national writing project of acadiana

2025 SUMMER INSTITUTE ANTHOLOGY:

Keep Dreamin' and Write Your Future

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WRITING MINI-LESSONS and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

By: H. Michelle Kreamer

After the successful return of the National Writing Project of Acadiana (NWP-A) Summer Institute (SI) in 2024, the NWP-A Leadership Team was thrilled to be able to host another SI for teachers this year. Through a partnership with the Lafayette Parish School System, 11 educators participated in the institute, engaging in personal, professional, and creative writing.

When planning for this year's SI, the NWP-A Leadership Team was focused on ways to leverage writing as a means of combating teacher burnout, while simultaneously supporting teachers as writers and writing instructors. With this aim in mind, the theme of the week was "Keep Dreamin' and Write Your Future," inspired by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention theme, "Dream Boldly." This theme was chosen to encourage and support teachers as writers to discover, analyze, and reflect upon their dreams.

With this focus on dreams and while becoming "Tangled Up in Currere," SI participants were encouraged to examine the possibilities of the profession, rather than focusing on barriers. Through personal, creative, and professional writing, they were challenged to dream without limits and make connections to their own instruction. Additionally, throughout the week-long SI, the group participated in book talks about the text, *Because of a Teacher: Stories of the Past to Inspire the Future of Education,* to reflect upon the long-lasting impact of influential educators. The culminating writing task, inspired by "This I Believe" essays, was for each participant to compose their own "This I Dream" creative work sharing their dreams for themselves, their students, their classrooms, or the broader educational world.

The dreams of SI participants, along with other creative works, fill the pages of this anthology and are powerful testaments to the work that we do. Additionally, four writing mini-lessons are included—each designed for a range of grade levels to support students' literary analysis or informative/explanatory writing. Finally, one professional development session to support teachers as writing instructors is included within this anthology.

Thank you to everyone who returned to NWP-A or who became part of this group for the first time. Each summer I spend with NWP-A is impactful and helps me to improve as a writer and teacher, and in this way, SI 2025 was no different. Whether through book talks, writing exercises, or informal conversations, SI participants were reminded of (and reminded me of) the joy and impact of teaching. I cannot wait to see how your ideas and experiences from the Summer Institute inform your instruction or coaching and I hope you always keep dreaming and working to make those dreams a reality for you and your students.

Summer Institute 2025: Contributors

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Stitching Justice
By: Megan Breaux

We gather—
threads in hands calloused by history,
clutching scraps and legacies,
oppression wound tight with memory,
classrooms heavy
with the weight of history.

Chalk dust hangs in the air,
ghosting hands and hems,
settling into every crack and fold
of a school built for
"separate"—
never equal.

That's where I learned to teach.
That's where I learned to hope out loud.

Voice trembling,
reading "Oh, the Places You'll Go,"
to students branded "bad"
by a world blind to their brilliance.

Listen—
I learned to hear
laughter, sharp as protest,
questions that cut silence,
hope carried carefully
in buildings meant to contain.

No one told me
how much resilience it takes
to teach history
in a room that is history.

No one told me
I was carrying a future—
quiet resistance, growing inside me.

Now—
my hands move differently,
guiding new makers, future teachers
who want to piece together classrooms
where every story matters,

where vulnerability is invitation,
not risk.

So we mend--
Patching courage,
darning silence,
quilting belonging
from remnants of hope and empathy.

Say it with me:
We dream.

We dream a tapestry--
woven from voices once pushed aside,
from threads of justice, joy, and repair
from lessons that know
the cost of forgetting.

Look close--
You'll see chalkboard seams,
shimmering notebooks,
the bright patch where someone finally says,
"You belong here."

This—right here—
this is our unfinished fabric,
stitched with intention,
stitched with resilience,
stitched with hope—
strong enough to wrap every child,
strong enough to hold every story,
so no one—no one—goes unseen.

This is how we dream forward.
This is how we make room.
This—
is how we change the world.

Everything Is on the Line
By: Megan Breaux

After “Everything Changes the World” by Naomi Shihab Nye

The hallway hums with summer silence—
emails blinking, coffee cooling by my side.
The calendar claims there’s time,
but headlines outrun the days.

The syllabus sits on my screen,
sections highlighted, flagged—
what future teachers need to know
and what I’m still allowed to say.
Every edit feels like a promise erased.

There is no certain ground.
Only the click of my office door,
the thud of a book closing,
the echo of questions I won’t be able to answer.

Maybe you call it resilience.
Maybe denial.

Students will come with their own losses,
their own breaking news.
I will greet them with a lesson plan
and a quiet apology for all I can’t fix.

Each program lost,
each promise erased,
each dream balanced on the thinnest line—
what does that say about the future?

