**Subject area/course**: English Language Arts

**Grade level/band**: 11–12

**Task source**: Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC)

**Remember Me: Exploring the Power of Memoir**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

1. **Task overview**:

In this task, students will study a variety of published memoirs (in print and online), write a memoir and deliver it as a dramatic reading to the class. Students should keep a notebook of pre-writing ideas from which they will choose a subject for their finished memoir. They will engage in a revision process that includes peer editing.

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Common Core State Standards**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/4/) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/5/) Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/4/) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/5/) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/11-12/1/) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/11-12/3/) Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/11-12/6/) Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

1. **Critical abilities**

Communication in Many Forms: Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

Use of Technology: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, making strategic use of digital media and visual displays to enhance understanding. Use technology, including the Internet, to research, produce, publish, and update individual or shared products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Interpersonal Interaction and Collaboration: Develop a range of interpersonal skills, including the ability to work with others, to participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations.

1. **Time/schedule requirements:**

Students will spend up to 3–5 days reading published memoirs and generating ideas for their own memoir. They will then spend one week writing and revising their final piece. Students will need 1–2 days to share their oral presentations.

1. **Materials/resources:**

* A blank composition book, journal, or notebook.
* Access to a computer for research and writing.
* Copies of the following resources for students:
  + William Zinsser’s article, complete or excerpted, “How to Write a Memoir; Be yourself, speak freely, and think small.” (The American Scholar, Spring 2006), available online at:

http://theamericanscholar.org/how-to-write-a-memoir/ Accessed July 11, 2013.

* Select writing prompts from Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir by [Natalie Goldberg](http://www.amazon.com/Natalie-Goldberg/e/B000AP7I9G/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1).
* Lara Adair ‘s article, complete or excerpted, “The Key Elements of Writing a Good Memoir” by (Writer’s Digest, October 14, 2010) available online at:

http://www.writersdigest.com/writing-articles/by-writing-goal/improve-my-writing/elements-of-an-effective-arc

* Other online resources include:
  + Six Word Memoir 2013 Student Movie:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPXpw1gvIZ8

* Selected clips from:

http://themoth.org/radio

* The following resources are optional for use in class:
  + I Can't Keep My Own Secrets: Six-Word Memoirs by Teens Famous & Obscure by Larry Smith and Rachel Fershleiser
  + Things Don't Have to Be Complicated: Illustrated Six-Word Memoirs by Students Making Sense of the World by Larry Smith
  + Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir by William Zinsser
  + Impact: An Anthology of Short Memoirs by [CoCo Harris](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=ntt_athr_dp_sr_1?_encoding=UTF8&search-alias=books&field-author=CoCo%20Harris&sort=relevancerank)
  + Behind Our Eyes, A Second Look: The Second Literary Anthology of Stories, Poems and Essays by Writers With Disabilities ([Kate Chamberlin](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=ntt_athr_dp_sr_2?_encoding=UTF8&search-alias=books&field-author=Kate%20Chamberlin&sort=relevancerank), Editor)
  + Teen Ink, Our Voices, Our Visions: Today's Teenagers Sharing Thoughts On: Friends, Family, Fitting In, Challenges, Loss, Memories, Love, Heroes by John Meyer and Stephanie H. Meyer

1. **Prior knowledge:**

Students should be able to:

* Analyze texts and understand how word choice and structure affect meaning and tone
* Make use of the writing process: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and peer-revision
* Use word processing software and conduct Internet research

1. **Connection to curriculum:**

This task will help students to establish strong writing, revision, peer revision, and editing skills. Since students will be sharing their written work, this task also helps to build a climate of trust and interest among students.

1. **Teacher instructions:**

Instruct students to bring a blank bound book, a notebook, journal, or composition book, to class for the first day of the memoir unit.

DAY ONE:

* Discuss the meaning and purpose of memoir. Facilitate discussion or have students write quick responses to questions such as:
  + What is memoir?
  + What memoir have you read?
  + What makes a good memoir?
* As a class, read selections from “How to Write a Memoir: Be yourself, speak freely, and think small” by William Zinsser or “The Key Elements of Writing a Good Memoir” by Lara Adair.
* Give students an overview of the scope of the project, including a timeline for drafts and a deadline for submitting their finished piece for publication. Be sure that students have access to a computer for their final draft. If necessary, give students instructions for gaining access to a computer.
* All writing for the memoir unit should be kept in the same notebook, up until the point students begin working on computers for drafting.

DAYS TWO–THREE:

* Use one or two exercises from Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir by [Natalie Goldberg](http://www.amazon.com/Natalie-Goldberg/e/B000AP7I9G/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1) to begin generating material in students’ notebooks. After each exercise, ask students to get peer response, as appropriate, in any of the following ways:
  + Trade notebooks with a partner, read their response to the prompt, and write one short, positive comment and one question.
  + Instruct students to gather in groups of 3–4 to share responses aloud and discuss how they will use the feedback to improve their writing.
  + Ask for volunteers to read their writing aloud to the class.
* Assign two more exercises from Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir by [Natalie Goldberg](http://www.amazon.com/Natalie-Goldberg/e/B000AP7I9G/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1) for homework each night.

