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3



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

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D**

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

**Objectives:**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to generate a compilation of vivid sensory details which can be used in their narratives.

**Procedures**

**Readiness [10 min.]**

- Students should take out their laptops.
- Students should read the following article on the relation between smell and memory: <http://health.howstuffworks.com/mental-health/human-nature/perception/smell3.htm>
- After students have read the article, they should list five smells they associate with childhood.
- Volunteers should share their lists.

**Central Learning Task [37 min.]**

1. Pass out Using Good Sense handout.
2. Students should think about the childhood memory they have chosen to write about and use this memory to fill out the Using Good Sense handout.
3. Students should first think about what they saw. Students should close their eyes and consider the following questions: What did you see? Who did you see? What are some of the images you can recall? When you think back to this memory, do any colors stand out to you? What are some good descriptive words you could use to describe what you saw?
4. Students should fill in the box for sight on the handout with any images which developed in their minds.
5. Students should stop, put down their writing utensils, and think about what they might have smelled in this childhood memory. Students should close their eyes and consider the following questions: What was something in this memory which might have had a particular odor? Was it a strong odor? What are some good descriptive words you could use to describe anything you smelled? Could you use metaphors or similes to describe the smells? How do these smells make you feel?
6. Students should fill in the box for smell on their handouts.
7. Students should stop, put down their writing utensils, and think about what they might have tasted in this memory. Students should close their eyes and consider the following questions: Did you eat anything? What are some tastes you can remember? Can you remember if something tasted good or bad? What are some good descriptive words you could use to describe taste?
8. Students should fill in the box for taste on their handouts.
9. Students should stop, put down their writing utensils, and think about what they might have heard in this memory. Students should close their eyes and consider the following questions: What were some sounds you might have heard? What does this memory sound like? What are some good descriptive words you could use to describe the sound?

10. Students should fill in the box for hearing on the handout.
11. Students should stop, put down their writing utensils, and think about what they may have felt in this memory. Students should consider the following questions: What time of year was it? Was it hot or cold? What textures could you feel?

### Closure [3 min.]

1. Pass out exit tickets.
2. Students should write one to two sentences explaining which sense they feel will be most important in their own narratives.
3. Collect exit tickets.

## Day 6

### Standards

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

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

### Objectives

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to develop a compelling introductory statement for their narratives after studying examples of the first lines of novels.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to compose a rough draft of a narrative using the prewriting activities developed in previous lessons.

### Procedures:

#### Readiness [10 min.]

- Show students the following first lines of novels:
  - “In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.” —F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
  - “Take my camel, dear," said my Aunt Dot, as she climbed down from this animal on her return from High Mass.” —Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956)
  - “If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.” —J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)
- Explain that starting a piece of writing can be the most difficult part, but these examples can help us.
  - If students choose to start their narratives in a way similar to the first example, they can begin with a statement which will easily lead into the main idea of the story.

- If they choose to start in a way similar to the second example, they can begin with dialogue.
- If they start in a way similar to the third example, they can begin by telling their audience what they will or will not talk about.
- After reading these lines, volunteers should explain which lines they like best and why.

### Central Learning Task [37 min.]

1. Students should take out a sheet of paper and spend a few minutes brainstorming ways to begin their stories which will grab their readers' attention. They may look back at the brainstorming they have done thus far on the Using Good Sense handout or the narratives they created by telling their stories to a partner.
2. Students should set their beginning lines aside for a moment and take out another sheet of paper.
3. Students should freewrite on this sheet of paper for five minutes. Students should not pick up their pens and pencils during these five minutes. They should write continuously. If they get stuck on one word and cannot think of another word, they should keep writing this word until something else comes to them.
4. Students should stop and listen as the teacher reads the following excerpt from an article about the benefits of writing with our non-dominant hand:
  - "Because brain mapping shows that creativity is housed in the right hemisphere of our brains, experts say we can stimulate this right brain through working with our "wrong" hand. This also works for lefties, as studies indicate that one hemisphere is active when we use our dominant hand, but both hemispheres are activated when we use our non-dominant hand.  
In this way, we can use the combination of our two hands to create new connections between our ears. "By its design, our right mind is spontaneous, carefree and imaginative. It allows our creative juices to flow free without inhibition," according to Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D., a neuroanatomist with the Indiana University School of Medicine. "If creativity is located in your non-dominant hemisphere, then using your non-dominant hand may stimulate those cells," she says."
5. Students should take five minutes to try to write with their non-dominant hands.
6. Students should look back through all of the pre-writing they have done up to this point, including their word lists, the narratives created with partners, the freewriting, and the non-dominant handwriting activity.
7. Students should begin working on a rough draft of their narratives.

