INTEGRATED ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS UNIT

TEACHER GUIDE

EVERYONE HAS A STORY

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

DIGITAL MEDIA ARTS

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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Unit Overview

Everyone has a unique set of experiences and a unique way of looking at life. By communicating these experiences and perspectives through personal stories, we allow others to step inside our thoughts and to know the world, if only for a moment, through our eyes and senses. In this unit, students learn to write about themselves by first analyzing audio stories and excerpts from published memoirs and then developing their own short memoirs about an incident they have never forgotten. In a series of investigations, students explore such questions as, What is an anecdote? What are the characteristics of a memoir? How do writers craft interesting stories from their lives? How can I make a personal story compelling for other people?

Students examine how writers apply literary techniques, such as narrative arc, point of view, characterization, and figurative and sensory language, to narrate true stories that enlighten, amuse, and emotionally move their readers.

Unit Length

15 50-minute sessions

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Unit Project Description

Students write short memoirs based on significant or dramatic incidents or moments from their lives. They apply what they have learned about literary elements, such as narrative arc, point of view, characterization, and figurative and sensory language, to make their personal stories engaging to an audience. They critique their own work, revise their drafts, and read their stories aloud to partners to receive final feedback on the memoirs themselves and their use of storytelling techniques.

In the process of developing their memoirs, students do the following:

- Analyze recorded autobiographical stories and memoirs written by published writers
- Explore the sources of autobiographical anecdotes
- Apply the conventions of storytelling to incidents from their lives

Assessment

Unit activities can serve as formative assessment tools. Use student work to gather information about student progress and to identify concepts or skills to reinforce within your instructional practice. The following activities are particularly useful for formative assessment:

- Analysis of narrative arc and other storytelling features for several memoir excerpts (Activity 1B.1, Handout 3)
- Three developed memoir ideas (Activity 2A.2, Handout 5)
- First draft of a memoir (Activity 2B.2)

The project-based nature of the unit allows students to demonstrate their learning through authentic and relevant applications. For this unit, the summative assessment consists of the finished memoir.

The unit's Assessment Checklist provides criteria that can be used to gain an understanding of student learning, and also suggests a weight for each part of the assessment. If you wish to use a rubric, work with teachers in your same grade level or subject area to develop a tool that is consistent with your school's assessment system.

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Framing Questions

- How do writers craft interesting stories from their lives?
- What are the characteristics of a memoir?
- How can I make a personal story compelling for other people?

Understandings

- A memoir usually recounts just one aspect of an author's life, often a life-changing event, the fulfillment of a dream, a physical or emotional struggle, or insight into a special person, place, or time.
- Writers use literary techniques, such as narrative arc, point of view, characterization, and figurative and sensory language, to transform personal anecdotes into interesting stories.
- Autobiographical stories can be engaging because they are funny, suspenseful, or poignant; because they present an interesting topic; or because they represent a viewpoint the reader can identify with.

Where the Unit Fits In

Everyone Has a Story is designed to be taught when students are reading works of autobiography or memoir and learning how to write personal narratives. By developing memoirs for reading aloud and/or recording, students have the opportunity to focus on their audience. They also consider how their own writing fits into the autobiographical tradition of literary nonfiction.

Integration with Foundation Courses

This unit integrates English language arts content and career and technical education (CTE) knowledge and skills. It can be taught before, at the same time as, or after the related units in *Foundations in Media and Digital Design* or *Foundations in Visual Arts*.

Foundations in Media and Digital Design: Audio and Video, Unit 1: Using Sound to Tell Stories. Students create an audio story to air on a radio show or podcast. For the unit project, students select a story that they would like to tell, and then develop the story through the pre-production, production, and post-production stages, including recording sounds, conducting interviews, editing, and mixing. Discuss with the *Foundations in Media and Digital Design* course teacher how students can use their memoirs as the basis for their audio stories, to which they may add musical soundtracks and sound effects.

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Foundations in Visual Arts, Unit 3: Community Storytelling. Students research material for a movie based on the story of a local community member or group. *Everyone Has a Story* connects to two framing questions for Unit 3: *How do communities keep stories alive? What are the stories that you want to tell?* Discuss with the *Foundations in Visual Arts* course teacher how students may use their memoirs as the basis for their projects.

Multi-Disciplinary Teams

Use the following integrated units and integration suggestions for a school- or pathway-wide multi-disciplinary project.

Podcasting the Past (U.S. History). Students conduct independent research to uncover the history of their communities. They create podcasts for walking tours, with interviews and narration to explain the historical significance of each stop on the way. Work with the history teacher to allow students to develop narratives that relate to their interest in or connection to the history of their community.

The Path to World War II (World History). Students conceive of a film sequence that tells the story of Europe's path to World War II. They learn about the conditions and events leading to the war, watch clips from historical films, and explore the impact of film on our understanding of history. Work with the history teacher to select memoirs from the period to read as examples, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* or *Maus*. Students can also write a short memoir as if they were a person living in the period leading up to World War II.

Acoustics: The Science of Sound (Physics). Students use sound editing software to manipulate sound waves, and apply what they have learned to understanding some of the challenges of audio production. Physics classes can learn about the science behind the sound editing they do in Foundations classes.

Functions and Sound (Algebra 2, Trigonometry, Pre-Calculus). Students investigate and compare functions and the equations and graphs that represent them, with a focus on the trigonometric functions that model sound. Algebra 2 students can study how variables and constants affect the shapes of the graphs they produce to represent different recorded sounds.

Student Prerequisites

Students should have some familiarity with basic elements of storytelling, including use of plot, characterization, and setting. The unit does not explicitly teach these elements, but you may use the unit as an opportunity to teach them.

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Adapting the Unit

Alternate Literary Works. In this unit, students read excerpts from several autobiographical works as models for their own memoirs. Possible answers are provided for excerpts from two example works: *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller and *Black Boy* by Richard Wright.

The unit projects and activities may be successfully adapted to a number of other works of autobiography and memoir. To accommodate the needs and interests of your class, you might choose, or have students choose, excerpts from other autobiographical works, or have students read an entire work or works, for example:

- The poignant memoir *Falling Leaves* by Adeline Yen Mah presents a strong female character who stands up to her abusive family.
- *Boy* by Roald Dahl is a humorous tale of growing up, written in a lighter style and with simpler vocabulary.

See *Media & Resources* for other suggestions.

Oral Skills. The unit offers an excellent opportunity for students to work on their oral communication and presentation skills. Writing for possible recording, presentation, or publication will motivate students to do their best work—they will want to appear professional to an audience outside the classroom. After students have written their memoirs, have them complete the optional step 6 in Activity 2B.3, in which they record, present, or publish final versions of their work. Alternatively, allow English-language learners and other students who are more comfortable with oral than written communication to complete their final projects as audio or voice recordings rather than written memoirs. In both cases, add skills such as expression and gesture, tone, clarity, volume, enunciation, and pronunciation to the project assessment criteria.

Pacing

The number of unit sessions assumes that students do all of their reading and writing in class. If you plan to assign some activities as homework, reduce the number of sessions accordingly. Alternatively, if students read entire works of autobiography or memoir, or more or longer excerpts, you may need to adjust the number of sessions. Likewise, if students select their own books to read, you may wish to build in time for them to acquaint their classmates with their readings.

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Table of Activities

Part 1: Stories from Life (6 sessions)

Students learn about memoir and autobiography. They analyze several taped and published memoirs for storytelling elements, such as narrative arc, point of view, characterization, and figurative and sensory language.

Activity 1A: Lend Me Your Ear

1A.1: ***Introducing Memoir***	Students listen to an audio story and discuss what makes it compelling. They are introduced to the unit and the unit project.
1A.2: ***What's My Storyline?***	Students write in their journals in response to a quotation about the value of personal narratives.

Activity 1B: The Genre of Memoir

1B.1: ***Reading for Narrative Technique***	Students read short memoirs and analyze their authors' use of storytelling techniques. Students brainstorm a list of characteristics of successful memoirs.
1B.2: ***Why Are You Telling Me This?***	Students consider why people might write memoirs and why other people might like to read them.

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Part 2: Welcome to My World (9 sessions)

Students explore sources of interesting anecdotes and stories in their own lives and select memoir ideas. They outline, write, revise, and present their own memoirs.

Activity 2A: Sources of Memoir

2A.1: ***Mining Memory***	Students explore sources of interesting anecdotes and stories in their own lives.
2A.2: ***The Diamond in the Rough***	Students choose three memoir ideas to develop further, and meet in groups to select their strongest idea.

Activity 2B: Writing Your Memoir

2B.1: ***Starting Strategies***	Students develop chronologies for their memoirs and discuss *focus* and *audience*. They read a memoir written by a student or a young adult.
2B.2: ***Writing the Draft***	Students write and edit first drafts of their memoirs and prepare second drafts.
2B.3: ***Ready for Prime Time***	Students read their drafts aloud in groups to focus on presentation and engaging an audience. They revise their memoirs, based on the feedback they receive, and complete a self-assessment.

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Advance Preparation

- Internet resources, provided as links in *Media & Resources*, are recommended throughout the unit for student or in-class use. These Web sites have been checked for availability and for advertising and other inappropriate content. However, because Web site policies and content change frequently, we suggest that you preview the sites shortly before using them.
- Address any issues, such as firewalls, related to accessing Web sites or other Internet links at your school.
- Look at **Materials Needed** at the end of the unit, and order or prepare any needed equipment or supplies. For example, a projector, chart paper and markers, or board and writing implements are used throughout the unit.
- Locate one or more audio stories to play for Activity 1A. Possible answers are included for *Prison Visiting Hours* from the Public Radio Exchange. See *Media & Resources* for a link to this story and for other suggestions.
- Decide which memoirs or autobiographies students will read in Activity 1B. Prepare to distribute either the entire books or photocopied excerpts. The unit includes possible answers for excerpts from two memoirs: *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller (Chapter IV) and *Black Boy* by Richard Wright (the first five pages of Chapter 1). See *Media & Resources* for additional suggestions.
- Before Activity 2B, find at least one example of a short memoir written by someone around the age of your students—such as a memoir written by a student in a previous class, a blog from a youth media Web site, or a memoir from an anthology of works by young people. See *Media & Resources* for suggestions.
- Decide whether students will complete the optional step 6 in Activity 2B.3 to record, present, or publish their completed memoirs. Plan accordingly for time, resources, and logistics.

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Part 1: Stories from Life

Students learn about memoir and autobiography and are introduced to the unit and the unit project. They analyze several taped and published memoirs for storytelling elements, such as narrative arc, point of view, characterization, and figurative and sensory language. They also consider the reasons that authors write memoirs, and why other people read them.

Length

6 50-minute sessions

Advance Preparation

- Prepare one or more audio stories for Activity 1A.1.
- Prepare equipment to play the audio story.
- Before Activity 1B, copy or collect the memoir excerpts or books you've chosen.

