Writers Workshop Unit of Study
9th Grade – Launching the Writer’s Notebook

ELA
Common Core Standards

Personal Narrative
# Writers Workshop Unit of Study

## 9th Grade – Launching the Writers’ Notebook

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Writers Workshop Unit of Study
9th Grade – Launching the Writer’s Notebook
Preface

The following unit supports and aligns to the Common Core State Standards. This research-based work is the outcome of a collective effort made by numerous secondary teachers from around the state of Michigan. Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) initiated a statewide collaborative project bringing together educators from around the state to create and refine a K-12 English Language Arts model curriculum. The launching unit is situated as the opening writing unit of study within a yearlong sequence of writing units. This unit develops foundational habits of mind, a process approach to writing, and reading like a writer. This foundation is essential to support writers in the complexities of subsequent writing units that focus deeply within the three main types of writing (opinion and argument, informational, and narrative). Each unit within the MAISA yearlong model curriculum presents a string of teaching points that scaffold and spiral the content and skills. Units of study are structured to be student-centered rather than teacher-driven. Sessions emphasize student engagement and strive to simultaneously increase critical thinking and writing skills. Writing and thinking processes are stressed and are equally important to the end-writing product. Sessions are designed as a series of mini-lessons that allow time to write, practice, and conference. Through summative and formative assessments specific to each unit, students will progress toward becoming independent thinkers and writers.

Significant input and feedback was gathered both in the initial conceptualizing of the unit and later revisions. Teachers from around the state piloted and/or reviewed the unit, and their feedback and student artifacts helped in the revision process. Special thanks go to lead unit writers Linda Denstaedt, Leah Barnett, and Laura Mahler, who closely studied the CCSS, translated the standards into curriculum and practice, and revised with a close eye to classroom teacher feedback. Throughout the yearlong collaborative project, teachers who are reviewing units are finding how students’ habits of mind have shifted from task-oriented to big-picture thinking, utilizing a critical literacy lens.
## Launching the Writer’s Notebook Unit Learning Progression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Personal Narrative</th>
<th>Memoir</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre</strong></td>
<td>Use writers’ notebooks to gather, record, strategize, and recognize importance within personal narratives.</td>
<td>Establish a way of living as writers in an open, sharing community.</td>
<td>Establish a way of living as writers in an open, sharing community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming a Community</strong></td>
<td>Establish writing time as a way to build community within a classroom.</td>
<td>Establish a special time to share our stories within the classroom community.</td>
<td>Understand the writers’ workshop framework, in order to explore and analyze observations, feelings, and ideas of other poets in the class community.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop writers to feel supported and encouraged by those around them.</td>
<td>Encourage developing writers to feel safe about the writers’ workshop format.</td>
<td>Develop habits and routines for a writer’s notebook such as: collecting entries, reading to survey and analyze a range of poetry, and writing to experiment with the elements of poetry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Immersion and Drafting</strong></td>
<td>Discover the writer’s independence, using support structures provided within the community by peers and the teacher.</td>
<td>Use strategies to draw from events in our lives, pulling out the small moments in order to reflect on their meaning.</td>
<td>Use poetry immersion to understand that poets use narrative poetry to deeply express themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use anchor charts, partnerships, and other strategies to immerse students in the work of writers.</td>
<td>Examine the memoir, in order to contemplate what we have learned from the small moments in our lives, and how we relate to others and live in the world.</td>
<td>Use strategies to generate poetry in a variety of ways, while studying the decisions of other narrative poets.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize strategies that teach students to identify long, drawn-out stories, as opposed to small, focused, meaningful stories.</td>
<td>Use Think/Pair/Share while establishing a community to live wide awake, while sharing and responding to stories of others.</td>
<td>With anchor charts and survey tools, understand the use of writing strategies such as listing, observing, describing, and telling stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revising and Editing</strong></td>
<td>Consider activities in the workshop as a process to reflect, provide feedback, and grow as writers within a safe community.</td>
<td>Analyze the mood, tone, and characteristics of the memoir.</td>
<td>Consider enticing word choice, the use of sensory detail, and the free expression of self.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use conferencing with peers and the teacher as a way to improve upon revision skills.</td>
<td>Assess writers’ skills by conferencing with writers’ groups.</td>
<td>Produce a narrative poem that expresses a powerful emotion, a meaningful experience, or a strong belief.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop the understanding that personal narratives are valuable tool that can improve writing and share our most meaningful stories with others.</td>
<td>Use peer discussions and sharing times to revise and edit for meaning and clarity.</td>
<td>Develop the understanding that narrative poems are powerful opportunities for writers to engage readers and share various perspectives and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Personal Narrative</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Memoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a Community</td>
<td>In a writer’s notebook, record memories, conversations, and bothersome things.</td>
<td>Read and write, examining the voices of other poets, and developing a voice in one’s own writing.</td>
<td>Write to discover an event’s personal meaning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recall an event with a strong emotional impact, and sequence the details to capture the problem and its impact on the narrator and other characters.</td>
<td>Use strategies to generate ideas and writing. Use these strategies multiple times to promote new thinking.</td>
<td>Use inquiry strategies for this exploration work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Immersion and Drafting</td>
<td>While reading, notice the sequences of the details and the techniques a writer uses to convey a central idea or theme; capture admired techniques.</td>
<td>Read a range of poetry, looking for personal connections.</td>
<td>Determine how much truth to tell and what to leave out.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Write under the influence of another author.</td>
<td>Read a range of poetry to admire the ways that poets structure their works.</td>
<td>Determine the angle of the memoir/event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reread to discover the significance of stories and expand writing.</td>
<td>Fall in love with and experiment with words.</td>
<td>Explore the emotions of the event.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reveal characters by describing their physical characteristics, behaviors and mannerisms, dialogue, and thoughts.</td>
<td>Use details and figurative language to describe observations.</td>
<td>Reread the writer’s notebook for a memoir topic and plan a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Optional) Pay close attention to sensory detail, taking the reader to the place and situation.</td>
<td>Reread and identify poems for publication.</td>
<td>Reflect on habits, writing strategies, and attitudes after rereading writer’s notebook.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflect on habits, writing strategies, and attitudes after rereading writer’s notebook.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Experiment with the decisions of this poet.</td>
<td>Reflect on poetic decisions and their effects on the meaning of poems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revising and Editing</td>
<td>Seek feedback to discover what a reader sees, and where new possibilities exist.</td>
<td>Revise line breaks to explore an emerging poem.</td>
<td>Explore both the memoirist’s mind and life experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use properly formatted dialogue so readers understand who is speaking.</td>
<td>Create surprise or emphasis by creating and breaking patterns.</td>
<td>Revise for emblematic details, word choice, and stylistic decisions that convey tone.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Celebrate stories by sharing them with others.</td>
<td>Use response groups to gain insight and make revisions to drafted poems.</td>
<td>Engage in response groups, acting as critical friends.</td>
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<td>Create a revision plan using a repertoire of decisions.</td>
<td>Create revision plans.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Edit punctuation and capitalization using universal and unique standards of poets.</td>
<td>Edit with an eye toward sentence variety.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writers Workshop Unit of Study
9th Grade – Launching the Writer’s Notebook

