

A Common Core State Standards Aligned
School Visit Programming Guide



Author Jen Barton
Presents

***An Exploration of Genre: Writing the
Personal Narrative, the Memoir,
and the Biography***

Guide created by Debbie Gonzales, MFA
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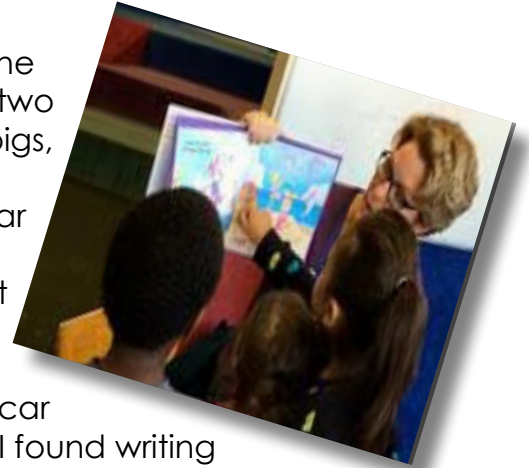
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MEET THE AUTHOR - JEN BARTON

I grew up in Pennsylvania and spent most of my life in the East. In 2007 my family and I moved to California. With two cars my husband and I moved two dogs, two guinea pigs, a cornsnake, and our 10-year-old daughter across the country (whew!). The five-day road trip (including a near escape by both dogs on Day 3) was one of my best (and most interesting) experiences ever. In fact, I'm not sure why that isn't a book yet...

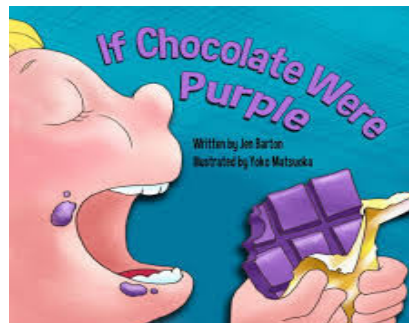


A few years later, after an especially boring day in the car (where the kids and I told stories and built characters), I found writing again. *Fiona Thorn* was born on that day, and I've been writing ever since. Visiting schools and meeting students has become my favorite way to share my love of reading, writing, and my strong belief that when you believe in your ideas (with some imagination and hard work mixed in) anything is possible.

JEN BARTON'S BOOKS (Summaries - Guide, pgs. 16-17)



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ISBN: 978-061566959



ISBN: 978-1-4677-7965-4



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MINING MEMORIES

Before beginning to write personal narratives, memoirs, and biographies, let's take some time to consider topics that are important to us. Once we've identified meaningful subjects, then we can proceed to write pieces infused with voice - YOUR voice!

Let's start by reflecting on events in your lives that have served to create the awesome person that you are today. Author/educator Nancy Atwell calls these events, "...meaty moments that help to define the person you are and the one you are becoming (Atwell, 10)."

The list of questions printed below are intended to help mine the memories inside you. As you consider the questions, think about your life and the unique experiences you've had. Use the handout found on the following page to list the memories that arise. Just write a few words, enough to help preserve the experience to be written about at another time.

QUESTIONS TO MINE MEMORIES:

- Identify your earliest memory.
- List things that you worry about.
- Tell of a time that you took a huge risk.
- Describe a time when you told a lie.
- Find a scar on your body. Tell the story of how you got injured.
- List the things you love to do.
- Describe your most embarrassing moment.
- Tell of a time when you got your feelings hurt.
- Tell of a time you hurt someone's feelings.
- List your pet peeves.
- What sorts of dreams did you dream when you were very young? Describe the dreams you hold dear now.
- Identify a teacher who has had an impact on you - either a positive or negative one.
- Define your core beliefs. List things that are important to you.
- What is your most prized possession?
- What actors, authors, and/or artists do you admire and why?
- What games do you enjoy playing?
- What games do you hate to participate in?
- How do you feel about rainy weather?
- List the qualities of a good friend.
- Tell of a time that you were very disappointed.
- Describe your happiest moment.

