

Common Core Standards for Memoir Writing Unit

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.A

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.B

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.C

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.E

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4

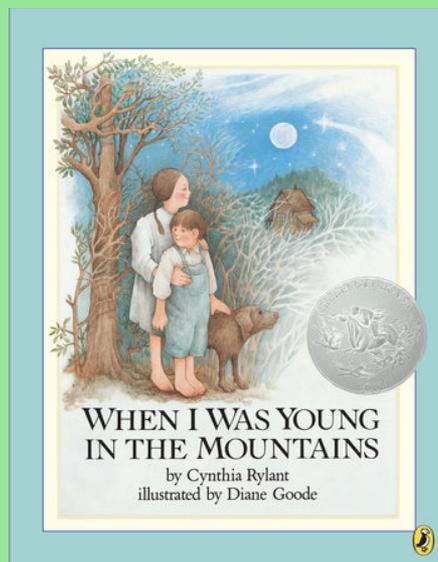
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Essential Questions:

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



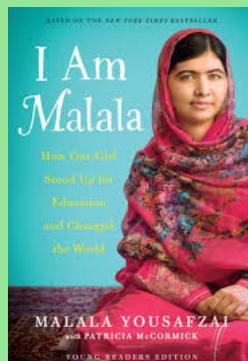
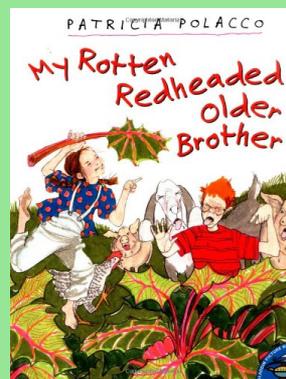
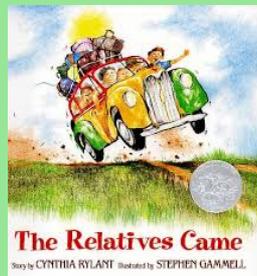
Lesson 1 - Elements of a Memoir

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

How will my learning be assessed today?:

-by identifying the elements of a memoir.

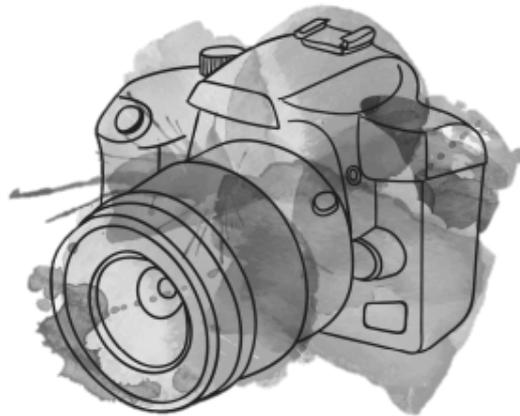
-by being able to explain the elements of a memoir.



I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

WHAT MAKES A MEMOIR?

Memorable Memoirs



"Memoir is a window into a life."
-William Zinsser

William Zinsser (1922-2015) was an American writer, editor, literary critic, and teacher. He began his career as a journalist for the New York Herald Tribune, where he worked as a feature writer, drama editor, film critic and editorial writer.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS QUOTE MEANS? WE WILL BE APPLYING THIS MESSAGE AS WE EMBARK ON WRITING OUR OWN MEMORABLE MEMOIRS!

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.



Writers how many of you are ten years old? I'm asking because so many of you have just turned (or are turning double digits. If you were Australian Aborigines, you'd soon be leaving on your walkabout. Does anyone know what that is?

It's what people call a *rite of passage*. It's a way of marking the shift from being a child to being an adolescent. In the Aborigine culture, the young person goes into the wilderness alone for six months. And they retrace the path of their history (including the paths of their ancestors) as a way to make the path forward. I'm telling you this because for our memoir unit, I think it would be good for you to each head off on a walkabout.

Well...not exactly but I do think it is important that we have a unit of study that marks the fact that you are going from being young kids to being teenagers. In the blink of an eye, you'll be in middle school.

In high school, there is some writing that kids do that helps them look back on the olden days and look forward to the next chapters in our lives--and I thought that even though you are going from elementary school to middle school, not from high school to college, that our next unit should be *that* kind of writing. The high school kids call it writing college essays but really they are also writing a memoir. You will write pieces that say, "This is who I am."

This will probably be the most challenging unit you have ever experienced. One of the hardest things about this unit is that I can't tell you, "This is how a memoir goes."

Some memoirs are essays. Some are poems. Some are stories. Most are what people call a *hybrid*--a combination. And you will have to figure out what share your writing might take.

