

# Lesson Plan Overview

Grade: 9 ELA

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Memory and Memorials

Lesson Overview

## Mission Statement:

Students will be able to write about how their memories effect who they are. They will be able to write narrative pieces with clear structure. Students will write from photographs from the internet, photographs from childhood, and documents from home. Students will use their decoding skills to analyze images and write about it. Students do not have a lot of opportunities to write about themselves in the high school English classroom. Writing memoir can help students discover important moments and memories that have shaped them into who they are. Students get to learn more about the writing process, revising, and peer reviewing. Students will learn how to write from their perspective, something which they will do in their future, whether that be college essays, personal statements, or general communication with others.

One of this unit's main goals is to create a sense of belonging in the classroom. Students will be sharing personal experiences with others, so there needs to be a sense of respect and community in the classroom. When students have a sense of belonging it was, "positively associated with persistence, use of campus services, and mental health," (Gopalan and Brady).

Reflection Notebooks is a material that is used in a majority of these lessons. This is a notebook that students take notes in, brainstorm, quick write, draw in, and reflect. They will be using this notebook for the entire year and will be a resource that they refer back to. This notebook is a place for students to write their reader response to mentor texts. For students who are nervous to talk in class, this is a place for them to collect their thoughts. For students who are adamant to talk, this is a place where they can formulate their thoughts and figure out how to present their arguments and opinions before they speak.

## In Class Texts:

*Radio Hill* by Alex Prager

*The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls

*Jean Howard's Hollywood: A Photo Memoir* by Jean Howard

*Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna Kaysen

*Blended* by Alyssa Doust

"Photos at the Tokyo Olympics: Emotion Runs High" by Mish Coffey and Lisa Tolin

"A Day in the Life of a Student at Home" by Brian Huynh

# Memoir Writing Final Project

## Weekly Plan:

Decoding Skills

Creating Community

Intro to Memoir Writing

Fake Memoir Writing

Writing From Photographs

Writing From Documents

Photo Essay

Writing with Documents and Photographs

Work Days and Conferences With Students About Final Assessment

## Final Assessment:

Students create a final product that contains supplemental documents/photographs to aid their memoir writing.

Students will have seen examples of expressions of memoir, and will get inspiration from these mentor texts.

Students can create any form of media that they chose. Some examples are;

- Photo Essay/Story
- Short Story with images or documents
- Zine
- Brochure
- Presentation/powerpoint
- Website
- Video
- Music Video
- Or anything else approved by the teacher

Students will write a proposal and work on it for a week to perfect their work.

Students will have meetings with the teacher to see how they are progressing

Students will have the opportunity to write creatively about themselves. They will reflect on life experiences and how they have changed them. These stories should be appropriate as if you are sharing these with the public.

# Memoir Writing Rubric

Highlights	Criteria	Improvements
	<i>Student uses various media to interpret, question, and express knowledge, information, ideas, feelings, and reasoning to create mutual understanding</i>	
	<i>Student uses original and flexible thinking to communicate ideas or construct a unique product or solution.</i>	
	<i>Student initiates and manages personal learning, and demonstrates a “growth” mindset, through self-awareness, self-motivation, self-control, self-advocacy and adaptability as a reflective learner in order to develop personal goals.</i>	
	<i>Student participates in group discussions with classmates respectfully and communicates their ideas effectively.</i>	

Adapted from Winnacunnet High School Learning Expectations Rubric  
(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1doRWnwo4w15OO61V8Aye6xSxkZarMmMFwe sj9aM7nXY/edit>)

# Decoding Skills

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Decoding Skills

Lesson # 1

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will learn skills to decode media that they see in their everyday lives. Students will learn key terms and questions to ask when looking at a piece of media. They will understand how media messages are created and how that can intersect with memoir. Look at *The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy: Critical Thinking in a Multimedia World* chapter "When are Questions the Answer?"

Materials Needed:

Powerpoint  
Reflective Journals  
Whiteboard and markers

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Structure / Activity:

-We begin the class with a question of the day: What is your favorite piece of media, this can be a movie, TV show, book, video game, ect. (10 Minutes)

-Students will write for five minutes about their favorite pieces of media and why they like it. Students have to be writing for the entire time. (5 Minutes)

-We will move to the PowerPoint "How to Analyze Artwork" (30 Minutes)

- After students complete the "15 second" activity hand out the "Analyzing Artwork" Worksheet. This will be an in-class formative assignment
- Students will complete the "Look" and "Observe" sections with Alex Prager's *Radio Hill* photograph
- Then show students the "Context" slide. Then students will finish the "Think" and "Connect" sections of the worksheet.
- Discuss as a class how their thoughts about this piece changed or didn't change when given the context. How might others respond differently to this piece?

