

Teacher Notes

This six week unit was designed to meet all of the Common Core narrative writing standards. By the end of this unit, all students should take at least one piece of writing through the entire writing process and formally publish that piece of writing. Students will also write to three different writing prompts within this unit. I've added a variety of writing craft and organization lessons within this unit. There are many other important writing craft lessons that will be introduced in my fictional narrative writing unit. You certainly do not have to follow these lessons in the exact order that they are written. You may want to spend multiple days on one lesson or rearrange some of the mini lessons. No one knows your students' instructional needs better than you! However, the early lessons were designed to help build students' writing stamina by having extended mini lessons and shorter independent writing time.

The mini lessons were designed to be an approximately 10-15 minute lesson that intentionally teaches a particular writing craft or skill. I've included a script of what I might say to my students when I was teaching the mini lesson, as well as additional teaching notes. I often use a picture book as a mentor text within the mini lesson.

You can follow each mini lesson with additional guided practice, but that is completely optional. I personally like to give my students that additional assistance before having them try those strategies independently. The guided practice can also be complete in guided writing groups for students who need the extra practice. In a few of the lessons, I have included multiple forms of the guided practice, so you can choose the form that best fits the needs of your students.

Independent writing time should take up the majority of time in the writing workshop. I allow my students to move around in the writing process as needed, rather than trying to require them to follow the writing process in a linear manner. After students have three completed first drafts, I have students select one of the narratives to take through the entire writing process to be published and shared at an author's tea.

Almost all research on writing workshop strongly recommends that students should select their own topics and be allowed to work at their own pace. I completely agree with that philosophy, and the majority of the time I do have my students choose their own topics and work through the writing process at their own pace. However, most states do require students to take a formal writing assessment where students will have to complete a timed writing to a given prompt. I feel that in addition to my ongoing writing instruction, I also need to help prepare my students for our state writing assessment. This is why I occasionally have my students write to genre specific writing prompts.

These writing prompts are not only good practice for formal writing assessments, but they are also great tools for identifying areas that need improvement in students which can help you form writing groups. These formal assessments can also give you ideas for additional mini lessons that your students need.

There is also a grammar tie-in for each lesson. I like to focus on one grammar skill each week, and spend a few minutes each day focusing on that skill. I prefer to set aside a few minutes before and after our traditional writing workshop time to focus on these grammar skills. Beginning on week two, these grammar skills are partially taught through mentor sentences that can be displayed for students to identify what is right or wrong about the sentence. These are not “fix all” sentences with a variety of errors. Instead, each sentence will reflect the grammar concept of the week. A collection of mentor sentences are included on pages 67-91 and are labeled to correlate with each lesson. Have students analyze these sentences and discuss what is right or wrong with the sentences and why. Be sure to use the formal language of the standards and relay that you expect to see these rules applied in student writing.

At the end of the unit, I've included a rubric to formally assess student writing. I do not give a grade using the rubric until the end of the unit, because I want to be sure I have taught each element the student will be graded on before I formally assess. However, it is very important to informally assess student writing throughout the unit.

The last day of the unit is an author's celebration. This celebration will be a chance for students to showcase their work to others. Students will create invitations to send home to their parents or other family members, other teachers or administrators. This will be your students' opportunity to show off all of their hard work. I've included this celebration on the last day (day 30) of the unit, but the timing of this celebration will depend on your classroom needs.

Suggested Mentor Texts

Personal Narratives

- Mama Had a Dancing Heart by Libba Gray
- Fireflies! by Julie Brinkloe
- The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant
- Salt Hands by Jane Aragon
- My Rotten Red-Headed Older Brother by Patricia Polacco
- Grandpa's Face by Eloise Greenfield
- Shortcut by Donald Crews
- In November by Cynthia Rylant
- Bee Tree by Patricia Polacco
- The Memory String by Eve Bunting
- Owl Moon by Jane Yolen
- Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox
- Strong to the Hoop by Leslie Jean-Bart
- Oma's Quilt by Paulette Bourgeois
- Saturdays and Teacakes by Lester Laminack
- Meanwhile by Jules Feiffer
- Come on, Rain by Karen Hesse
- When I was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant
- Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst
- Punctuation Takes a Vacation by Robin Pulver
- A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams

Unit at a Glance

Week 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	What Can I Write About?	What is a Personal Narrative	Using a Graphic Organizer	Writing About a Small Moment in Time	Adding an Emotional Hook
	6	7	8	9	10
	Writing With a Strong Lead	Writing With a Strong Lead	Writing With a Strong Lead	Writing With a Strong Lead	Show Don't Tell
	11	12	13	14	15
Week 2	Paint a Word Picture	Adding a Satisfying Ending	Adding a Satisfying Ending	Adding a Satisfying Ending	Adding a Satisfying Ending
	16	17	18	19	20
	Adding Transition Words	Avoid the "It Monster"	Strong Verbs	Specific Nouns	How to Include Dialogue
	21	22	23	24	25
	Stretch Your Sentences	Performing Surgery	Revision Checklist	Revision Checklist Part 2	Editing Checklists
Week 3	26	27	28	29	30
	Rewriting Your Narrative	Illustrating Your Narrative	Choosing Your Title	Parts of a Published Book	Author's Celebration

Day 1: What Can I Write About

Standard:
Text Types and Purposes 3

Materials:

- Your Own Heart Map
- Heart Map Template
- Mama Had a Dancing Heart by Libba Gray

Mini Lesson: *In this writing unit we will be learning how to write personal narratives. When we write a personal narrative, we write about our own lives, memories, and feelings. A personal narrative tells a true story about you!*

Many times young authors have trouble deciding what to write about, so today we're going to create a heart map to show all of the things

DETAILED LESSON PLANS

Read Mama Had a Dancing Heart as a mentor text to show students an example of a personal narrative.

Independent Writing: Have students create their own heart map. They can either use the blank template or the template with the sections already added to it.

After students complete their heart map they should begin independently writing in their writing notebook. They can select any topic, but their writing should be about themselves. Remind students that they will be able to write made up stories later in the year.

Sharing: Since students have not had the opportunity to spend much time writing, allow two or three students to share their heart map. Give students time to ask questions to the presenter.

Optional Handout/Printable:



Grammar Tie-in: Spelling

This week, focus a small amount of time each day on what students should do if they can't spell a word. Remind students that they should not let a word interrupt their thinking and flow of writing.

A large heart outline containing a stylized bird silhouette and a smaller heart in the center. The bird's body is formed by the large heart's outline, with its head at the top and tail at the bottom. A smaller heart is positioned in the center of the bird's body. The text "OPTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES" is written across the middle of the bird's body.

OPTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Day 3: Using a Graphic Organizer

Standard:

Text Types and Purposes 3

Production and Distribution of Writing 4

Materials:

- The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant
- Several copies of the graphic organizers

Mini Lesson: *Sometimes when we write, we need a road map to help guide our writing. A graphic organizer helps us make a plan for our writing and keeps us organized as we write. There are many different types of graphic organizers, and today we'll be learning how to use one that I think you'll find very useful.*

I've included three of my favorite personal narrative graphic organizers that you can choose from. You only introduced the graphic organizers for one day, because any longer would have been overwhelming to students.

Read The Relatives Came as a mentor text for personal narratives, and recreate the graphic organizer as if you were the author planning the story.

Independent Writing: Encourage students to begin a new piece of writing and to plan the narrative using the graphic organizer. I like to keep a copy of the graphic organizer in my students' writing notebooks. If students have trouble deciding what to write about, you can suggest that they write about a time when they visited with their relatives.

Sharing: Select one or two students who completed the graphic organizer and allow them to share using the document camera.

