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Reflexive Writing and Literature [7th grade]

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UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Reflexive writing and literature

Grade Level: 7th Grade

Subject/Topic Area(s): English

Designed By: Kara Dougherty

Time Frame: 25 class periods (or 5 weeks)

School District: NISD

School: Vale Middle School

**School Address and Phone: 2120 N. Ellison Drive, San Antonio, TX 78251
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OVERVIEW & STATUS

Brief Summary of Unit:

The goal of this unit is for students to write their own reflexive piece of writing – a memoir. While students have had previous exposure to this in the past, their focus should be more on narrowing down their topic to the important facts and uses vivid descriptions and sensory details to create imagery in their writing. We will read published examples of reflexive writing from both essay collections and the literature book, *Elements of Literature: First Course* published by Holt in order to analyze and understand how other writers make their literature interesting to the reader.

We will also explore strategies to guide us through the pre-writing process. Students will look in-depth at different ways of pre-writing in order to generate ideas and drafts for their memoirs. We will also complete multiple revising and editing activities in order to show students how to enhance and refine their writing.

Unit: Reflexive writing and literature

Grade: 7

Stage 1: Desired Results

Understandings

Students will understand that...

- * Writing is used for many purposes, including self-discovery.
- * Writers use different literary devices and strategies (such as imagery) to both hook and keep their audience.
- * Writing is a process which is always evolving.
- * Writers get ideas from many different sources.
- * Literature relates to and reflects both our everyday lives and society.

Essential Questions

- * Why do people write about themselves?
- * How do writers know what to write about?
- * How do authors make readers interested in their writing?
- * When do I know my writing is done?
- * How does literature reflect my life?

TEKS

- * 15A: Write to express, discover, record, develop, reflect on ideas, and to problem solve.
- * 15H: Produce cohesive and coherent written texts by organizing ideas, using effective transitions, and choosing precise wording.
- * 15G: Use literary devices effectively such as suspense, dialogue, and figurative language.
- * 14A: Compare text events with his/her own and other readers' experiences.

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task:

Students will write a memoir – focusing on an important event in their life. They will need to show all stages of the writing process in their final product and make the writing *interesting* to the reader. To accompany their essay, students will prepare and present a visual representation of their memoir. Students will have choices to visually show their memoir. Some of the choices include making a movie or PowerPoint of photos and music that reflect the appropriate tone of the memoir, create a scrapbook page or poster to commemorate the event that the student wrote about, perform a monologue or skit about the event, create a comic strip of the event, etc. **See pages 5 & 6.**

Other evidence:

- * Rollercoaster of life and sample writing from it
- * Name quickwrite
- * Blueprint
- * Picture activity for focus
- * Looping activity (regulars only)
- * Peer review sheets
- * Draft checks of performance assessment

Stage 3: Learning Activities

Day 1: Exploring EQ: Why do people write about themselves?

- Journal: Do you like to write about your own life? Explain.
- To begin thinking about reflexive (personal) writing, I will show clips that give background information on a character (ex: *Freedom Writers*, *Holes*, *Field of Dreams*, etc.).
- Students will do a Think-Pair-Share with someone on why it is important to know information about people's lives.
- Students will be given a piece of writing that correlates to one of the movies and be asked to work with their partner to answer these questions: Why do you think the author wrote about this? What would you call this type of writing?
- Introduce different genres of personal writing (autobiography, biography, memoir, and poem) on [PowerPoint](#).

Day 2: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- My favorite type of ride at an amusement park is...
- I will explain to students that we will also be doing a type of personal writing. In order to do this, we need to brainstorm to get ideas for our writing.
- Our first method of brainstorming will be to create a "Rollercoaster of Life." Students will choose different events of their life to illustrate and put on their rollercoaster to represent the "ups and downs" in their lives. **See page 7.**

Day 3: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: If you had to go back and change one thing in your life, what would you change and why?
- In-class work on their Rollercoaster of Life.
- Write one paragraph explaining one of the items on their rollercoaster in-depth.

Day 4: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: Make a list of 10 things that you haven't done yet, but you want to do.
- Read examples of Day 3's writing
- Mini-lesson on showing vs. telling in writing: Write "The girl is a snob." On the board. As a class, give ideas to *show* that she is a snob instead of just *telling* it.
- Students will independently change a boring statement from *telling* to *showing*.