Abstract

WHAT IS A LAUNCHING UNIT?
The launching unit engages learners as partners in a year of learning, beginning with this brief, two- to three-week unit. The unit establishes the teaching and learning environment through the enactment of writing and reading tasks, as well as through decision-making, as students generate and nurture writing. These tasks and decisions establish norms, writing and reading habits, and ways of living together in a classroom where all students develop confidence and competence. The non-negotiable results are student choice; teacher feedback, focused on strengths; and student reflection. The launching unit helps students do the following:

- Imagine an identity as a writer
- Read in order to appreciate, study, emulate, and experiment with the decisions of other writers
- See how writers engage the writing process, as they watch teachers puzzle through the creation of their own writing
- Develop a voice that expresses both emotions and ideas, through a variety of genres
- Engage a safe community of writers that encourages risk-taking and growth

ASSESSMENT
Working in a collaborative environment, students become a group of writers who support each other. They mine their own lives for ideas. They decide for and revisions to their work. They write with an authentic audience in mind. And they learn from established writers, in order to add to the their repertoire of writing decisions. As a result, grades are not determined based on a list of writing elements or a rubric that defines product quality. Instead, students are assessed through the enactment of a writing process and of the habits and strategies of a writer and critical reader. Students will generate ideas and writing in readers’/writers’ notebooks and develop a portfolio of work. (The notebook is the primary tool by which the teacher and student assess growth.) They will also self-assess and prepare written reflections. This combination serves as evidence of a student’s growth over time and the metacognitive awareness of that growth.

STUDENT OUTCOMES
The launching unit is designed to provide students with the vital opportunity of seeing themselves as capable thinkers and decision-makers in the following ways:

- Students become more flexible in their writing and thinking, as they have time to experiment with words and ideas.
- Students practice a variety of ways to generate ideas and revise writing, including inserting, cutting, or reducing words.
- Students investigate the ways other writers work through complex ideas and face difficult writing decisions.

While students do create a polished writing piece, the objective is much deeper: the unit establishes a writing community wherein each student is empowered with a repertoire of generative and revision strategies. This unit sets forth a workshop approach, which develops reading, writing, and thinking skills that will be resonant throughout the school year.

TEACHER DECISIONS FOR UNIT IMPLEMENTATION
It is true that this unit could be designed in many different ways with many different teaching points, but it would be impossible to write one unit to meet the needs of all audiences who will take it up. Knowing this, teachers should expect to adjust and adapt the lessons to meet the needs of their students, while staying true to the intent of the unit. We recommend that teachers study and understand the intent of the lesson series. The lessons have a purposeful sequence, but they may require that teachers make adjustments in pacing or decisions about extension activities. Teachers are encouraged to gather their own sources (mentor texts, etc.) that reflect district curriculum and/or student interests.

UNIT ORGANIZATION
The unit is divided into three parts:

- **BECOMING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS:** The sessions in this part are typical of every launching unit. Students will develop a community by personalizing readers’/writers’ notebooks and developing a safe community in which students can take risks with their writing and thinking. Students begin with a recursive writing process used by writers.
The work in this part is vertically aligned and extends prior learning with the expectation that students come prepared to generate ideas and writing on the first day, using strategies that are typical of writers in this genre. These also may also be similar to the habits and attitudes developed in previous years of writing and study.

- **READING IMMERSION AND DRAFTING**: The sessions in this part of the unit are focused on students’ reading and drafting multiple drafts, as they see that reading and writing are cyclical, recursive processes. Students examine mentor texts, and attempt to imitate some of the moves they see. They generate writing and ideas by observing the world closely, paying attention to how those observations reveal ways in which to see the world. The work in this unit is vertically aligned and extends prior learning with the expectation that students understand the concept of a repertoire of decisions, which was taught in previous grades.

- **REVISING AND EDITING**: The sessions in this part of the unit encourage students to go deeper into the decision-making process and revise their drafts using specific technical decisions. In addition, students will participate in writer-response groups, gaining feedback from peers in preparation for publication. The work in this unit is vertically aligned and extends prior learning with the expectation that students understand the concept of a repertoire of decisions, which was taught in previous grades.

**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCING, SCAFFOLDING, AND PACING**

Daily pacing of the unit’s sessions is based on a 50-minute class period. Individual teacher pacing will change based on duration of the class period, student population, familiarity with content, process, and/or instructional practices. Instruction scaffolds students through a four-tiered process.

1. **Teaching Point**: Teacher models the strategy, process, skill, or habit of mind using a mentor text written by the teacher, students, and/or published writers or other materials.

2. **Active Engagement**: Students rehearse the writing, thinking and/or critical reading or viewing just modeled by the teacher.

3. **Independent Practice**: Students complete a Mini-task independently or in small collaborative groups. During independent practice, the teacher confers with individuals or small groups to assess student performance and to differentiate the lesson and task. Teacher may stop the independent practice to adjust the Mini-task and/or session teaching point or for planned teaching points that extend or deepen student performance.