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Activity 1A: Lend Me Your Ear

Sequence

1A.1: ***Introducing Memoir***	Students listen to an audio story and discuss what makes it compelling. They are introduced to the unit and the unit project.
1A.2: ***What's My Storyline?***	Students write in their journals in response to a quotation about the value of personal narratives.

Understandings

- An autobiography is the story of a person's life written by that person.
- Writers often use the techniques of fiction writing to tell autobiographical stories.

Materials Needed

- Audio story (or stories) (see Advance Preparation)
- Equipment for playing the audio story
- **Handout 1: Journal Assignments**
- Equipment to project or display the story's narrative arc
- **Handout 2: Unit Overview**
- **Assessment Checklist: Memoir**

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1A.1: Introducing Memoir

RESOURCES

1. Introduce the first task: listening to an audio story.
Tell students that they are beginning a unit on writing stories drawn from real-life experiences. They will start by analyzing stories taped for radio broadcasts or podcasts and those published in books. They will then apply what they've learned to a story of their own.

> **Note:** If you plan to have students record, present, or publish their final work, you may want to let them know now.

Discuss any radio stories that students might have heard, and introduce the example you've chosen. Ask students to listen carefully to the story and to who is telling it, and to be prepared to answer questions about the story.

Distribute **Handout 1: Journal Assignments**. Direct students to the questions under Journal 1, which they will answer for the audio story.

2. Play the audio story.
As students listen, have them jot down answers to the journal questions.

> **Journal 1**
> Listen carefully to the audio story, and jot down answers to the following questions:
>
> - What is the story about?
> - Who is telling the story?
> - Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?
> - What do you "take away" from the story, or how does it make you feel?

Think about the story, and add any other thoughts that occur to you. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

Provide time for students to finish writing their responses. Call on some volunteers to share their answers.

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Teacher's Notes:
Possible Responses to the Journal 1 Analysis Questions

These answers are for the *Prison Visiting* Hours audio story.

What is the story about?
A girl visiting her brother in prison.

Who is telling the story?
A girl named Jennifer, whose older brother is in prison.

Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?
It's an important, very sad part of her life. Maybe she hopes that someone else will identify with her experience.

What do you "take away" from the story, or how does it make you feel?
Listeners are likely to feel sad for the narrator and to sympathize with her brother in prison when he realizes the mistakes he's made. Listeners might also think about how one person's actions can unintentionally hurt others in his or her family.

3. Model the story's narrative arc.
Play the audio story a second time. Tell students to listen very carefully to the plot of the story and to write down everything that happens that they think is important.

Ask students:

- How does the story begin?
- What is the major conflict, issue, or situation on which the story centers?
- What other important things happen in the story?
- Is there a high point in the action, or a moment of revelation? If so, what is it?
- How does the story end? Does the author reflect on the experience?

As students answer the questions, project or display the story's narrative arc. Write in the beginning, high point, and ending, as well as other important events in the story. Explain that what they have created is a diagram of the story's *narrative arc*, a sketch of the main storyline, including the high and low points in the story's development.

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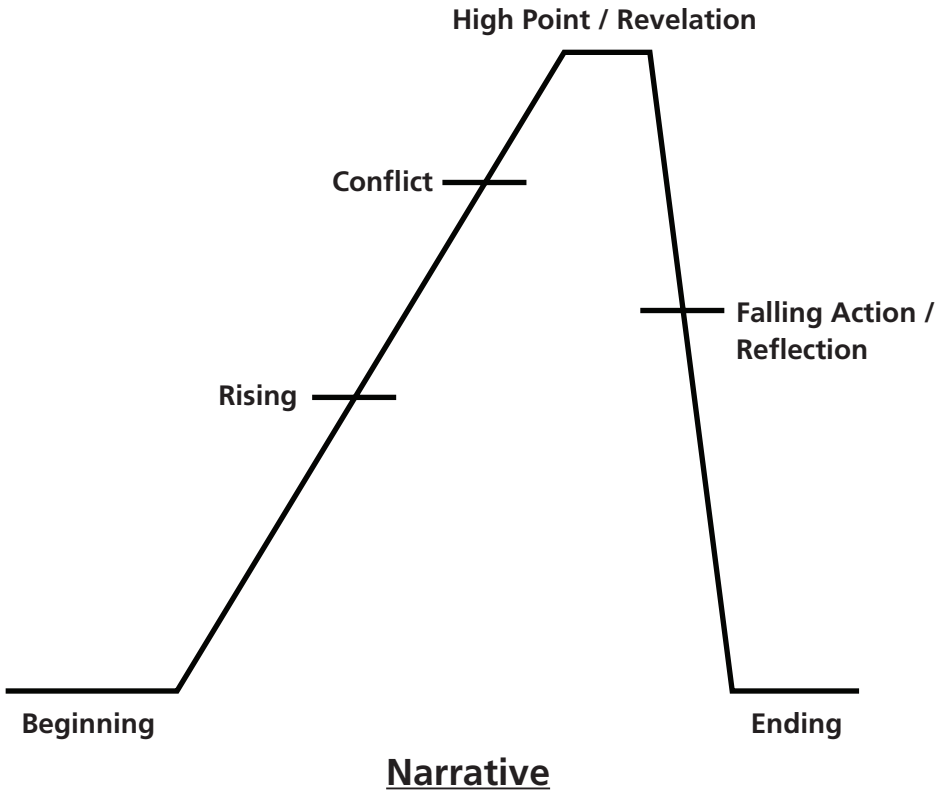

Narrative arc diagram

Teacher's Notes: Possible Responses to the Narrative Arc Questions

These answers are for the *Prison Visiting Hours* audio story.

How does the story begin?
The narrator tells about entering the visiting room at the prison, and she remembers something her brother once told her.

What is the major conflict, issue, or situation on which the story centers?
The narrator is sad but also upset that her brother is in prison for something he has done. She feels like he has betrayed her.

What other important things happen in the story?
She tells her brother how much he has disappointed her, and he gives her advice about how not to end up like him.

Does the story have a high point in the action, or a moment of revelation? If so, what is it?
There is no action-oriented climax, but the narrator confronting her brother with her sadness and disappointment is an emotional high point, and also an important moment of self-revelation.

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How does the story end? Does the author reflect on the experience?
The brother cautions the narrator to avoid ending up like him, and the interview ends. The narrator realizes that they can never get any closer and that now she must be strong for her brother.

4. Wrap up discussion of the audio story.

> **Note:** If time and interest allow, have students analyze a second audio story before wrapping up the discussion.

Discuss the following questions as a class.

- Did the story hold your interest? If so, what about it kept you interested? If not, what about it made you lose interest?
- You observed that this true, or nonfiction, story has a plot, or narrative arc, just as a fictional story does. What other techniques does the storyteller use that are similar to those used in fiction?

  Possible answers: *Characterization, setting, conflict, suspense*

List all the storytelling techniques the author used, and tell students to copy the list in their journals. Explain that they will consider these techniques again when analyzing written stories and when writing their own.

Teacher's Notes: Possible Responses for Storytelling Techniques

In the *Prison Visiting Hours* example, the narrator uses sensory language to describe what life is like in prison. She uses dialogue when she introduces the voice of the prison guard. She takes what she remembers her brother saying at the beginning of the story, and circles back to it at the end, giving it a new, deeper meaning. The narrator also uses irony when she concludes that her brother, who had promised to never let anyone hurt her, became the person who hurt her the most.

5. Introduce the terms *autobiography* and *memoir*.
Tell students that the story they just heard is an example of *autobiographical narrative*. Autobiographical narratives may be structured in ways very similar to fictional stories.

Project or display the two word parts *auto* and *biographical*. Tell students that *auto* is a prefix meaning *self*. An *autobiography* is a *self-biography*, or a biography written by and about oneself.

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Tell students that in this unit they will learn about a genre of autobiography known as *memoir*. They will explore how and why authors write personal narratives, in preparation for writing memoirs drawn from their own life experiences.

Project or display the word *memoir*. Explain that the word *memoir* is derived from the Latin *memoria*, which means *memory* or *recollection*. Tell students that they will delve into their memories to discover material for their memoirs.

> **Note:** To expand students' vocabulary, ask them to think of other words they know that use the prefix *auto* and to come up with a definition that includes the word *self*. *(**Possible answers:** Automobile: a vehicle you drive yourself; autograph: your name written by yourself; automatic: something that runs by itself)*

6. Present an overview of the unit and assessment criteria.
Distribute **Handout 2: Unit Overview** and have students read it.

Point out the vocabulary list, and tell students that they should refer to this list when they encounter unfamiliar words.

Distribute the **Assessment Checklist: Memoir** and go over the criteria with students. Answer any questions.

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Teacher's Notes: Assessment Criteria

Narrative Structure

The unit emphasizes narrative arc as a tool to support students in structuring their memoirs and to help them identify the use of storytelling techniques in nonfiction writing. Use unit activities as an opportunity to teach and reinforce other elements that you would like to emphasize, for example:

- Using descriptive writing and sensory language to evoke settings and moods
- Using irony or tone to achieve a specific effect
- Developing a writing style or voice

Writing Mechanics

The Assessment Checklist includes criteria relating to grammar, punctuation, and sentence and paragraph structure, although the unit does not explicitly teach these skills. Use the activities in the unit to teach and reinforce any writing skills that your students find challenging, for example:

- Writing in the first person
- Using details to develop paragraphs
- Using transitions to maintain a story's narrative momentum or suspense

Adjust the weight of the assessment criteria related to writing elements, mechanics, or any other area as you see fit.

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1A.2: What's My Storyline?

1. Have students consider the value of writing a personal narrative.
Direct students to Journal 2 on Handout 1. Have them read the assignment, and answer any questions they may have.

> **Journal 2**
> Read the following quotation:
>
> *Personal narrative gives us a storyline. It helps us see how we belong, how we are—or aren't—safe in the world, and how we love, how we fear, how we want to change, too . . . Personal narrative reveals to us our hearts and gives us all we need to know to understand ourselves and one another. I always say, it's hard to make someone your enemy when you have shared your stories honestly with one another.*
>
> *—Deborah Wiles*

Write one or two paragraphs in response to Deborah Wiles's ideas about writing about ourselves. You can use the questions below to guide you, but feel free to present your own ideas about the value of writing personal narratives or memoir as well:

- What might it mean for your life to have a "storyline"?
- Which statement or statements of Wiles's do you most strongly identify with, and why?
- Do you disagree with anything she says? Why?
- What else do you think is valuable about writing about your own life?

2. Have students write responses to the quotation.
Provide class time for students to complete Journal 2.

3. Have students share their journal entries.
Invite students to share their responses to the quotation and any other ideas they have about the value of writing and reading personal narratives. Use the journal questions to initiate the discussion, or ask students for their ideas in a more open-ended discussion.

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Teacher's Notes: Possible Responses to Journal 2

What might it mean for your life to have a "storyline"?
Your life is like a story, or a series of stories, with plots, suspense, humor, and all the other elements that stories have.

