

Creative Nonfiction -- Memoir



You should have read the poem “When I Was Young in the Mountains” by Cynthia Rylant in your language arts class. That poem was a type of memoir, which is a French word meaning _____ or _____. A memoir is specifically a collection of _____ that an individual writes about _____ or _____ that happened in the writer’s _____. This is a specific type of creative nonfiction, which is a _____ of writing that uses literary _____ and _____ to create _____ narratives. Remember! Non-fiction is *not fake*. It is all true.

For this unit, we will be exploring a specific memory of an event in your past. You will then write an expressive memoir as either a poem or as a narrative essay. The memory you choose should be more specific and more detailed than what you chose for your memoir assignment in language arts. The due dates should be written in the box below:

<p>My memoir rough draft is due</p> <hr/> <p>The final typed copy of my memoir is due</p> <hr/>



When I Was Young(er) ...

- The details I focused on in my “When I Was Young in _____” memoir assignment for language arts were:

- What were some examples of literary devices (metaphor, simile, etc) that you used to express your memories?



Mining Memories

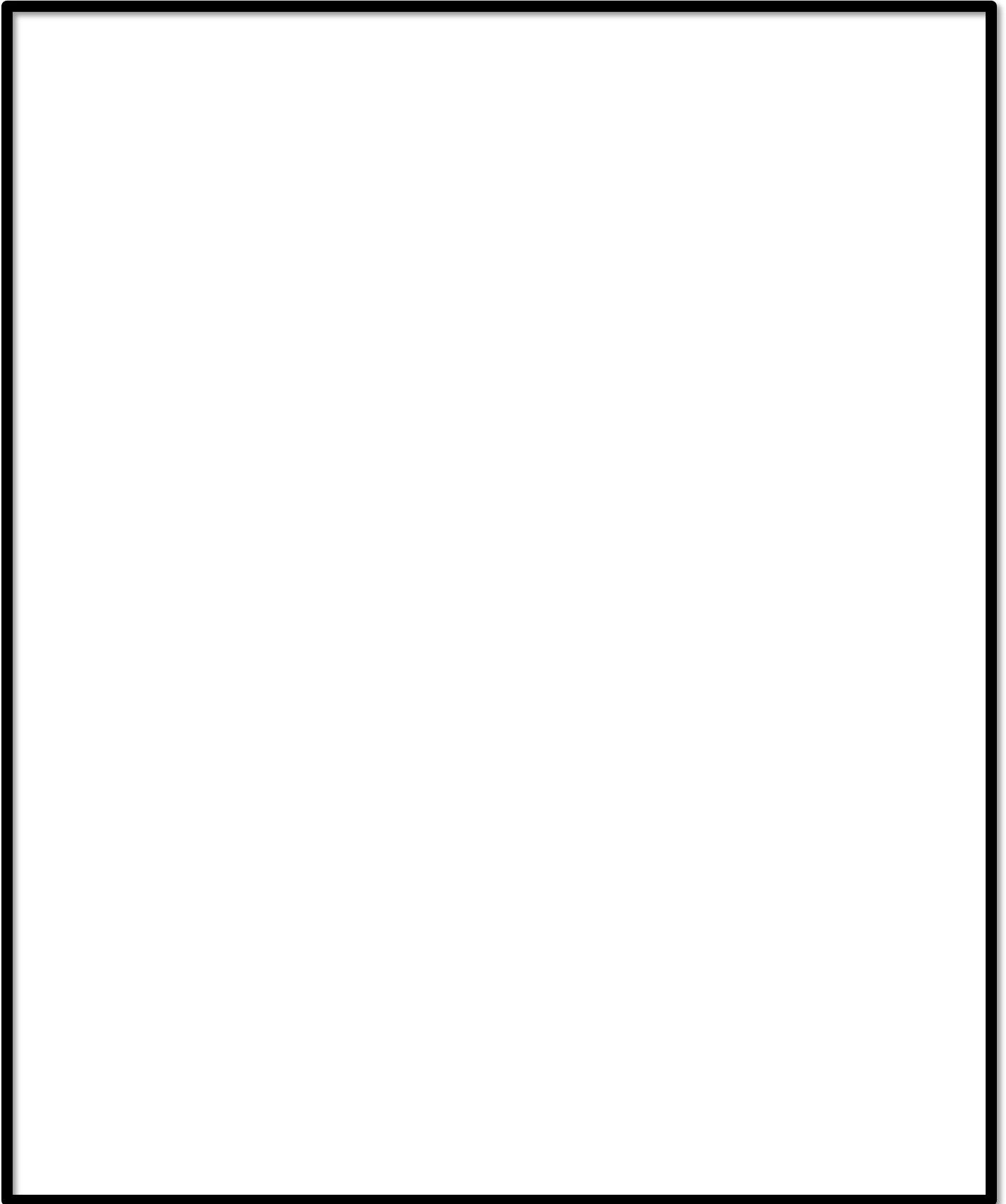
For *Marshfield Dreams*:

- Why do you think Ralph Fletcher might have included the map in his book?




- Why do you think Ralph choose to write about the specific memory he talks about in the chapter titled “Statue”?

Memory Map

In the space below, create a map of a setting from one of your memories. Perhaps it will be a map of a house you lived in, a park you used to play in, the mall, etc. Draw it from your memory—do not look up any reference pictures!



Memories to Consider

PEOPLE	PLACES	EVENTS
		

The memories you choose should be at least 6 months old. These memories that you brainstorm should be things you can write a lot of details about. Don't worry if you can't remember everything. Creative nonfiction allows writers to "fill in the gaps" with what they believe might have happened. However, most of your narrative must be true.



Creative Nonfiction Centers

For *Thank You, Mr. Faulker*

In this book, the author tells us about a person who made a big difference in her life. Memoir writers often write about people who have changed them or made a difference in their lives. Perhaps there has been a person in your life who has had an impact on you. Read/listen to the book to figure out why Patricia Polacco chose to write about Mr. Faulker.

1. How did Mr. Faulker make a big difference in the author's life? Why would Polacco choose to write about him and not someone else?

2. What physical and personality details does the author use to describe Mr. Faulker to highlight what made him unique and significant?

3. Explain at least one person in your life who changed you or had an impact on you:

For *Baseball, Snakes, and Summer Squash*

Memoir can take different structures, such as a picture book, short story, or poem. When authors write memoir, they consider the structure the memoir will take. They think about what shape best shows their thinking to their audience. Memories can also come from different places in our lives and be about many different things. Authors of memoir choose memories that are important to them. Read/listen to "The Accident" and "Making Pies with Grandmother," then answer the following questions.

1. What does the ending of "The Accident" show about the author?

2. Why do you think Donald Grave wrote "Making Pies with Grandmother"? Why do you think this memory was important to him?

3. How do you think you might decide which memories you might write about?



For *Knots in My Yo-Yo String*

One characteristic of memoir is that authors reflect on why the subject they have written about is significant. As you read/listen to Jerry Spinelli's "War," pay attention to the parts that show reflection in his writing. There are several memories represented and each contain reflective sentences that show why they are significant to him. Often, a reflective sentence will come at the very end of a memoir.