4. **Share**: Students share to read, examine, analyze and/or reflect on the range of responses created by other students. Sharing also enables students to self-monitor effective strategy use. The teacher may also share an exemplar to reinforce or enhance the session’s teaching point(s) and student enactment.

**Philosophy**

In this unit, students are reintroduced to the concept of the reader’s/writer’s notebook. They build a community of readers and writers as they read, discuss, write, respond to, and share their work. They read sample narratives and write their own brief (1-2 pages) personal narratives. Students experiment with real writers’ skills that are used to create compelling stories. Keep in mind that a personal narrative is usually focused on one event, is told through first-person point of view, and reveals why that experience is important to the writer.
Standards

Common Core Standards: Narrative: The following College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards apply to reading and writing in narrative template tasks. Refer to the 6-12 standards for grade-appropriate specifics that fit each task and unit being developed. The standards numbers and general content remain the same across all grades, but details vary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development: summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Writing Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of Sessions – Teaching Points and Assessment Tasks

Unit Title: Launching the Writer’s Notebook: Personal Narrative

Unit Description (overview):
Students will become familiar with a writing workshop approach as they practice generating and exploring ideas and will, ultimately, write a short personal narrative. They will develop and use writers’ notebooks to hatch ideas, puzzle through questions, and practice narrative strategies. Additionally, they will work with their classmates to examine ideas collectively and will practice listening and critiquing skills. Students will explore elements of a narrative, including understanding characters through their internal stories (thoughts) and external stories (description and dialogue). Students will practice a variety of strategies to generate ideas, including exploring memories, expanding on drafts, and paying attention to sensory details. They will celebrate their writing with their classroom community of writers, as they share and seek publishing venues.

Teaching Points

Becoming a Community of Personal Narrative Writers
1. Writers pay attention to the world around them. As writers, we need a place to keep our notices, our thoughts, our questions about things we want to know more about. We need to practice writing in one place. There are certain things that writers do in a writer’s notebook, like record memories, conversations—things that bother or interest us.
2. The class is a community of writers. Students write using a process of uncovering one’s own beliefs, insights, and values. This process requires non-judgmental and thoughtful feedback from others. Writers in a community feel free to take risks and feel comfortable exposing parts of themselves to their classmates.
3. Writers record memories from their past with as much detail as possible to use as the basis of their writing. Writers write about stories that matter, but sometimes they don’t even know why a story is important until they write about it.

Reading Immersion and Drafting Personal Narratives
4. Writers often reread to discover the significance of their stories so they can expand their writing. As they reread, they search for parts that surprise them; repeated words, lines, images, or ideas; or a line that catches their attention.
5. Writers reveal their characters by describing their physical characteristics, behaviors and mannerisms, and dialogue.
6. Writers reveal their characters by exposing their thoughts. They consider how a character’s internal story impacts the action.

Mid-Unit Assessment Task
What is the main lesson of your story? After identifying the main lesson in a childhood narrative, write a revision plan based on a close rereading of your first draft, setting goal(s) to write and revise your narrative under the influence of the mentor.

Revising and Editing a Personal Narrative
7. Researchers revise their informed view to incorporate new information. They use this revised view to organize their evidence. Writers share their writing with others. A writer seeks feedback to discover what a reader sees, where there is confusion, and where new possibilities exist. They make plans to re-work their writing when they see how others view it.
8. Writers give their work clarity by using proper conventions of writing. Readers can understand who is speaking with properly formatted dialogue.
9. Writers celebrate their stories by sharing them with others. Listeners note what resonates with them in their peers’ writing.

Optional Session: Writers pay close attention to the world around them. They record observations and thoughts in a writer’s notebook. They include sensory details. Using the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch) takes the reader to the place and shows the reader the situation.

Post-Unit Assessment Task
After reading narratives about childhood that explore what children learn, students will write personal narratives that show what they learned to do, or who they learned to be, as they grew up. Stories may not be literally true in every detail, but the stories will be located in the time and space of students' childhoods. Students will also write a reflection that examines the ways their writing has been impacted by experimenting with and developing a narrative.

