

MEMOIR SESSION 20: I CAN EDIT BY MATCHING SOUND TO MEANING

## 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.

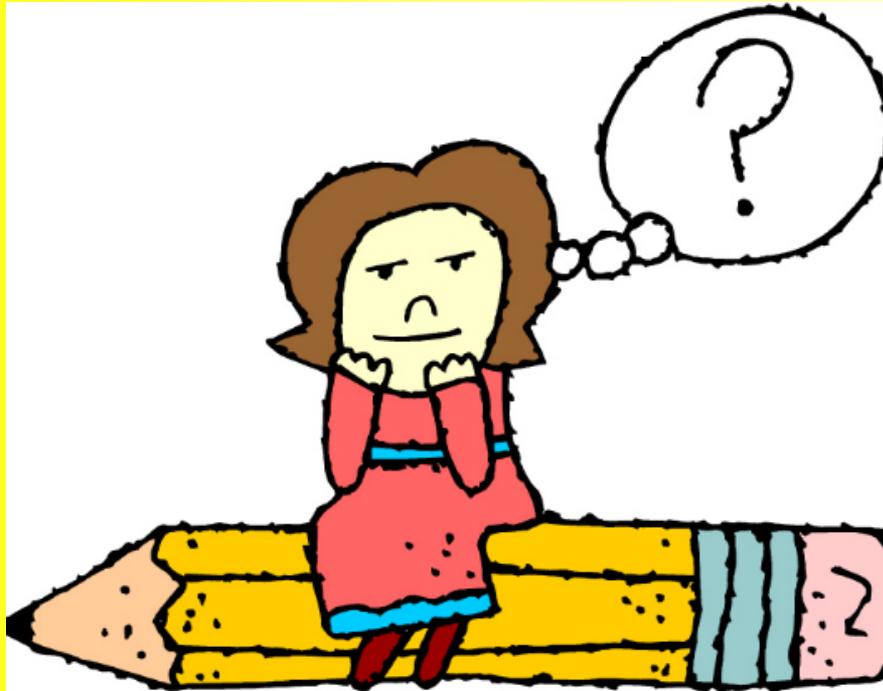
### Essential Questions:

- 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?

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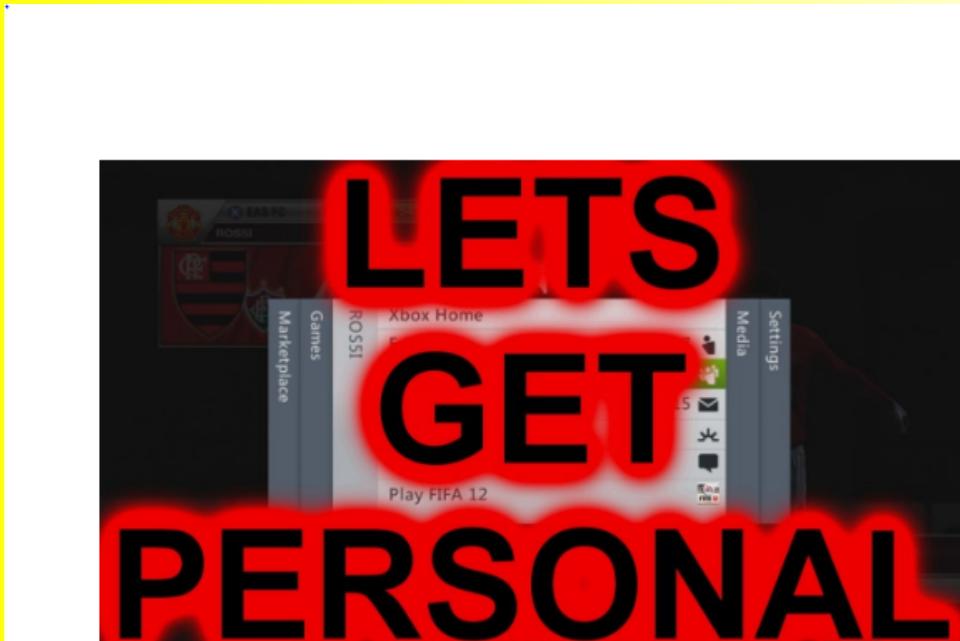
CONNECT: Writers, you know that it is important to edit in order to check for spelling and to indent our paragraphs. You know that in order to be taken seriously as a writer, it is important to scrutinize our drafts, reading our writing over and over that so that we find and mend places where our ideas tumble onto each other or places where our thoughts hang awkwardly in mid-air.