-As a class, make a list of key terms that students should look at when analyzing a piece of artwork, (Lighting, shading, color, movement, subject, focal point, ect.). (10 Minutes)

Exit Ticket (5 Minutes)

The teacher can adapt these questions to your students needs or any particular questions you have for their learning.

- What was one thing you didn't understand from today's lesson?
- Do you have any further ideas for your final project?
- What is one thing you learned today?
- Any other comments or questions?

# Creating Community

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Intro to Memoir Writing

Lesson # 2

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: This class is focused on creating community and trust within the classroom. Students will be able to get to know each other better and prepare for the memoir writing unit. When students feel a sense of trust in their peers and their community, they are more likely to succeed academically (Gopalan and Brady).

Materials Needed:

- Sneetches Questions
- Survey Worksheet

Standards:

CCCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6

Structure / Activity:

-We will begin this lesson with telling the students that we are moving into our memoir unit. This means that we will be writing about ourselves and our experiences. We will be reflecting on the things that make us who we are. We will have the opportunity to share things with our classmates and therefore, we need to build a sense of trust in our class. What is said here stays here, what is learned here leaves here. This means that what is shared in this class is not to be talked about outside of the class. Also let students know that you are a mandatory reporter and what this means in your school district. Ask the students if they have any questions. (10 Minutes)

-If students do not know each other yet, you can begin with a name game. My personal favorite is the "What are you bringing to the picnic" game. Where each student says what they are bringing to the picnic but it has to begin with the first letter of their name. They then say the names and items of the people before them. (10 Minutes)

-Then we will do a game called "Sneetches". It is where there are rapid fire questions and students give one word or sentence answers with no explanation. (30 Minutes)

-Students will then fill out a survey on who they want to work with and get to know more. They will be working with these people on a regular basis and be sharing a lot about themselves. This will also affect the seating chart. (10 Minutes)

# Intro to Memoir Writing

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Intro to Memoir Writing

Lesson # 3

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will learn what the genre of memoir is. We will read an excerpt from *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls as a mentor text for students to fully comprehend what memoir is.

Students will also learn about their final project and look at the week ahead.

Materials Needed:

Powerpoint  
*The Glass Castle* By Jeannette Walls  
Handout/Rubric of Final Project  
Example of final project

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5](#)

Structure / Activity:

-We begin the class with a question of the day: What are you proud of about yourself today? (10 Minutes)

-We then transition to a Memoir Powerpoint (10 Minutes)

-Ask if the students have any questions about the genre of memoir.

-Then we will read the first chapter of part 2 "The Desert" from Jeannette Walls's *The Glass Castle*. The teacher can project the pages on the screen so students can follow along. (15 Minutes)

-Discussion afterward (10 Minutes)

- How did that make you feel?
- What memoir traits are exhibited here?
- What was the theme of that chapter?
- Do you think she remembered all of those details or did she embellish them?
- What does this chapter say about Jeannette and her family?

-Memoir Unit Introduction: Weekly Schedule, Final Project Handout (10 Minutes)

-Exit Ticket: (5 Minutes)

- Do you have any questions or anything that you didn't understand about the lesson today?
- Did you enjoy *The Glass Castle*?
- Do you have any questions about the final project?

# "Fake" Memoir Writing

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Intro to Memoir Writing

Lesson # 4

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will learn what the genre of memoir is. They will look at some examples, and attempt to write a fake memoir. This will prepare them for the rest of this unit and the final project. Students will have the opportunity to write creatively with no pressure.

Materials Needed:

Powerpoint  
Reflective Journals  
Museum of Lost Memories

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Structure / Activity:

-We begin the class with a question of the day: What are you proud of about yourself today? (10 Minutes)

-Students will free write for five minutes about what they are proud of or qualities that they like about themselves. (5 Minutes)

-Ask students if they remember what a memoir is and if they can name any characteristics.

-Then ask students to pull out their computers, and go to

<https://www.museumoflostmemories.com/> or you can print out the photos on the "Archive" tab and hand them out to students. Students will choose a photo they want to write a "fake" memoir about. They will pick an image and write as if they were someone in the photo or taking the photo. This will engage their decoding skills and the memoir characteristics that they just learned to create a story. (5 Minutes)

-Students can write a short story, draw a comic, or if they have another medium in mind they should get it approved first by the teacher. (20 Minutes)

-We then will go around and share the image and what they chose to write about (15 Minutes)

-Exit Ticket: (5 Minutes)

- Do you have any questions or anything that you didn't understand about the lesson today?
- What made you choose the image you wrote about?