Possible prompt: What can children do aside from learning to be tough, which is only a temporary or at best a partial answer? After reading stories of childhood that explore what children learn, write a narrative that relates what you learned to do or be as you grew up. Stories may not be literally true in every detail but will be located in the time and space of your childhood. Use stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, tone, humor, suspense) to develop a narrative.
# Personal Narrative Summative Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer’s Notebook Assignments</th>
<th>Characteristics Evident</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Student Score</th>
<th>Teacher Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming a Community of Personal Narrative Writers</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating Writing</td>
<td>Multiple detailed personal memories and partial drafts of personal narratives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversation between Writers</td>
<td>Active participation in the small group discussions about initial notebook entries</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Immersion and Drafting Personal Narrative</strong></td>
<td><strong>Characteristics Evident</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Score</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Details</td>
<td>Experimentation (list or prose) with physical characteristics, behaviors and mannerisms, and dialogue for the main character</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Details</td>
<td>Experimentation (list or prose) with internal thoughts and how thoughts affect action in the personal narrative</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Unit Assessment Task</td>
<td>Revision plan with specific goals for personal narrative final draft that names the lesson of your narrative</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revising and Editing a Personal Narrative</strong></td>
<td><strong>Characteristics Evident</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Score</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Draft of Personal Narrative</td>
<td>Narrative with a beginning, middle and end that develops the experience of the main character</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Groups</td>
<td>Detailed feedback responses to other narratives concerning their personal narratives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Editing & Formatting | Generation and punctuation of dialogue to include in narrative revision
| | Editing another student’s dialogue for correctness
| Notebook Total | 80
<p>| Personal Narrative Final Draft | Characteristics Evident | Possible Points | Student Score | Teacher Score |
| Narrative Focus | Narrative focuses on one event or experience that is significant in the writer’s life and reveals the writer’s feelings or thoughts about the experience. Story is told in first person. | 5 |
| Development of Character’s Internal Story | Character thoughts clearly reveal what’s going on inside the character’s head. Easy to see how the main character’s thoughts impact the action. | 5 |
| Development of Character’s External Story | Character description reveals physical characteristics, behaviors/mannerisms, and dialogue to paint a clear picture of the characters in the reader’s head so the characters come to life for the reader. | 5 |
| Formatting of Dialogue &amp; Mechanics | Free of grammatical errors, Properly formatted | 5 |
| Personal Narrative Final Draft Total | 20 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>“A writer’s notebook works just like an incubator: a protective place to keep your infant idea safe and warm, a place for it to grow while it is too young, too new, to survive on its own.” - Ralph Fletcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td><strong>Writers pay attention to the world around them. As writers, we need a place to keep our notices, our thoughts, our questions about things we want to know more about. We need to practice writing in one place. There are certain things that writers do in a writer’s notebook, like record memories, conversations—things that bother or interest us.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Preparation | ● Copy and prepare individual inspirational quotes to be taped into students’ writers’ notebooks.  
● You must be a writer alongside your students. You will need to keep a writer’s notebook and be willing to share some parts of it with students so they can see how you process ideas and practice writing regularly. You will need to prepare your own personalized writer’s notebook to show in this first session. Select an entry you are willing to share. Remember: you are not modeling polished writing; instead, it should be an entry that reveals your thinking.  
● Find magazines that students might use to cut out pictures. Set out markers, scissors, and glue sticks for students to use. You may want to set out quote books from which they might draw quotations that speak to them. Tell students the day before to bring in photos they would like to include on their writers’ notebooks.  
● Materials: Prepare copies of “Ways to Use the Writer’s Notebook.” (See attached sheet)  
● Helpful Resources on this topic:  
  ➢ *A Writer’s Notebook* by Ralph Fletcher  
  ➢ [www.ralphfletcher.com](http://www.ralphfletcher.com)  
  ➢ *Writing Workshop* by Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi |
| Active Engagement | ● Review the teaching point.  
● Begin by explaining how the writer’s notebook will be used regularly throughout the school year. The notebook is a place to record observations, questions, thoughts, drafts of writing, memories, etc.  
● Stress the importance of using the notebook as a tool as we deepen our understandings of our thoughts and beliefs, as well as develop our writing and thinking skills. Explain that this is a place to capture ideas before they are lost. While the writing in the notebook may be disjointed or choppy, the thoughts and ideas are important to the writer and may be developed into something more later. The notebook is an informal, no-pressure place to explore our thoughts.  
● Discuss the fact that great writers spend a tremendous amount of time considering their ideas, fleshing out characters, and building their stories. J.K. Rowling, for example, spent five years taking extensive notes and planning her books, BEFORE she even began writing her *Harry Potter* books.  
● Share your own notebook, explain how you have used it, and share an entry. Underscore that this is not a diary, but a collection of ideas and observations.  
● Review the list of possible entry topics. Students should staple or glue the list “Ways to Use the Writer’s Notebook” inside their notebooks as a way to generate ideas as they need them. (There are other good ideas for writing topics at www.ralphfletcher.com.) |
| Independent Practice | Because the notebook is a collection of ideas that is important to each writer, students should decorate their notebooks to reflect their own values and interests. Students should select a topic from the “Ways to Use the Writer’s Notebook” list and complete one entry that is at least one page in length. |
| Share | Students should show their notebooks to the class or a partner and highlight at least one quote or picture that is meaningful. They should then explain some of their decisions about why they chose to decorate their notebooks in the fashion that they did. Instead, they might choose to read all or part of their notebook entries. |
| Homework/Extension | Students should select a topic from the “Ways to Use the Writer’s Notebook” list and complete another entry that is at least one page in length. |
| Assessment | Points may be given for decorating the notebook. Also, points may be given for a one-page notebook entry. |
Ways to Use the Writer’s Notebook

Use your writer’s notebook to generate ideas, record observations, reflect, and work through questions you have. This is not a place for polished writing—it is the birthplace of ideas.

For example, you might include:

- Character observations
- Descriptions of a person
- Descriptions of a place
- Descriptions of a thing
- Dialogue
- Extensions of earlier drafts
- Family lore
- Favorite quotes
- Imagined stories
- Lists
- Memories
- Overheard conversations
- Questions
- A rewritten version of a story’s ending
- Reading responses
- Story ideas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Session 2</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quotation</strong></td>
<td>“When we allow ourselves to become vulnerable, to take chances, and to risk our pride, that is when we find our own glory.” –Richard Corman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Point</strong></td>
<td><em>The class is a community of writers. Students write using a process of uncovering one’s own beliefs, insights, and values. This process requires non-judgmental and thoughtful feedback from others. Writers in a community feel free to take risks and feel comfortable exposing parts of themselves to their classmates.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Copy and prepare individual inspirational quotes to be taped into students’ notebooks.  
- Write your own entry about a time when you felt an extreme emotion (e.g., particularly disempowered or helpless, elated, shocked, saddened, anxious). This entry should be an initial reaction to the prompt—not a polished draft. It should be something that is personally meaningful, but one that you feel comfortable sharing with the students.  
- Helpful Resource on this Topic:  
  - *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents*, Nancie Atwell |
| **Connection** | In the first session, students decorated their Reader’s/Writer’s Notebook. In this session, they will work to build a writing community. |
| **Active Engagement** |  
- Review the connection and the teaching point.  
- Begin by explaining the importance of a writing community. This class will require students to dig within themselves and to work with one another. The teacher is a guide and facilitator, but by no means the only judge or editor of student work. They will get to know and trust one another in a safe, nurturing environment.  
- Students consider a time when they felt an extreme emotion (e.g., particularly disempowered or helpless, elated, shocked, saddened, anxious).  
- Share your own notebook entry and allow students the opportunity to ask questions and/or comment on your piece. You might jot notes to demonstrate how their feedback might be used in further drafts of the piece. Thank them for being a part of your process of clarifying the significance of what you wrote about. |
<p>| <strong>Independent Practice</strong> | Students should draft their own notebook entries about a time when they felt an extreme emotion (e.g., particularly disempowered or helpless, elated, shocked, saddened, anxious). They should consider what they learned about themselves, or life in general, from this event. Remind them that some topics may be too personal to share. They are writing about an experience they will feel comfortable sharing with their writing partners. |
| <strong>Share</strong> | Students will form small groups (3 or 4 students) and take turns reading their entries. Listeners will tell the writer what they found most memorable about their entries and make non-judgmental, clarifying statements (e.g., I wish I knew more about..., I wonder..., I was confused by..., The part I remember best is..., I also...). The writer will take notes about the feedback in their notebooks. |
| <strong>Assessment</strong> | Points may be given for the completion of a one-page notebook entry. Also, points may be given for participation in the writing community discussion. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Session 3</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quotation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Point</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Preparation** | ● Copy and prepare individual inspirational quotes to be taped into their writer’s notebooks.  
● Prepare copies of the short story “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros or another story with a first line that recalls a memory and tells about its significance. From Cisneros: “What they don’t understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you’re eleven, you’re also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one.” |
| **Active Engagement** | ● Review the connection and the teaching point.  
● Read “Eleven” or another model short story to show how a writer writes about and finds significance in an important event in his/her life. During the reading of the story, stop occasionally to discuss which sections are recalling a memory and which parts are making sense of the memory, and thus finding the significance.  
● Students are given a list of possible sentences to start their writing. These sentences should help students to write about significant memories. The sentences can be altered to fit their needs and other sentences can be added.  
  o I thought it was going to be a great day, but boy was I in for a surprise.  
  o That day started off like any other, but it sure didn’t stay that way.  
  o The time that really changed my life was...  
  o The way I view the world was changed forever when...  
  o It should have been a great summer, but...  
  o I used to think______, but now I think_________.  
● Students turn to a partner and rehearse ways to finish the sentence starters. |
| **Independent Practice** | ● Students choose a memory that fits with one of the lines that interests them.  
● Next, students write an entry in their notebooks that details that memory. |
| **Active Engagement** | The teacher returns to his/her draft to model the search for significance in the draft. The teacher reads the entry and thinks aloud about the things s/he notices in the draft that seem to be important. The teacher models their thinking process as s/he examines the draft for the potential for turning it into a fully developed personal narrative. Sentence starters like “I notice...” and “I’m wondering...” and “I see now that...” and “I think this is important to me because...” or “I’m surprised in my writing by...” could be helpful for the teacher to point out the potential in the entry. |
| **Share** | Students share their entry with a partner to see potential for future writing. They discuss with their partner to answer these types of questions: “Is this an important story that you think has potential?” “Why is this memory significant or important to you?” |
| **Homework/Extension** | Students may continue to develop this entry, if desired. |
| **Assessment** | Points could be given for a completed notebook entry. |
### Session 4

**Quotation**
"Fortunately writing is fun. Hard fun, but fun because it is hard, because it is significant play. We do not know what we will say until we say it and so we discover, by writing, what we have seen, what we have learned, what we have lived and what it means."  -Donald Murray

**Teaching Point**
Writers often reread to discover the significance of their stories so they can expand their writing. As they reread, they search for parts that surprise them; repeated words, lines, images, or ideas; or a line that catches their attention.

**Connection**
In the last session, students wrote in their readers' writers' notebooks. In this session, they reread to discover the significance of their stories.

**Preparation**
- Copy and prepare individual inspirational quotes to be taped into writers’ notebooks.
- Students will need their previous three pieces of writing from their notebooks to work from. They’ll also need highlighters. (If highlighters are not available, students could circle or underline instead.)

**Active Engagement**
- Review the connection and the teaching point.
- Model the process for examining previous notebook entries to find what’s really important in them. Demonstrate the opportunities that arise by rereading entries and highlighting:
  - Anything that surprises the writer
  - Repeated images, ideas, lines, or words
  - Anything that catches the writer’s attention as important on this second reading
- Put a sample notebook entry on the projector, and, as you read aloud, demonstrate which words, lines, or phrases you would highlight as you discuss why you would highlight it.
- After reading and modeling highlighting for them, they read some more of the sample entry with a partner and talk about what they would highlight and why. A few report out their decisions before moving on to independent practice.

**Independent Practice 1**
Students reread and highlight their own entries. After highlighting, students generate a new draft.
- Reread and highlight using the same process and mini-lesson:
  - Anything that surprises them
  - Repeated images, ideas, lines, or words
  - Anything that catches their attention as important on this second reading
- Students write a new draft:
  - Choose which line, word, image, or idea they think is important
  - Write it at the top of a new page in the reader’s writer’s notebook
  - Write a new draft that delves deeper into the topic identified as important
  - Be open to new ideas or related ideas and write those ideas as well

**Share**
Students turn to a partner and finish the following sentence starter: “What seems to be important in my writing is ______________.” They discuss with their partner why they want to take this particular draft through the writing process in this unit.

**Homework/Extension**
Students continue working on the draft they wrote today, or if they aren’t yet satisfied with their topic, they can choose to work on another draft in an attempt to discover what’s really important in their writing. By the time the next session starts, they need to have chosen one of their entries and have it ready for further work in the writing process.