Optional Handout/Printables:

The image shows three overlapping graphic organizers for personal narratives. The top one is titled 'PERSONAL NARRATIVES' and has three large circles. The middle one is titled 'Personal Narrative Graphic Organizer' and has a 'This is an early version' section with lines for 'What', 'When', 'Where', and 'Who'. The bottom one is titled 'Personal Narratives' and has a 'Title' box, a 'Time' box, a 'Place' box, a 'Beginning' box, a 'Middle' box, an 'End' box, a 'Memory Lesson' box, and a 'Character's Lesson' box.

Grammar Tie-in: Spelling

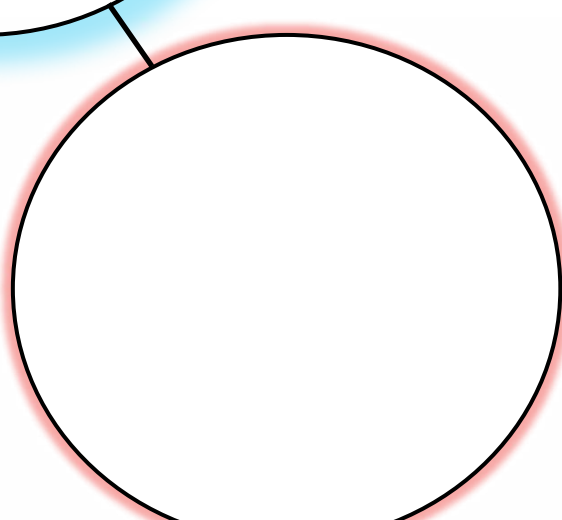
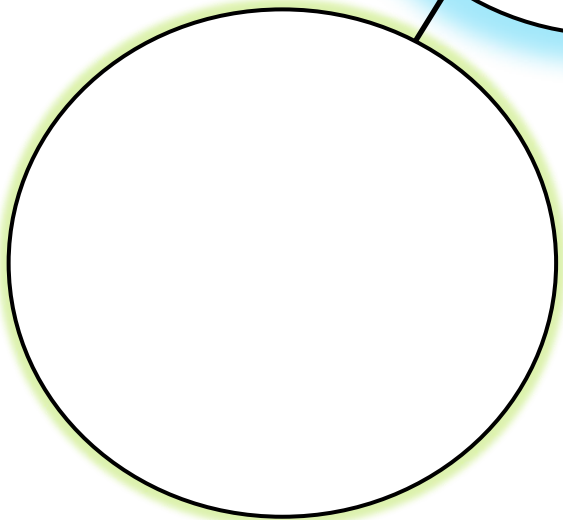
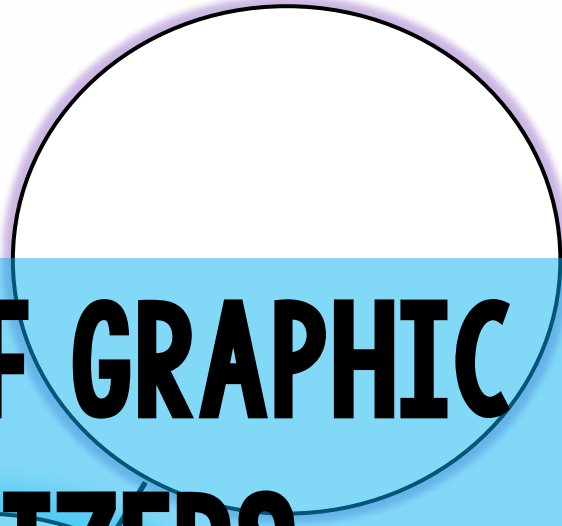
Show students that when they write, they can circle words they don't know how to spell, so that they can come back to those words at a later time.