Reference: Atwell, Nancie. *Lessons That Change Writers*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002.



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MY LIFE MEMORIES

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THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND THE MEMOIR - AN OVERVIEW

The **Personal Narrative** and the **Memoir** are two genres that are based on personal knowledge or experience. Both are stories about real people in true-to-life situations. While the Personal Narrative and the Memoir are inspired by memories or experiences, there are some basic differences between the two.

A **Personal Narrative** is founded on an event inspired by an experience. It is written like a story with a plot, setting, characters, and dialogue. A Personal Narrative can be written in a first, second, or third person point of view. They have a structured plot-line with a distinct beginning, middle, and an end. The thoughts and feelings of the characters featured in the Personal Narrative are oftentimes explored, yet they are done so in a story-like manner.

While **Memoirs** can be written in a similar narrative format, the focus is on how a person remembers life. They explore memories and real-life experiences in thoughtful, reflective ways. Authors interpret the affects particular events have upon the people involved in a given situation. Memoir authors consider recurring themes that transpire in individual lives. They highlight lessons learned. Emotions interpreted. Personal values revealed.

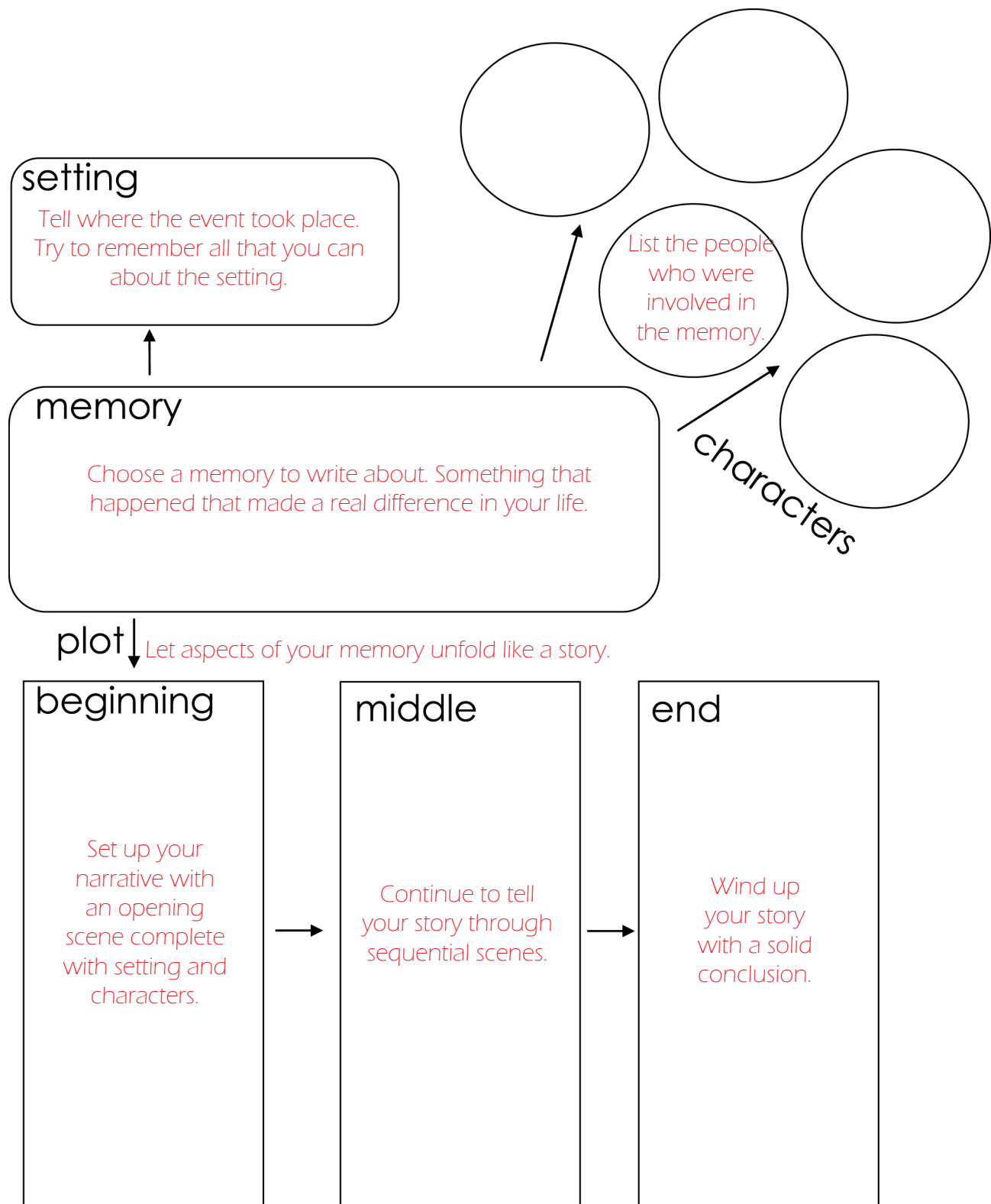
CRAFTING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND A MEMOIR