A week or two from now, you'll have a notebook full of entries out of which you will make your memoir.

Rite of Passage

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.



Connection

In Writing Workshop we are now starting our unit on Memoirs.

Today I am going to teach you the elements of a Memoir so that when we start writing you know what to include.

So let's begin our journey...

Writers, when we begin a begin writing project, it helps to take time to read over work that is the sort of thing you plan to make. It's a bit like looking at the picture on the cover of a jigsaw puzzle before setting to work making that puzzle. It helps to think especially how all the parts fit together into the whole.

So we need to look at a finished memoir, something you know well.

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

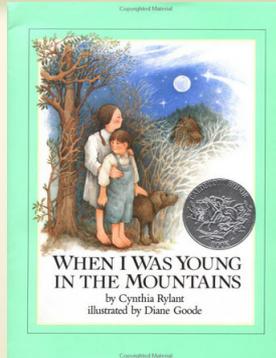
Let me show you what writers include in their memoirs so that you will know what to include when you are writing.

Teach

I'm going to read this beautiful memoir to you. Please follow along and please join me in thinking about whether there are different parts of the memoir. Please feel free to jot down what you are noticing in your notebooks. I'll do some annotating up here as well.

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Listen and follow along as I read this Memoir to you.



Teach

When I Was Young In The Mountains by Cynthia Rylant

When I was young in the mountains,
Grandfather came home in the evening
covered with the black dust of a coal mine.
Only his lips were clean, and he used them
to kiss the top of my head.

When I was young in the mountains,
Grandmother spread the table with hot
corn bread, pinto beans and fried okra.

Later, in the middle of the night,
she walked through the grass with me to the
Johnny house and held my hand in the dark.
I promised never to eat more than one serving
of okra again.

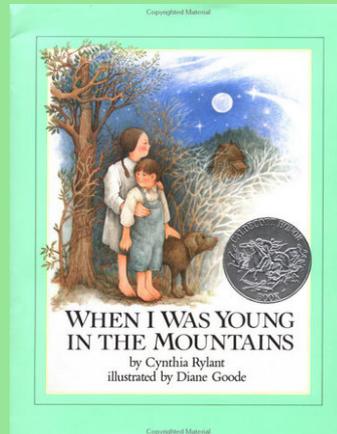
When I was young in the mountains,
we walked across the cow pasture and through
the woods, carrying our towels. The swimming
hole was dark and muddy, and we sometimes
saw snakes, but we jumped in anyway.

On our way home, we stopped at
Mr. Crawford's for a mound of white butter.
Mr. Crawford and Mrs. Crawford looked
alike and always smelled of sweet milk.

When I was young in the mountains,
we pumped pails of water from the well at
the bottom of the hill, and heated the water
to fill round tin tubs for our baths.

Afterward we stood in front of the
old black stove, shivering and giggling
while Grandmother heated eggs on top

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.



When I was young in the mountains,
we went to church in the schoolhouse
on Sundays, and sometimes walked with the
congregation through the cow pasture
to the dark swimming hole, for baptisms.

My cousin Peter was laid back into the
water, and his white shirt stuck to him,
and my Grandmother cried.

When I was young in the mountains,
we listened to frogs sing at dusk and awoke
to cowbells outside our window. Sometimes
a black snake came in the yard, and my
Grandmother would threaten it with a hoe.

If it did not leave, she used the hoe
to kill it. Four of us once draped a very
long snake, dead of course, across our necks
for a photograph.

When I was young in the mountains,
we sat on the porch swing in the evenings,
and Grandfather sharpened my pencils with his
pocketknife. Grandmother sometimes shelled
beans, and sometimes braided my hair. The dogs
lay around us, and the stars sparkled in the sky.
A bobwhite whistled in the forest.
Bob-bob-bobwhite!

When I was young in the mountains,
I never wanted to go to the oceans, and I never
wanted to go to the desert. I never wanted
to go anywhere else in the world, for I was
in the mountains. And that was always enough.

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Does When I was Young in the Mountains contain all or most of the elements?



Memoir

-special **memories** about people, places, objects.

✓(a memory means that the author had time to reflect on what happened.)

✓Memoirs...

✓Use the first person point of view

✓Are true accounts of actual events

Describe conflicts faced by the write

Include the writer's feelings about Historical Events or Social Issues

Teach
Anchor Chart

Characteristics Of A Memoir

It **describes an event** from the past - a memory.

It focuses on **one event** shared in the order it happened.

It is written in the **first person**. First person is (the viewpoint of) a character writing about himself or herself.

It is based on **truth**.