Homework:

Bring in a photo of you as a child that you have a memory associated with.

# Writing From Images

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Intro to Memoir Writing

Lesson # 5

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will learn how authors use images as writing prompts. They will then try this for themselves. Students will respond to images and analyze why they reacted the way they did. Alys Culhane discusses how “memorabilia can be used to trigger memories, thoughts that we often draw on when writing memoirs” (310).

Materials Needed:

Series of images  
Pages from *Jean Howard’s Hollywood: A Photo Memoir*  
Reflective Notebook

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3](#)

Structure / Activity:

- Question of the Day: If you could photograph any moment in history, what would it be and why? (10 Minutes)
- Show a series of images to students for around 15 seconds each. They write their initial thoughts on all of these images. (5-10 Minutes)
- Then the students chose one image to write about their personal connection to it (5-10 Minutes)
  - Why did you chose this image?
  - What feelings does it invoke?
  - Does it spark any memories?
- Turn and talk with the people around you about what you wrote. (5 Minutes)
  - Why do you think you think you reacted the way you did?
- Read pages from *Jean Howard’s Hollywood: A Photo Memoir* as a class. (15 Minutes)
  - She combines a story with these images that she had taken previously. How do these images support her story?
  - How can you use your decoding skills to interpret this?
  - How do these images make you feel? What do you notice about her writing and photography?
- Students should have brought in a photo of them as a child that they have a strong memory associated with. Students will take that photo and decode it. They will use their abilities to write the context of the image. (15 Minutes)

Homework:

Bring in a document that you have a memory associated with. Some examples would be an old art assignment, report card, or other documents.



# Writing From Images

At the height of the Frank Sinatra-Lauren Bacall romance in 1957, I was invited to join them and Peter and Pat Lawford, Leland and Slim Hayward,



and Michael and Gloria Romanoff to fly to Las Vegas in Frank's private plane for the opening of *The Joker Is Wild*. We had a hilarious weekend; Frank

was gallant and generous. Each of the women received a bag of chips to gamble with after dinner. Frank would sit on the floor and sing, always leaving us wanting more. I've never known a better host.

Frank's recording sessions were ultraprivate affairs. Once I was invited I was nervous about bringing along my cameras, but I did not want to miss an opportunity so rare. I dropped a tiny Minox in my purse. On the appointed day, I was taken to dinner. I had also received long-stemmed yellow roses. At the studio were more flowers, even on Frank's music stand, and drinks served all around. As would any woman, I was wondering how this attention would end.

After the session Frank drove me home. I suggested stopping by a friend's house for a night-cap, but Frank shook his head. As we approached my place, I began to agonize about whether I should ask him to come in for a drink. Before I knew it, Frank had pulled up at the bottom of my steps. He reached over me, opened the door, and said, "Good night, Miss Howard." "Night, Frank," I said, puzzled. I'm still puzzled by this clever charmer.

After all these years, here's my thank-you: two previously unpublished photographs of an artist in his element, in his prime.



# Writing From Images



# Writing from Documents

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Writing From Documents

Lesson # 6

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will read *Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna Kaysen as an example of memoir writing from a document. Students will practice their decoding skills with this text. They will also practice memoir writing based on a document they bring to class. Carolyn Kraus taught a class about writing from documents and she had students who brought in a variety of documents and discovered something about themselves and their families.

Materials Needed:

*Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna Kaysen  
Reflective Notebooks  
Projector  
Document from home (ex. birth certificate, old art assignment, ect.)

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3](#)

Structure / Activity:

-We will begin with a question of the day: What document did you bring in to write about today? (10 Minutes)

-Students will then journal for 5 minutes. They can write about their item they brought, an item someone else brought, whatever is on their mind, ect. They have to be constantly writing for the 5 minutes. (5 Minutes)

-As a class, we will look at the first page of *Girl, Interrupted* projected on the screen and students will decode Susanna's medical record. (10 Minutes)

- What do you notice?
- What is missing?
- What year is it?
- Who wrote this?
- What do you make of this document? Does it set the scene?