How to Leave
By: Michelle Salts

I am 65 years old, and the job of teaching, for me, is beginning to come to an end. I am moving into a stage of life described by the psychologist Erik Erikson as Integrity versus Despair. This stage, the eighth and final stage of Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development, is a time of reflection on one's success in creating a meaningful and satisfying life. Over the years, I have celebrated when former students have achieved entrance into prestigious colleges, established careers, received a pilot's license, gotten married, had children, or reached other goals. My experiences in public schools have been mostly gratifying, encompassing connections, successes, and opportunities to develop and expand my perspective, but there have also been challenges.

Not everything can be about academic success. I have attended funerals and visited students in the hospital. As a teacher, I have learned to extend compassion to students in a state of bereavement. When her brother was killed, Destiny came to school every day, including the day of his funeral. Did she meet the learning targets for that day? It didn't matter. More students than I can remember lost grandparents, parents, and siblings. Following Hurricane Katrina, our community and our school took in many refugees, and it was not uncommon for my newfound students to sleep through class after wakeful nights in chaotic shelters. There is no data, no numerical evidence to validate teacher impact on these students, but care and concern align with my values and give my career meaning.

My retirement is not at hand, but under different circumstances, it would likely have already occurred. I am past the official age for it, and some days, I don't know what to do with that. For today, though, I'm choosing to embrace my integrity and not fall into a negative place or to believe that I am continuing in the classroom past my "use by date." For today, I can intentionally choose relevance, and for today, I will not settle for a mediocre fade away from my beloved profession. My struggle to stay relevant and engage in the work of teaching is strongly connected to finding meaning in what I do. Have I made a difference? Have I done enough? And the most pressing question for now: Is it possible for me to sustain the momentum required to continue to make a difference? In *Composing a Life*, author Mary Catherine Bateson suggests that the patterns in our lives cannot be seen as we are living them--they only come to us upon reflection, as we look back at the seemingly improvisational decisions and moves we have made.

I have made many moves, both in my childhood and as an adult. Some have been from house to house or state to state. These moves have been accompanied by the births of children, job changes, education, and other life realities. My life is mapped out in houses, little way stations, places of rest between school and work, places to pause and bask in community. When I was young, and it was time to move, my mother and I would clean the house with a thoroughness she reserved for that purpose. She showed me the spots to look for, the forgotten places on the tops of cabinets, the corners of the windows--places I had never really noticed before--but we did it then, not for ourselves but for strangers, for the people who would next inhabit the dwelling--the world I was leaving--and we did it to honor the house itself.

Most recently, I have lived in the same place--the same state, the same house, the same school district--for the past 20 years. Within that time, however, I have changed jobs, buildings, and

classrooms, and I have picked up my mother's ritual of leaving a classroom or office clean upon my departure. I never wanted the next teacher to clean out or sort through my useless castoffs. I like entering a new classroom and beginning with a fresh canvas, with no distractions.

Over the past 20 years, I have encountered numerous iterations of curricula, various versions of best practices, and multiple shifts in accountability systems, teacher evaluations, and high-stakes, data-driven chaos. Clarity and simplicity inhabit my teaching dreams, and I have developed some skepticism about the general state of public education. I deeply believe in teaching, learning, and education. I believe that these are natural processes born out of human need, and I will continue to do what I can to ensure that there is an equal opportunity for all to be a part of a community-based system. What I will not do is leave behind well-meaning resources, materials, or supplies. My former classroom will be a clean slate. This connection to my mother gives me an understanding of what she had really been teaching me all those years ago when she taught me to do a final cleaning. She was teaching me how to let go, how to say goodbye to a dwelling, how to say goodbye to a world, and she was helping me to move on.

Our concluding act in leaving each house was always to mop our way to the threshold. My mother and I would then walk outside carrying our cleaning supplies and lock the front door for the last time. It was time to leave. I do not yet know when my final leaving from teaching will be or what it will mean for me. Retirement does not beckon in a way that seems imminent yet, and I need to keep working for now. Maybe when the time comes, it will be clearer. I do know, though, as it looms more closely than it once did, an exit from this teaching job is not the end, nor is it the last connection I will have to the world of education. When I eventually take that final step and close the classroom door for the last time, I am certain there will be other, as yet undiscovered, places for me to inhabit.

Mother Principal

By: Emily Weber

A mother wakes the kids up—four born of her body, one chosen by her heart. A modest three-bedroom home, warm despite its size, sits at the edge of a cracked sidewalk, its reddish-brown bricks faded slightly by the southern sun. Behind it looms the Dow Plant, glowing faintly even before daybreak— a silent sentinel, a pulsing nightlight locals call *the Norco Star*. Three garage doors face the street; one is already empty. A daily clue. The day has begun. Someone is already gone. A pink Barbie bike lies near the porch, its training wheels half-bent, handlebar streamers limp and dust-caked. She once scraped her knees on the driveway—legs pumping furiously, trying to beat the sun home. The Norco nightlight always showed her the way. Inside, a mother's voice drifts into a dim bedroom like sunlight beneath a door. "Good morning, my baby. I love you so much. It's time to start your day." She says it softly, like a prayer. Then, the daughter—blanketed in sleep and irritation—rolls over with a groan. Now, she sees. She sees the warmth in those worn hands, the green-blue eyes glassy with fatigue. She sees what she couldn't then: the weight her mother carried behind her smile. The way her squint wasn't impatience, but restraint— a breath held between exhaustion and grace. Her almond-shaped eyes, rimmed with soft crow's feet, spoke volumes before her voice ever did. Once perched high on a pedestal, her mother now appears fully human—and somehow, even more sacred.

