

# Writing Workshop

## Grade 8 Launching with Memoir

---

Written by Nicole Maraventano & Kari McGann

Readington Township Board of Education

August 2013

Reviewed by: Reviewed by: Dr. Barbara Sargent, Superintendent  
Kari McGann, Supervisor of Humanities

Board of Education approval: August 2013

Members of the Board of Education:

David Livingston, President

Cheryl Filler, Vice-President

Barbara Dobozyński

Wayne Doran

Ray Egbert

William Goodwin

Vincent Panico

Laura Simon

Eric Zwerling

Readington Township Public Schools  
52 Readington Road, Whitehouse Station, NJ  
08889

[www.readington.k12.nj.us](http://www.readington.k12.nj.us)

# Writing Workshop

**Unit length: About 30 days**

**Grade 8**

## **Unit 1: Memoir: Authoring the Stories of our Lives**

### **Unit Rationale**

**Overview:** This unit is intended for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in Language Arts. The unit will be approximately 5 weeks long and includes an introduction to the course as well as lessons on the Memoir genre. Students will create a series of vignettes around topics or themes of their lives. Key topics of this unit will include ways writers develop and organize ideas, use concrete and appropriate details, and employ proper conventions. The first part of the unit will be on helping students to write with volume—both in their writing notebooks and in essays. They will collect both entries and idea-based writing. Students will research the structure of memoir and notice that there are different forms of memoir; essay-like structure, list-like structure, and narrative with reflection. This unit will ask students to transfer what they already know about opinion and narrative writing to form a bridge between the two.

**Rationale:** This unit serves as an introduction to the year-long course. By beginning the year with the stories and themes of our lives, the classroom will become a space for a community of risk-taking writers. Students will learn how to keep a writer’s notebook and use it throughout the year to develop ideas for writing. Students will also learn the procedures of a writer’s workshop and practice thinking and reading like a writer. Students will be given the opportunity to work deeply and closely together while writing memoirs. Students will have a chance to define themselves as growing individual, a change to author life stories that they can take with them as they leave the safety of childhood and held out into the world.

As the first unit of the year, students will have the opportunity to share personal stories and experiences that will help develop ideas for their Memoir. Using mentor texts (published memoirs), students will study how writers collect ideas, compose drafts, and revise and edit writing for publication.

#### **Enduring Understandings**

- Writers have a purpose for writing.

#### **Essential Questions**



- How do authors tell the stories of their lives? Why do

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is a multi-stage process.</li> <li>• Writing is a reflective process.</li> </ul>	<p>they tell their stories? Why do readers enjoy these stories?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do writers collect and develop ideas?</li> <li>• How can I make my writing clearer, focused, and hold my reader's attention?</li> <li>• How do writers use craft to highlight emotion, complex inner thinking, and tension of moment?</li> </ul>
---	---

Unit Content (What the student will learn.)	Unit Skills (What the student will be able to do.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to collect and develop ideas</li> <li>• How to choose a writing structure</li> <li>• How to craft leads and conclusions</li> <li>• How to find a writing territory or universal theme</li> <li>• Ways to revise for organization of ideas</li> <li>• Ways to edit for conventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Transitioning</li> <li>• Incorporating narrative elements</li> <li>• Writing with Reflection and Purpose</li> <li>• Synthesis of events and moments</li> <li>• Notice the qualities of Memoir</li> </ul>

Unit Standards	Core Vocabulary	Links to Technology	Resources
<p><b>Common Core Curriculum Standards</b></p> <p>Writing:  <a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3</a> Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant</p>	<p>Elements of plot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exposition</li> <li>- Rising action</li> <li>- Climax</li> <li>- Falling action</li> <li>- Resolution</li> </ul> <p>Internal Monologue</p> <p>Transition words and phrases</p>		<p>Mentor Texts (Instructional Read Aloud):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">House on Mango Street</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Growing Up</a> by Russell Baker</li> <li>• <a href="#">Big Russ and Me</a> by Tim Russer</li> <li>• Excerpt from <a href="#">Black Boy</a> by Richard Wright</li> <li>• <a href="#">Chicken Soup for the Writer's Soul</a> by Canfield, Hansen, and Gardner</li> <li>• <a href="#">Walking on the Boundaries of Change</a></li> </ul>

<p>descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4</a> Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5</a> With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 8 <a href="#">here</a>.)</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-</a></p>	<p>Figurative language</p>		<p>by Sara Holbrook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Crow Call</a> by Lois Lowry</li> <li>• <a href="#">Writing Down the Bones Freeing the Writer Within</a> by Natalie Goldberg</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>Unit Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Marley &amp; Me</a> (Lexile 1050)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Tuesdays With Morrie</a> (GR Level: U Lexile Level: 1050)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Knots in My Yo-Yo String</a> (GR Level: U Lexile Level 980)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Chinese Cinderella</a> (Lexile Level: 960)</li> <li>• Memoir Excerpts: <a href="#">Marshfield Dreams: When I was a kid, etc</a></li> <li>• Great Essayists’ writings by Joan Didion, Malcolm Gladwell, Barbara Kingsolver</li> <li>• <i>Starting with I</i> published by Youth Communications (essay by an adolescent)</li> <li>• <i>The Struggle to Be Strong</i> by Youth Communications (essay by an adolescent)</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher Resources:</b></p> <p><a href="http://readingandwritingproject.com/">http://readingandwritingproject.com/</a></p> <p>Core Curriculum Content Standards  <a href="http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-">http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-</a></p>
--	----------------------------	--	--

<p><a href="#">Literacy.W.8.6</a> Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.10</a> Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p> <p><b><u>Reading:</u></b> <a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.5</a> Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.</p>			<p><a href="#">standards</a></p> <p> <a href="http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards">http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards</a></p> <p>Please visit the following website to view the Common Core Anchor Papers for Writing. Anchor papers provide you with an example of <i>real</i> student work aligned with the Common Core Writing Standards. This is a great resource to use as professional development, as well as using with your class. When students can see examples of the expectation, they tend to perform better.</p> <p> <a href="http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards">http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards</a></p> <p>Scroll down and click on <b>English Language Arts Appendix C</b>. Click <b>OK</b> to download and prepare to wait a few minutes, as it is a large file.</p> <p>You will find student examples of the three types of writing: narrative, informative, and opinion. Although each grade level is required to write three types of writing, you will only find two out of the three genres. Therefore, view the previous or proceeding grade level for the missing genre you need.</p>
--	--	--	---

<p><b>Speaking &amp; Listening:</b> <a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1</a> Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p> <p><u>Foundational Skills</u> <u>Grammar</u></p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1</a> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2</a> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3</a> Use knowledge of language and its</p>			<p><b>Teacher Resources:</b></p> <p><u>Writing a Life</u> by Katherine Bomer</p> <p><u>50 Tools for Writers</u> by Roy Peter Clark</p> <p><u>Crafting Authentic Voice</u> by Tom Romano</p> <p><u>Boy Writers</u> by Ralph Fletcher</p> <p><u>Write Like This</u> by Kelly Gallagher</p> <p><u>Shaping Texts From Essay and Narrative to Memoir</u> by Lucy Calkins</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4</a> Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on <i>grade 8 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.5</a> Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.6</a> Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p>			
--	--	--	--