Which statement or statements of Wiles's do you most strongly identify with, and why?
Writing about things that happened helps you understand them better.

Do you disagree with anything she says? Why?
It's not fully clear how writing about our lives keeps us "safe in the world."

What else do you think is valuable about writing about your own life?
Writing about your life helps other people understand you. Reading what other people have written about themselves helps you understand them.

Encourage students to continue to think about the value of writing and sharing personal narratives, as they analyze published works and consider the memoirs they will write.

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Handout 1:
Journal Assignments

Complete the following journal assignments when you are instructed to do so by your teacher.

Journal 1

Listen carefully to the audio story, and jot down answers to the following questions:

- What is the story about?
- Who is telling the story?
- Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?
- What do you "take away" from the story, or how does it make you feel?

Think about the story, and add any other thoughts that occur to you. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

Journal 2

Read the following quotation:

> Personal narrative gives us a storyline. It helps us see how we belong, how we are—or aren't—safe in the world, and how we love, how we fear, how we want to change, too . . . Personal narrative reveals to us our hearts and gives us all we need to know to understand ourselves and one another. I always say, it's hard to make someone your enemy when you have shared your stories honestly with one another.
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- What might it mean for your life to have a "storyline"?
- Which statement or statements of Wiles's do you most strongly identify with, and why?
- Do you disagree with anything she says? Why?
- What else do you think is valuable about writing about your own life?

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Journal 3: Character Video Observation

Write a chronology of the incident you have chosen for your memoir. The chronology should be a brainstorm of all your ideas, so don't worry about whether everything is important or whether it will all be part of your final memoir. Just write down everything you can remember about the incident in chronological order.

And don't just write about the physical actions, such as "I walked six blocks to the store" or "I bought a magazine." Write about what you remember *seeing*, *thinking*, and *feeling* as things were happening. If there were any smells or sounds, or if you remember touching or tasting anything, include those sensations too.

While you're writing, you may remember something that occurred earlier in the chronology. If this happens, just draw an arrow to where the new item belongs in the sequence.

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Handout 2:
Unit Overview

Everyone Has a Story

Have you ever said to a friend, "You'll never guess what happened to me!" and then proceeded to relate a story based on your own experience? Even if you never wrote it down, what you were telling was a little piece of autobiography, the story of your life. Authors write stories about their lives all the time. If they change enough of the details, the finished piece might end up being a work of fiction. But if they stick to their memory of what really happened, the result will be an autobiography or a memoir.

What gives us such a strong desire to tell stories about ourselves? Some people may have experienced a life-changing event or gone through a difficult struggle. Maybe they lost—or found—something precious to them, or overcame daunting challenges to become a leader in their community. Some people may want to tell humorous stories from their childhood, or write about their relationships to special people or places. No matter what prompts us to create and share our personal narratives, through the telling and the listening we learn something deeper about ourselves and what connects us to the world and to one another.

What stories do you have to tell?

Here are some of the questions you'll explore in this unit:

- How do writers craft interesting stories from their lives?
- What are the characteristics of a memoir?
- How can I make a personal story compelling for other people?

What You Will Do in This Unit

Learn what makes an anecdote worth remembering. Listen to audio stories and to your classmates to discover the elements that keep you riveted.

Experience real-life struggles of some master writers. Peer through the window into some fascinating lives.

Delve into your past for the seeds of stories. What interesting stories have you lived, and why are they important to you? Will they make your audience laugh, learn something new, or cry along with you?

Craft a mesmerizing memoir of your own. Use the storytelling elements that professional writers use to spice up your stories and keep your audience on the edge of their seats.

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Project Description

For the unit project, you will write a short memoir in which you relate a significant or dramatic incident or moment from your life. You will begin by selecting several potential story ideas, and then work in a group to choose the best one for writing and polishing as a memoir. You will apply literary techniques, such as narrative arc, point of view, characterization, and the use of sensory and figurative language, to make your personal story engaging to an audience. As part of the process, you will critique your own work and then read your revised memoir aloud to a partner to learn how to make it even more compelling.

Vocabulary Used in This Unit

Anecdote: A short narrative that tells about an interesting or amusing incident; often biographical or autobiographical.

Audience: A group of people who listen to, read, or view a piece of writing, or a work of art or media. An audience can be as small as a single person, or it can encompass the entire reading or viewing public.

Autobiography: A book that tells the story of the author's life. Autobiographies differ from memoirs in that they include the subject's entire life, or at least the most significant portions of it; they generally span a longer time period and are larger in scope.

Biography: A book that tells the story of a person's life other than the author's. Biographies may be collaborations between authors and subjects, or they may be written without the assistance or support of the people they are about.

Chronology: An arrangement of items in the order of their occurrence. A chronology of a day begins with what happens first thing in the morning and ends with what happens last at night.

Memoir: A true story that usually recounts just one aspect of an author's life—often, a life-changing event, the fulfillment of a dream, a physical or emotional struggle, or an insight about a special person, place, or time.

Narrative arc: The main plot of a story, including the high and low points of the action and turning points or moments of suspense.

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Assessment Checklist:
Memoir

Use this assessment to help you write and revise your memoir. Make sure to include all the requirements. Your teacher will use this assessment to evaluate your work.

Requirements	Percentage of Total Grade	Comments	
Memoir		**Student Comments**	**Teacher Comments**
Narrative Structure. Has a narrative arc, with strong beginning, middle, and ending, including a clear high point in the action or a moment of revelation.	**40%**		
Reflection. Reveals why the author has chosen this moment or incident to write about and what it means to him or her.	**20%**		
Characteristics of Memoir. Uses first-person point of view, characterization, figurative and sensory language, and other characteristics of memoirs that are appropriate to the story.	**30%**		
Writing Mechanics. Demonstrates proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence and paragraph structure.	**10%**		
Total	**100%**		

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Activity 1B: The Genre of Memoir

Sequence

1B.1: Reading for Narrative Technique	Students read short memoirs and analyze their authors' use of storytelling techniques. Students brainstorm a list of characteristics of successful memoirs.
1B.2: Why Are You Telling Me This?	Students consider why people might write memoirs and why other people might like to read them.

Understandings

- Storytelling techniques used in memoirs include developing a narrative arc; including a good beginning, middle, and ending; writing with a first-person point of view; establishing and developing characters; and using sensory and figurative language.
- Authors often write memoirs because they wish to reflect on certain aspects of their lives, and they believe that their experiences might offer something of interest to a wider audience.

Materials Needed

- Copies of memoir excerpts or complete memoirs (see Advance Preparation)
- **Handout 3: What's It All About?** (1 copy per memoir per student)

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1B.1: Reading for Narrative Technique

1. Introduce the memoirs that students will read.
Tell students they will read excerpts from two memoirs by published authors to learn more about memoir writing for their own projects.

Explain that for each memoir excerpt they will begin by addressing the same questions they answered about the audio story. They will then look at each memoir excerpt more deeply and compare the two stories.

Introduce the authors and the works.

Teacher's Notes: Examples of Memoir Excerpts

Throughout this unit, possible answers are included for excerpts from two literary works:

- *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller. In Chapter IV, the author has her first encounter with her teacher, Annie Sullivan, who will lead her out of her darkness.
- *Black Boy* by Richard Wright. In the first five pages of Chapter One, the author, age 4, unwittingly starts a fire in his own house and is nearly beaten to death by his mother.

Feel free to have students read other memoirs or to read more than two, or to use longer or multiple excerpts from these works, and then adjust the pacing of activities accordingly. See *Media & Resources* for suggestions of other memoirs and autobiographies.

2. Have students read and analyze the memoirs.
Distribute **Handout 3: What's It All About?** Tell students that they will read and analyze the memoir excerpts, using a copy of Handout 3 for each analysis.

Have students recall the narrative arc they created as a class for the audio story. Tell them that they will create similar diagrams for each memoir they analyze.

Provide class time for students to read and complete Handout 3. Suggest that as they read, they should think about techniques they might use in their own memoirs.

Note: Handout 3 offers a good opportunity for formative assessment.

3. Discuss students' responses.
As a class, discuss students' responses for each memoir to the questions on Handout 3.

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Teacher's Notes: Possible Answers for excerpts from *The Story of My Life* and *Black Boy*

The Story of My Life (Chapter IV)
If students are not familiar with the story of Helen Keller, tell them that she was born at the end of the 19th century and became blind and deaf after an illness when she was 19 months old.

What is the memoir excerpt about?
This excerpt tells about Helen's first meeting with her teacher when she was seven and how she learned about the existence of words.

What do you learn about the person telling the story?
The narrator is angry and feeling lost because of her disability. She is smart and understands things fairly quickly, but she also has a temper and is quick to get angry when she's frustrated.

Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?
She says it was the most important day of her life, and she wanted to remember it and reflect on its meaning.

What do you take away from the story, or how does it make you feel?
Helen's life seems like it will be more hopeful; she will probably learn a lot by working with her teacher. This story might inspire people to overcome challenges and limitations, particularly those who deal with a disability or know someone who has a disability.

Black Boy (Chapter One, first five pages)
If students are not familiar with Richard Wright, tell them that he is a well-known novelist of the 20th century. His most famous novel is *Native Son*.

What is the memoir excerpt about?
The memoir describes an incident that occurred when the author was four years old and unwittingly set fire to his house. His mother was so angry that she beat him severely.

What do you learn about the person telling the story?
The narrator is bored and frustrated because his mother is preoccupied with his sick grandmother. He is more mischievous than his younger brother, who tries to stop him. He seems to be more afraid of being beaten than he is of dying in the fire.

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Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?
What the author remembered most was that his mother almost killed him. It was probably the first really terrible thing that happened to him, and he wanted to understand it and the role it played in his life.

What do you take away from the story, or how does it make you feel?
Readers may have mixed reactions to this incident. Clearly, the author did something very dangerous, and he disobeyed his mother's orders to "keep still." But he also was a small boy and had no idea what harm he could cause. Some readers might think that he should have been punished but not beaten so severely; others might say that his parents should have been relieved that he was still alive and forgiven him. The story gives the reader a sense of how difficult this boy's life was.

4. Compare the memoirs.
Have students compare the two memoirs. Ask:

- What is similar about the two memoirs?
- What is different?

Encourage students to do a thorough comparison by following their responses to each question with prompts, such as "What else?" and "What makes you think that?"

As students note similarities and differences, record and display their responses on two separate lists.

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Teacher's Notes: Similarities and Differences Between *The Story of My Life* and *Black Boy* Excerpts

Similarities

- Tell the story from a first-person point of view
- Write about the authors as young children
- Tell about a life-changing event
- Begin by describing a setting and situation
- Have distinct beginnings and endings
- Use vivid description
- Have several characters

Differences

- Keller writes about something uplifting, while Wright describes a horrific incident.
- Wright uses dialogue to characterize the relationship between himself and his brother and to dramatize his parents' search for him in the fire. Keller does not include dialogue, since she can't hear.
- Keller focuses on other senses besides hearing, such as touch and smell; Wright doesn't do this.
- Keller uses metaphor—"a ship in dense fog"—to describe her disconnection with life, which Wright does not do.
- Wright's piece is told in a child's voice and from a child's perspective; Keller's memoir is told in the voice of an adult.