### Closure [3 min.]

1. On an exit ticket, students should write down the line with which they chose to begin their narratives.
2. Collect these exit tickets.

**Homework:** Students should complete a rough draft of their narratives and bring in two printed copies to the next class period.

### Day 7

**Standards:****CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3**

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

**Objectives**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to evaluate a narrative based on criteria they have developed concerning what makes a good narrative.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to provide appropriate feedback to peers by commenting on and correcting rough drafts of a narrative essay.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to effectively communicate with peers in a small group setting through participation in a peer editing writing workshop.

**Procedures:****Readiness [5 min.]**

- As students walk in the room, they should begin working on the entrance activity posted on the Smart Board which will be as follows: List the five most important qualities you would look for in a good narrative.
- Volunteers should share the qualities they came up with.

**Central Learning Task [30 min.]**

1. Ask students:
  - What is peer editing?
  - What kind of comments should you make on a piece of writing as a peer editor?
2. Go over peer editing worksheet with students. As they work through each other's drafts, they should complete the following steps:
3. Students should read the narrative through without making any comments.
4. Students should read through the narrative again and make positive comments, pointing out things which the author did well.
5. Students should highlight any portions of the narrative which do not make sense or are difficult to understand. Next to it, jot a little note. Why is it hard to understand? Is it the wording? Does a particular event need more explanation?
6. Students should place a star next to any parts of the narrative which could use more descriptive details.
7. Students should place a 'v' next to portions of the narrative in which they can see the author's voice the most.
8. Students should place an 'mv' for more voice next to parts of the narrative which could use more of the author's voice. What could they do to make it sound more personal and to make it sound more like them? How can they bring out their own voice more? Could they add more dialogue?
9. Students should make note of any obvious grammatical mistakes.

10. Write down three questions you have for the author.
11. Students should take out their rough drafts and find a partner.
12. Students should take turns reading their narratives aloud to one another. Students should fix any grammatical mistakes they find in their own writing as they read.
13. Students should trade narratives and follow the steps listed on their peer editing sheets.

**Closure [15 min.]**

Students should hand back rough drafts to their authors and discuss the comments made on each draft.

**Homework:** Go home and read your narrative to a friend or family member and then answer the following questions:

- Does your friend or family remember the event the same way as you?
- Is it possible that your memories have been shaped by their memories in any way?
- Has your friend or family member had an experience similar to your own?

**Day 8****Standards****CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3**

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

**Objectives**

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to apply an author's thoughts on memory to their own writing by editing their work and making the revisions which they deem to be necessary to their narratives.

**Procedures****Readiness [5 min.]**

- As students walk in the room, they should begin working on the entrance activity posted on the Smart Board which will be as follows:  
Read the following quote and write two to three sentences explaining what you think it means:  
"N. Scott Momaday is right, and this is a quote that I've read many times while teaching his autobiography *The Names*. I'm paraphrasing here, but he said something to the effect that even though this is not in some places historically true, it is nevertheless the way I remember it, and if it were any different, I'd be a different person"
- Volunteers should share their responses
- Ask students: How can our personalities be shaped not just by our experiences, but by the way in which we remember these experiences?

Transition statement: Keep this quote in mind as we discuss perspective during today's class.

**Central Learning Task [40 min.]**

1. Ask students:

- Can two people remember the same event differently? How?
  - Why might two people remember the same event differently?
2. Pass out copies of the novel *Flipped* by Wendelin Van Draanen.
  3. A volunteer should read the excerpt written from the perspective of Bryce and a female volunteer should read the excerpt written from the perspective of Juli.
  4. Ask students the following questions:
    - How does Bryce's memory of his first meet with Juli differ from Juli's memory? How do these two characters view their first encounter differently?
    - How has this first encounter shaped Bryce as a person?
    - How has this first encounter shaped Juli as a person?
  5. Discuss students' homework from the previous day's lesson
  6. Ask students the following questions:
    - Did your memory differ from your friend or family member's memory?
    - Do you think you would be a different person if you remembered this particular event differently?
    - Are there any other moments in your life which you think might have made you a different person if you remembered them differently?
  7. Students should think back to the quote they wrote about for the entrance activity and should consider how it relates to the drafts of their narratives.
  8. Students should turn to a partner and discuss the relevance of the quote.
  9. Volunteers should share what they discussed with their partners.
  10. Explain to students that while people may view the world in different ways and relate stories in different ways, ultimately, it is their voices which matter the most in their own writing.