A mother. A maternal force of nature. A provider of ponytails and post-its, of snacks and standards, of warmth and willpower. She just so happens to have 500 other children who call her *Principal.* But I still call her *Mom*.

Hannah was already gone. Her footsteps whispered down the hallway long before sunrise. NOCCA-bound, chasing art like it was oxygen. Her earrings always mismatched, her spirit unapologetically hers. Then, I was jealous— of the way the city welcomed her like an old friend. Now, I am proud. Awed by how she made space in the world with color and rhythm. Renny, stumby and jovial, climbed into his faded gold F-150 and headed down River Road. The levees blurred into buildings as he crossed parish lines. Then, I prayed for his safety. Now, I pray for not just his peace, but his whole lineage. For his legacy. For the road to rise beneath his sons and daughters one day. Damarius rode beside him, laughing too loud, the bassline of *Tha Carter II* shaking the windows. They didn't share a last name. Then, I wondered how much that hurt. Now, I know it didn't. He never needed paperwork to feel like family. He breathed it in, like swamp air through cracked windows—belonging, thick and easy. Jace, always loud, was already melting down in the kitchen. His shirt tag itched, his socks bunched wrong, his world unraveling before 7:30 a.m. Mom hushed him, her hand resting on his back like a grounding wire—her body absorbing his static. Then, I felt invisible. Now, I see a woman learning how to give five children what she was never taught to give herself. And me? Independent Emily. Brushed teeth. Brushed hair. Grabbed a cinnamon roll. My mom looked at me—just once— a flicker of her eye over Jace's shoulder. I saw it. I felt it. Then, I wanted more. Now, I understand: her love was built in the in-between moments. The glances. The gentle touches. The way she stayed, always. After securing us into our car seats, she shifted into drive—kitten heels tapping the gas, her freshly blow-dried hair safe from the humidity by sheer force of will. We pulled into the lot— her name painted in crisp white beneath the words: **"Principal Parking Only."** Then, I wondered: Did she eat today? How many milligrams of caffeine kept her upright? Who pours into her, when she's spent everything on others? Now, I ask bigger questions: When is her break? When does she

exhale? When can she stop mothering? Does she ever? She moves through the world like a storm cloud with sun inside— quietly powerful, beautifully heavy. She holds space for hundreds, but never lets her own children feel small. She is both thunder and shelter. She is the woman who made everything work, and we never saw her flinch.

What's missing from this piece? Can you spot it?

No fatherly figure appeared. Yet, my dad had the same job as my mom. He was nowhere to be seen.

The map of education is sketched in soft, silencing gray—
pencil-smudged skies hanging over outdated expectations.

Hair pulled tight, a perfect loop—
a noose disguised as neatness.
Blouse buttoned to the throat,
not for style, but survival.

Don't distract him.
Don't tempt the boys.
Don't let your skin speak louder than your lesson plan.

Paint your mouth in professionalism—
scarlet lipstick,
wings of eyeliner sharp enough to carve out credibility.

Click-clack.
Click-clack.
Your heels echo before you enter.
Your sound arrives before your name.
No matter how quiet you try to be.

Piercings? Forbidden.
Tattoos? A disgrace—
sacrilege etched into skin,
a rebellion they fear might be contagious.

They warn:
You are being watched.
You are a mirror.
Don't show the girls freedom.
Don't show the boys options.

But him—
he walks in late,
tie clipped because he never learned the knot.
Shirt wrinkled like an afterthought.

Pants not dress-code regulated.
No one flinches.

He is man,
and man is allowed to forget.
Allowed to be unfinished.
Allowed to exist without comment.

He can grow a beard
and no one wonders if he's still committed.
He can wear ink on his sleeve,
and still be called professional.

Yet woman—
she must be perfect,
and pleasing,
but not too pleasing.
She must be warm,
but not soft.
Strong,
but not loud.

An impossible standard,
rooted in rules passed down like hand-me-downs:
Patriarchal in structure,
Maternal in essence.

Education—
I'm waiting for you to see it.
To unroll the map,
to redraw the lines.

Because without her—
who would do the unseen labor?
Who would show up early
and stay until the last student's ride arrived?

Who would offer the softness
they never put in the handbook,
but students search for anyway?

The map of education was built
on silent sacrifice and unspoken rules.

But now—
slowly, surely—
we are pinning new flags.

Seeing her not only in the classroom,
but at the head of the table.
Behind the desk.
Beneath the nameplate that reads:
“Principal.”