But today I want to emphasize that when we as writers edit our writing, we read it out loud to hear the sound of each word, to hear the rhythm of our sentences. Author Truman Capote wrote, "To me, the greatest pleasure of writing is the inner music the words make." The sound of our words is powerful. Writers communicate with readers by choosing words that convey not only the content but also the mood, the tone and the feelings that we want to convey.



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TEACH: In order to learn how to write for one's ear, it helps to look at texts that other authors have written. Once again, let's return to "Eleven." We all feel like we can look into Rachel's heart and see how hurt and powerless she feels and how she's a sad accumulation of all the moments that came before her. We can notice the varied lengths of her sentences, her word choice and the different kinds of punctuation she uses. She used list like sentences and short abrupt sentences along with long sentences that seemed like they would never end. The sound of Rachel's words were forceful and direct and created clear, elaborate images that help us understand her feelings on a very deep and personal level.



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Reading our writing aloud can help us edit for sound. Remember my Mrs. Beasley piece about my "mission impossible" to find my "childhood friend" and stay connected to happy moments from my past? Notice the inner dialogue? The variation in sentence lengths? As we discussed before, it's like a "ping pong" back and forth exchange as I question myself. There's narrative intertwined. I actually modeled this piece off of Paul Auster's "He Remembers," writing about my experiences in third person narrative. There's the comfort and relief when I finally get ahold of my old pal and get reassured by the two big bright buttons that beam back at her. I deliberately wanted to create a sense of movement, excitement and a bit of sadness, longing to recreate the past as I finally got a hold of this doll--my friend. I had to try and make sure the writing matched the ideas I wanted to convey and the images were clear to the reader--even those like you who may have no idea who Mrs. Beasley actually was.

**She remembers stopping at one flea market. The wrong flea market. Oh no! It's almost five o'clock! She panics. No sign of Mrs. Beasley there. But then comes that magical moment when some helpful guy at the wrong flea market directed her to the right place! "Across the street," he points. "Over there!"**

**"Whew!" she remembers sighing. She got there just in the nick of time to claim her prized polka-dotted pal. One hundred and seventy five dollars poorer, she remembers emerging with her faithful friend in tow.**

**She clutched Mrs. Beasley just as tightly as Buffy did years earlier. You're coming home with me! She says to herself. You're thirty years old! What would people think? Shut up! She remembers saying to the sensible voice deep inside that was quickly silenced. Who cares? Those that know me understand. This is not a doll. This is a friend.**

**"Black market Beasley," her friends quip in unison as she tightly grips the shopping bag that held Mrs. Beasley inside. They applaud as she stood besides them with the polka dotted-clad girl. She remembers how her friends said that it looked like she was holding a package full of some illegal contraband inside. "Nah," she remembers replying. "Just an old pal."**

**She remembers bringing Buffy's buddy to her new apartment. Looking at Mrs. Beasley put her back into her bell-bottom pants, a big smiley face T-shirt and a mood ring. There's some kind of magic in those big blue eyes! She remembers saying to herself, feeling comforted and reassured by the two big bright blue buttons that beamed back at her.**



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ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: Let's get ready to listen to a bit of a student's memoir and try editing it to match the sound to the meaning. We will then edit our own writing to ensure that the writing sounds in a way that communicates our ideas as best it can.

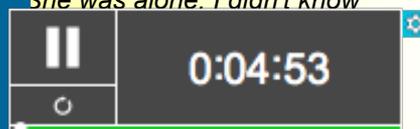
Here's a scene that her little as you listen **content of it**

*The doors of what to do. I*



and she was when she thought convey in the back of your mind **of her writing match the**

*She was alone. I didn't know*



HOW CAN WE MAKE IT HAVE MORE EXCITEMENT:

HOW ABOUT THIS?

*Slam! The train doors shut behind me as i stepped from the train onto the platform. My sister wasn't next to me where she had been, a moment ago! When I turned to find her, the subway started with her in it. All I could see was her tiny face looking out the closed train door!!!*

So writers as you make your editing decisions today and on other days, remember it's not enough to make sure each word and sentence looks right. It's not enough to say, "Oh, I've used capital letters and I've made sure to use punctuation." We also need to make sure our writing sounds the way we want it to. We need to make sure the sound communicates our ideas." Practice reading your pieces aloud to yourself--quietly and to your partners and make sure your memoirs sound the way you want them to!!!