5. Discuss storytelling elements.
Have students look over the lists of similarities and differences. Ask:

- Which of these characteristics might you also find in fiction?

Highlight or put a check next to any characteristics that students mention as relating to elements of fiction, such as characterization, setting, plot, or dialogue.

Ask:

- What other storytelling elements do these authors use in their memoirs? Describe.

Note: This would be a good place to expand on any other storytelling elements you would like to focus on, such as interior monologue, metaphors and similes, personification, or flashback.

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Have students compare these storytelling elements with the ones they identified and listed in their journals from the audio story, and add any new ones to their lists. Tell students that they should look for opportunities to use these elements in their own memoirs.

6. Have students think about characteristics of successful memoirs.
Have students again consider the similarities and differences between the two memoirs. Ask:

- What characteristics are most important in a successful memoir?

Begin a list of characteristics of successful memoirs. Have students copy the list into their journals. Keep the list posted prominently in the classroom so that students can refer to it as they make choices for their memoirs.

Teacher's Notes: Possible Characteristics of a Successful Memoir

Students' list might include the following:

- A first-person point of view
- Memorable situations or events
- Strong, interesting characters
- Vivid descriptions of setting and events, which make us feel like "we are there"
- Focus on a short but intense period of time or a situation
- Realistic dialogue
- A narrative structure that reads like fiction
- A beginning that pulls you into the story
- Action or events that move the story along
- A satisfying ending that ties things together or leads to greater understanding
- Personal reflections by the writer on the meaning of events
- An ability to evoke strong emotions
- Characters or situations we can identify with
- Suspense
- Humor

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Prompt students further by asking them about their personal responses to the memoirs:

- Which memoir did you like best?
- What did you like about it?

Encourage students to give specific examples of the characteristics they liked, and add these to the class list.

Emphasize that not all memoirs have all these characteristics, nor should students use them all when they write their own memoirs. Instead, they should look for the characteristics that best help them tell their own stories.

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Handout 3:
What's It All About?

Memoir Title _____ **Pages** _____

For each memoir excerpt, answer the following questions.

1. What is the memoir excerpt about?
   - What is the major conflict, issue, or situation on which the story centers?
   - How does the story begin?
   - What happens next? (List all the important events in the story. Put a check next to the event that you think represents the high point of the action or the moment of revelation.)
   - How does the story end?
   - Draw the narrative arc to include the beginning and ending of the story, the high point or moment of revelation, and any important events that happen in between.

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2. What do you learn about the person telling the story?

3. Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?

4. What do you take away from the story, or how does it make you feel? (Do you identify with any of the author's experiences? Describe.)

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1B.2: Why Are You Telling Me This?

1. Discuss why people write and read memoirs.
Remind students that the memoirs they read were written about very different subjects and made their readers feel very different ways. When they answered the question, "Why do you think the storyteller chose to tell this story?", they were trying to get inside the author's head and think about his or her motivation for writing. In other words, what meaning did the story have for the author?

Tell students that although they can never know for certain why a writer chooses his or her subjects, thinking about it can help them with the process of choosing their own writing topics. Ask:

- What kinds of subjects do you think memoirists might choose to write about, and why?
- What might their readers or listeners "take away" from these stories? (How will readers feel after reading the stories? What questions or ideas might they continue to mull over?)
- What types of things in your own life might you choose to write about, and why?

Create a class list of memoir subjects and what readers might take away in response to each. If students give examples from memoirs they have read in or outside of class, include them on this list.

Teacher's Notes: Possible Subjects and "Take Aways" for Memoirs

Students might suggest the following:

- **Subject:** Overcoming personal difficulties or obstacles (e.g., *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller, *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt)
  Take away: Inspire people to persevere and conquer personal obstacles
- **Subject:** Personal experiences with oppression or discrimination (e.g., *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank)
  Take away: Educate people about a situation to encourage them to effect positive change
- **Subject:** Humorous childhood adventures (e.g., *Boy* by Roald Dahl, *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Dumas)
  Take away: Entertain people or make them see something in a new way
- **Subject:** Exploring cultural identity or family history (e.g., *Dreams from My Father* by Barack Obama, *Falling Leaves* by Adeline Yen Mah)
  Take away: Give people pride in their heritage or encourage them to find strength in their roots

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- **Subject:** Life (or growing up) in a particular place and time (e.g., *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam, *An American Childhood* by Annie Dillard)
  Take away: Capture and share the beauty or feeling of a special place or way of life

Point out that many memoirs cover multiple subjects—*Black Boy*, for example, is also about Wright's family life, and *Angela's Ashes* describes both "overcoming personal difficulties" and "life in a particular time and place." In most memoirs, however, one subject seems more central than others.

Conclude by suggesting that although most authors choose to write about what most interests them, they are often also conscious of their audience—the readers and listeners who will experience their work.

2. Have students think about other memoirs they'd like to read.
Ask students:

- Are there people you know or admire whose lives you'd like to read about? Who are they, and what more would you like to know about them?

List students' responses, and project or display the list.

> **Note:** Some students may mention people for whom memoirs or autobiographies already exist. Help students find these books in a school or local library.

Have students look at the list and consider the types of things their classmates would like to learn about in the memoirs of people they admire. Encourage students to consider some of these topics as they think about writing their own memoirs.

Remind them that their memoirs will also have an audience—their classmates as well as their families, friends, or other people with whom they might want to share their writing.

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Teacher's Notes: Student Memoir Topics

Tell students that while their stories may not be as dramatic as the ones told by Richard Wright and Helen Keller, they all have unique experiences and their own perspectives on life. By writing their personal narratives, or "storylines," not only do they record important moments for themselves and their friends and families, but they also allow others, who don't know them, to see the world through their eyes. In their memoirs, students should think not only about telling their stories, but also about how they can help someone unfamiliar with their lives relate to them and understand their feelings and experiences.

If a story means something to its author, chances are good that it will mean something to someone else. Students might want to ask themselves: What do I hope my audience will take away from my story, and how can I help them do so?

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Part 2: Welcome to My World

Students explore sources of interesting anecdotes and stories in their lives, and choose three ideas to develop for their memoirs. Students pitch these memoir ideas in small groups, and with peer input select the idea best suited for a memoir. Students write their memoir drafts, read them aloud to a partner, and revise and polish them for a final performance.

Length

9 50-minute sessions

Advance Preparation

- Prepare to display or distribute the Roald Dahl and Meredith Sue Willis quotations from **Appendix A: Quotations** in Activities 2A.1 and 2B.1.
- Optional: For Activity 2A.2, locate video clips of Ira Glass from Public Broadcasting Corporation's (PBS) *This American Life*, Storytelling #1, #2, #3, and #4. See *Media & Resources* for a link to these clips.
- Make copies of the short memoir or memoirs you have selected to use in Activity 2B.

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Activity 2A: Sources of Memoir

Sequence

2A.1: ***Mining Memory***	Students explore sources of interesting anecdotes and stories in their own lives.
2A.2: ***The Diamond in the Rough***	Students choose three memoir ideas to develop further, and meet in groups to select their strongest idea.

Understandings

- An *anecdote* is a short narrative that tells about an interesting or humorous incident, frequently from the narrator's own life.
- The incidents you remember most vividly from your own life are often the ones most likely to interest others.

Materials Needed

- Equipment to display Roald Dahl quotation (or **Appendix A: Quotations**)
- **Handout 4: Tell an Anecdote**
- Optional: Clips from *This American Life* (see Advance Preparation) and equipment for playing video clips
- **Handout 5: Developing Memoir Ideas** (1 copy of first page and 3 copies of second page per student)
- **Handout 6: The Critical Response Process**

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2A.1: Mining Memory

1. Have students discuss the Roald Dahl quotation.
Display the quotation. Tell students that these words introduce the memoir *Boy* by Roald Dahl. Some students may be familiar with Roald Dahl as the author of *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Fantastic Mister Fox*. Have students read the quotation to themselves, or call on a volunteer to read it aloud.

> An autobiography is a book a person writes about his own life and it is usually full of all sorts of boring details.
>
> This is not an autobiography. I would never write a history of myself. On the other hand, throughout my young days at school and just afterwards a number of things happened to me that I have never forgotten.
>
> None of these things is important, but each of them made such a tremendous impression on me that I have never been able to get them out of my mind. Each of them, even after a lapse of fifty and sometimes sixty years, has remained seared on my memory.
>
> I didn't have to search for any of them. All I had to do was skim them off the top of my consciousness and write them down.
>
> Some are funny. Some are painful. Some are unpleasant. I suppose that is why I have always remembered them so vividly. All are true.
>
> —Roald Dahl

Ask the following questions:

- How does Roald Dahl define *autobiography*?
- How does he distinguish his own writing from an autobiography? Why do you think he makes this distinction? Would you agree?
- What are some of his criteria for the type of personal story worth writing about?
- Why do you think the things you remember most vividly about your own life might be the things that are most likely to interest other people?

Tell students that in the next series of activities, they will focus on things that happened to them that they have never forgotten. Have them keep Roald Dahl's words in mind as they choose what they would like to write about in their memoirs.

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2. Introduce students to the concept of *anecdotes*.
Explain that the seeds of an autobiographical story or memoir often come from an *anecdote*, a short narrative that tells about an interesting or humorous incident in the author's life. Suggest that students probably tell their friends anecdotes every day.

Ask students:

- Who would like to share an anecdote about something that happened to you in the past day or so?

> **Note:** Emphasize that the anecdote doesn't have to be about something important. You might start by telling students a short anecdote from your own life. It could be as simple as a conversation you had in a grocery line or something surprising you saw on your way home.

Distribute **Handout 4: Tell an Anecdote**. Tell students that they are now going to delve into their pasts and think of sources for more memorable anecdotes.

Tell students to read over the prompts on the handout. Ask if they can come up with any additional prompts to get at interesting, funny, emotional, or challenging moments in their lives, which they might like to write about. Project or display any student prompts that are substantially different from the ones on Handout 4.

3. Have students complete five prompts.
Tell students that their next task is to complete five anecdote prompts.

If students came up with some strong additional prompts, tell them that they may use the displayed prompts as well as prompts from Handout 4, for a total of five. They may not, however, replace a prompt with an idea they make up on the spot.

> **Note:** Limit the number of student prompts each person can select if you have concerns about their appropriateness.

Tell students to keep their responses relatively short—to finish the sentence prompt and write one additional sentence, if they wish, for each phrase. Explain that they will have an opportunity to write more later.

Provide class time for students to complete their five prompts.