### **Closure [5 min.]**

1. Students should take out the rough drafts which were edited by their peers.
2. Students should take the last few minutes of class to begin making choices as to which corrections they will keep, and which to ignore. Students should keep in mind the idea that in their narratives, their voice should be dominant; not anyone else's.

Homework: Turn your rough draft into a final draft. If you wish to read it tomorrow, practice reading it aloud.

## **Day 9**

### **Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

### **Objectives**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to orally present a narrative about their own childhood experiences to an audience of their peers.

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to provide appropriate positive feedback to a peer after listening to readings of narratives.

### **Procedures**

#### **Readiness [10 min.]**

- Listen to the following reading of “Go Carolina” by David Sedaris.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_OqdlFjlbq](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_OqdlFjlbq)
- Ask students the following questions:
  - What makes this a good reading?
  - How is this relevant to your own reading?
- Explain to students that the author is the one who can read his or her work the best.

#### **Central Learning Task [30 min.]**

1. Students should prepare to read aloud and listen to others read their stories.
2. Students should take out a sheet of paper and list five qualities of a good audience member.
3. Volunteers should share the qualities they were able to come up with.
4. Ask students which of them would like to read their narratives aloud.
5. Each of these students should write his or her name on a slip of paper and place it into a Ziploc bag.
6. One student should choose names from the bag in order to decide who will read first, second, third, etc.
7. Write the order of students on the board.
8. Students should take out another sheet of paper. They should tear this sheet of paper into as many slips as there are students reading. As each of their classmates reads, they should write at least one positive comment on the slip of paper.
9. Students should read their narratives aloud.
10. Collect the slips of paper and distribute them to the students who read their narratives.

#### **Closure [10 min.]**

1. Students should take out one final piece of paper.
2. Students should pick one of the stories read by their peers during the class period.
3. Students should take five minutes to retell this story in one paragraph.
4. Volunteers should read their paragraphs aloud.

### **Day 10**

#### **Standards**

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6**

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C**

Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

**Objectives**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of a writer's style in conveying a certain set of ideas by comparing two different articles.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to describe the importance of voice in scholarly writing.

**Procedures****Readiness [5 min.]**

- Students should take out a sheet of paper and number it from one to four.
- Students should listen to the following four questions and write agree or disagree next to the corresponding number on their papers.
  - All scholarly writers write the same way.
  - A writer should never try to include his or her own voice in scholarly writing.
  - One should never use the word “I” in a research paper.
  - Research papers and narratives share no similarities.
- Read each statement and ask students to raise their hands for agree or disagree.
- Volunteers should explain their answers.

**Central Learning Task [35 min.]**

1. Ask students the following questions:
  - How might your writing for a research paper differ from you writing for a narrative?
  - How can an author include his or her voice in a research paper?
2. Students should take out their laptops and research a topic of their choosing on EBSCO Academic Search Complete. Students should find two articles on the topic and read the first paragraph of each.
3. Students should take out a sheet of paper and answer the following questions:
  - How are these two articles similar?
  - How are they different?
  - At what points can you see each author’s unique voice in the articles?
4. Students should choose one of the paragraphs they found and paraphrase it, using only their own words.

**Closure**

1. Students should attempt to write a paragraph which integrates the following three quotes with their own words.
  - “The domestic dog is a subspecies of the grey wolf.”
  - “The dog was the first domesticated animal and has been the most widely kept working, hunting, and pet animal in human history.”
  - “The oldest remains of a domesticated dog in the Americas were found in Texas and have been dated to about 9,400 years ago.”
2. Volunteers should share their paragraphs.

Quotes from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog>



Name:

Date:

Period:

“All great artists draw from the same resource: the human heart, which tells us that we are all more alike than we are unlike.” -Maya Angelou

Are we all more alike than unlike?