**Assessment**
Points may be given for the completion of highlighting and an expanded entry.
### Session 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>&quot;Description begins in the writer’s imagination, but should finish in the reader’s.&quot; - Stephen King</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td><strong>Writers reveal their characters by describing their physical characteristics, behaviors and mannerisms, and dialogue.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>In the last session, students reread to discover the significance of their stories. In this session, students work to develop their characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Preparation       | - Copy daily quote.  
- Prepare a chart on the board or poster board that has three columns: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS and BEHAVIORS/MANNERISMS and DIALOGUE. |
| Active Engagement | - Review the connection and teaching point.  
- Begin by reading Gary Soto’s “The Bike” (or another suitable story) aloud, as students follow along. Stop periodically to notice passages where the writer describes the main character’s physical characteristics, behaviors, mannerisms, and dialogue.  
  For example, stop at the end of the first paragraph:  
  “When I squinted, I could see past the end of the block. My hair flicked like black fire, and I thought I was pretty cool riding up and down the block, age five, in my brother’s hand-me-down shirt.”  
  Ask the students to notice the t-shirt. Write in key phrases in the PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION column (e.g., “hair flicked like black fire,” “brother’s hand-me-down shirt”).  
  Stop at other key places to find descriptions of the character’s behaviors or mannerisms:  
  “I stood at the window, looking out, amazed and devious, with the devilish horns of my butch haircut standing up. From behind the window, I let my finger slowly uncurl like a bean plant rising from the earth. I uncurled it, then curled it back. I should remember this day, I told myself.”  
  Write in key phrases in the BEHAVIORS/MANNERISMS column (e.g., “I let my finger slowly uncurl…”).  
  Continue this throughout the story. (You may ask for a student volunteer to fill out chart as you read and make purposeful stops.)  
- When you are done with the story, ask students to look back over the story and the chart and consider how the character came to life on the page. **What kind of character is the narrator? How did Gary Soto’s physical and behavioral descriptions help you picture and “hear” the character? What are ways you can flesh out a character by using description?** |
| Independent Practice | Using the chart as a model, students will list physical and behavioral characteristics of their own main character (themselves) at the time they intend the story to take place. They will do the same for any other characters they will include in the story. |
| Share             | - Next, students will tell partners how they would describe themselves, using the two categories.  
- Together, the pairs will work to choose details they think have potential to be included in the story. They will highlight or underline these. They are looking for description that will cause the reader to be able to “see” the character in his/her mind. |
| Homework/Extension | - Students will use the lists of details they created to write at least one paragraph describing themselves at the time of the story they plan to write. They will want to include both physical and behavioral details.  
- They then incorporate those details into their current draft. |
<p>| Assessment        | Points may be given for completing a chart that lists their own physical and behavioral characteristics, as well as a written description. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quotation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“If you want your reader to understand something about a given character, his habits of intellection and control of his emotions, show the reader what the character thinks about, and then the reader will think about it too.” -George V. Higgins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Point</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connection</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Preparation** | - Copy and prepare individual student inspirational quotes to be taped into the writers’ notebooks.  
- Prepare copies of Robert Cormier’s “The Moustache” or another story with good examples of internal story or dialogue.  
See [http://www.nexuslearning.net/books/Holt-EOL2/Collection%202/the%20moustache.htm](http://www.nexuslearning.net/books/Holt-EOL2/Collection%202/the%20moustache.htm) |
| **Active Engagement** | - Review connection and teaching point.  
- Begin by reading some examples of character descriptions from the previous session. Explain to students that writers build interesting characters by allowing the reader to “see” and “hear” them, but also by letting readers know their characters’ thoughts. Most good writers switch back and forth between the external story (description and dialogue), and the internal story (thoughts and backstories). Let them know that they will practice writing each type of character description and will eventually try to work the various descriptors into their stories.  
- Remind them that the author doesn’t always give clues like “I think,” to show that the character is thinking about something.  
- Now, go back to one of the mentor texts you have used and reread orally. Have students clap when they hear descriptions that show what is going on inside the character’s head. |
| **Independent Practice** | Ask students to read “The Moustache” or another story you have selected and highlight passages that show the character’s thoughts. |
| **Share** | Students will turn and talk with a partner. First, they will explain what they highlighted as the internal story. Next, they will work together to underline passages that show external story (descriptions and dialogue). *What do they notice about the balance of the two? Would the story be as effective if it didn’t include one of the types of descriptions? Could it be better if the story included more of a certain type of description?* |
| **Homework/Extension** | Students will generate a list or a paragraph that describes the thoughts of the main character (themselves) at the time of the story they want to tell. They will then add it to their current draft. |
| **Assessment** | Points may be given for a completing a written description of their thoughts at the time that their stories take place.  
*Mid-unit assessment task:*  
What is the main lesson of your story? After identifying the main lesson in a childhood narrative, write a revision plan based on a close rereading of your first draft, setting goal(s) to write and revise your narrative under the influence of the mentor.
### Session 7

#### Quotation

"As I reach out to create the writing communities I need, I have one rule: I do not share my writing in process with anyone who does not make me want to write. When I get a response from the members of my writing community, I hurry back to my desk, excited by the problems, the possibilities, the strengths I have discovered. I have work to do and I am eager to get at it." - Donald Murray

#### Teaching Point

**Researchers revise their informed view to incorporate new information. They use this revised view to organize their evidence. Writers share their writing with others. A writer seeks feedback to discover what a reader sees, where there is confusion, and where new possibilities exist. They make plans to re-work their writing when they see how others view it.**

#### Connection

In the last session, students developed characters through their internal stories. In this session, students work in writer response groups to obtain helpful feedback.

#### Preparation

- Inspirational quote: Copy and prepare individual quotes to be taped into writers’ notebooks.
- All students bring a current draft of their personal narrative to class. (If choosing option 2 in Independent Practice, all students bring copies of their narratives for each person in their response groups, or the teacher might make those copies for them.)
- Prepare a sample piece of writing to be analyzed for feedback practice.
- Notecards or sticky notes for writing feedback.
- Helpful Resource: *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem* by Donald Murray

#### Active Engagement

- Review connection and teaching point.
- Students tape the inspirational quote for the day into their notebooks as it is read aloud.
- As an example of today’s activity, look at a piece of writing together (This could be a piece of the teacher’s unfinished writing, a student sample, etc.) to practice the skills of giving helpful feedback. Answer the following response group feedback questions:
  1. Which craft decision do you admire in the piece? (For example, great imagery, a funny metaphor, some really realistic dialogue, etc.)
  2. What part of the story is confusing? Was it hard to tell how it all ended? Was it confusing trying to tell who was talking?
  3. What possibilities do you see in the story? In other words, what are some things the writer could do if they thought it would be appropriate? Never tell the writer what they need to do, only what they might do.
- Students, in pairs or as a whole group, report out their answers to the three questions after the teacher finishes reading the sample.

#### Independent Practice

*Depending upon the teacher’s familiarity and comfort level with writer response groups, one of two ways might be used to solicit peer feedback. The directions begin the same and then diverge. Then choose either option 1 or option 2.*

- Students share their work with a small group (3 or 4 is best) in order to get feedback that will leave them “hurry(ing) back to (their) desk(s).”