DAY FOUR:

* Read a short memoir together (selected from list or anthologies or from your own source).
* Ask students to take 4–5 minutes to write a response to the memoir before you discuss it as a class. What stuck with them? What surprised them? What bothered them? What did they like? What didn’t they like?
* Ask students to share their responses. As a class, generate a list of qualities they might include in their memoir.
* If time allows, use peer response groups to examine homework writing from the previous night.

DAY FIVE:

* Show "Six Word Memoir 2013 Student Movie" (link in RESOURCES section) or display a series of six-word memoirs from I Can't Keep My Own Secrets: Six-Word Memoirs by Teens Famous & Obscure by Larry Smith and Rachel Fershleiser. Ask for brief student responses and questions. Discuss the possibilities and limitations with this form of writing.
* Instruct students to work in groups of 4 –5 to craft some collaborative six-word memoirs. Share some of them as a whole class. Once they are comfortable with the form, allow students the opportunity to craft some six-word memoirs of their own in their notebooks, sharing in their groups as they work. Share as a whole class, discussing word choice, imagery, etc.
* For homework, ask students to use photographs, old home movies, or memories to create at least six, six-word memoirs.

DAY SIX:

* Show selected clips from The Moth Radio Hour. Give students 1 –2 minutes to write a quick response to one of the clips, then share responses as a large group. Discuss how clips satisfy requirements of memoir. Discuss elements of a strong dramatic reading, asking students to take notes.
* Remind students that not only will they be writing a memoir but also giving a reading of their memoir to the class. In peer editing groups, have students exchange notebooks and put stars next to ideas that they feel would make a strong memoir and dramatic reading. Be sure to give students enough time for each of them to see each notebook in their small group. Once they have received feedback from classmates, ask students to identify the topic for their memoir.
* For homework, ask students to write a first draft of their memoir.

DAYS SEVEN & EIGHT DRAFTING and REVISION:

* Continue to read examples of memoir that focus on one particular element: imagery, metaphor, dialogue, and the like. Provide opportunities for students to revise their memoir through the lens of the element you are studying.
* Use peer-editing groups and teacher feedback to provide students with further suggestions for revision and editing. You could use an online forum and provide a structure for peer responses and editing suggestions.
* Allow time, if needed, for students to use computers for word processing to produce final drafts.
* Homework: Rehearse dramatic reading.

DAYS NINE AND TEN:

* Students deliver dramatic readings of their memoirs and turn in their final written drafts.

1. **Student support:**

* Confer with individual students who require additional support with the writing process. Provide specific suggestions for drafting, editing, and revision.
* Provide time for small groups or partners to work together on drafting, revision, and editing. Design groups with students’ strengths and weaknesses in mind.
* Provide written guidelines for revision and/or editing.
* Allow time for students to rehearse dramatic readings and give individual feedback.
* Provide printed copies of rubrics to guide student writing and preparation for dramatic readings.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* Organize a reading for students to share their memoirs, either in class or in a larger setting. Invite the larger school community, family, or community members to an evening reading.
* Students could create a representation of their memoir in another form: visual, video, graphic/comic, etc.
* Students may submit memoirs for publication. Provide students with time in class to research online publication opportunities. Discuss submission guidelines and processes for submitting original writing for publication. Instruct students to submit finished pieces for publication.

Submission Web Sites for Teen Authors:

* http://www.smithteens.com/

*SMITH Magazine* is a home for storytelling of all forms and kinds, with a focus on personal narrative. Whether a professional or unpublished writer, we believe everyone has a story and everyone should have a place to tell it.

* http://www.teenink.com/

*Teen Ink* is a national teen magazine, book series, and website devoted entirely to teenage writing, art, photos and forums. Students must be age 13 –19 to participate, register and/or submit work.

* http://www.behindoureyes.org/

Behind Our Eyes is a group of writers with disabilities, is accepts submissions of fiction, poetry, essays, and memoirs. *Magnets and Ladders* is Behind Our Eyes’ online magazine, issued in the spring and fall. You can contribute your own work and enjoy new ideas for writers. To read the magazine or sign up for the email edition, visit the *Magnets and Ladders* web site at http://www.magnetsandladders.org.

1. **Scoring instructions:**

A successful memoir uses varied language to capture a single experience in the life of the writer. The length of the memoir should be a minimum of 750 words. An exemplary memoir will use sensory language and vivid detail to engage the reader and reveal the experience and its significance.

This task is accompanied by two corresponding rubrics to be used to score your students’ work. Training for utilizing the rubrics to score the student responses will be provided through a webinar, and information about where you can access that training will be provided to you. It is important that you use the specified rubrics according to the instructions provided in the webinar. If you have questions during the scoring process, you should feel free to contact your Point of Contact from the research team.

This task will be scored using the English/Language Arts Effective Communication Oral Presentation Rubric and the Narrative Teaching Task Rubric.