Ecdysis
By: Emily Weber

Phase 1: Dull Skin, Pink Belly
Definition in snakes due to increased blood flow under the old skin as new skin forms underneath. The blood vessels become more visible, especially through inner ventral scales.*

I believe education is not a system of institutionalized rules.
I believe it is a spiritual force that calls people into action.

Was it my backyard or my first time feeling at home?
My second home, or just the job my mom worked
to put Confetti Spaghetti and Pasta Jambalaya on the table?
When did I first feel the ripple of my parents' legacy?
In the community?
In the school system?
In me?

I believe education is shaped by the echoes of many souls—
never just one hand, and never just one voice.

Love in education travels hand to hand, unseen but deeply felt—
passed like breath between those who care.
It ricochets and recoils
Seemingly knowing who carries the capacity to hold ***it.***
More than that, I believe ***it*** chooses who is ready.

Educators know when they've been chosen.
You may resist the call—brush ***it*** off, bury ***it***—
but ***it*** waits, quietly.
Until you are ready to remember.

Phase 2: Blue, Cloudy Eyes
Definition when a snake's eyes turn bluish or milky as fluid builds up between the old and new layers of skin. The snake becomes irritable or defensive due to reduced vision.*

No concrete, white-washed buildings.
Paintings embodying feelings from the floor
to the ceiling. Anything but bland,
Ordinary
or standard.
The walls speak in whispers of infantile love so pure and nostalgic
panging of future lessons taught.
almost hurting to look at.

Those walls remember tears shared when a classmate left this earthly plane.
They hold breath of a classroom,
Stacked with mismatched tools—

from phonics to poetry of complex thought.

The room my mother first taught in.
The room where ***it*** found me.
I believe ***it*** finds you in the quiet moment
when your soul is open to being seen.

Still, we forget.
We hide ***it*** in the quiet drawers of our minds,
letting pride and ego convince us we're in control.
But this work—***this calling***—asks not for control.

Why won't I nap?
Why won't I sleep?
Frustration fills the teacher's bones,
knowing the snot-nosed child won't rise with new energy
but with a patience earned from staring at popcorn ceilings
counting each kernel like a distant constellation.

The sweaty necks on mats,
cheap and worn,
not nearly as fancy as they are now.
We soothe young minds into silence,
while longing for their light to stay lit.
We go from "don't ever give up,"
to "that'll never happen."

How do beads and buttons become bulletins and rubrics?
Where does the wonder go? Where do we put it all as we decide
to go with
it?

I believe imagination is not a fleeting spark,
but the pulse that sustains true learning.

Phase 3: Clear Eyes, Rest
Definition The snake's eyes begin to clear as the fluid is reabsorbed. Vision returns. Clarity. Stillness. Shedding is near.*

The perfume of *Bombshell by Victoria's Secret*
drifts like a warning—sharp, sweet, everywhere.
The scent curls through the hallways,
lingering in the scent of girlhood,
of adolescence,
of unspoken hierarchies.

The girls in charge stare.
They tilt their heads.

“Why do you dress like that?”
“Why is your makeup like that?”

Questions that are not questions.
They are declarations.
Borders.

And then—
saliva, warm and sour, sliding down my chin.
Not mine.
Someone else’s cruelty made tangible.
A queen’s decree: I was less.

The first taste of truth.
Adolescence is not a gentle blooming.
It is a battlefield of stares and silence.
Of learning your place
before you know who you are.

And yet—
I believe these small violences,
the ones you carry quietly,
the ones that ache long after they end—
they become seeds.

They grow in those who have ***it***.
And from them,
we gain the power
to undo what was done to us.

I believe individuality is not an afterthought in education—
it is the foundation.
And the ones who move this field forward
are the ones who dare to try
what others never will.

Phase 4: Shedding

Definition The snake begins rubbing its head against rough surfaces to loosen the old skin. It peels off, often in one long piece—like turning a sock inside out.*

I keep running from ***it***.
The calling.
The fate everyone else saw coming—
the dutiful daughter fulfilling her legacy.

Do it for your family.
Make them proud.
Walk the path they paved.

What a quiet, ugly disappointment.

Regret rises in my throat,
acidic and sour,
like something I can't spit out.

I try to forget the hurt—
the kind that arrived
before I even had the words to name it.

The perfect kid.
The perfect grades.
The perfect family.

Who knew she would fall from so high?

But I believe it's the cracks,
the imperfections,
the shaky moments and vulnerable confessions—
that teach growing minds it's okay
not to be perfect.

I believe the timing of transformation
is not up to us.
It comes when you say yes—
not when you're ready,
but when you surrender.

Phase 5: Slough

Definition The old skin has been shed. The new skin is brighter, vibrant. The snake leaves the discarded layer behind.*

Now I sit in an auditorium,
surrounded by minds I swear
are quicker than mine,
sharper,
cooler,
smarter.

Comparison is the thief of self.
Still, I compare.

I had become unrecognizable to myself—
so I set out to find her again.