**Option 1**

Students each silently read one group mate’s story and then answer the response-group feedback questions on the notecard. After finishing each story, they should all pass their stories to the right and read the next group-mate’s story quietly. At the end, all of the personal narratives should have been read, with notecards filled out by each reader. The narratives and notecards should be returned to the author by the end.

**Option 2**

Students bring enough copies of their personal narrative for each member of their response group. The first author reads their narrative aloud while group members listen quietly, and then the author is silent while the rest of the group attempts to answer the questions about the narrative they have in front of them. The author takes notes on their copy of the narrative, but cannot answer any questions or insert thoughts. They simply record the group’s thinking in order to have information for possible revision.

#### Share

After all students have read the stories, provided feedback, and had their notecards returned to them or taken notes from their group’s discussion, they share the most helpful piece of feedback they received, share which changes they plan to make based on the feedback they got, and then thank the group for their assistance.

#### Homework/Extension

Students return to their own writing and make any changes that they deem desirable after reading their group’s feedback.
| **Assessment** | Points may be given for participation in writing response groups. Also, points may be given for a completed draft with revisions made based upon response-group feedback. |
Session 8

Quotation

“I have been correcting the proofs of my poems. In the morning, after hard work, I took a comma out of one sentence . . . . In the afternoon I put it back again.”  -Oscar Wilde

Teaching Point

**Writers give their work clarity by using proper conventions of writing. Readers can understand who is speaking with properly formatted dialogue.**

Connection

In the last session, students met in response groups to obtain feedback on their writing. In this session, student will edit their stories for proper formatting of dialogue.

Preparation

- Prepare copies of “Editing and Formatting Dialogue” and “Cheat sheet – The Rules of Formatting Dialogue.” (see attached sheets)
- Inspirational quote: Copy and prepare individual quotes to be taped into notebooks.

Active Engagement

- Review the connection and the teaching point.
- Begin by explaining that writers give their work clarity by using proper conventions of writing. Let them know that we will edit for all conventions in this piece of writing, but will focus specifically on formatting dialogue in this session.
- Using the handout “Editing and Formatting Dialogue,” begin by having students read the passage from Jeffrey Wroblewski’s *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, to notice how the dialogue is formatted (where the punctuation occurs, where the text is indented, etc.).
- Next, they will review the “Cheat Sheet” section of the handout to learn the four ways that a writer might set up dialogue.
- Finally, they will practice rewriting sentences of dialogue, applying the rules that they have just learned.

Independent Practice

Next, the students will go back to their narratives to find places where dialogue might improve the story. They will write one or more example of dialogue to insert, using proper conventions on formatting dialogue. They should try using at least two of the four strategies for including dialogue in the narratives.

Share

- Students will read their dialogue to a small group to gain feedback about how realistic-sounding the dialogue is.
- Then, they will edit one another’s dialogue samples to be sure they are formatted according to the conventions listed.

Homework/Extension

Students will edit and revise their narratives. They will be due in the next session for a final celebration.

Assessment

Points may be given for the completion of the “Editing and Formatting Dialogue” handout. Also, points may be given for a draft of their own dialogue, including at least two different strategies for formatting dialogue.
Launching the Writer’s Notebook 9: Session 8

Editing and Formatting Dialogue

By properly formatting dialogue, your story will be easier to read. Read the passage below to notice how the author uses the conventions of formatting dialogue.

Excerpt from David Wroblewski’s novel The Story of Edgar Sawtelle

“Okay, “ she said. “Follow me.” She tore her coat from the hook and walked out the door and in the waning light led them around the corner of the woodpile. “Here,” she said. “I want you to load this into your truck and take it out to the field. Every stick. Edgar will show you where the wheelbarrow is. Then I want you to go into town and go to Gordy Howe’s place and get another truckload and bring that back. I’ll call him now.” The old man scratched his head and looked at her. “Will it be enough?” she said. “Yes, ma’am, I think it will be. It might take some time, even then, but I believe that will do it.” “And will you help?” The old man smiled and nodded. “Oh, we’ll help all right. We’ll be here until the ground is thawed.” He turned to the younger man. “Won’t we?” he said. “Son?”

ANALYZE

After reading the excerpt:

A. Go back, using two different colored highlighters, and highlight the words of each speaker. Use one color to show the first speaker and the other color to show the second speaker.

B. Circle the commas, periods and question marks at the end of what each person says. Where are the quotation marks in relation to the question marks? Where are the quotation marks in relation to the commas? Where are the quotation marks in relation to the periods?

C. Notice the indentation. Why does the author indent when he does? What does it signify?
Cheat Sheet - The Rules of Formatting Dialogue

The Rules

1. Quotation marks go at the beginning and ending of spoken words.

2. A speaker’s sentence should always start with a capital letter.

3. Some form of punctuation (comma, question mark, exclamation mark, or period) should go at the end of spoken words, but before the closing quotation mark.

4. Each time a new speaker speaks, a new indentation (TAB or five spaces) is needed.

Strategies with Examples

When you write a story including spoken words and narration, you have four options.

A. Write the spoken words first and then the narrator’s words at the end. To do this, write the spoken words in quotation marks. Before the final quotation marks, you will add a question mark, exclamation mark, or comma.
   
   For example:

   “Okay,” she said.

   “Will it be enough?” she said.

B. Write the narrator’s words first and then the spoken words at the end. To do this, write the narrator’s words, then a comma, then the spoken words (beginning with a capital letter) in quotation marks. Another example from The Story of Edgar Sawtelle shows this:

   Before Edgar could sign the answer, Claude said, “She had a cut near her eye, but it wasn’t deep. Finch is going to be limping for a few days, that’s all. They looked worse than they really were.”

C. Interrupt the spoken words by placing the narrator’s words in the middle. To do this, write some of the speaker’s words, plus a comma in quotation marks, then the narrator’s words, plus a comma, and then the rest of the speaker’s words in quotation marks again. The author uses this form in the following example:

   “My name is Louisa Wilkes,” she continued, “and I—well, the fact is, I don’t know exactly why I’m here.”