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**IMPORTANT REMINDERS AS YOU COMMUNICATE IDEAS THROUGH THE SOUND OF OUR SENTENCES:**

- For some effects, we can vary the way we begin our sentences.
- For some effects, we can vary the length of our sentences.

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## MID WORKSHOP INTERRUPTION: USING PUNCTUATION TO CREATE SOUND.

Writers, can I have your attention please? As I walked around the room, I can hear your memoirs. I can see you editing and listening to them again to hear how your changes sound. Many of you are reading your writing to your partners and asking them to listen and give your feedback. That's a great idea because sometimes we have a hard time hearing the sound of our own words because you've heard them so many times.

You're working on varying your word choice and sentence lengths as well as rewording your sentences to add variety to your writing. But there's another choice that writers make that affects the sound and therefore the meaning of their writing. That's our punctuation choices. Let's look at a couple of lines from the story, *Night in the Country* by Cynthia Rylant. Notice how still and quiet her writing sounds. There are two lines in particular that go:

*And if you lie very still, you may hear an apple fall from the tree in the back yard.*

*Listen: PUMP!*

That last line is what really brings out the tone and mood. She uses a colon after "Listen" to set up the sound that the apple makes as it falls. Then she adds an exclamation point after, "Pump!" to make that single sound—one that would normally be so quiet—ring out.

You can play with punctuation as you write so that you can bring out the tone of your writing. Right now, take a minute to reread your writing to see how the punctuation choices that you've made help to bring out the tone in your writing. If you don't find that they do, find a spot that you might rewrite. From now on, remember that using punctuation is another way you can make your writing sound the way you intend.

## Punctuation and meaning

Speakers use tone of voice to shape meaning.  
Writers use punctuation marks.

*David Crystal*

It's not there.

It's not there!

It's not there?

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SHARE: What did you do today as a writer?  
How did you ensure that everything you are writing is clear and the sound matches the meaning you wish to express?



- HOMEWORK: USING THE SOUND OF LANGUAGE TO CONVEY MEANING.** Today's workshop focused new attention on the sound of our writing and how word and sentences and punctuation choices affect that sound. Being able to listen closely is a tremendously important part of being a writer. The way our writing sounds on the page helps us to convey meaning. Tonight, I want to you read your writing aloud and think about how it sounds. Ask yourself the following questions:
- Does my word choice and sentence structure and punctuation convey what I am trying to say? Underline places where your writing has a strong sound--lonely or confused or joyful-related. Then ask yourself:
  - Is this the feeling that I want my reader to have?

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TEACHING SUPPORT:

IF STUDENTS SEEM TO BE WRITING WITH AN INCONSISTENT USE OF MECHANICS...teach them to find mentor sentences in their own writing where their words and structure glisten. It may be the structure or punctuation but remind them that when they do something beautiful, we set new expectations for ourselves. We should try to continue to lift our writing to new heights. Find other places where you can craft wonderful sentences.

IF STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH SPELLING...teach them to live their lives as students of spelling. Listen to words and study their spelling, develop curiosities and theories and in the process develop the experiences needed to accurately spell words in their writing. You can also provide them with a fifth grade word list of commonly misspelled words.

Good spellers sometimes make up rhymes to remember rules. (Like "i" before "e" except after "c" or if pronounced "a" as in "neighbor" or "weigh." Sometimes knowing the spelling of one word will open the door of others. We should also keep dictionaries and thesauruses near by to assist us.

More reminders: If a word doesn't look quite right, probably because we've seen it spelled correctly somewhere else. One thing that good writers do is try writing the words they're not sure about in a couple of different ways. We can think about the part of the words we are not sure about. Then try writing the word a different way, stretching it out slowly, listening to each sound. When it's as close as we can get, we can meet with someone else to help us.

During conferring, we can

- Indicate a line that contains a spelling error and ask the writer to find it and try to correct it.
- Underline misspelled words that you think the writer should know and ask them to correct them.
- Show the writer how to spell a limited number of words that are misspelled if you think they would be useful for the writer to learn.