-The teacher will then read the first two chapters, "Toward a Topography of the Parallel Universe" and "The Taxi". Students will follow along either in their book or on the projector. (10 minutes)

-Students will discuss with the people next to them the what they thought of the two chapters we read in class. How does the first document affect the reader? And why does it start with that document? The class will discuss what they talked about in small groups. (3 minutes)

# Writing from Documents

## Structure / Activity Continued:

-The class will then decode the next two pages (11 and 13) which are more medical records. Students will discuss if they believe what the doctor wrote in his note. We will then discuss if Susanna is an unreliable narrator, or if the doctor is lying. (10 Minutes)

- Who is telling the truth?
- Why would someone lie?
- What does this say about your own memoirs?

-Students will then get out their reflective notebooks again and journal for the rest of class. Here they will focus on decoding their own document they brought in. (10 Minutes)

Here are some questions to get them started

- Why did you chose this item?
- What stories or memories do you associate this with?
- Who created this document and why?

-Exit Ticket (2 Minutes)

The teacher can adapt these questions to your students needs or any particular questions you have for their learning.

- What was one thing you didn't understand from todays lesson?
- Do you have any further ideas for your final project?
- What is one thing you learned today?
- Any other comments or questions?

# Photo Essay

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Photo Essay

Lesson # 7

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will understand what a photo essay is and will look at some examples. They will see how a photo essay can impact the reader, and connect the reader to the story. Students will understand how the genres of photo essay and memoir complement each other.

Materials Needed:

Powerpoint  
Reflective Journals  
Phones

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6](#)

Structure / Activity:

-Question of the day: What is the most recent photo you took. Please be appropriate! Students can share what they are most comfortable with, but they need to be classroom-friendly. (10 Minutes).

-Presentation on what a photo essay is and how it can intersect with memoir to create a photo story. (35 Minutes)

Remind the students that they can create a photo essay or photo story as a final assessment.

We then will transition into an activity where students will pick a photo from their camera roll on their phone that they really like. Then they will write a couple sentences to explain the significance of that photo. This can be a brainstorm or jumping off point for students who really like this activity into their final project.

-Then students will go into small groups and share what they made. They can ask for advice on what sentence to chose or help picking a picture with their peers. (15 Minutes)

-If the teacher chooses the students will turn these in for a formative grade/exit ticket.

# Documents and Images

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Intro to Memoir Writing

Lesson # 8

Time: 60 Minutes

Lesson Focus and Goals: Students will look at an example of how to combine memoir storytelling, image and document curation, and design. Students will look at how design, layout, font, and color impact media messages. Emily Meixner found that using multimodal texts in the classroom is effective for students' learning.

Materials Needed:

*Blended* by Alyssa Doust  
Reflective Notebook

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5](#)  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7](#)

Structure / Activity:

-We begin the class with a question of the day: What is your favorite food? (5 Minutes)

-As a class we will read Alyssa Doust's *Blended*. (20 Minutes)

-Discussion questions (Depending on your class, you can do a fishbowl discussion, socratic discussion, or a small or large group discussion) (30 Minutes)

- What did you notice?
- What did you relate to?
- What do you think the media message is?
- What parts of her cookbook did you like or draw inferences from?
- How did Doust use layout and formatting to impact her message?
- How did Doust combine images, recipes, and scans of old recipe cards with memoir writing? How did they supplement/support each other?
- Do your families have recipes that have been passed down through generations?
- Brainstorm family recipes, traditions, or meals that have impacted your life and how.

Exit Ticket Questions:

- What did you not understand from today's lesson?
- What did you like or not like from today's lesson.
- What ideas do you have for your final project?



# Workshop Days

Grade: 9

Subject: Memoir Writing

Teacher: Caroline  
Hanna

Topic: Intro to Memoir Writing

Lesson # 9 +

Time: 60 Minutes

Materials:

As needed

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1

Structure / Activity:

-We begin the class with a question of the day: Do you have any ideas for your final project?

Options for workshop days:

-You can hold individual conferences with students to check in how their progress is going.

-You could also brainstorm ideas or stories they could possibly write about as a class.

-Peer workshop and teaching students how to give productive and constructive feedback.

-Grammar mini lessons that students need help with.

-A lot of the students' work should be created in class. If students have class time to work, they will be more likely to turn in work. Students should be revising their work to get to their best draft (Kittle and Gallagher). I encourage you to write alongside the students and create your own final project! Share your drafts and writing process with the students. They can see writing modeled towards them. They will see that you too are a human who goes through similar emotions as they do.

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Winnacunnet High School Learning Expectations Rubric  
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