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4. Share completed phrases.
For each prompt on Handout 4—or displayed student prompt—call on one or two volunteers to share their anecdote idea. Keep in mind that there may be some prompts that students did not choose.

Teacher's Notes: Private Personal Stories

Through unit activities, students share memoir ideas, receive feedback at each stage of development, and present their final memoirs to an audience. Make sure students understand that they will be sharing their stories, so they do not choose to write about incidents that they might find to be overly revealing, or that they simply do not want other students to know about. Encourage students to write about such intensely personal stories in some other venue, such as a journal or diary.

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Handout 4:
Tell an Anecdote

Choose ***five*** prompts to complete by describing something that really happened to you.

1. The most embarrassing moment of my life was . . .

2. The hardest thing I ever did was . . .

3. I laughed so hard when . . .

4. One place I went that I'll never forget is . . .

5. I don't think I've ever been so scared as when . . .

6. If I could choose one thing to do over again, it would be . . .

7. The first time I knew I had a true friend was when . . .

8. I felt proud when . . .

9. The nicest thing anyone ever did for me was . . .

10. I've never felt happier than when . . .

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2A.2: The Diamond in the Rough

1. Introduce the next task: developing ideas for a memoir.
Tell students they will explore three of their anecdote ideas in more detail, then "pitch" them to a small group of classmates. Working with their group, they will determine which story idea has the potential to make the best memoir.

Teacher's Notes: Ira Glass on Storytelling (Optional)

Play one or more of the video clips in which Ira Glass of *This American Life* talks about developing an audio story.

Students who have completed or are currently taking the *Foundations in Media and Digital Design* course *Audio: Using Sound to Tell Stories* may have already seen these clips, but it will be useful for them to watch them again in a different context.

After viewing, discuss Glass's "formula" for an engaging audio story. Ask:

- What are the building blocks of the audio story?

  Answers: *Anecdotes and moments of reflection*

- How do you keep your audience engaged?

  Possible answers: *Describe a sequence of actions—one thing following another; "prop up" the story with questions (bait) and moments of reflection along the way.*

- How are Ira Glass's tips relevant to both audio stories and written memoirs? What advice might you use in your own memoirs?

  Possible answers: *Most of his advice is relevant to both, as audio stories and written memoirs each have the shape of a story and must be engaging to a reader or listener.*

2. Have students develop three memoir ideas.
Distribute **Handout 5: Developing Memoir Ideas** (one copy of page 1 and three copies of page 2 for each student). Have students read over the handout. Point out the fourth question under Step 1. Remind students of the Roald Dahl quotation to reinforce the idea that what is most meaningful to them is also likely to have meaning for others.

Explain to students that they will complete Steps 1 and 2 to choose their three memoir ideas. They will jot down brief answers to the questions in Step 3 for each idea, and they will use this information to pitch their ideas to their classmates.

Have students complete the handout.

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Note: Handout 5 offers a good opportunity for formative assessment.

3. Prepare students to work in critique groups.
If students have never given and received feedback as a group before—or to refresh their skills—introduce or review the Critical Response Process.

Distribute **Handout 6: The Critical Response Process** and have students read the first paragraph. Ask for student volunteers to read aloud the quotations by artists and writers about giving and receiving feedback. Suggest that the ideas apply equally to writing and other art forms.

Note: Handout 6 was adapted from Handout 9 in *Foundations in Visual Arts*, Unit 1, to refer to writers and written work. Although some students may have used the Critical Response Process in the Foundations course, it will be useful to review it in this context.

Discuss the quotations with students, asking them the following questions about each one:

- What does this artist or writer have to say about the process of giving and receiving feedback?
- Do you agree with this point of view? Why or why not?

Ask students why feedback is an important component of the writing process.

Go over the steps of the Critical Response Process. Tell students to use this process as they offer feedback on their classmates' ideas in their group sessions.

Tell them that later, when they work in pairs to give and receive feedback on their written memoirs, they will use elements of this process again, such as emphasizing positive aspects of work, asking open-ended questions, and making judgment-free comments.

4. Have students pitch their story ideas in groups and give and receive feedback.
Divide students into groups of three. Have them pitch their story ideas to the other group members, using their completed copies of Handout 5, and take careful notes on all feedback received. Encourage group members to suggest which ideas would make strong foundations for memoirs.

Note: Circulate among groups to help model and support students' use of the Critical Response Process.

5. Have students choose their memoir idea.
Tell students to analyze their notes from the group discussion and to use the feedback they received to help them select one idea to develop into a memoir.

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Handout 5:
Developing Memoir Ideas

Step 1: Pick three ideas to develop.

You now have five possible ideas for your memoir. Choose three to develop further. Remember, the stories do not have to be dramatic or earth-shattering—but, as Roald Dahl said, they should be stories that you have never been able to get out of your mind.

To help you choose your ideas, answer the following questions:

- Which ideas do I remember most clearly and with the most detail?

- Which ideas suggest a story with a beginning, middle, and ending?

- Which ideas offer an opportunity to use other storytelling elements, such as characterization, setting, and sensory language?

- Which ideas are most meaningful to me and would I most like to explore further?

Step 2: Come up with working titles for your three ideas.

Idea 1: _____

Idea 2: _____

Idea 3: _____

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Step 3: Jot down notes in answer to the questions below for each idea.

Idea title: _____

What will the memoir be about?

Why do I want to tell this story? (What does it mean to me? How might it have meaning for someone else reading the story?)

Who will the characters be?

Where will the story take place? (Write down a few descriptive words or phrases.)

What other storytelling elements can I use to make the memoir interesting or engaging?

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Handout 6:
The Critical Response Process

There are many different ways to give and receive feedback. One method that writers and artists sometimes use is the Critical Response Process, which creates a safe and supportive environment in which to receive feedback on a completed work or work in progress.

Quotations About Feedback

Before you learn about the Critical Response Process, think about the following questions: Why is feedback important? What good does it do?

The following are some quotations from artists and writers with different opinions about feedback:

> *Any artist that asks for advice is interested in doing more, being more, going further. Ultimately there should be a target in mind, and understanding this target is an important part of giving advice.* (David Oleski, painter)
>
> *Criticism should not be . . . all knife and root-puller, but guiding, instructive, inspiring.* (Ralph Waldo Emerson, writer)
>
> *I hear all comments and criticisms around me. I chew on them. I'm nourished by the ones that I decide work for me and spit out the others.* (Kelly Borsheim, sculptor)
>
> *We artists stick ourselves out. This in itself deserves respect.* (Robert Genn, painter)

Steps in the Critical Response Process

The Critical Response Process comprises three steps:

1. The audience comments on something engaging about the idea or work. These comments should not judge or criticize. (For example, "That situation is so funny [interesting, surprising, touching, informative, or otherwise meaningful].")
2. The writer asks the audience open-ended questions about something specific. (For example, a writer wouldn't ask, "Do you like this idea?" but would ask instead, "What do you like about this idea? How could I make this character funnier? What can you relate to in this story?")
3. The audience asks neutral (i.e., judgment-free) questions of the writer. (For example, the audience doesn't ask, "Why is your story so sad?" but rather, "I'm interested in the emotion in this piece. How do you imagine your audience will feel?" Or rather than ask, "Why did you end the story so suddenly?" the audience might say, "I'm curious about the way the story ends. What effect would you like to produce?")

As you provide feedback, try to start sentences with phrases such as the following:

I notice . . .
I'm curious about . . .
I'm interested in . . .
I wonder . . .

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Activity 2B: Writing Your Memoir

Sequence

2B.1: ***Starting Strategies***	Students develop chronologies for their memoirs and discuss *focus* and *audience*. They read a memoir written by a student or a young adult.
2B.2: ***Writing the Draft***	Students write and edit first drafts of their memoirs and prepare second drafts.
2B.3: ***Ready for Prime Time***	Students read their drafts aloud in groups to focus on presentation and engaging an audience. They revise their memoirs, based on the feedback they receive, and complete a self-assessment.

Understandings

- While authors know every detail of the events in their stories, they might not include all of them or write about them in the order in which they happened.
- The opening paragraphs in a finished written work are not always the ones the author writes first.

Materials Needed

- Students' copies of Handout 1
- Memoir written by a student or young adult (see Advance Preparation)
- Class list of characteristics of a successful memoir
- Equipment to display Meredith Sue Willis quote (or **Appendix A: Quotations**)
- **Handout 7: Writing Your Memoir**
- Students' copies of Handout 5, Step 3, for their selected memoir idea
- Students' memoir chronologies from Journal 3
- **Handout 8: Reviewer Questions**
- Students' copies of the Assessment Checklist

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2B.1: Starting Strategies

1. Introduce the term *chronology*.
Tell students that they will do a couple of activities to get them thinking about the writing process. Their first activity is to create a chronology of the incident they will write about.

Elicit a definition of *chronology*, or explain that a chronology is a list of things that happened written in the order in which they happened.

> **Note:** To expand students' vocabulary, display the root *chrono* and explain that it means "time" in Greek.

2. Model the chronology of a recent event.
Choose a recent event from school that students will remember, such as what happened in class the day before. Begin by asking:

- What's the first thing you remember about [the event]?
- What happened next?
- Then what?

Record and display the chronology as students offer their responses.

Encourage students to contribute not just physical actions, such as "I sat down at my desk" or "You wrote the assignment on the board," but also anything you or they might have said (even if it was unrelated to the event), and if there were any interruptions during the event, such as an announcement, a noise in the hallway, or someone's cell phone going off. Invite students to tell what they were thinking or feeling, such as being tired or getting excited about something happening later in the day.

Continue asking questions until you have recorded everything that students remember happening. If a student remembers something that occurred earlier than an item that was already mentioned, draw an arrow to where the new item belongs in the chronology.

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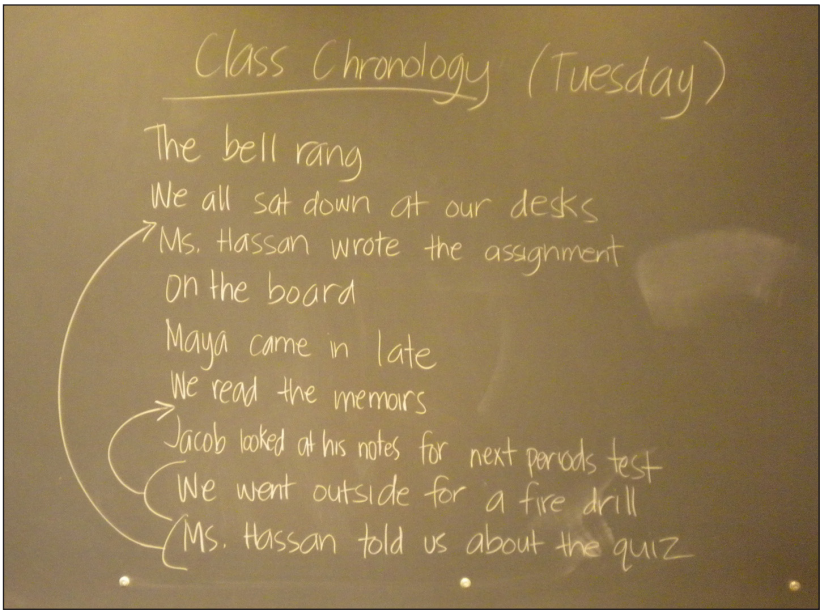

Chronology of class

> **Note:** If some students remember things happening in a different order or a different way, use this discrepancy as an opportunity to discuss the unreliable nature of memory and how this affects the "factual" nature of memoirs.