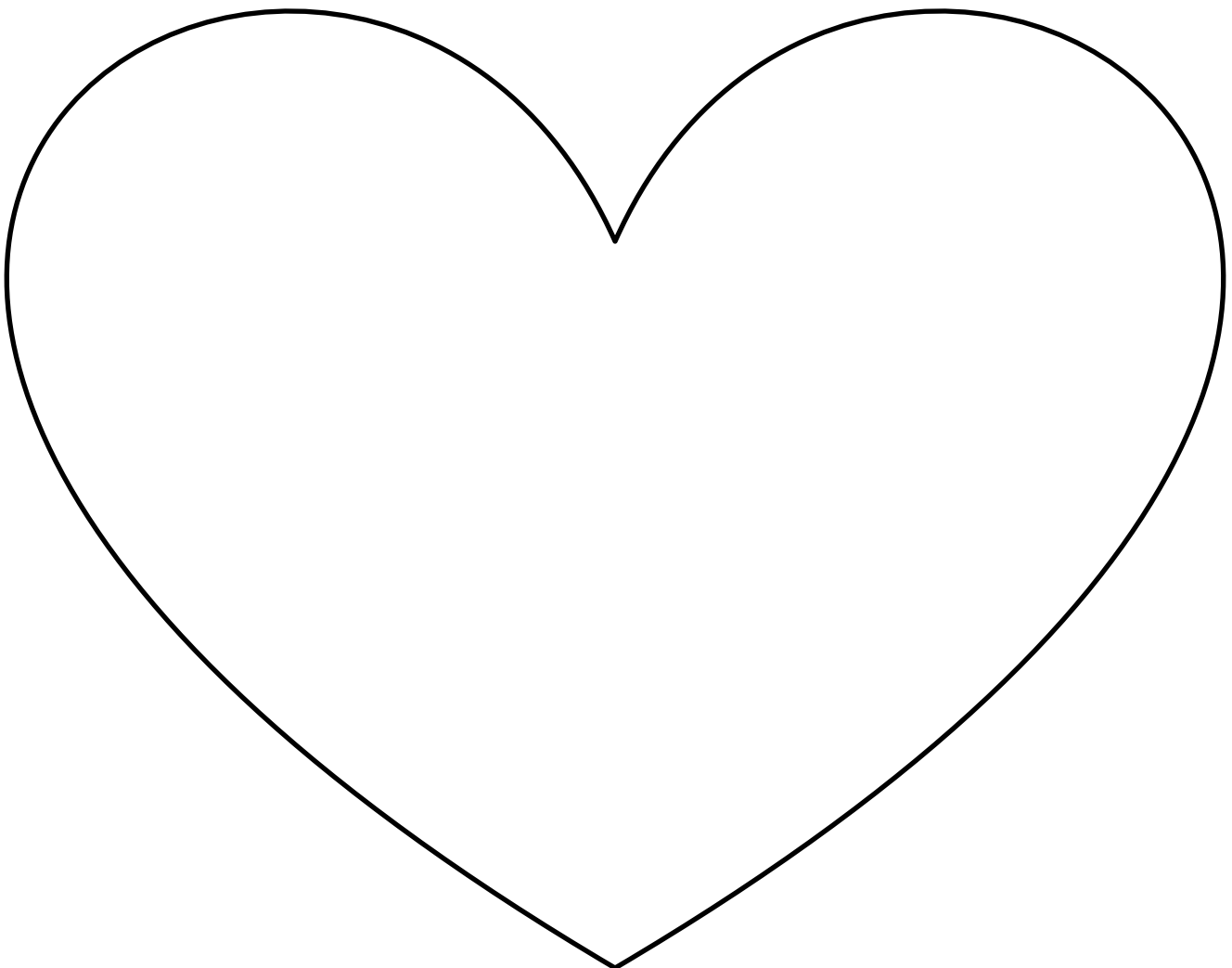
1. Why do you think the author chose to add in a reflective piece to his writing?

2. What were some of the reflections the author mentioned? How do they add to the memoir? How do they make you feel?

3. When you are writing your memoir, you will need to think about a "so what?" question. Choose a memory that is significant to you and explain why it is significant.

Getting Started

Creating a "Heart Map" will help you think about what is important to you. Use your "Memory Map" and your "Memories to Consider" chart to help you elaborate on the details of your specific memories to fill your "heart".



Choose Your Memory

Using all of the brainstorm ideas you have made so far, choose 1 specific memory to write about.

My Memory: _____

Create a timeline of everything that happened in your memory. If you cannot remember exactly what happened, “fill in the blanks” with details that *could* have happened. For example, if your memory is about the time you and your sibling broke your mother’s favorite vase, but you can’t remember who broke it, speculate on who it could have been. Just like your short story, your memoir should have an introduction (exposition), rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (reflection/ending).

My Memory Timeline

Introduction:

Rising Action Events:

Climax:

Falling Action Events:

Resolution/Reflection/Ending:



Choose whether your memoir will be a poem or a narrative essay.

Poems must be at least 5 stanzas made of at least 4 lines each. Poems do not have to rhyme. Narrative essays must be in first person POV and include paragraphs made of complete sentences varying in length. You should have a paragraph for each of the timeline elements above. Write your rough draft using the attached pages. Later, you will type up your revised final copy and turn it in with this packet on the due date indicated on the front page.