There he was:
the grey-bearded man with the unibrow.
My new nemesis.

How are you so proud that so many are failing?

Biology.
The only subject that fascinated me
because it was grotesque,
bloody,
honest.
Unapologetically real.

Here—
this is where I finally said yes
to ***it.***

Swallowed pride and bitterness
like a pill I didn't want to take.
Big. Dry. Sharp-edged.
Gone before I could taste it.

I accepted ***it.***
The calling.
The weight.
The gift.

I believe in purpose.
I believe in people.
I believe in the possibility of repair.

Self-improvement is not perfection.
It is the promise to begin again,
again,
and again.

I believe the ones who leave a mark
must do so with honesty,
not polish.
With authenticity,
not performance.

Final Phase: Post-Shed

Definition The process is complete. The skin is vibrant, the body whole. The snake returns to movement, to living—with new growth.*

A rare alignment—
needs and wants,
wounds and wisdom,
gathered in one place.

Hearts, ready to love.
To notice.
To truly see
what so often goes unseen.

Was it Mr. Plasse?
Mrs. Baltazar?
Your favorite teacher?

Maybe it was Addie.
Or Evelyn.
Or Bryce.

You don't always know who carries it,
but you feel it when they do.

Finally,
my heart beats steady.
No more racing.

My schedule hasn't changed.
But the rhythm of my days—
the chaos,
the laughter,
the quiet triumphs—
they make me thrive.

It lives in me now.
Not as a burden,
but as a presence.
As truth.
As the quiet pat on the back
when my 8th graders leave behind their IDs,
little echoes of who they were.

I believe education is continuous—
a river that never stops flowing.

I believe in the tears,
the laughter,
the hallway whispers,
and the classroom belly-laughs.

I believe in what we build—
together.
And I believe ***that***
is why we stay.

Daedalus' Lament
By Georgia Elliott

I shaped those wings so patiently.
Each feather laid like a prayer,
Made of wax and warnings --
And every lesson I poured into you.

I told you, Child --
not too high
The sun doesn't welcome strangers.
not too low
The sea swallows what it doesn't understand.
stay in the middle
Stay with me.

Oh Child --
why didn't you listen?
Or maybe you did --
And you just didn't care.

Did my love sound like fear to you?
Did my company feel like a cage?

I believed in what I built.
in the placement of every feather
in the logic of the wind.
I thought my passion and planning
would be enough to carry us both.

Oh Child --
Was it my idealism that failed you?
Was it your hubris that led you to fall?
I sift through every lesson
like the melted wax and torn feathers of your wings asking
Where did it all go wrong?

OhChild,whydidn'tyoulisten??
What have you done?
You flew too close to the sun.

What Was It All About?
By: Georgia Elliott

It was all about --
classic middle child syndrome
the big wild untamed backyard
learning to cook Hamburger Helper
“Take care of your brother!”

It was all about --
a fresh pack of Camel Lights,
flipping the Lucky
tasting that first delicious drag
learning the power of my body

learning the power of my mind.

It was all about --
making life-altering mistakes
betrayals, both Shay’s and mine
“How could you do that to me?!”
losses so great I dare not touch them.

It was all about --
looking it all square in the eye and saying:

I am no longer afraid.

This I Believe: A Smattering of Beliefs

By: Matthew Canone

There are an infinite number of pools of thought to lounge by. The lazy splash around but never dip their toes in. The loud ones stand ankle-deep and brag about how much they know. The clowns stumble about here and there unsure of what to believe until they are shown. The real ones know which to avoid, which to dabble in, and eventually, the vantage point required to excel, blossom, and perhaps even tower because this world offers everything and, unfortunately, everything else. We all have a choice of theories, faiths, and truths to embrace.

I always assumed common sense would win in the internet's misinformation blame game, but there's always the possibility that hate, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, misogyny, etc, will pervade. Hence, every morning when I pour my cup of coffee, pet my dog, and head out into the real world I am highly aware I could be in the real world making money off the back of someone else, in a cubicle where the air conditioner consistently hums and every year a raise is expected. That was never my calling, although my mind sometimes drifts to an alternate reality where I have enough money for a vacation. Still, I don't believe in wealth enough to live for it. No. I live for the sound of the bell and SSR, a healthy dialogue with students trying to figure it out. The Ah-ha moments and the digging away at surfaces to find a deeper meaning, to help young minds reach that pivotal moment when they realize they hadn't thought about "it" and that the world isn't black and white, us or them. The world is all of us and sitting back immediately judging a character, or group of people on the news, based on preconceived notions stuffed down our throats by media and entertainment, is not only apathetic and disheartening, but dangerous and unbecoming when you're one of Canone's kids.

However, when the door closes and class begins, I know that those entities can go back into their little dark caves and wallow in their misery. You see, this is the thing: they aren't teachers. All they do is set an example of what not to be in life.

