

Who are you?**Writing your story**

Dee Anne Squire, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

Students will gather information about themselves into one location, so they will be able to access this information at any time throughout the year in order to write stories about their life. Students will also share one of these personal stories with a peer in preparation for recording it. The final step is to pick a personal story to write and share with others.

Objective:

- Students will gather information to be able to write routinely for a range of tasks, purposes and audiences. (W6.10, W7.10, W8.10.)
- Students will be able to engage effectively in a one-on-one discussion. (SL6.1, SL7.1, SL8.1.)
- With some guidance from peers, students will be able to develop and strengthen writing as needed. (W6.5, W7.5, W8.5.)
- Students will be able to produce clear and coherent writing focusing on audience and purpose. (W6.4, W7.4, W8.4.)
- Students will write a narrative to develop real experiences or events using effective techniques. (W6.3, W7.3, W8.3.)

Context:

Grades 6-8 with online and classroom options available.

Materials:

- Google Slides presentation.
- Handout/ pencil.
- Essay writing materials.
- Device to share the Google Slides presentation.

Time Span:

Two 50-minute class periods with some possible time at home for students to write.

Procedures:**Day 1**

- Begin class by asking students to think about stories they really love, from books, from movies, from their lives. To get started, write some of these suggestions, in a few words, on the board.
- Ask them to write in their journals the title and any details about the story they like the most. Their journal entry should also include why that story is their favorite. Ask students to share their responses with a neighbor. Discuss with students why we love stories so much. Include in the discussion if students don't bring it up that they help us to make meaning of things and that they help us to connect.
- Then ask the question "Who are you?" Solicit responses from the students. Again, give them time to talk with their neighbor. As some students answer the question, change it slightly to broaden their perspective. Really help students explore what makes them who they are. There should be many different answers just as there are many different students. Emphasize that everyone is different, and will have a different story to tell and that is OK, even that the same experience will be seen differently by different individuals.

- Explain to students that this year is going to be about learning to tell your story. We will explore other writers and look at how they have chosen to tell their stories. We need many stories with which to practice and today's activity will help them brainstorm a list of stories they can refer to throughout a year of writing.
- Hand each student a brainstorming sheet entitled "Who Are You" and put on the Google Slide presentation with the same name. Bring up one slide at a time and instruct students to fill in as much information as possible using keywords that they will understand at a later time. Details aren't as important as ideas. Instruct students to use words to help them remember their ideas. Be sure to give enough time between slides for students to think and write.
- When finished with the slides, have students store the sheet someplace safe so that can access it again tomorrow and throughout the year.

Day 2

- Ask students to review their "Who are You" page from the previous day. They should be looking for a story they want to tell. As soon as they have decided upon a story, each student should begin writing that story on a separate sheet of paper skipping every other line. Students will have 15 -20 minutes to select and write the story. The goal is to get the entire basic story written in that amount of time. So, this is a quick writing experience.
- After writing time, put students in groups of two. Students will share their first story about themselves. First one partner will read what he/she has written. The other partner will listen and write down notes on the paper he/she is given based on the following questions:
 - What questions do I have after listening?
 - What do I really like about this story?
 - What could be added to the story to make it better?
 - Have I had a similar experience?
 - How can others relate to this experience?
 - How is this experience unique to the author?
- After reading, ask students to discuss the piece, including the following:
 - Notes taken by the listener.
 - What the writer would like to add or change to improve the piece.
- Now switch and complete this exercise for the other partner. It might be helpful to have a brief break in-between sharing sessions.
 - Ask students to return to their stories and rework them based on ideas from themselves or their partners. This work may be done the next day in class or at home.
 - This is the first of many parts students will complete throughout the year that can be added together to create an answer to the question, "Who are you?"

Extensions/ Adaptations for online learning:

- The Google Slide presentation can be added to a digital classroom as an individual assignment for each student to fill out and return if remote learning is necessary. Students should have digital access to this throughout the year. You may want to create an online folder for all students to hold their brainstorming as well as their individual self-writing projects.
- You as the teacher can fill out the "Who are You" slide presentation for yourself and share that with students as part of this lesson or at the beginning of the year. This helps students to feel more comfortable doing it themselves and helps to make a connection with the teacher. Consider a story or two from your life that you would feel comfortable sharing with students. This would be an important thing to record or share in a class meeting if students are learning remotely.
- If students are unable to talk to one another in person to share stories, consider using Flipgrid or another way for them to still be able to be able to listen and comment on others' stories. Some expectations about appropriate responses must be included as part of this activity.

Rationale:

We are living through a pandemic that is affecting the history of the world in unprecedented ways. Its effect on individuals is still unknown. This project is important and effective for two reasons: First, we connect as human beings through story. Writing and sharing our stories will help us to connect with one another, something that has been lacking during the quarantine period. This connection with story can happen virtually or in the classroom depending on what circumstances allow. Second, telling and writing our stories helps us to think through and make sense of our own lives. In the process of writing that story, we can learn more about ourselves, learn about the experience we have all just endured. This will help us each become the hero of our story as we take control of the outcome.

Resources:

Google slides presentation -

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1q_HKmy98eQ52_jNPd5XZkFP5qJiFyoQ9HHdH_8P7u1M/edit?usp=sharing

Who are You? Brainstorming Sheet -

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cf1F9NrzePi5wAlQv3y3RR1o70_LV5-3n1wM3NOctNY/edit?usp=sharing

Listening Sheet -

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fLdfgehXjLzk060oIZv7-wt6g98hYSjGXTmu1xbVklE/edit?usp=sharing>

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