<b>Think</b> What I Thought	<b>Pair</b> What My Partner Thought	<b>Share</b> What We Will Share

Name:

Date:

Period:



## Entrance Activity

Read the following excerpts and circle words which you believe reveal something about the author.

### **Excerpt from *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau**

“This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me. The bullfrogs trump to usher in the night, and the note of the whip-poor-will is borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled. These small waves raised by the evening wind are as remote from storm as the smooth reflecting surface. Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes. The repose is never complete. The wildest animals do not repose, but seek their prey now; the fox, and skunk, and rabbit, now roam the fields and woods without fear. They are Nature's watchmen — links which connect the days of animated life.”

### **Excerpt from Mount Washington Observatory “Funny Hiking Stories”**

While ascending the Huntington Ravine trail last year, my wife and I came to one of the crossings of the Cutler River. It was flowing pretty good and we were both carrying pretty heavy packs, since we had planned to descent the Great Gulf trail and camp somewhere north of Spaulding Lake. My wife was a little nervous about the crossing and asked if I could stay close to steady her if she started to slip on the rocks. On either the first or second step I took, my foot started to slip off one of the nearly submerged rocks. Faced with either stepping directly into a foot and a half deep water or just leaping to the next rock and hoping for the best, I chose the later (I guess I'm an eternal optimist). I made that rock, but my momentum wouldn't allow me to stop, so I leap again, and again, and again. Within 2 seconds flat, I landed on the other side of the river, upright and completely dry! I turn around to to see my wife just staring at me, mouth wide open. After we finish laughing, I left my pack and crossed back over to help her across. I still have no idea how I made it across, since I've been known to trip on totally flat pavement!

Name:

Date:

Period:

*They Were the Best of Times, They Were the Worst of Times*



<i>Best Childhood Memories</i>	<i>Most Frightening Childhood Experiences</i>
<i>Family Vacations</i>	<i>Times You Got Into Trouble</i>
<i>Times You Learned and Important Lesson</i>	<i>Other</i>

Name:

Date:

Period:

## Using Good Sense

Sight

Smell

Sound

Taste

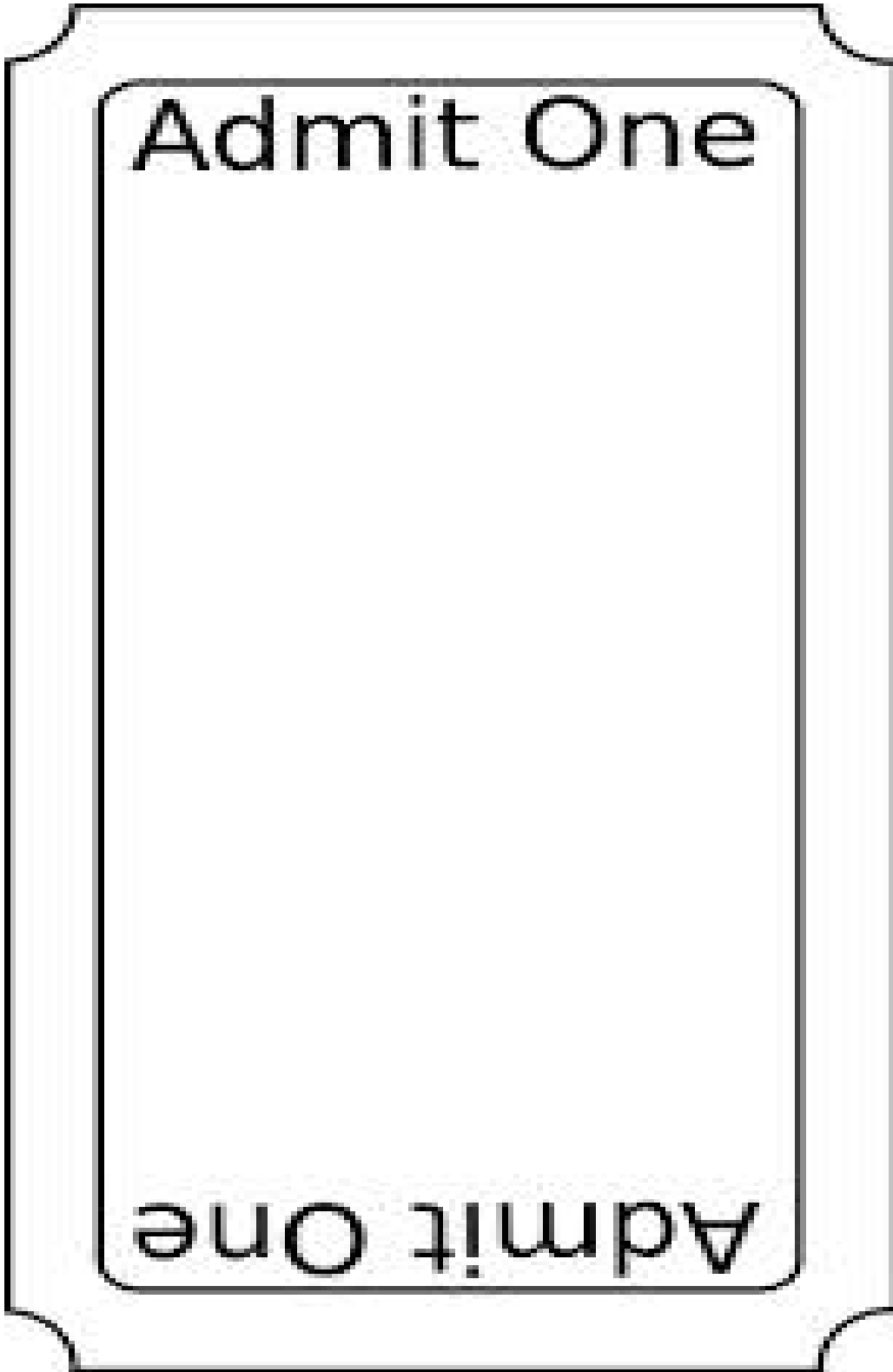
Touch

Name:

Date:

Period:

# Exit Ticket



Name:

Date:

Period:

Partner's Name:

## Peer Editing Worksheet

Read through the narrative without making any comments or revisions.

Read the narrative again and complete the following steps:

Make at least three positive comments in which you point out the things your peer did well in the margins of the narrative.

**Highlight** any sections of the narrative which do not make sense. In the margins, jot brief notes which explain why these sections don't make sense. Think about the following questions: Why doesn't it make sense? Is it the wording? Does something require more explanation?

★ Place a star next to any parts of the narrative which could use more descriptive detail. How could the author create a more vivid picture?

Place a **'v'** next to sections in which you can really hear the author's voice.

Place an **'mv'** next to parts of the narrative in which you would like to see more of the author's voice. Consider the following questions: What could they do to make it sound more personal? How can they bring out their own voice more? Could they add more dialogue?

Make note of any obvious grammatical mistakes, i.e. misspelled words, punctuation, and capitalization mistakes.

Questions for the author:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Story Writing : Childhood Narrative

Teacher Name: **Ms. Gaskill**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Writing Process</b>	Student devotes a lot of time and effort to the writing process (prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing). Works hard to make the story wonderful.	Student devotes sufficient time and effort to the writing process (prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing). Works and gets the job done.	Student devotes some time and effort to the writing process but was not very thorough. Does enough to get by.	Student devotes little time and effort to the writing process. Doesn't seem to care.
<b>Introduction</b>	First paragraph has a "grabber" or catchy beginning.	First paragraph has a weak "grabber".	A catchy beginning was attempted but was confusing rather than catchy.	No attempt was made to catch the reader's attention in the first paragraph.
<b>Focus on Assigned Topic</b>	The entire story is related to the assigned topic and allows the reader to understand much more about the topic.	Most of the story is related to the assigned topic. The story wanders off at one point, but the reader can still learn something about the topic.	Some of the story is related to the assigned topic, but a reader does not learn much about the topic.	No attempt has been made to relate the story to the assigned topic.
<b>Organization</b>	The story is very well organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.	The story is pretty well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used.	The story is a little hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear.	Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged.
<b>Creativity</b>	The story contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has really used his imagination.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has used his imagination.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they distract from the story. The author has tried to use his imagination.	There is little evidence of creativity in the story. The author does not seem to have used much imagination.
<b>Voice</b>	The author's voice is clear and apparent throughout the narrative.	The author's voice is clear and apparent throughout most of the narrative.	The author's voice is apparent in some sections of the narrative.	The narrative is lacking in voice.

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