# Memoirs: Exploring Personal Challenges

## Stage 1 - Desired Results

### Unit Summary

In this unit, students will explore the genre of memoirs through reading memoirs of individuals who faced challenges in their lives. They will be introduced to several prewriting strategies as they brainstorm ideas for their own personal memoir about their childhood, and experience the writing process in depth as they draft, revise and publish their childhood memoirs.

### Content Standards and Learning Expectations

#### Listening/Speaking

L/S.6.1 Listens and responds during a read aloud from a variety of fiction and text styles to comprehend, identify, and relate to character and setting.

#### Reading

R.6.2 Applies context clues, reference sources, and other vocabulary expansion strategies to assess word meaning; uses prefixes, suffixes, and root words to determine the meaning of unfamiliar and compound words.

R.6.4 Sorts and organizes relevant events, identifies cause and effect, makes predictions and inferences, and identifies problem and solution in narrative and expository text.

#### Writing

W.6.3 Applies the parts of speech; identifies subjects and objects using prepositional phrases in sentences.

W.6.4 Identifies elements in descriptive, narrative, and expository forms of writing; uses a variety of sentence types and basic organizational patterns to construct narrative, descriptive, and expository paragraphs.

W.6.5 Uses the writing process; applies prewriting strategies to generate ideas; uses the dictionary as an aid in the writing process; identifies spelling, capitalization, and ending punctuation errors.

### Big Ideas/Enduring Understandings:

- Challenges are openings for new learning.
- Experiences can be turned into memoirs.
- Understanding words help us become better readers and writers.
- The writing process is made up of a series of strategies that authors use to improve their writing.

### Essential Questions:

- How do challenges lead to new learning?
- Which experiences are worth writing about?
- How would the world be without words?
- What makes our writing great?

### Content (Students will know...)

- Root words and compound words
- Prefixes *(un-* not, against, opposite; *trans-* across, beyond, change; *re-* back, again; *dis-* not, opposite of, exclude)
- Suffixes *(-*age activity, or result of action, *-er,*-or person or thing that does something, *-ful an amount or quantity that fills)*
- Parts of speech (nouns & verbs)
- The steps of the writing process: brainstorming/free-writing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing

### Skills (Students will be able to...)

- Listen and respond during a read-aloud from a variety of memoirs to comprehend and identify character and setting
- Use prefixes, suffixes and root words to determine the meaning of unfamiliar and compound words
- Make predictions and inferences while reading memoirs
- Use a variety of sentence types and basic organizational patterns to construct descriptive paragraphs as part of a memoir
### Content Vocabulary
- Memoir
- Descriptive text
- Setting
- Event
- Dialogue
- Inference
- Prediction
- Verb
- Noun
- Pronoun
- Prefix
- Suffix
- Root word
- Compound word

### Performance Tasks:
#### Using the Writing Process to Write My Personal Childhood Memoir (4 Parts)

1. **Prewriting**
   - Have students reply to prompts to help students think of ideas to write about, such as:
     - What is your first memory as a child? Walking? A birthday party? A car ride?
     - What is the most embarrassing thing that happened to you in first grade?
     - What is the best gift you ever received?
     - Who were your best friends in second grade? Are they your friends now?
     - Did you ever get lost in your own neighborhood? Did you spend time outside? Think of something that happened to you outside and write about the experience.
   - **Neighborhood Map:** Have students create maps of their childhood neighborhoods &

### Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence

#### Other Evidence:
- At the end of each project, have students do a reflective journal entry (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Reflective Journal)
- Create a Word Wall using unit vocabulary and new concepts/words students encounter in texts they read during the unit. (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Using Word Wall to Improve Instruction)
- Fluency Running Records and Paired Reading Fluency Checks (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Paired Reading Fluency Check)
- Verb Tense exercises (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Verb Tense Activity)
- Noun Quiz (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Noun Quiz)
- Pronoun Quiz (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Pronoun Quiz)
- Root and compound word quiz (See Attachment: 6.4 Other Evidence – Root and Compound Word Quiz)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.4 Memoirs: Exploring Personal Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong> ESL</td>
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<td><strong>Length:</strong> 6 weeks</td>
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<td><strong>connect them to stories from their childhood for ideas by choosing three places on the map and remembering things that happened to them in those places.</strong></td>
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**(2) Rough Draft**
- Ask students to select one of their ideas from the prewriting and write a story from this experience as their own childhood memoir. The student should aim for at least 4 pages double-spaced (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Characteristics of a Memoir).