3. Discuss focus and audience.
Explain to students that if they had to write a one- to two-page story about this event, they wouldn't be able to include everything in this chronology. What they decide to leave out or include would depend on the story's focus and audience.

Ask students:

- If you were describing the highlights of the event to someone who missed it, what items from the chronology would you include and what would you leave out?
- If you wanted to tell an anecdote about what the event was like from your point of view, what items would you include and what would you leave out?

Have students be specific about which details they would include in each case.

Explain that how students focus their memoirs depends on what most interests them about their chosen idea and what they hope their audience will gain from reading their work. For example, are they most interested in telling a funny story? Describing an interesting situation? Recapturing a magical moment? Exploring their feelings about a personal challenge?

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Being clear about the goal and the meaning of their story will help them decide which details are most important to include and which they can leave out.

> **Note:** If you think that students need to have this idea reinforced, repeat the exercise with another example of a familiar event or incident.

4. Have students write a chronology for their memoir idea.
Have students read Journal 3 on Handout 1. Answer any questions students have, then give them time to write their chronologies.

> **Journal 3**
> Write a chronology of the incident you have chosen for your memoir. The chronology should be a brainstorm of all your ideas, so don't worry about whether everything is important or whether it will all be part of your final memoir. Just write down everything you can remember about the incident in chronological order.
>
> And don't just write about the physical actions, such as "I walked six blocks to the store" or "I bought a magazine." Write about what you remember *seeing*, *thinking*, and *feeling* as things were happening. If there were any smells or sounds, or if you remember touching or tasting anything, include those sensations too.
>
> While you're writing, you may remember something that occurred earlier. If this happens, just draw an arrow to where the new item belongs in the sequence.

Tell students that their chronologies provide them with the raw materials to build their memoirs. Emphasize, however, that they will not necessarily use everything in their chronology or write about things in the exact order in which they happened.

5. Have students read a memoir written by a young person.
Tell students that before they begin their memoir drafts, they will read one more example of a memoir—one written by someone their age. Distribute the memoir you've chosen.

As students read the memoir, have them jot down the chronology of the incident described. When they're done, have them look over the list of characteristics of a successful memoir. Ask:

- How does the story begin?
- What is the major conflict, issue, or situation on which the story centers?
- What is the high point in the action, or the moment of revelation?
- What other important things happen in the story?
- How does the story end? Does the author reflect on the experience?

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- Is everything in the memoir written in chronological order? Describe any deviations.
- Which characteristics of a successful memoir does the memoir exhibit? Did you identify any new characteristics to add to the list?
- What do you take away from the story, or how does it make you feel?

Have students compare this memoir to the two they read written by older, more established authors. Point out that although the subject of a student memoir may be less dramatic, the memoir still presents a unique and engaging story told from a particular point of view.

Encourage students to use the characteristics of successful memoirs to write their stories with as much detail, accuracy, and emotional truth as they can.

Teacher's Notes: Teaching Storytelling Elements

If students need more practice in developing specific storytelling techniques, such as introducing characters, creating settings, or using sensory language, teach these element(s) before students begin to write their drafts. Draw on activities in the English Language Arts units *Settings from Page to Screen*, in which students create accurately detailed and sensory-rich settings for short works of fiction, or *Casting a Novel Character*, in which students learn to introduce and develop characters from literature by writing monologues and dialogues. Many of these activities are readily adaptable to memoir writing.

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2B.2: Writing the Draft

1. Discuss three ways of thinking about beginnings.
Display the following quotation by Meredith Sue Willis:

> . . . we are actually talking about two different things when we talk about beginnings. One is how you get yourself started in your work, and one is deciding what the reader should read first.

Call on a volunteer to read it aloud. Ask students:

- What is the difference between the two kinds of beginnings the author describes?

  Possible answers: *One kind is how the writer starts when he or she first begins to write; the other is how the finished story starts.*

- Why might an author start writing from a point other than the beginning of the story?

  Possible answers: *An author might start by writing what he or she remembers best, is most interested in, or can describe most vividly, in order to get into the subject right away.*

Suggest to students that in the case of memoirs, there is a third way of looking at beginnings—the chronological beginning of the incident the author is relating. Ask:

- How do most of the memoirs you've read begin—at the chronological beginning of the incident, with something exciting or humorous, with a reflection by the author in the present, or in some other way?
- Why might an author choose to begin a memoir somewhere other than the earliest point in the story's chronology?

  Possible answers: *To hook the reader with something exciting, interesting, or humorous; to tell the reader why the author is writing the story; to provide information or context the reader needs to know to understand the story.*

Summarize by telling students that what they write first will not necessarily be what happens first in the story, nor will it necessarily be the opening of their finished piece. They should begin with whatever "gets them into" writing the memoir, then go back and tell the rest of the story.

2. Go over the first steps in writing a memoir.
Distribute **Handout 7: Writing Your Memoir** and tell students that they will follow these steps to write and revise the first drafts of their memoirs. Have them read over the steps, and answer any questions they have.

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Teacher's Notes: Creating Oral Memoirs

You may wish to consider allowing English-language learners, or other students who are more comfortable with oral than written communication, to complete their final projects as audio or video recordings. Adapt Steps 3 through 5 on Handout 7 as necessary. Work with students one-on-one, or have them work in pairs, to review and revise their memoirs and to practice English pronunciation, grammar, and syntax, as well as other oral reading skills.

3. Provide time for students to write their first drafts.
Have students follow Steps 1 through 3 on Handout 7 to complete their first drafts. Circulate to assist students as necessary.

4. Have students edit their drafts.
Have students complete Step 4 to review and edit their drafts.

> **Note:** Students' first drafts offer a good opportunity for formative assessment. If possible, meet with students after they have reviewed and marked up their first drafts but before they have written their second drafts. Go over their proposed changes and help them identify any other areas needing improvement.

5. Have students write their second drafts.
Have students complete Step 5 to write their second drafts, incorporating all their edits, changes, and additions.

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2B.3: Ready for Prime Time

1. Introduce the idea of reading memoirs aloud.
Tell students that in this final stage of their projects, they will concentrate on preparing their memoirs for an audience by taking turns reading them aloud to a partner. Pair up students and distribute **Handout 8: Reviewer Questions**. Each student will listen closely to his or her partner's memoir and take notes on the handout questions.

Encourage students to read slowly, clearly, and with expression. Tell students that if they do not hear or understand part of their partner's memoir while it is being read, they should politely ask their partner to repeat the missed portion.

Review aspects of the Critical Response Process that students should keep in mind when offering and receiving feedback:

- Reviewer comments should reinforce positive aspects of the work.
- Authors should feel free to ask open-ended questions about specific areas, or ask for more detailed responses.
- Reviewer suggestions should be nonjudgmental.

Emphasize that both authors and reviewers should show respect and appreciation for one another's ideas.

2. Have partners read their memoirs to each other.
Have student pairs take turns reading their memoirs aloud to their partners and jotting down their responses to the questions on Handout 8.

3. Have partners share feedback.
Have partners discuss their feedback for each question, including any additional clarifications or detailed responses requested by authors. Reviewers should give their completed copies of Handout 8 to their partners.

4. Have students write their final memoirs.
Have students write their final drafts, incorporating their partners' feedback and making any other revisions or corrections that they note.

5. Have students assess their work.
Have students turn in their final memoirs and fill in the Student Comments section of the **Assessment Checklist: Memoir**.

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6. Optional: Record, present, or publish memoirs.
If you are working with *Foundations in Media and Digital Design* teachers, have students use their memoirs to create audio stories with musical soundtracks and sound effects for their final projects.

You may also wish to have students create audio stories to record in English class. To prepare for recording sessions, have students work in pairs to practice oral reading, focusing on the following skills:

- Expression and gesture (including dramatic pauses)
- Tone
- Clarity
- Voice inflection and volume
- Enunciation and pronunciation

Provide class time for students to rehearse. Have them jot down their partners' feedback directly on their memoirs. Suggest that students take notes about where to pause, gesture, or raise or lower their voices, marking words or phrases that require special attention.

There are a number of ways that students can share their finished memoirs with an audience, for example:

- Presenting them in a program for classmates and invited family members and friends
- Recording them as podcasts or for broadcast on a student radio station
- Publishing them in a class anthology

7. Wrap up the unit with a class discussion.
Discuss the unit as a class by asking the following questions:

- What did you learn about memoir by doing the activities in this unit?
- Do you think you might like to read more memoirs in the future? What kind or by whom?
- What did you enjoy most about writing your own memoir?
- What did you find the most challenging?
- What, if anything, would you do differently the next time you write a story about your life?

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Handout 7:
Writing Your Memoir

Follow the steps below to create a first draft, edit your work, and create a polished second draft. You will need:

- Your notes on your chosen memoir idea (Step 3 on Handout 5)
- Your memoir chronology (Journal 3)
- The list of characteristics of a successful memoir

Step 1: Consider your focus.

Decide what is most meaningful to you about the memoir idea you have chosen. Think also about what a reader or listener might take away from your memoir. Put a check mark next to the one or two phrases that best describe your focus:

___ Telling a funny, exciting, or bizarre story
___ Sharing a personal insight or discovery
___ Describing a special person or place
___ Capturing a magical moment
___ Processing an interesting experience
___ Exploring an emotional or physically challenging situation
___ Other: _____

Step 2: Choose what to include.

Chronology. Decide which items in your chronology will contribute to and reinforce your chosen focus. Label each item in the chronology with an "A" (very important), "B" (somewhat important), or "C" (unimportant or potentially confusing).

You will probably want to eliminate items labeled C before you begin writing.

Characteristics. Review the list of characteristics of a successful memoir. Ask yourself: Which of these characteristics will strengthen my story?

Some characteristics, such as first-person voice or vivid description, you will definitely include. Others, such as dialogue or suspense, are optional and will depend on the story you want to tell.

Step 3: Write your first draft.

Start writing! Refer to your notes from Handout 5, your chronology, and your list of characteristics of a successful memoir. Your chronology will help you remember what you want to include, though the process of writing may bring even more details to mind. And remember—what you write first will not necessarily be the beginning of your memoir.

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Don't worry about getting your first couple of sentences or even the first paragraph or two perfect on the first draft. What's important is to keep writing until you have everything down on paper that you might be able to use. It is often easier to cut when you have too much material than to add more details to "beef up" a completed draft.