It shares the **"inside" feelings** of the writer.

It shares **what the author learned** or **how the author changed**.

It is more **about the author's experience** than the event itself.



I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Listen and follow along as I read this Memoir to you.

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On our way home, we stopped at Mr. Crawford's for a mound of white butter. Mr. Crawford and Mrs. Crawford looked alike and always smelled of sweet milk.

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When I was young in the mountains, we went to church in the schoolhouse on Sundays, and sometimes walked with the congregation through the cow pasture to the dark swimming hole, for baptisms.

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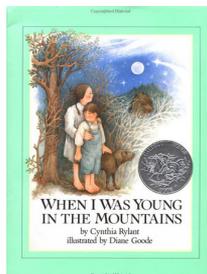
When I was young in the mountains, I never wanted to go to the oceans, and I never wanted to go to the desert. I never wanted to go anywhere else in the world, for I was in the mountains. And that was always enough.

I and my are words used for first person

Conflicts faced by the writer.

Teach

The writer's feelings about the historical events.



I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Now, it's your turn to show me how writers include elements of a memoir in a story, so that you will know what to include when you are writing.

Active Engagement

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Active Engagement

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Turn and Talk with your writing partner. Does Marshfield Dreams contain all or most of the elements of a Memoir?



Marshfield

THERE' A TOWN called Marshfield in the state of Vermont. You can also find a Marshfield in Maine, one in Missouri, and one in Wisconsin. I grew up in Marshfield, Massachusetts. The curly part of Massachusetts that sticks out into the ocean is Cape Cod. Marshfield sits on the ocean, just above that curl.

I lived on Acorn Street in a regular house bordered by forest on two sides. Dad owned seven acres of woods in back. Across a dirt driveway we had Ale's Woods, a forest of pine trees. The pines dropped millions of needles, which gave the forest floor a nice, springy feel. Those trees were great for climbing. If I crawled out too far on a limb

and fell, the soft needles cushioned my fall, so I never got hurt.

The woods held magical things. We found snake skins, real Indian arrowheads, box

turtles, beehives, snake spit on tall grass. We dug up the buried trash from people who

lived there many years before. We saw gravestones so old we could no longer read the

names carved in them. We found all kinds of mushrooms. Some were edible, and others were poisonous toadstools. Mom said to think of them as strangers—some are good, some are bad, and since you couldn't tell the difference it was best to leave them

alone. One morning in the woods I stepped into a fairy ring of mushrooms, a big circle ten feet across.

There was a tiny stream in our backyard small enough so you could step from one bank

to the other. This stream flowed under the dirt driveway and formed a swamp at the edge of Ale's Woods. I loved the dank smell of that swamp and all the things that lived there: mossy logs and goggle-eyed frogs, bloodsuckers and eels and foul-smelling skunk cabbage. Half the swamp was underwater, and the other half contained thick, dense mud. It was impossible to walk through that muck without getting stuck. More than once I tried and left behind one of my sneakers, a lost sole sunk forever at the bottom of the swamp. I got in trouble for that. But today I'm glad to know that something

of mine was left behind in Marsh-field.

Use the first person point of view.

Are true accounts of actual events.

Describe conflicts faced by the writer.

Include the writer's feelings about Historical Events or Social Issues.

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

So, writers we have been learning what elements writers include in their memoirs so that you will know what to include when you are writing.

Use the first person point of view

Are true accounts of actual events

Describe conflicts faced by the write

Include the writer's feelings about Historical Events or Social Issues

Link

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

1. Work as a group and use the book or mentor text from your packet at your table to find the elements of a memoir. As you study the samples, you will probably notice that every memoir contains some storytelling and then some writing about ideas and opinions. Jot down your observations with your partners.
2. Then in your Writer's Notebook, write a story using the elements of a memoir.

Independent work

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I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Remind students of the elements they should be looking for. Focus on any that most students are not seeing.

Midworkshop
Interruption

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I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

So what were some of your noticings about memoirs? Where, in the book or mentor text that your table studied, did you find the elements of a memoir?

What did you do as a writer today as you wrote your first entry?

Share

I can explain the elements of a memoir by using a checklist.

Teacher Page

Student Handouts: Each student should have a copy of (or copy into their notebook) the Memoir Checklist.

Differentiation: For students who are having trouble locating the elements of a memoir, model using a different excerpt from a Memoir on their level.

Assessment:

Self-Students will refer to the "How will I be assessed" slide in order to assess their abilities and understanding during active engagement, mid-workshop interruption, and share.

Teacher-conferring, collect a table's notebooks for reading, and listen to student's partner conversations.

January 10, 2018