D. Write the spoken words with no comment from the narrator. (It is obvious, in this case, who the speakers are because the previous speaker is tagged. This will only work when this happens, or the reader will have no idea who is speaking.) Indent to show the new speaker. For example:

   “Yes, ma’am, I think it will be. It might take some time, even then, but I believe that will do it.”
   “And will you help?”
PRACTICE

Rewrite the following sentences, punctuating them as needed.

When is this narrative due she asked

I have so much homework this week she complained that I’m going to have to cancel my date

Nervously scribbling on her notebook she burst out I can’t make it Friday night Joe

I have two tests this week she went on plus an essay due Monday

Next week life should get a lot easier she said

I just hope she exclaimed that all this hard work will pay off

Eliza told her stop worrying so much and have a little fun

Straight A’s she laughed now, that’s fun
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 9</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quotation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Preparation** | - Inspirational quote: Copy and prepare individual quotes to be taped into notebooks.  
- Bring snacks, treats, and drinks to set the mood for a real celebration. |
| **Connection** | In the last session, students edited their stories. In this session, they share their finished product. |
| **Teaching Point** | *Writers celebrate their stories by sharing them with others. Listeners note what resonates with them in their peers’ writing.* |
| **Active Engagement** | - Review the connection and teaching point.  
- Students get their snacks, tape their inspirational quotes into their notebooks, and have their copies of their stories ready.  
- Discuss the inspirational quote from Donald Murray and point out how important our writing can be. This is the day that they get to celebrate all of their hard work by sharing their writing with others. And they also get to hear the fascinating stories that their classmates wrote. This is a time of enormous joy, but a time of enormous responsibility to nurture the writing community that they are creating.  
- Remind students that in order to support the community, they must listen carefully to their classmates as they read, and be prepared to share what echoes for them after the story is over. |
| **Independent Practice** | Students take turns sharing their stories in their designated groups or with the whole class. (This will depend on the number of students in the class. The teacher will have to decide what works best logistically.) |
| **Share** | After a student finishes, other students should volunteer to share what resonated with them. *What line or section made them say “wow” or surprised them?* |
| **Homework/Extension** | Writing for an audience outside the classroom makes the writing more authentic than just for completion of a classroom assignment. Students should be encouraged or required to submit their pieces for publication in some way. This might include posting on a bulletin board, a showcase in the hallway, a podcast, a blog, a class website, a class book, or submission to any number of writing contests for possible publication. Please be sure to give students the names of valid, legitimate contests to enter. Many can be quickly submitted to online. Teenink.com accepts all sorts of writing for possible publication in their magazine, and other contests can be found online or through local organizations. |
| **Assessment** | Points may be given for the participation in the celebration by reading and responding to student narratives.  
**Post-unit assessment task:**  
After reading narratives about childhood that explore what children learn, students will write personal narratives that show what they learned to do, or who they learned to be, as they grew up. Stories may not be literally true in every detail, but the stories will be located in the time and space of students’ childhoods. Students will also write a reflection that examines the ways their writing has been impacted by experimenting with and developing a narrative.  
Possible prompt: What can children do aside from learning to be tough, which is only a temporary or at best a partial answer? After reading stories of childhood that explore what children learn, write a narrative that relates what you learned to do or be as you grew up. Stories may not be literally true in every detail but will be located in the time and space of your childhood. Use stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, tone, humor, suspense) to develop a narrative. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optional Session**</th>
<th>**This is an optional session for teachers who would like to take students on an observation walk. This would work nicely between sessions 1 and 2 or 2 and 3.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>&quot;I get my ideas from living my life wide-eyed and awake. I sit on the edge of chairs. I pay attention to wherever I am.&quot; -Drew Lamm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Preparation       | - Inspirational quote: Copy and prepare individual quotes to be taped into notebooks.  
                   - Write a model of a series of observations, using multiple senses, that describes a place. Include three senses in the writing.  
                   - Scout out a good place to go on an observation walk. An outdoor location close to the school is best: an athletic field, school courtyard, or the neighborhood. The walk might be inside the school: the library, lunchroom, or gymnasium. (Get permission to observe any classes prior to the walk.) Plan three stops or angles to focus the observation period. For example, 1) Take a walk in the neighborhood on trash day and stop at a house, a garden, and then the trash cans lined along the road. 2) Stay in the library and stop to focus on posters, shelves of books, people in the library, the view outside the window. 3) One location inside and use these angles of focus: observing from across the room, observing close-up, observing by touching the object. |
| Teaching Point    | Writers pay close attention to the world around them. They record observations and thoughts in writers’ notebooks. They include sensory details. Using the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch) takes the reader to the place and shows the reader the situation. |
| Active Engagement | - Review the teaching point.  
                   - Share your model.  
                   - Sight is the most frequent sense used to describe. Writers take the challenge to use multiple senses as they observe and describe the world they live in. Before you leave for your walk, students practice their observational skills.  
                   - Students take a moment and use two other senses to observe and describe something in the room or at the gathering point for the walk.  
                   - Students turn and talk, sharing their observations.  
                   - Students report out a few observations using multiple senses. |
| Independent Practice | Students go on a walk to a chosen destination, get comfortable, and write. They use their notebooks as a place to record observations that focus particularly on the five senses. They should have the freedom to move around and touch things, examining things from afar and up close, recording their sensory descriptions. |
| Share             | Students regroup to share their favorite observation point. They read the description to a partner. Listeners notice the senses the writer is using and compliment the writer on a single description. |
| Homework/Extension| - Examine a model of a piece of writing from a writer who used close observation to describe a person, place, or thing. Post it so that all can see. (We recommend “Skater” by Ted Kooser, the former poet laureate, and it can be found at [http://www.tedkooser.net/poems.shtml#](http://www.tedkooser.net/poems.shtml#) along with others like “Tattoo” that might work nicely with this lesson.)  
                   - Students experiment with using close observation to write a description. They write a paragraph or poem using the observation notes they gathered today to describe a person, place, or thing they noticed on the walk.  
                   - They can add details from memory to complete the paragraph or poem. |
| Assessment        | Points may be given for the completion of a notebook entry that uses observation skills and sensory detail. Also, points may be given for completion of a paragraph or poem that is rich in sensory detail. |
Works Cited