Because, in the end, this is what I know to be true:

-Novice teachers have profound theories in their arsenal, but it's slipped their minds that it's the same old game.
-Older teachers need to let go of what teaching used to be like 15 years ago when they first started because it's never going back (nothing can, not even America, dad)
-State tests designed to fail schools and line the pockets of politicians are not the end all / be all
-Kids are not data scores
-Axing free lunch shouldn't be used to score points in the political arena
-The Department of Education shouldn't be run by a billionaire who protects sexual predators
-The government shouldn't hoot and holler about freedom of speech and then ban books
-Empathy for all
-And the crux of the whole thing, interest young minds in as many books as you can

Make It a True Daily Double, Doc

By: Matthew Canone

It's the same building from when you were an undergrad,
but now you can park in the forbidden lot.

"Have you ever heard of currere," he asked the class.
Close to a circle, but not quite.

"Not quite a circle," you think to yourself.
He said racetrack, mentioned motif, recurring themes.

You have to take your hands, use the fingernails,
scrape away at the brain, the ventricles, the juices.

Rip it out, hold it up to the light
Poke until you find the awkward, potent feels.

These are the edges that sculpted you into this,
but you're getting older now, you can't recall

The jealousy, anger, desperation, hunger
That blur your formative years but you need to.

Next week you have a class of freshmen who
Don't believe Romeo could possibly love Juliet.

Sometimes you have to fall off the bike
Crush your bits and pieces on that bar.

It's on the sidelines, bruised ego, inarticulate, blinded,
When you notice the clouds, the direction, the distance.

"Currere is a process, like a duck, it
Goes where it does without question."

"The world," he said to no one in particular,
"Isn't what most people think it is or isn't."

The ripples of a manmade lake paused,
Something far above us shifted, made its presence known

"Ambiguity isn't your problem," I later told him
At the end of an empty bar.

"I used to be a dreamer," he said. "Now,

It’s different. I used to be though.”

“Dreamer means something new now.
Can’t tell people that anymore.”

“This can’t go on forever,” he told the
Rest of his amber.

“What is, It’s not looking too good, doc?”

Knowing When to Ebb and When to Flow

By: H. Michelle Kreamer

I don't say I'm OCD,
I say I have OCD tendencies.
I try not to describe myself
as a "control freak,"
rather, "I'm Type A."
I like calendars and planners
and crossing items off a to-do list.

Accomplishing tasks, big or small,
makes me feel at ease.
"There is a reason for the things I do,
even if it isn't readily apparent."
I tell my students this
when I'm being particularly particular.

Backwards mapping,
beginning with the end.
When it comes to planning,
I'm a mastermind.
But I remember that day
in 7th grade
when no lesson
would go as planned.

"Planes struck
the Twin Towers!"
My gifted teacher
ran in shouting this.
I didn't know what this meant
but I knew it was important.
You could tell
because of the adults' faces.

We watched the tv
the rest of the day,
footage on a loop,
sitting Indian-style on the floor—
we said Indian-style then.

But on this day,
curriculum was set aside.
Standards were forgotten.
Lesson objectives washed away.
We sat in collective disbelief—
being human.

Good teaching requires
an understanding
of the ebbs and flows.
It's designing thoughtful,
challenging instruction.
but realizing when there has been
a change in the tides.
And when it's best
to let it take you for a while,
instead of fighting it.

A Teacher's Dream

By: Elyse Landry

I dream of a lot of things for a lot of people. As a teacher I constantly feel the weight of the world on my shoulders, too scared to ask anyone for a helping hand. Oftentimes too scared to make any noises that might reveal how I feel like I don't belong in this profession. Constantly scanning for skeptical eyes who might see right through my facade, silently dreading for the curtains to rise and expose me as a fraud. When I lie awake at night, I often imagine a world where everything can be at a standstill in perfect peace and harmony. Where I can stand in front of a group of children and I will be able to help them all. A future where I can save them all.

I dream of a world where I won't have to worry about saying my last goodbyes to students who have not matured yet. Where I won't have constant pangs of worry that my students won't get put in impossible situations
and that they'll be safe. A world where pencils aren't traded for guns, where children who need Maslow the most aren't held in the basement fighting for their life to get out. A world where his hierarchy of needs are actually valued and remembered. Where those students' only worry is about what grade they make, and not how they are going to get their next meal. Where those students can confidently walk down the halls without fear of judgment about their home lives.

I dream of a world where the people in power actually care about human lives. Where there are not hundreds of rich people haphazardly deciding to rip away a child's only chance to eat a warm meal. Where they value those students with exceptionalities, and to care about them even if they don't fit the social class requirement. When they say "No Child Left Behind", I dream that they truly mean it.

I dream of a world where children are valued for their potential. They are not menaces, they are the future generation that could save this world, or be the very thing to finally finish it off. I dream of a world where every child has felt the love and warmth of one adult at least once in their lifetime.

