UNIT DESIGN

Personal Narrative Unit of Study

Reading Work to Support a Genre Study in Writing Workshop

• Gather and study published personal narratives to become familiar with this type of writing

• Collect books to read in the personal narrative inquiry that are models for what will be taught

• Read aloud and have conversations with students about
  o responses as readers
  o ideas around why this narrative is important to the writer
  o elements of personal narratives
  o where and how personal narrative writers get ideas
  o the purpose(s) of personal narrative writing

• The teacher decides upon touchstones, asking:
  o Is this text an example of the kind of writing students will do?
  o Does this text help students envision possibilities to emulate in their own writing?
  o Is this text a good example of what I’m teaching into?
  o Can this text be read in one read aloud?
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Ideas for Collecting in Writing Notebooks

Over time, students will...

• Revisit touchstone texts to discuss where and how personal narrative writers get ideas

• Try out the habits of mind of personal narrative writers, carry their writing notebooks with them and capture ideas from:
  o Every day events
  o Ideas that come from sharing stories with other writers
  o Stories in their lives
  o Ideas that come from reading personal narrative texts
  o Memories
  o Important people and places that they don’t want to forget
  o Thinking about times they realized or learned something
  o Strong feelings
  o Rereading entries to spark new life stories

• “Story tell” with other writers to spark ideas

• Trust the process of discovery in the act of writing

• Share ideas with and get ideas from other writers

• Write every day

• Explore and discover thoughts while writing

• Develop a treasure chest of ideas to choose from when picking a topic to work on for publishing

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Ideas for Choosing a Topic
Over time, students will... 

• Carefully reread entries and ask themselves,
  o Which WNB entry is really important to me?
  o Which entry can I say more about?
  o Which entry do I want to spend more time working on for our personal narrative publication?
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Ideas for Nurturing a Topic

Over time, students will . . .

• Carefully reread their writing, asking themselves why their topic is important to them and then

• Write about why their topic matters to them

• Find the focus for their writing and write small in terms of time

• Slow down time to convey what matters to the reader

• See the movie in their mind, asking where the story begins

• Not only write about what happens, but their response and internal thoughts about their small moment narrative

• Ask other possible questions to push thinking
  o What does this writing tell me about myself?
  o What does this writing tell me about the world?
  o Can I dig deeper and find a theme in my writing?

• Try possible ways to layer onto their writing
  o interview someone who was a part of a memory
  o Go to the special place in their writing
  o Look at photographs and other artifacts to jog memories

• Talk with fellow writers about their ideas and write from their responses

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Ideas for Planning a Draft

Over time, students will...  

- Organize and structure the events, using a graphic organizer as a temporary guide, perhaps as a timeline or a storyboard, making sure the events support the meaning.

- Think about where their narrative may begin and end, having determined the importance of the topic they’ve chosen and having determined a focus for their writing.

- Reread their entries and think about which events to include and which events to delete in order to focus on what’s important.

- Refer to mentor texts that they want to emulate.

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Ideas for Writing Draft(s) Outside of the Writing Notebook

Over time, students will . . .

• Write a first draft on separate sheets of paper, outside of the notebook, using their plan for the structure

• Remember that writing a draft is not recopying an entry – drafting is new thinking and it’s messy

• Approach the draft(s) as an opportunity to explore and play around with the sequence of events in their narrative

• Think of their drafts as the foundation for their writing in order to make decisions about what to include, delete, and ways to craft their writing

• Keep in mind that there’s no specific number of drafts that will ensure great writing – however, most likely, there will be many versions of the original draft

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Ideas for Revising

Over time, students will...

• Refer to mentor texts to learn from published writers

• Refer to mentor texts that use craft moves they want to try in their writing

• Reread and re-see their writing in order to make changes that will make their writing the best it can be

• Consider the importance in their writing and ask, Do the events and the details support what I want the reader to think about?

• Try the craft moves they learned about in mini-lessons and see if they enhance the meaning in their writing

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Ideas for Editing
Over time, students will. . .

• Proofread their writing as a habit of mind

• Use strategies taught during a skills block, outside of writing workshop, to edit personal narratives

• Use the one or two editing skills they learned during this personal narrative unit of study within their writing for this publication and within their future writing

• Polish their writing, using what they’ve been taught, for going public

• Use editing skills to enhance the meaning of their writing

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Ideas for Celebrating and Reflecting

*Over time, students will...*

- Publish their writing for a variety of audiences and purposes
- Go public and celebrate their writing in a variety of ways
- Reflect on their learning as writers and set goals for future writing

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