Day 5: Exploring EQ: How do authors make readers interested in their writing?

- Journal: Read the overhead of yesterday's writing winner. Write down 3 examples that create imagery.
- Mini-lesson on sensory detail: Students will work in groups of 3-4 students at describing an unknown item in a container. Students will be able to write their observations of the five senses about their item (sight, smell, taste, sound, and touch). Students will share these answers with the class. After finishing sharing, each student will write a few sentences that describe their item, but they must use all five of the senses in their writing. **See page 8.**
- Students will look back at their paragraph from Day 3 and add detail to address all 5 of the senses (homework).

Day 6: Exploring EQ: How do authors make readers interested in their writing? and Exploring EQ: How does literature reflect my life?

- Journal: Make a list of all names/versions of your name/nicknames that you have been called in your lifetime.
- Students will participate in four corners responding to the statement "My name makes me who I am."
- We will read "Nombres/Names" by Julia Alvarez. As we read, students should think about this prompt and also use sticky notes labeled with a quick picture of one of the five senses when they see examples of sensory detail.
- Class discussion on why details like this are important (adds images to your writing and makes it more interesting).

Day 7: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: Pick a name from your list yesterday and explain that name.
- Brainstorming: As a class, we will do a concept web about "childhood."
- Students will choose one item from the concept web and write a story about their childhood.

Day 8: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: I will probably never throw away my _____ because...
- Introduce blueprints – students will draw the floor plan of a house/apartment that is important to them. They will label 10 different memories that they have in different rooms (or in the yard of their home).

Day 9: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: None – move straight to blueprints.
- In class work on blueprints

Day 10: Exploring EQ: How do authors make readers interested in their writing?

- Journal: None – move straight to blueprints.
- Finish blueprints and choose one event to expand and write on the back of your house – make sure to use sensory details.

Day 11: Exploring EQ: Why do people write about themselves?

- Journal: The people next door...
- Students will share their blueprint writing with a peer and highlight the first line of the story.
- Mini-lesson on leads: Explain what options they have and how to engage the reader from the very beginning. Share good examples of beginnings of short stories, books, movies, and songs. Why are these good? PowerPoint notes on

how to write a good lead.

- Students will work in groups of fours to play a card game that shows them how to write a variety of leads. Students should come up with two alternative leads to your story and have the group choose the best one. **See page 9.**

Day 12: Exploring EQ: Why do people write about themselves?

- Journal: What would you do if you won the lottery?
- Introduce performance assessment and refer back to notes for the different genres of personal writing (autobiography, biography, memoir, and poem).
- Brainstorm with a quicklist and remind students of ideas from concept web, blueprint, rollercoaster, etc.

Day 13: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: Who are your friends? Why do you all get along?
- Read a sample essay from *Starting with "I"* ("The Crew from the Parking Lot"). Why do you think the author wrote this? Examine taking one simple moment and making it seem special.
- Complete snapshot writing exercise with students own pictures to make students focus in on details in their writing.

Day 14: Exploring EQ: How do writers get ideas on what to write about?

- Journal: When I am bored, I...
- Topic choices due for personal memoir – share with class.
- Begin drafting

Day 15: Exploring EQ: How do authors make readers interested in their writing? and Exploring EQ: How does literature reflect my life?

- Journal: None – move straight on to drafting
- Drafting in class.

Day 16: Exploring EQ: When do I know my writing is done?

- Journal: Write about your first crush. How did it make you feel?
- Read "Dream Girl" in essay collection and ask students to highlight details that make the writing clear (create imagery).
- Discussion and notes about devices that make writing clear; put in writer's notebook (imagery, sensory detail, similes and metaphors, onomatopoeia, etc.).
- Revise drafts to add tools from above.

Day 17: Exploring EQ: When do I know my writing is done?

- Journal: Write one alternative lead of your choosing for your essay.
- Group with peers to assess each other's writing. Checking in on the main idea of the essay (Is it focused?); the lead (Is it interesting right away? Does it grab you?) and details (What images can I clearly see? Do I feel like I am actually there?)
- Share suggestions and make revisions to your essay.