NOTE: Use the list created on the My Life Memories handout (Guide, pg. 5) as reference in filling out the following graphic organizers:

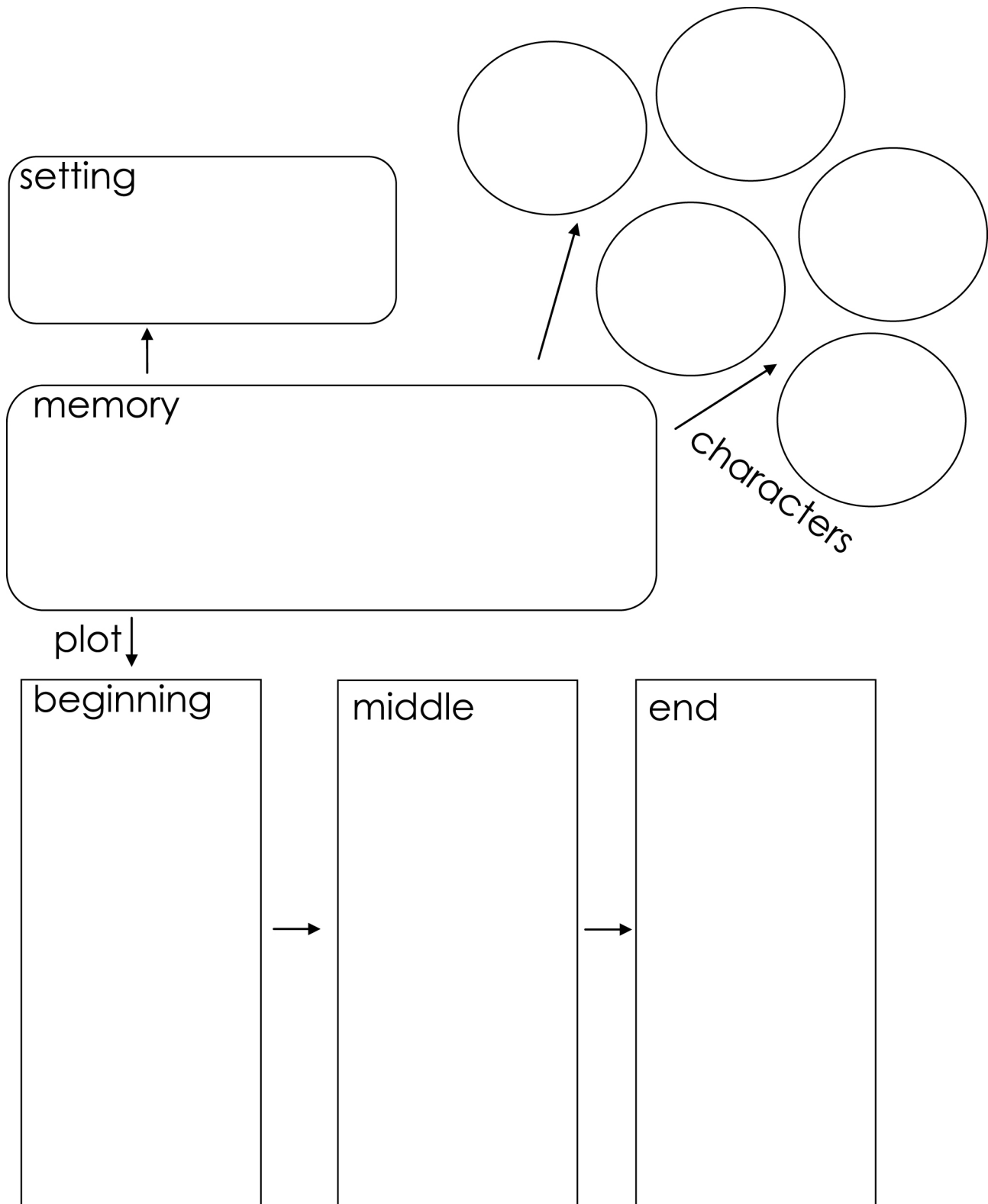
- * THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE TEMPLATE (Guide, pgs. 7-8):
Use this template to plan to write a narrative about an event in your life. Identify a memory that you want to explore. Determine the setting, character involved, and the structure of your plot-line. Upon completion of the PERSONAL NARRATIVE TEMPLATE, use the information gathered and write your story.
- * THE MEMOIR TEMPLATE (Guide, pg. 9-10):
Use this guide to explore reflective aspects of a given memory. Explore a chosen memory by stating why it is important to you. List lasting impressions this memory has upon you. Decide upon an opening and conclusion of the piece. Upon completion of THE MEMOIR TEMPLATE, use information gathered to tell the story of your life.