I dream of my future, and what that could look like. When my head hits the cheap cotton pillow, my mind swirls around endless possibilities, trying hard to fight the ever present negative ones out of my mind. Whether or not I will have to attend another child's funeral, and watch parents break into pieces knowing there is nothing I can possibly do.Whether or not I will be able to stick around for years to come, funneling my students' pain as my own to give them a childhood they so desperately deserve.

I dream of a world where none of these possibilities exist, and my only concern is how to make my classroom more organized and aesthetic, not which black dress I should wear.

I dream of a lot of things for a lot of people. Being a teacher has always been the pinnacle dream for me even at the lowest points. But I wonder how many people I have let down trying to chase that dream.

Teaching from the Fragments

By: Elyse Landry

I stand there cowardly, shoulders clinging to the ground,
where the only thing I feel is the 30 young wandering eyes
all focused on me.
Are they are taunting me?
The long interstate drive home did nothing to soothe the pain,
My mind drifted, as I wish I would've let my car do the same.
Little to the right.
Little to the left.
What if I give in?
Would I feel better?
Would I finally gain control of my own body?
My own mind?
My ego is a delicate shell that broke piece by piece,
continually being smashed on a granite countertop.
My ego ran over,
now I am nothing more than a broken egg.

Today I stand tall,
worn down by emotional baggage not entirely my own.
Weathered by changes that forced my glass ceiling to fall.
Brick by brick, I braced my walls,
which were once only built by my insecurity and shame.
Now super glued with support and love,
I realize now, my students are what make me strong.

One day I'll walk into a classroom,
and see the four walls that used to petrify me,
and I'll no longer see a flashing red sign
screaming at me, abandon all hope ye who enter here.
I will only see a potential garden,
waiting to be nurtured by me.
No glazed eyes staring back at me
waiting for the bell.
The world will be brighter, everything still.
But will those comforts help me
if I can't be stable?
Will my students still trust me
if I no longer feel the pain that they felt?

From the cracks of my shattered shell,
hope grew in its place.
I was so broken and defeated,
but slowly I grew strong.

Thread by thread,
I built myself up and fortified my walls.
Colorful but calm,
I let the light in through cracks I once feared,
letting warmth replace the chill of doubt.
When I stand before those now hopeful eyes,
I see not just their futures, but the reflection of my own resilience.
Not untouched by pain,
but transformed by the courage to heal.

This I Dream

By: Jacob Rummel

Everything happens for a reason.
This is purpose showing face, is it not?
Is our purpose absolute?
Or is it constantly in flux
like south Louisiana weather in Summer?
Can we ever know?
Does it matter if we don't?

Existence persists,
each exhalation a push for something more.
As we inhale the space and people around us
they fan the flames in our bellies
in directions we may not have intended
or to heights we may not have yet explored.

Is it others that give my life meaning?
If I were alone, how would I see myself?
Would I see myself at all
if not as a reflection
in the lenses that are the souls
looking into my life?
Is all of this just a dream?

I dream explosions of color,
Fractals of variegated shades and sizes,
connected by perfect blemishes of imperfection,
thresholds into transformative liminal space,
filling the void which binds all catches of experience
into a myriad so incomprehensive
that it can't help but make sense that it is so.

I dream of willingness to embrace challenge and change.
I dream of living on in stories I will never hear.
I dream that the purpose is all love:
no matter what it is,
do it in love, especially when
we do not know what we are doing.

I dream of sharing the world I want to live in.
There is a need to share the world I want to live in.
A world of tom-foolery,
A world of butting in on conversations of strangers
that conclude as a conversation amongst friends.

I dream of living in a world of risk:
the risk to try,
the risk to ask why,
even when you're too fatigued to hear the answer;
to cry when you need to,
and to share those tears with others:
the happy tears and those tangled up in blue.
I dream of living in that shared world,
because happiness is only real when shared.

I dream of a legacy etched into stone
that only hundreds or thousands of years can fade;
fortitude for the weary, those battered down by
the injustices of life, the negative experiences
that rot the roots that would otherwise
give blossom to the beauty of the next day.

To dream all this implies its existence,
but to question this dream is encouraged.
Once questioning ends, stagnation begins,
and this I do not dream for anyone.
Questions are abstract curiosity birthed into reality.
This I dream…that teachers always remember
what it was like to be a wondering child.

Smile

By: Jacob Rummel

I stand at the front of class
as teachers are wont to do,
smiling anxiously while
maintaining composure and good intentions,
when a plastic carton of Oreos rips open,
jarring me out of what I think to be academic revelry
(only it is just me not shutting up until I talk myself
into spirals of doubt and contradiction.
No wonder she was feeling peckish).

The smile fades, the eyebrows furrow:
I snatch the freshly opened carton,
flip them upside down and
smash them into the trashcan,
making sure not a single of milk's favorite cookie is salvageable.

I'm slapped with instant regret,
trying to smile through a grimace of receding anger,
stammering an apology to a caricature of shock and awe.
I give her five dollars the next day with the same goofy grin on my face
and tell her to buy some more Oreos.