Day 18: Exploring EQ: How do authors make readers interested in their writing? and Exploring EQ: How does literature reflect my life?

- Journal: None – go to the lab
- Go to lab to type a copy of our essay for ratiocination.

Day 19: Exploring EQ: When do I know my writing is done?

- Journal: None – get appropriate supplies for ratiocination.
- Ratiocination of papers – fix and edit areas of their papers. Specifically stress review of major grammar skills taught in 6th grade such as capitalization, simple punctuation, and structure of paper (paragraphs).

Day 20: Exploring EQ: How does literature reflect my life?

- Journal: None
- Introduce and begin working on visual representation of performance assessment.

Day 21: Exploring EQ: When do I know my writing is done?

- Journal: None
- Written portion of performance assessment due; clocking and read around.
- In-class work on visual portion of performance assessment.

Day 22: Exploring EQ: How does literature reflect my life?

- Journal: None
- In-class work on visual portion of performance assessment.

Day 23: Exploring EQ: How does literature reflect my life?

- Journal: None
- In-class work on visual portion of performance assessment.

Day 24: Exploring EQ: Why do people write about themselves? Present performance assessment to the class.

Day 25: Exploring EQ: Why do people write about themselves? Present performance assessment to the class.

Name _____ Class Period _____

Memoirs of Me

A memoir is a piece of autobiographical writing that captures one specific moment or highlights an event in your life. Usually this event is very meaningful or significant to the writer. It does not have to be a big event; often, we attach more emotions and significance to the small moments in our life. Some possible examples include baby sitting for the first time, remembering a camping trip that you took with your father, or a special tradition that your family has. The topic is YOUR choice. You will be writing one of these memories, and we will work together to take your writing to the next level.

In this writing, you will be expected to...

- * Write an interesting lead (hook the reader with your writing)
- * Write dialogue correctly (if it is included)
- * Tell the WHOLE story (whether it be one page or five)
- * Use details to show, NOT tell (create a picture in the reader's mind - imagery)
- * Cycle through the entire writing process (including prewriting, drafts and revisions)
- * Have fun (choose a topic that is important to *you*)
- * Use correct grammar
- * Listen to your peers and revise as necessary (when grouping)

When you hand in your final copy, you will hand in ALL brainstorming, your rubric, all your drafts (a minimum of 2 with revisions) and your final copy. I want to see the entire thought process that you went through in order to get your final piece of writing. Please look at the rubric on the back to see what you need to do for your essay.

After finishing the written piece, you will also make a visual component of your memoir which will show the main idea of what you wrote about. You can choose one of the options below to create or you can think of your own idea. If you come up with an idea not on the list below, please get my permission first before completing it! You will be graded on the following qualities: how well your project represents the idea of your memoir, the quality of your project, and your presentation.

Some ideas for the visual portion of your project:

- * Create a movie or PowerPoint with pictures and/or music to complement the tone of your memoir (please bring this on a disk on save to your Digital Locker).
- * Create a scrapbook to show your experience
- * Create a poster illustrating your experience
- * Perform a monologue or skit
- * Create a comic strip of your experience
- * Make a picture book telling your story