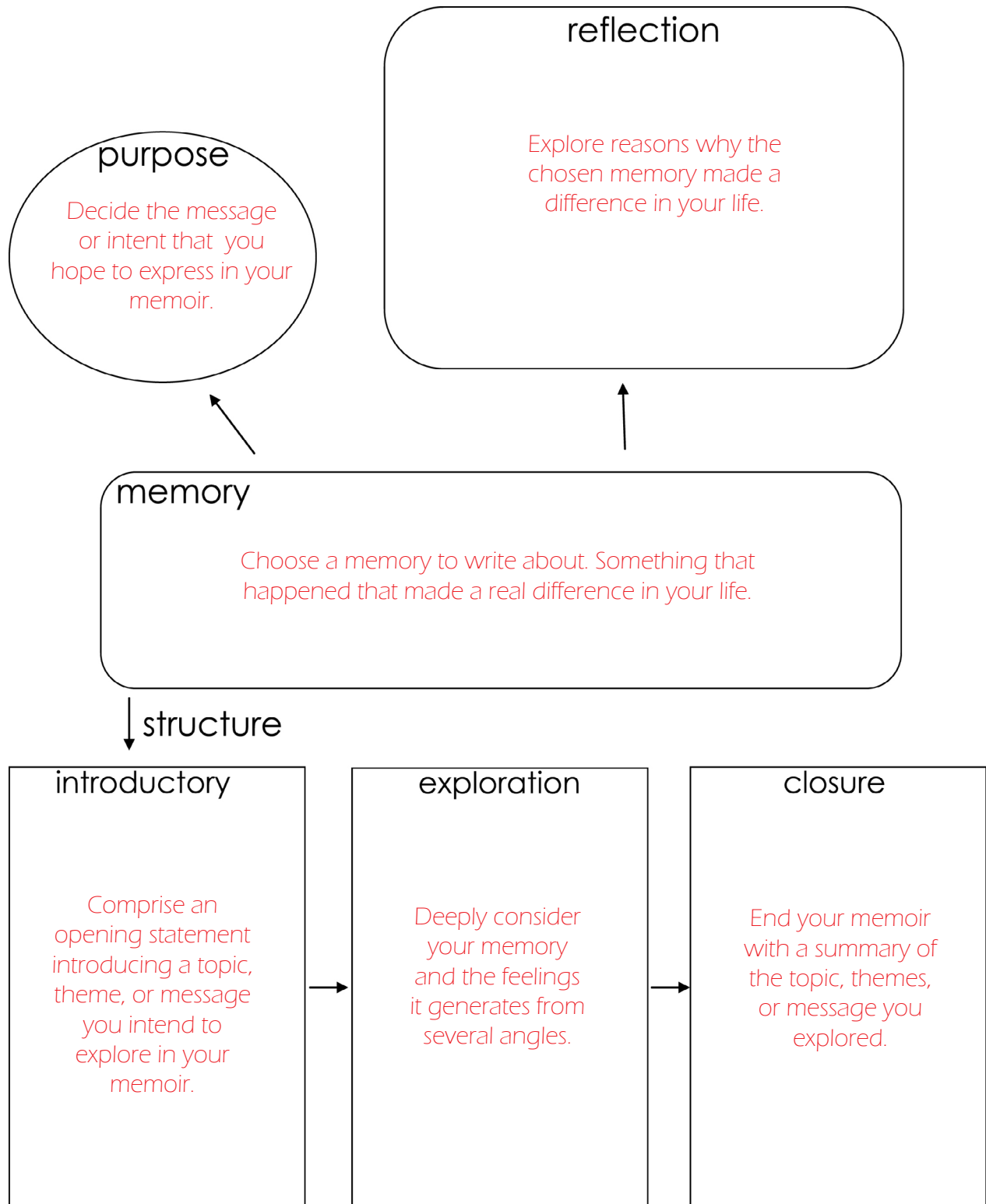
THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE TEMPLATE (SAMPLE)