**(3) Revision**
- Have students revise their work (See Attachments: 6.4 Writing Tool – Self-Revision Worksheet and 6.4 Writing Tool – Peer Revision Checklist).
- After completing their self-revisions, have them make changes, if necessary, to their memoirs.
- Next, have students work in pairs to revise their work (See Attachment: 6.4 Writing Tool – Peer Editing Worksheet).

**(4) Final Drafts and Assessment**
- Have students make final revisions based on the feedback they received from you and their peers.
- Have students keep all pre-writings, revisions, maps, self-revisions and peer-revisions and turn them in with their final drafts. Collect rough drafts and maps for daily grades, and give them back during the same class period. Give the students grades on their finished papers.
- Have students share their memoirs with the class.
- Assess using memoir rubric (See Attachment: 6.4 Writing Tool – Memoir Rubric).

**Reader’s Response Letter**
Read a memoir about someone who experienced a personal challenge and overcame the challenge. Write a reader’s response letter to the author of the memoir making connections between the experiences of the author and either:
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1. Your life
2. The life of a fictional character from another novel
3. The life of a real life character from another memoir or biography

Your reader’s response letter should contain at least three connections, or one connection with three reasons about why the connection is valid.

### Stage 3 - Learning Plan

#### Learning Activities

**Memoirs: Predictions & Connections**
- Show students the titles and covers of various memoirs and have the make predictions and inferences about what the book is about. Have students check to see if their predictions and inferences were correct or not by having them read the back pockets of the books and their summaries.
- Read aloud an excerpt from the memoir, *When I Was Puerto Rican*, by Esmeralda Santiago (See Attachment: 6.4 Text – When I Was Puerto Rican), keeping in mind the characteristics of a memoir (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Characteristics of Memoirs).
- Have students select a part of a memoir that they identify/connect with. Have them do an illustration of the scene they selected and a journal entry reflecting how this scene relates to them. Have them make connections to the setting and the author’s experience.

**The Writing Process: Prewriting & Brainstorming**
- Ask students to choose a brainstorming strategy to write for 3-5 minutes (See Attachment: 6.4 Writing Tool – Brainstorming Ideas for a Memoir). After time is up, have students choose a different prompt and write for 3-5 minutes. Repeat this exercise as many times as you see necessary.
- Ask students to pick two of their brainstorming exercises and have them write details about each event using the senses (See Attachment: 6.4 Graphic Organizer – Brainstorming Using the Senses).
- Give students a list of dialogue tags (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Dialogue Tags) and copies of an excerpt from “Summer of the Monkeys” (See Attachment: 6.4 Text – Summer Excerpt). Have students revise the dialogue tags in the excerpt using dialogue tags from the dialogue tags list.

**Vocabulary Strategies**
- Word Hunt: Have students skim through the memoir, *When I Was Puerto Rican* (See Attachment: 6.4 Text – When I Was Puerto Rican), and have them identify ten new words that have prefixes, suffixes or compound words (See Attachment: 6.4 Graphic Organizer – My New Words).
- Practice context clues (See Attachment: 6.4 Learning Activity – Context Clues).
- Practice prefixes (See Attachment: 6.4 Learning Activity – Prefixes Worksheet).

**Sample Lessons**
- Lesson on introduction to memoirs (See Attachment: 6.4 Sample Lesson – Memoirs)
- Lesson on memoir writing (See Attachment: 6.4 Sample Lesson – Memoir Writing)

**Additional Resources**
- Information on compound words (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Common Compound Words)
- Information on suffixes (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Common Suffixes)
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- Information on prefixes (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Common Prefixes)  
- Esmeralda Santiago Interview (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Esmeralda Santiago Interview)  
- Root words resource (See Attachment: 6.4 Resource – Roots)

**Literature Connections**

- *When I was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago  
- *Destined To Live: A True Story of a Child in the Holocaust* by Ruth Gruener  
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie  
- *My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir* by Samantha Abeel  
- Sample Childhood Memoirs (See Attachment: 6.4 Text – Sample Childhood Memoirs)