

## **“Writing Lessons According To the 6 Traits of Writing” July 2007**

### **Lesson Template**

**Lesson Title: “Memoirs” / Neolithic Revolution (The pre-teaching mini-lesson(s) done about ‘memoir writing’ strategies taken from “Lessons That Change Writers” by Nancie Atwell.**

**Trait: voice**

**Grade Level: 6**

**Content Area: writing/ social studies**

**MA Framework: Imaginative/ literary writing**

**Strand/Standard: 19.14**

**Teacher: Mariann Eden**

**Instructional Content/Strategy/Strategies:** *Describe the content/strategy learned and used.*

The content includes a strong emphasis on the teaching of VOICE in writing through the ‘memoir’ writing strategies. The content also includes the vehicle of using a specific grade 6 social studies/ writing unit to become further aware of and to provide practice in the trait of voice.

**Instructional Objectives:** *Include content, process or skills, goals . . .*

- 1.) The students will use the appropriate chapters of the social studies text, “A Message of Ancient Days” to complete a study of the Neolithic period of ancient central Europe.
- 2.) The students will construct a 3D model of the Neolithic village, Catal Hoyuk, located in south central Turkey. This will be done in groups of 4 using specific criteria and collected natural materials.
- 3.) The students will be involved in a class brainstorming discussion to generate the categories to consider that would directly and indirectly impact everyday life in a south central European Neolithic village of 6500 B.C.E. in preparation for the writing assignment.
- 4.) The students will be instructed in the memoirist strategies with respect to voice as follows:
  - a.) What is a memoir and what is its purpose?
  - b.) What is the significance of the memoir to his/her life –real or imaginative?
  - c.) How does the memoirist invite the reader to care about or become involved in the meaning of the memory or shared action, reaction or event?
  - d.) How does the memoirist come to identify and know the specific audience with whom they are communicating?
  - e.) How can the memoirist pace the writing so that events unfold just fast enough, but not too fast for a reader to make a movie in his or her mind?
  - f.) How can the memoirist write to include and reveal enough detail to ensure voice to the piece?

- g.) The memoirist should use 'I' rather than 'we' to ensure that the reader can engage with one person throughout the events of the narrative.
- h.) The writer must tell his or her thoughts and feelings so that the reader has someone with whom to empathize during the reflections.

**Description:** *Include how you proceeded with the lesson. What did you do?*

This mini unit culminates in mid October with this writing experience following the 3D construction of the Neolithic village of Catal Hoyuk located in south, central Turkey. It was inhabited and successfully functioning in 6500 B.C.

The students are asked to consider the circumstances that would have existed within this village of over 6,000 people, and to make inferences about life for a 12 year old boy or girl at that time. The entire unit should be completed prior to asking students to individually and collectively brainstorm areas to think about including, but not restricted to the following areas: geographical features and terrain, climate, cultural attitudes of and toward male and female children and adults, rights of passage up to and through adolescence, division of labor among younger/ older people as well as among males and females, dangers from wild animals beyond the walls of the village, movement throughout the village over the rooftops (village is void of ground passageways and roads – only ladders up and over the building structures), family relationships between children and their parents and among siblings, 'education', health and welfare, and all aspects of overall survival both as members of a family and of a fairly large ancient community. An overall class generation of specific categories to consider works best. The students are then more personally invested in the thought process required before the individual writing can be done.

The 'memoir' approach to this writing experience is very effective because once the 3D village – done in groups of 4 is complete, the students are able to 'enter' the village in a powerful and imaginative 'dollhouse' way. They are young enough to live among and within the surrounding circumstances of a place long ago and far away, but they are old enough to also enter the reality that childhood, family structures and relationships, and everyday living actually timeless. They can write and record their memoirs of thoughts, actions, observations, and reactions to all that is happening around them. Their writing pieces are amazing. It is best to allow them to share the final drafts aloud among their peers.

**Resource Materials:** *Include book chapter pages, handouts, graphic organizers . . . .*

*"Lessons That Change Writers" by Nancie Atwell (memoir writing) pgs. 93 – 100 (teacher's guide)*

*"Message of Ancient Days" Houghton Mifflin social studies text (Neolithic Revolution)*

*"6 + 1 Writing Traits – Theory and Practice manual – Chap. 4 pgs. 100 – 138*

**Assessment/Follow-up:** *List the method(s) you'll use to assess student learning.*

*"6 + 1 Writing Traits" assessment criteria/ rubric sheet check off format (voice)*

*Mc Carthy Towne School generated writing rubric K – 6 (revised 6/07)*

**Reflection:** *How was this content/strategy useful or successful? What changes would you make, if any? Why did you select this content/strategy for this lesson? Was this an effective content/learning strategy? How will this content/strategy lead to increased achievement in your classroom?*

*In the past, I have instructed the social studies unit, and have culminated the unit with the final writing piece as described above. The FCA or Focus Correction areas have now been targeted as the writing trait of VOICE and the writing skill/ strategy of memoir writing as opposed to the former method of simple 'journal entries. Each time I have introduced this writing assignment to grade 6 students, they have*

*invariably asked to be able to write it in journal entry form. The voice aspect of the piece has been easier for them to accomplish using the more personalized method of journal. The new memoir style might create an even more powerful way to consider the task. I am new to the methods and style of Nancie Atwell, and I am excited to find material that is so middle school sophisticated, age appropriate and intriguing. I look forward to trying this in October 2007.*