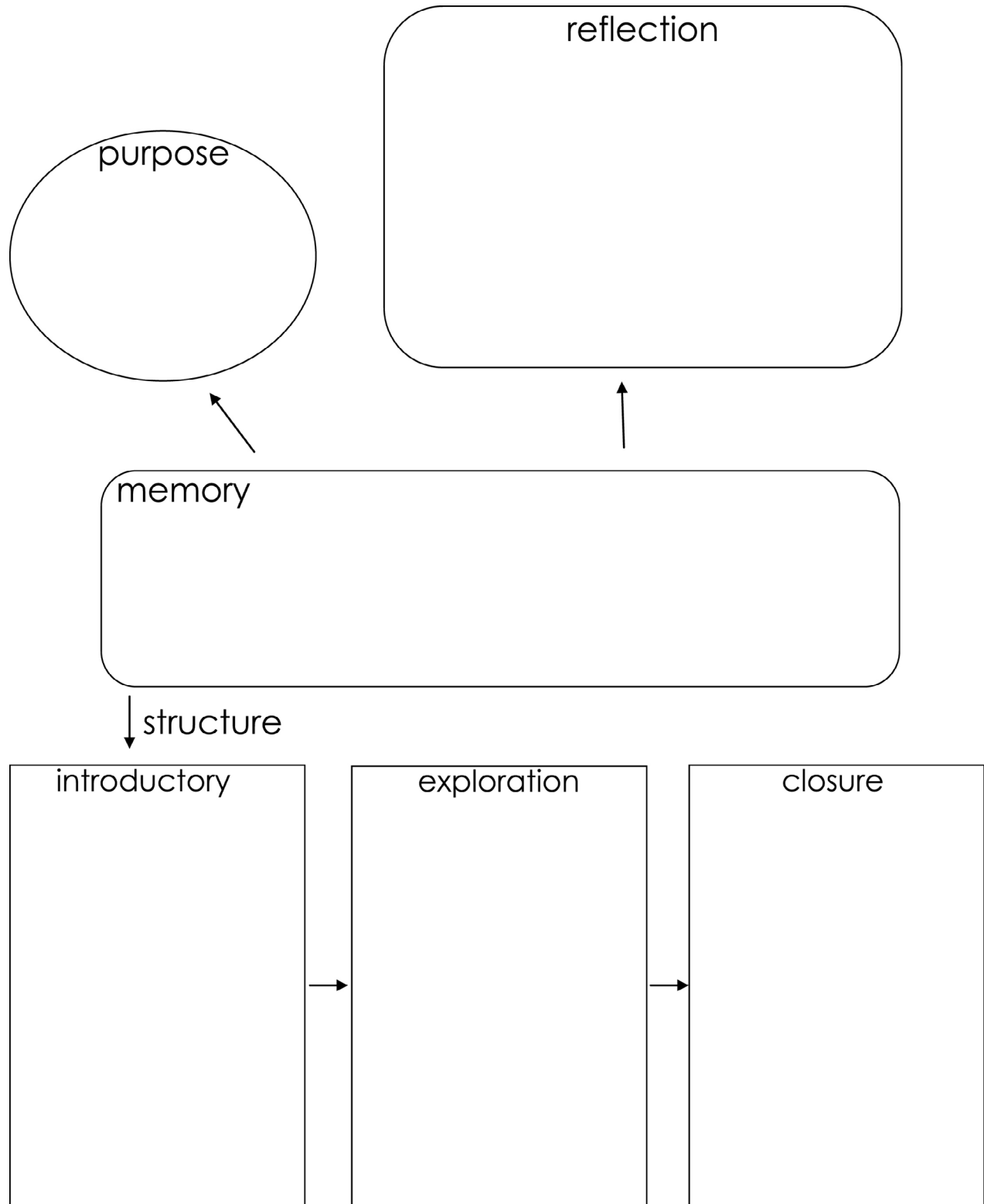
THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE TEMPLATE