Rubric for Memoir – Written portion

Category	1	2	3	4
<p>Ideas and Conventions (50):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is my message clear and focused – did I narrow my topic down to tell the important information? ● Does the writer use details and specific words to show, not tell (create imagery)? 	<p>The memoir is not focused at all and lacks any detail. It simply tells what has happened. EXAMPLE: I flew on a plane to Disney World. I rode the rides. It was fun. I came home. (0-11)</p>	<p>The memoir is somewhat focused and has some description that creates imagery. However, the writer spends much of the time focused on and describing UNIMPORTANT or insignificant events. It leaves the reader confused or unclear about what is important. (12-24)</p>	<p>The memoir is focused, and the writer uses precise wording and description to create imagery at times. The reader can clearly understand what is happening, but does not get a complete picture of the events. (25-38)</p>	<p>The memoir is focused on the most important part of the explanation. The writer uses precise wording and description to create imagery. The writer uses sensory details to make sure that the reader feels as if they have experienced the event in the memoir as well. (39-50)</p>
<p>Organization (10):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did I tell the whole story? ● Did I split my writing up into meaningful paragraphs? 	<p>The memoir moves in no particular order and/or is not split into paragraphs. (0-1)</p>	<p>The memoir jumps around and the order is unclear, but the writing is split up into more than one paragraph. (2-4)</p>	<p>The memoir moves in a somewhat logical order, and the writing is split up into paragraphs. (5-7)</p>	<p>The memoir moves in a logical order and is easy for the reader to follow. The writing is split up into paragraphs that are meaningful (8-10)</p>
<p>Voice (20):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does my essay sound like me? ● Did the essay hook my reader from the very beginning (with a good lead)? 	<p>The memoir has no voice (is BORING) and does not hook the reader at all. (0-5)</p>	<p>The memoir has a general or dull voice, and fails to hook the reader at the start of the essay. (6-10)</p>	<p>The memoir has a distinct voice that sounds unique to the reader, but does not really hook the reader at the beginning of the memoir (11-15)</p>	<p>The memoir has a distinct voice that sounds unique to the reader. The reader is hooked from the very start of the essay. (16-20)</p>
<p>Conventions (10):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did I check for spelling and grammar errors? ● Did I write dialogue correctly? 	<p>The author makes too many errors in capitalization, spelling, and basic punctuation to understand the essay. (0-1)</p>	<p>The author makes many errors in capitalization, spelling, and basic punctuation some of which are careless and can cause the reader to misunderstand the essay. (2-4)</p>	<p>The author makes some errors in capitalization, spelling, and basic punctuation, but they don't cause a problem in comprehension. (5-7)</p>	<p>The author makes very few errors in capitalization, spelling, and basic punctuation. (8-10)</p>
<p>Writing process (10):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did I cycle through the writing process and make revisions throughout my drafts? ● Did I include all pre-writing, drafts, and revisions? 	<p>The author is missing most stages of the process (or the final draft) and did not make revisions (0-1)</p>	<p>The author is missing portions of the writing process in the final product and did not make revisions during the pre-writing and drafting stages. (2-4)</p>	<p>The author includes all portions of the writing process in the final product. The author made some, but not significant revisions throughout the pre-writing and drafting stages. (5-7)</p>	<p>The author includes all portions of the writing process in the final product. The author made thoughtful revisions throughout the pre-writing and drafting stages. (8-10)</p>

Name:

Date:

Per:

Rollercoaster of Life

In everybody's life, there are important events that make us who we are. Your job for this assignment is to create a rollercoaster that symbolizes your life.

- You must include at least 10 events on this rollercoaster - make sure that they are important events (Example: Do not choose the day that you went to Wal-Mart with your mom because you remember doing it - make sure that the event has some significance to your life!).
- You should place these events on the rollercoaster in the appropriate place. If it was a great, exciting event, put it at the top of your rollercoaster bump. If it was a sad or hard event in your life, put it at the bottom of a dip in your rollercoaster track.
- Create a symbol for each event (example: a little U-Haul for moving to a new place).

Use the back of this paper to start listing possible events in your life...think of holidays, moves, big changes, births, birthdays, vacations, your "first" of something, etc.

Name:

Date:

Per:

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What does sensory detail mean???

Sensory detail:

Write your observations of the object in your container in the chart below:

				

Write your sentences - complete with sensory detail - in your journal and glue this paper in also.

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RULES FOR PLAYING LEAD MATCHING

1. Lay all cards face down in the center of the desks.
2. You will be playing “Lead Matching.”
3. On a turn, each person will flip over 2 different cards – If the cards match, the person keeps the cards. If they do not, the cards are flipped back over so the next person can go.
4. Continue around your group of people until all the cards are gone.
5. Look at the matches that you have and choose 2 of the matched piles.
6. These are the 2 ways that you will write a NEW lead for your paragraphs.

What if I have 0 or only 1 match?

You are in luck! Your group (whoever has extra matches) gets to gift whatever matches they do not want to you!

Lead card examples:

**Start
with...
ACTION!**

**Start
with...
A
SHOCKING
STATEMENT**

**Start
with...
A
FAMOUS
QUOTE!**

**Start
with...
DIALOGUE!**

**Start
with...
A NOISE!**

**Start
with...
A
FACT!**