Step 4: Edit your first draft

Before you get feedback from your peers, you should review your own work. Read over your first draft. Sketch the narrative arc below, including the story's beginning and ending and the important events that happen in between. Mark the high point in the action, or the moment of revelation, as well as where you reflect on the story's meaning.

Use the questions below and your narrative arc diagram to help you revise your first draft:

- How can I make the memoir's beginning and ending stronger? Is there a better place to start or finish telling the story?
- Is the high point of the story, or moment of revelation, clear? If not, how can I make it more vivid, dramatic, or emotional?
- How can I make my characters, including myself, seem more well-rounded and real?
- Where can I add more descriptive or sensory language?
- Have I included all the characteristics of a successful memoir that seem appropriate to my story? Could I add something to strengthen the take-away for my audience (humor, suspense, interesting or poignant details)?
- Is there any part of the memoir that doesn't contribute to my story or meaning? If so, where can I cut words and make the language more concise and clear?

Mark up your first draft with any edits, additions, and rearrangement of material. Be tough on yourself. You want to create the best piece you can.

Step 5: Revise your draft.

Go over your draft, incorporating any changes you decided on in Step 4. Correct any additional spelling, grammatical, or usage errors you catch to produce a polished second draft.

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Handout 8:
Reviewer Questions

Use the questions below to review your partner's memoir. Write down your responses as soon as your partner is done reading.

1. Which characteristics of a successful memoir does your partner's work exhibit? Are there places where he or she could use those characteristics, or additional ones, to further strengthen the story?

2. Which parts of the memoir are the most engaging? Why?

3. What do you take away from this memoir? How does it make you feel?

4. What suggestions do you have for ways the author might make the memoir more engaging or effective?

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Appendix A: Quotations

Roald Dahl, in the Preface to his memoir *Boy*:

An autobiography is a book a person writes about his own life and it is usually full of all sorts of boring details.

This is not an autobiography. I would never write a history of myself. On the other hand, throughout my young days at school and just afterwards a number of things happened to me that I have never forgotten.

None of these things is important, but each of them made such a tremendous impression on me that I have never been able to get them out of my mind. Each of them, even after a lapse of fifty and sometimes sixty years, has remained seared on my memory.

I didn't have to search for any of them. All I had to do was skim them off the top of my consciousness and write them down.

Some are funny. Some are painful. Some are unpleasant. I suppose that is why I have always remembered them so vividly. All are true.

Meredith Sue Willis, on "beginnings," in her book *Deep Revision*:

. . . we are actually talking about two different things when we talk about beginnings. One is how you get yourself started in your work, and one is deciding what the reader should read first.

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Materials Needed

Throughout the Unit

- Projector, chart paper and markers, or board and writing implements for displaying or projecting information and student responses.

Part 1: Stories from Life

Writing Supplies and Other Equipment

- Equipment for playing the audio story

Handouts

- **Handout 1: Journal Assignments**
- **Handout 2: Unit Overview**
- **Assessment Checklist: Memoir**
- **Handout 3: What's It All About?** (1 copy per memoir per student)

Examples of Media Resources

- Audio story (or stories) (see Advance Preparation)
- Copies of memoir excerpts or complete memoirs (see Advance Preparation)

Advance Preparation

- Prepare one or more audio stories for Activity 1A.1. Possible answers are included for *Prison Visiting Hours* from the Public Radio Exchange. See *Media & Resources* for a link to this story and for other suggestions.
- Prepare equipment to play the audio story.
- Before Activity 1B, copy or collect memoir excerpts or books you've chosen.

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Part 2: Welcome to My World

Writing Supplies and Other Equipment

- Equipment to display Roald Dahl and Meredith Sue Willis quotations
- Optional: Equipment for playing video clips

Handouts

- (Optional) **Appendix A: Quotations**
- **Handout 4: Tell an Anecdote**
- **Handout 5: Developing Memoir Ideas** (1 copy of first page and 3 copies of second page per student)
- **Handout 6: The Critical Response Process**
- **Handout 7: Writing Your Memoir**
- **Handout 8: Reviewer Questions**

Examples of Media Resources

- Optional: Clips from *This American Life* (see Advance Preparation)
- Memoir written by a student or a young adult (see Advance Preparation)

Items Students Need to Bring

- Copies of Handout 1
- Class list of characteristics of a successful memoir
- Copies of Handout 5, Step 3, for their selected memoir idea
- Memoir chronologies from Journal 3
- Copies of the Assessment Checklist

Advance Preparation

- Prepare to display or distribute the Roald Dahl and Meredith Sue Willis quotations (from **Appendix A: Quotations**) in Activities 2A.1 and 2B.1.
- Optional: For Activity 2A.2, locate video clips of Ira Glass from Public Broadcasting Corporation's (PBS) *This American Life*, Storytelling #1, #2, #3, and #4. See *Media & Resources* for a link to these clips.

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Media & Resources

These recommended Web sites have been checked for availability and for advertising and other inappropriate content. However, because Web site policies and content change frequently, we suggest that you preview the sites shortly before using them.

Media & Resources are also available at http://dma.edc.org and at http://dmamediaandresources.pbworks.com, a Wiki that allows users to add and edit content.

Part 1: Stories from Life

Activity 1A: Lend Me Your Ear

Online Audio Stories

Example Audio Story Used in the Unit

Prison Visiting Hours

Eighteen-year-old Jennifer recalls the last time she visited her brother in prison. (Duration: 2:14)

www.prx.org/pieces/24298-prison-visiting-hours

Other Audio Stories

Story Corps

- *Story Corps: The Conversation of a Lifetime*. Hundreds of recorded stories drawn from conversations between more than 50,000 participants.
  http://storycorps.org/listen
- Cynthia Rahn remembers trying to complete a kindergarten class project.
  http://storycorps.org/listen/stories/category/growing-up/page/6
- Brian Miller talks to his son, Jonathan Emerson, about adopting him as a single dad nearly 10 years ago.
  http://storycorps.org/listen/stories/category/friendship

Adobe Youth Voices

- The Adobe Youth Voices Web site has interviews, memoir monologues, and theatre pieces written, directed, and taped by teens.
  www.adobe.com/cfusion/ayv/index.cfm?page=1

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- Leila's Eyebrow
  A young Iranian woman confronts her cultural identity and learns to embrace it.
  www.adobe.com/cfusion/ayv/index.cfm?event=detail&ayvid=282
- In This Life Nothing Is Impossible
  A young immigrant from Puerto Rico has lived through very difficult circumstances but continues to have a positive outlook on life.
  www.adobe.com/cfusion/ayv/index.cfm?event=detail&ayvid=464

This American Life:

- *This American Life: Radio Archive*
  www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Archive.aspx
- *A Hard Life at the Top*
  A story about a ritual that West Point cadets participate in on their first day. *From This American Life: 20 Acts in 60 Minutes*, Act 19, 48:50. (Duration: 4:30)
  www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=241
- *Guns*
  Geoffrey Canada, author of the book *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*, talks about what it's like to carry a gun. From *This American Life, Episode 81: Guns, Act 2*, 15:53. (Duration: 10:00)
  www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=1337
- More Lies
  An interview with a woman about a humorous babysitting mishap she had in college. From This American Life: 20 Acts in 60 Minutes, Act 13, 31:36. (Duration: 2:45)
  www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=241

El Salvador to L.A: One "War" Zone to Another

A teenager whose mother fled civil war in El Salvador talks about the violence in her own community of East Los Angeles. (Duration: 4:09)
www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89760907

Father Returns to Mexico; Should Son Follow?

A teenager talks about his father's decision to return to Mexico after decades in the United States, and his own struggle to decide whether to stay and finish college or take his chances finishing his education in Mexico and job-hunting there. (Duration: 3:49)
www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98718795

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From New Orleans to New England

"Fifteen-year-old Tyrel and seventeen-year-old Tevin Wooten lived their whole lives in the Algiers neighborhood of New Orleans. Now they're starting life over at their new home, near Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts." (Duration: 2:31)

www.prx.org/pieces/6880-from-new-orleans-to-new-england

Miracle on the Streets

A story about Miracle, a homeless girl who is also a crystal meth addict, told mostly through clips of interviews with Miracle. (Duration: 2:27)

http://hearingvoices.com/news/2009/02/miracle-on-the-streets/

Quinceanera

A sixteen-year-old girl talks about getting ready for her quinceanera, which is like a Latina "sweet 16" celebration. (Duration: 3:01)

www.prx.org/pieces/17906-quinceanera

Ricky, The Banjo, and Me

David Barber-Callaghan talks about growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, listening to his parents and their friends play bluegrass music on summer nights. (Duration: 4:09)

www.prx.org/pieces/16359-ricky-the-banjo-and-me

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Part 2: Welcome to My World

Activity 1B: The Genre of Memoir

Activity 1B.1: Reading for Narrative Technique

Selected Excerpts from Autobiographies and Memoirs on the California Recommended Reading List

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. In Chapter 9, the author meets her father for the first time and is reunited with her mother.

Ansary, Tamim. *West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story*. In Part One, The Lost World, "Villages and Compounds," the author describes the system of family life in Afghanistan from his own experiences, including brief biographies of his mother and father.

Bragg, Rich. *All Over But the Shouting*. In Chapter 11, "Under a hateful sky," the author works a construction job for his uncle and is accused of stealing. In Chapter 14, "100 miles per hour, upside down and sideways," the author puts all his savings into a new car, wrecks it in a high-speed chase, and almost kills himself.

Dahl, Roald. *Boy: Tales of Childhood*. In "Homesickness," the author fakes appendicitis in order to be sent home from boarding school.

Hickam Jr., Homer H. *Rocket Boys: A Memoir*. In Chapter 3: Mom, the author shoots off a rocket, and his mother talks to him about his creative potential.

Mah, Adeline Yen. *Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter*. In the fourth section of Chapter 6: Jia Chou Bu Ke wai Yang (Family Ugliness Should Never Be Aired in Public), the author is sent to a private missionary school and takes her first stand against her stepmother, choosing to walk miles to school rather than beg her stepmother for tram fare.

Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy: An Autobiography. The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*. In Chapter 19, the author is roused early in the morning to accompany the family to his grandmother's house, where his 13-year-old uncle has been arrested for not carrying a pass.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Bad Boy: A Memoir*. In "Bad Boy," the author writes about being made aware that he has a speech impediment, and learning to love literature.

Other Suggestions from the California Recommended Reading List

Allende, Isabel. *Paula*

Alvaraz, Julia. *Something to Declare*.

Ansary, Mir Tamim. *West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story*.

Canada, Geoffrey. *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*.

Cary, Lorene. *Black Ice*.

Chen, Da. *Sounds of the River*.

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Crutcher, Chris. *King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography*.

Dumas, Firoozeh. *Funny in Farsi*.

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*.

Gantos, Jack. *Hole in My Life*.