THE MEMOIR TEMPLATE (SAMPLE)



THE MEMOIR TEMPLATE



THE BIOGRAPHY - AN OVERVIEW

A **Biography** is a true story about a person's life. Maybe the person did something amazing. Perhaps the person helped others in some special way. Or, possibly the person is admired for their friendliness, humor, or intelligence. Generally, biographies are about people who have had an effect on others in some outstanding way.

One of many ways to tell the story of a person's life is to do so in a chronological manner - from birth to death, or up to the present day. Another effective way to tell someone's story is to focus on a few events that occurred during their life, some special moments that defined their character as an individual. However an author decides to tell a biographical story, the process begins by learning all that they can about the individual. The more facts gathered - through research, interviews, or observation - the better.

After the research process, the writer searches through their notes to discover information that effectively reveals the impact the person had on others. While keeping their reader's interest in mind, the writer then decides on the biography structure that will best tell the person's life story.

GATHERING BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

* THE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE (Guide, pgs. 12-13):

Following engaging in the research or interviewing process use THE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE as a guide to write the story of chosen person's life.

The template is divided into 5 sections. Use your research or interview notes to fill in the designated boxes provided. Once the template is complete, use the information gathered to craft a wide variety of projects based on your research. See pages 14-15 for lots of fun ideas!

The 5 sections presented are:

- The Person's Name
- List three important facts about the person's life
- List three details that make this person interesting
- Tell of something that happened when this person was/is alive
- Explain why you chose to write about this person

More information about content required is available on the Sample Template (Guide, pg. 12).



THE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE (SAMPLE)

Person's Name

Identify the person you want to write about in this box.



Three important facts about the person's life



Use these three boxes to list things that you feel best reveal your person's character. What did they do to make a difference in the world?



Three details that make this person interesting



Use these three boxes to list interesting facts about this person.



Tell of something else that happened
when this person was/is alive



Use this box to give a sense of the time in history your person lived in.
Describe some event or historic fact that occurred during their lifetime.



Explain why you chose to write about this person



Tell why you find this person to be intriguing. What is it about this person that made you want to know more about them?