Name_____

Date_____

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

VARIETY OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS



Name _____

Date _____

Personal Narrative

Graphic Organizer

This is a story about _____

VARIETY OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

First, _____

Next, _____

Then, _____

Finally, _____

Name _____

Date _____

Personal Narratives

Topic

Time

Place

VARIETY OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Beginning

Middle

End

Sensory Details

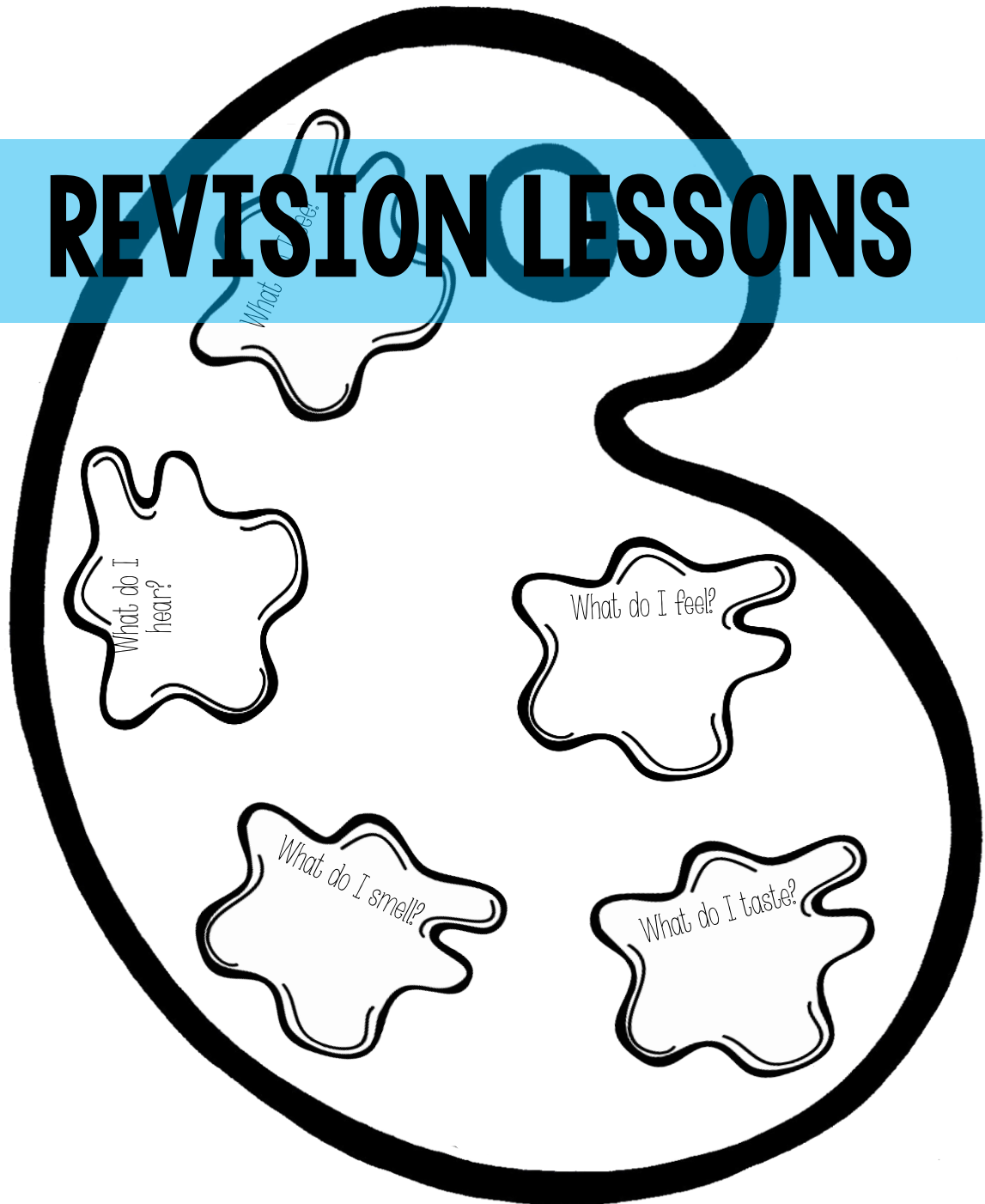
Emotions & Feelings

Name _____

Date _____

Paint a WORD picture
using sensory details

REVISION LESSONS



Mentor Sentence 1

The tall trees swayed in
the cool breeze.

MENTOR SENTENCES