Herriott, James. *All Creatures Great and Smal*l.

Houston, Jeanne W. and James Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar*.

Jimenez, Francisco. *Circuit Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*.

Latifa. *My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story*.

McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*.

Paulsen, Gary. *My Life in Dog Years*.

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*.

Yen Mah, Adeline Mah. *Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter*.

Activity 2A: Sources of Memoir

This American Life, Public Broadcasting Corporation, Ira Glass on Storytelling, #1, #2, #3, and #4.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7KQ4vkiNUk

Activity 2B: Writing Your Memoir

Anthologies of Student Voices

Atkin, S. Beth. (2000). V*oices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories*. Boston: Little Brown. (Short memoirs based on interviews with students ranging in age from 9 to 18.) Selections:

- "Fitting In" by Andrea Martinez, pp. 36–43: Eighteen-year-old Andrea Martinez talks about the difficulties of fitting into the Mexican community in the United States with her Zapotec Indian heritage.
- "Life in a Gang" by Frank Rosas, pp. 56–63: Seventeen-year-old Frank Rosas discusses his involvement with gangs in Salinas, California.

Boas, Jacob (Ed.). (1996). *We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust*. Foreword by Patricia C. McKissack. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee (Ed). (1993). *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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Haynes, David, and Julie Landsman (Eds). (1998). *Welcome to Your Life: Writings for the Heart of Young America*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions. Selections:

- Excerpt from "A Leak in the Heart" by Faye Moskowitz, pp. 17–20
- "A Woman in April" by Andre Dubus, pp. 79–83

King, Laurie (Ed.). (1995). *Hear My Voice: A Multicultural Anthology of Literature from the United States*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

Multimedia

The Adobe Youth Voices Web site includes interviews, memoir monologues, and theatre pieces written, directed, and taped by teens.

www.adobe.com/cfusion/ayv/index.cfm?page=1

YouthRadio.us includes blogs and multimedia stories written and produced by young people.

www.youthradio.us/

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Additional Resources for Teachers

Part 1: Stories from Life

Activity 1A: Lend Me Your Ear

Books R4 Teens. College of Education, Education Resources. Multicultural book list.
www.edb.utexas.edu/resources/booksR4teens/multi.html

On Memoir, Truth and "Writing Well," recorded interview with William Zinsser, author of *On Writing Well*, April 13, 2006.
www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5340618

ReadWriteThink. Audio Broadcasts and Podcast: Oral Storytelling and Dramatization.
www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=901

ReadWriteThink. Plot diagram tool.
www.readwritethink.org/materials/plot-diagram/

Teaching Students to Read and Write Memoir.
http://web2.jefferson.k12.ky.us/CCG/supp/MS_Memoir.PDF

The Learning Network: Teaching and Learning with *The New York Times*. 10 Personal Writing Ideas.
http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/teaching-topics/teaching-topics-10-personal-writing-ideas/

Welcome to Inkspell, Dr. Z's Education Web site.
http://inkspell.homestead.com/memoir.html

Activity 2A: Sources of Memoir

Borg, Mary. (1998). *Writing Your Life: Autobiographical Writing Activities for Young People*. Fort Collins, CO: Cottonwood Press.

Christensen, Linda. (2000). *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

Willis, Meredith Sue. (1990). *Blazing Pencils: A Guide to Writing Fiction & Essays*. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative.

Activity 2B: Writing Your Memoir

Willis, Meredith Sue. (1993). *Deep Revision: A Guide for Teachers, Students, and Other Writers*. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative.

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Standards

This unit was developed to meet the following standards.

California Academic Content Standards for English, Grades 9–10

Reading

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Literary Criticism

3.11 Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)
3.12 Analyze the way in which a work of literature is related to the themes and issues of its historical period. (Historical approach)

Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

Organization and Focus

1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.
1.2 Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, and the active rather than the passive voice.

Research and Technology

1.4 Develop the main ideas within the body of the composition through supporting evidence.
1.6 Integrate quotations and citations into a written text while maintaining the flow of ideas.

Evaluation and Revision

1.9 Revise writing to improve the logic and coherence of the organization and controlling perspective, the precision of word choice, and the tone by taking into consideration the audience, purpose, and formality of the context.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Using the writing strategies of grades nine and ten outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

2.1 Write biographical or autobiographical narratives or short stories:

a. Relate a sequence of events and communicate the significance of the events to the audience.
b. Locate scenes and incidents in specific places.

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c. Describe with concrete sensory details the sights, sounds, and smells of a scene and the specific actions, movements, gestures, and feelings of the characters; use interior monologue to depict the characters' feelings.
d. Pace the presentation of actions to accommodate changes in time and mood.
e. Make effective use of descriptions of appearance, images, shifting perspectives, and sensory details.

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

1.0 Written And Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions.

Grammar and Mechanics of Writing

1.1 Identify and correctly use clauses, phrases, and mechanics of punctuation.
1.2 Understand sentence construction and proper English usage.
1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, and syntax.

Manuscript Form

1.4 Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
1.5 Reflect appropriate manuscript requirements, including title page presentation, pagination, spacing and margins, and integration of source and support material with appropriate citations.

Listening and Speaking

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:

a. Narrate a sequence of events and communicate their significance to the audience.
b. Locate scenes and incidents in specific places.
c. Describe with concrete sensory details the sights, sounds, and smells of a scene and the specific actions, movements, gestures, and feelings of characters.
d. Pace the presentation of actions to accommodate time or mood changes.

2.6 Deliver descriptive presentations:

a. Establish clearly the speaker's point of view on the subject of the presentation.
b. Establish clearly the speaker's relationship with that subject.
c. Use effective, factual descriptions of appearance, concrete images, shifting perspectives and vantage points, and sensory details.

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California Academic Content Standards for English, Grades 11–12

Reading

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Structural Features of Literature

3.1 Analyze characteristics of subgenres (e.g., satire, parody, allegory, pastoral) that are used in poetry, prose, plays, novels, short stories, essays, and other basic genres.
3.2 Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim.
3.3 Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author's style, and the "sound" of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both.

Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

Organization and Focus

1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse (e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments.
1.2 Use point of view, characterization, style (e.g., use of irony), and related elements for specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.
1.3 Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained, persuasive, and sophisticated way and support them with precise and relevant examples.
1.4 Use language in natural, fresh, and vivid ways to establish a specific tone.

Evaluation and Revision

1.9 Revise text to highlight the individual voice, improve sentence variety and style, and enhance subtlety of meaning and tone in ways that are consistent with the purpose, audience, and genre.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Using the writing strategies of grades eleven and twelve outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

2.1 Write fictional, autobiographical, or biographical narratives:

2.1a. Narrate a sequence of events and communicate their significance to the audience.
2.1b. Locate scenes and incidents in specific places.
2.1c. Describe with concrete sensory details the sights, sounds, and smells of a scene and the specific actions, movements, gestures, and feelings of the characters; use interior monologue to depict the characters' feelings.

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2.1d. Pace the presentation of actions to accommodate temporal, spatial, and dramatic mood changes.
2.1e. Make effective use of descriptions of appearance, images, shifting perspectives, and sensory details.

2.2 Write responses to literature:

2.2a. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the significant ideas in works or passages.
2.2b. Analyze the use of imagery, language, universal themes, and unique aspects of the text.
2.2c. Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text and to other works.
2.2d. Demonstrate an understanding of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created.
2.2e. Identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text.

2.3 Write reflective compositions:

2.3a. Explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions, or concerns by using rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, description, exposition, persuasion).
2.3b. Draw comparisons between specific incidents and broader themes that illustrate the writer's important beliefs or generalizations about life.
2.3c. Maintain a balance in describing individual incidents and relate those incidents to more general and abstract ideas.

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions.

1.1 Demonstrate control of grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage.
1.2 Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct punctuation and capitalization.
1.3 Reflect appropriate manuscript requirements in writing.

Listening and Speaking

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Using the speaking strategies of grades eleven and twelve outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

2.1 Deliver reflective presentations:

2.1a. Explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions, or concerns, using appropriate rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, description, exposition, persuasion).
2.1b. Draw comparisons between the specific incident and broader

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themes that illustrate the speaker's beliefs or generalizations about life.

2.1c. Maintain a balance between describing the incident and relating it to more general, abstract ideas.

California Career and Technical Education: Arts, Media, and Entertainment Industry Sector Foundation Standards

Communications

Reading

2.2 Analyze the way in which clarity of meaning is affected by patterns of organization, hierarchical structures, repetition of the main ideas, syntax, and word choice in the text.

2.5 Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions by using elements of the text to defend and clarify interpretations.

3.1 Analyze characteristics of subgenres (e.g., satire, parody, allegory, pastoral) that are used in poetry, prose, plays, novels, short stories, essays, and other basic genres.

3.2 Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim.

3.3 Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author's style, and the "sound" of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both.

3.7 Analyze recognized works of world literature from a variety of authors:

b. Relate literary works and authors to the major themes and issues of their eras.

Writing

1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse (e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments.

1.2 Use point of view, characterization, style (e.g., use of irony), and related elements for specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.

1.5 Use language in natural, fresh, and vivid ways to establish a specific tone.

1.9 Revise text to highlight the individual voice, improve sentence variety and style, and enhance subtlety of meaning and tone in ways that are consistent with the purpose, audience, and genre.

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Written and Oral English Language Conventions

1.1 Demonstrate control of grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage.
1.2 Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct punctuation and capitalization.
1.3 Reflect appropriate manuscript requirements in writing.

Applications of Listening and Speaking Strategies

1.6 Use logical, ethical, and emotional appeals that enhance a specific tone and purpose
1.7 Use appropriate rehearsal strategies to pay attention to performance details, achieve command of the text, and create skillful artistic staging.
1.8 Use effective and interesting language, including:

- **a.** Informal expressions for effect
- **b.** Standard American English for clarity
- **c.** Technical language for specificity

1.10 (Optional) Evaluate when to use different kinds of effects (e.g., visual, music, sound, graphics) to create effective productions.
1.11 Critique a speaker's diction and syntax in relation to the purpose of an oral communication and the impact the words may have on the audience.

Technology (Optional)

4.6 Know how technology and the arts are interrelated in the development of presentations and productions.
4.7 Understand how technology can reinforce, enhance, or alter products and performance.

Leadership and Teamwork

9.5 Understand how to interact with others in ways that demonstrate respect for individual and cultural differences and for the attitudes and feelings of others.
9.7 Cultivate consensus, continuous improvement, respect for the opinions of others, cooperation, adaptability, and conflict resolution.

Technical Knowledge and Skills

10.11 Know the ways in which literature builds an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., intellectual and philosophical, moral and ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

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Wiles, D. (September 10, 2008). Teaching Personal Narrative Writing. *One Pomegranate* [Web site]. Retrieved March 1, 2010, from http://deborahwiles1.blogspot.com/2008/09/teaching-personal-narrative-writing.html

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