THE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE

Person's Name

↓

Three important facts about the person's life

↓

↓

Three details that make this person interesting

↓

↓

Tell of something else that happened when this person was/is alive

↓

↓

Explain you chose to write about this person

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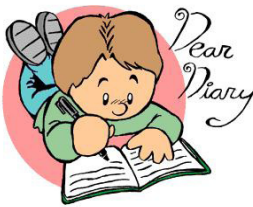


MULTI-GENRE BIOGRAPHY PROJECTS



CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW:

Imagine that you are meeting your subject in a face-to-face setting. Comprise a list of at least ten questions you'd like to ask them, based on your research. Gather a pencil and note pad and ask your subject the questions you've listed. Respond to the questions in a manner in which you feel that your subject would do so. Record your findings in a document. Share your interview with your class.



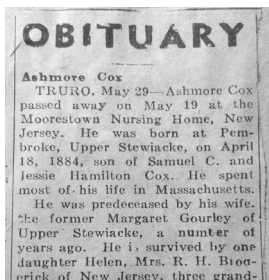
WRITE A DIARY ENTRY:

Diaries are books in which someone keeps a daily record of events and experiences. Consider recording your subject's events or experiences in a diary entry from their point of view. Date the entries according to the correct time in history the events took place. Write the entries as if your subject were recording and responding to the events that occurred in their lifetime.



WRITE A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE:

Your subject has done something incredible, something important that the public needs to know about. As a reporter for your local paper, tell your subject's story. Report the breaking news. Remember to follow proper reporting protocol by covering the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the newsworthy event!



WRITE AN OBITUARY:

An obituary is a written piece that reads much like a mini-funeral. In it, a subject's passing is commemorated by acknowledging their contributions and special aspects of their life. An obituary covers the following topics:

- ~ The Announcement of Death - List the deceased name, place of residence, time and place of death.
- ~ Biographical Sketch - A short tribute summarizing important events and contributions made in life.
- ~ Special Message - Perhaps select a famous quote or phrase that best represents the subject's character or contributions.
- ~ Add a Photo





DESIGN A TOMBSTONE:

The design and engraving of a tombstone give an insight to the life of the deceased and the time in history in which they lived. Design a tombstone that reflects the significance of your subject's contributions. Consider the font design, the tombstone size, shape, and location as you commemorate the day your subject arrived in this world and departed from it.



CREATE A COMIC STRIP BIOGRAPHY:

Tell your subject's story in a comic book format. Choose an event in your subject's life and write, sketch, and ink a graphic rendition of their story. Research about the basics of the graphic arts genre. Discover ways to use spreads, splash panels, speech bubbles, and captions to recount your subject's story in comic-book style!



ILLUSTRATE AN ESSAY:

An illustration is a picture that tells a story. Choose one outstanding event that occurred during your subject's life and write a short essay about it. Illustrate your work. Create a scene that tells a story about the event that took place.



WRITE AN 'I AM' POEM:

Write a list poem stating at least ten one-line attributes describing your subject. Introduce your subject in the first line by saying, "I am (state their name)". Follow the introductory line with statements based on their life experiences. For example, one line might read, "I am kind because I helped animals find shelter." Or, "I am brave because I fought in the Civil War." Illustrate your work.



WRITE AN ACROSTIC POEM:

- ~ Write your subject's name vertically.
- ~ Brainstorm words or phrases that best describe your subject.
- ~ Place brainstormed words or phrases on lines that begin with the same letter.
- ~ Discover an appropriate word or phrase for each letter in your subject's name.
- ~ Illustrate your work.



PUBLISHED WORKS BY JEN BARTON



WHAT'S YOUR STORY, AMELIA EARHART?

