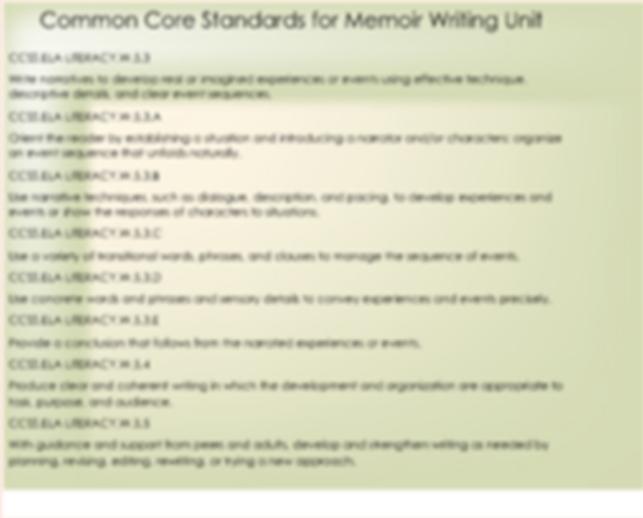


LESSON 16: I CAN DRAFT BY CHOOSING EMBLEMATIC DETAILS AND BY REALIZING THAT EVERY DETAIL COUNTS!!!



The image shows a document titled "Common Core Standards for Memoir Writing Unit" with a list of standards from CC.8-10.EA.W.3.1 to CC.8-10.EA.W.3.5. The standards describe various aspects of memoir writing, such as using narrative techniques, organizing events, and providing conclusions.

**Common Core Standards for Memoir Writing Unit**

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.1  
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.2A  
Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.2B  
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.2C  
Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.2D  
Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.2E  
Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.4  
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CC.8-10.EA.W.3.5  
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?

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CONNECT: Writers you have worked really hard to be sure that when you work on the narrative sections of your memoir, you write not only the external but also the internal storyline--considering how your internal story will evolve and change across a story. Today, I want to teach you about the way you describe events in your memoir because as I think you realize, every since part of your memoir reveals who you are.

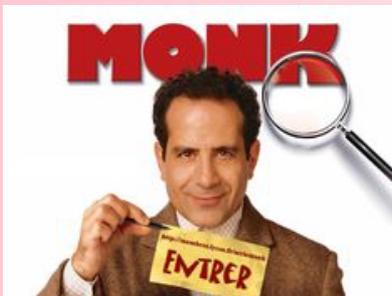
Writers don't simply add details into their drafts because they are true. We include them because they are important to a text. And in a memoir, that usually means the details say something about the kind of person we are, the kind of life we lead. We call these details, *emblematic* which means they stand for something very important or significant.



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TEACH: Every detail a writer adds into a short text is chosen because it furthers the writer's message.

Some families watch the television show, *Monk*. At the start of this mystery show, some extraneous detail always happens--a cat runs across the living room, a neighbor makes a cake and brings it by and those details are never by accident. They always turn out to be part of the solution to the mystery. That's how mysteries go and frankly that's how well written texts go.



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ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: Writers may use details to paint a family or a life. Let's look at the following text and then turn and talk to your partner about places where the author uses emblematic details.

The following young man wrote a memoir about visiting his grandparents. Stop and jot places where he reveals something about the sort of person he is or family he belongs to.

*A Family Portrait*

*As we approached my grandparents' sprawling farmhouse last Christmas, my brother and I went silent. In single file, suitcase in hand, we marched down the ramshackle brick path. The storm door shut as we entered the mud room, then trooped up the short flight of stairs, past the boxes of apples, home-laid eggs, the dog food and into the kitchen. Catalogs were strewn across the tables. Christmas cards dangled from the walls. Dogs lay curled under the tables and chairs and cousins of all shapes and sizes--thirty four in all--perched on every surface. In the corner, Virginia's parrot squeaked, "Hello, Charlie. Hello, Charlie" as he swung chaotically in his cage.*

*Virginia the matriarch of the family furtively scanned the room in a conspiring tone, she asked, "Did you hear what happened?..."*

Right now I want you to think about your own home and your own entrance way. Remember the first things you see and do when you arrive home. Turn and talk to your partner about a time when you arrived home and walked into your place. Use details not because they are true but because they will reveal whatever it is you want to show about yourself, your family and your home.

INDEPENDENT: Writers today you may wish to revise your draft as to include more revealing details about yourself. Remember it's not just the internal thinking that reveals you. Every detail in your memoir reveals you. Therefore, we choose our details carefully thinking, "What does this detail show about the kind of person I am and the kind of life I lead?"

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MID WORKSHOP INTERRUPTION: INVENTING DETAILS. Sometimes when our memoirs fail us, we need to make up the details. The secret is to invent the details so they reveal the truth of your life. Let's go back to Miles' story. He went on to describe how he sat underneath the Christmas tree and Christmas stockings--which he may or may not have actually done. He selected details that captured what we wanted to show about his family. So you can put yourself on a rocking chair or bean bag chair--whatever would best fit you. In other words, the details may not be true with a small "t" but true with a capital "T" because they reveal the real you!!!

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SHARE: What did you do as a writer today? How were you able to take a tiny action and write about it with great details? Let's share a bit of our writing.



HOMEWORK: USING DETAILS TO REVEAL POINT OF VIEW. Writers, early this year you learned that details are important in writing and today you learned a lot about how writers go about writing details that will be powerful. Tonight take a moment and write what it is you are trying to show about yourself and the way you see the world. Of course, as we are learning, you want to show what you are feeling early in the piece and something else at a different time. Record in the margin what it is you want to show about your point of view of the world at each point in your story. Then go through your draft and find other places where you could write with more precise details. REMEMBER THAT THE DETAILS YOU NOTICE WILL SAY AS MUCH ABOUT YOU AS THEY SAY ABOUT THE WORLD BEFORE YOUR EYES. FOR EXAMPLE, IF I AM FEELING GENEROUS, I MIGHT DESCRIBE ANTICS AT A BIRD FEEDER THIS WAY:

*I watched as two sparrows landed on the bird feeder and immediately began pecking at the seed. "Poor birds, they look hungry," I thought and reminded myself to buy more birdseed at the grocery store. Then a large black crow settled beside the smaller birds and they spun away. "I should hang up another feeder so there is space for everyone," I thought.*

VS. If I felt cranky I could see the same scene differently:

*Two sparrows landed on the bird feeder and immediately began pecking at the seed. "Golly these guys are so dependent on my handouts," I thought. "Can't they get any food for themselves at all?"*

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TEACHER NOTES:

If kids are having trouble with writing with details, remind them that it begins with living with details. You have to be in the moment and look at the world around us--at things that may not seem that important. Let's try to see the wonder of it all--"that dark, foreboding sky that indicates rain may be around the corner" or the snap, crackle and pop in the bowl of my Rice Krispies cereal. So just take a moment and describe what you see before you right now--use sensory details and remember the beauty of the moment--the sheer wonder of it all--the extraordinary in what seems ordinary!!!