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

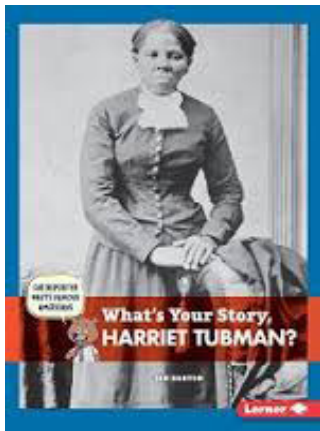
Grade Level: 1 - 4

Publisher: Lerner Publications

ISBN-10: 1467787833

ISBN-13: 978-1467787833

How did Amelia Earhart learn to fly? How was flying then different than it is today? Cub Reporter interviews Amelia Earhart to find out how she made a difference in the world of aviation and defended women's rights. Learn how Amelia fought against adversity to become the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. Discover how she stood up for other female aviators and the ways she fought for gender equality. Readers will see how to use interviewing skills and journalistic questions to reveal the story behind a famous American.



WHAT'S YOUR STORY, HARRIET TUBMAN?

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Publisher: Lerner Publications

ISBN-10: 1467785334

ISBN-13: 978-1467785334

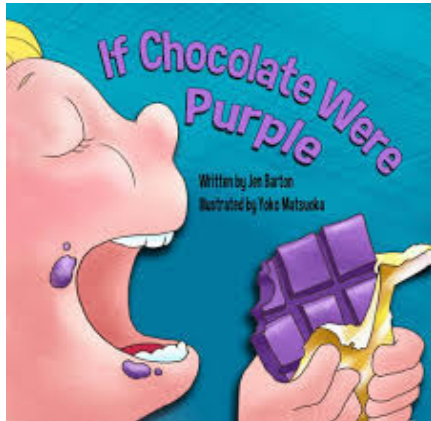
What did Harriet Tubman do to make her an important American? Cub Reporter interviews her to find out! See how Harriet escaped from slavery and then risked her life to rescue other slaves from the South.



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IF CHOCOLATE WERE PURPLE

Age Range: 2 - 5 years

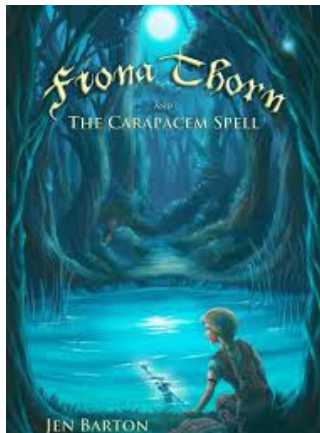
Grade Level: Preschool - Kindergarten

Publisher: Flickerfawn

ISBN-10: 0615783430

ISBN-13: 978-0615783437

In a world where chocolate is purple, where roller skates grow on trees and all kinds of things turn topsy turvy, one thing your little one can count on is your love. Full of delightful rhymes and whimsical imagery this fun bedtime story will warm hearts and ignite imaginations.



FIONA THORN AND THE CARAPACEM SPELL

Age Range: 9 - 14 years

Grade Level: Middle Grade

Publisher: Flickerfawn

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

ISBN-10: 0615696953

ISBN-13: 978-0615696959

When Fiona Thorn, an ornery orphan with an expertise in explosives, sets out to rescue her imprisoned friend, Jaydin Rowan, she wants nothing more than a few sleeping guards and a satchel full of Blast. What she gets is a run-in with three bickering princesses that puts all four girls on the wrong side of a locked dungeon door.

Now, accidentally involved in a plot to assassinate the King and accused of kidnapping the princesses, Fiona must find a way to free them all, save the King, and rescue Jaydin, all while struggling to pay the magical debt that's slowly killing her. Unless, of course, the princesses' annoying sibling rivalry kills her first.

Packed with powerful magic, fun-loving fairies, and a vicious ogre turned pet, *Fiona Thorn and the Carapacem Spell* is a fantasy kids' book sure to become a favorite in middle grade fiction.



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COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

English Language Arts Standards » Anchor Standards » College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

		Personal Narrative	Memoir	Biography
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.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.CCRA.W.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.	●	●	●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.			●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.			●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.			●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.	●	●	●