Today I rise above: the emotions,
the turmoil, the negativity, the lack of focus, the unwillingness.
Today I grin and bear it, at ease in nature.
Today I do not stress what I cannot control.
Today I am content. I will it. I must be it: Incarnate.
Today I am aplomb in the midst of irrational things.

I smile as I look forward to presiding over the silly things
that ordinary people fret over, with an eternal glint in my eyes.
Chaos is inevitable, entropy a constant,
so why not knock things over to see the beauty in the chaos?
To embrace change when and where it comes at whatever degree.
To continue to smile, to spread joy in the world of education,
To poke the bear with kids to show them that sometimes that's ok:
The bear needs to get off its ass
and is often more scared of you than you of the bear.

No smile is exactly the same.
So much depends upon what is hidden beneath a smile.
I once was smiling through anxiety,
doing my best to hide the tension of unrequited self-importance.
Now I smile with contentment,
riding the waves of chaos and change,
happy to be where and when I am.
Thread by thread I weave my tunic of tutelage,
a robe of linen lined with the armor of self-balance,
helping me stand steadfast against the slip back into self-importance.

These Four Walls
By: Meradith Maxey

Freshly painted walls
newly waxed floors,
burying remnants of last year's footsteps.
The voices that once echoed in this room
have been replaced with familiar strangers,
faces I have seen
paired with names I do not know.
Same series, new episode.

The first bell echoes through Hall 4
new rosters in hand
childish chatter approaches,
"Welcome Back" displayed.
Here we go.
One by one,
"Good Morning" I repeat,
coming face to face with
the smiles that will brighten my days,
the minds that will challenge my intellect,
the chapters of this year's story.

Blank pages that crave
color and purpose,
unbounded imaginations,
searching for meaning,
seeking acceptance.

Faces of white and brown,
the differences of the crowns
that we wear to protect,
but don't be scared to dissect.
Embrace the journey
that led you here.
A room where you
will never disappear.

I dream that these four walls
provide a sanctuary where
authenticity and self-discovery reside.
A place where learning is treasured,
where comfort cannot be zoned,
risk-takers that hold insecurities
reminding me of my own.

Mistakes are inevitable,
humanity unhidden,
facades forbidden.
Through me they will see,
vulnerability is key.
Through me they will know,
even teachers can grow.
In Room 38,
I will carry the weight.

Burnout

By: Meradith Maxey

My phone alarm screams the arrival of another day.
"Shut it off," he says, but I just need a minute longer
I don't care that it's loud, I don't care that it's time to get up.
Somehow I prefer this sound to the echoes of disrespectful comments and immature jokes. "I don't want to go," I mumble incoherently, but today, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter that I couldn't sleep last night because I fussed too harshly at a student and I can't forgive myself. It doesn't matter that the black circles under my eyes are evidence of my stress, my exhaustion, my burnout…

These thoughts control my mind,
Reminders of all the things I must do,
But what time do I have?
Testing is near, high stakes I fear,
But isn't this when I thrive?
When the lists are long,
Stress and anxiety in gear,
But the days somehow feel longer.
I have plans.
So. Many. Plans.
Maybe I'll cook that dinner I've been planning for weeks,
Maybe I'll take my pups for a walk,
But if I'm being honest,
All I have the will to do is sit.
Sit with these overwhelming, racing thoughts,
Sit with the list that bears the tasks that keeps me up at night,
I sit in the silence, dissecting the mistakes I made today.

You forgot to schedule that IEP meeting.
You should have written that kid up today in 6th hour.
Those essays still didn't get graded.
You let the discussion get too off topic in 1st hour.

"Remember the why," they say, like a mantra.
But today, I couldn't even remember my phone number.
"Take it day by day"—the mantra continues—
But how can I focus on tomorrow
when I haven't made peace with today.
I'll call my mom; cry it out.
"Give yourself a break," she says,
But summer is still two months away.
So until then, I will sit.
Until then, I will show up and smile through the exhaustion
Because to them, I make a difference.
To them, my presence is needed.
While right now I can't seem to do this for myself,
Until then, I will do it for them.

Muscle Memory
By: Chelsie Sanders

When I was a junior in high school, my teacher, Madame Mary-Caroline Ancelet, assigned us the book *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer alongside an eventual project. The book detailed a young boy around the age of 10 who endured the loss of his father in 9/11. The boy, Oskar, would trace the hands of those he loved in order to study them. Studying hands was a very large part of the story, as they were ways in which Oskar would communicate and interpret the world. My home life reminded me of Oskar because his parents weren't absent (while his father was alive), but they were neglectful. I never felt comfortable comparing my life to someone who lost a father to a tragedy. However, as the project was announced two weeks before, I begged my mom to buy me a poster. As the trope goes, she blamed me for "waiting until the last minute" to tell her, and she told me to figure it out. I got to school and my friend reminded me that one of our teachers sold posters for $1 for school projects. She wasn't here at her usual time that morning, but mercifully one of her neighboring teachers offered it to me at no charge when she saw me scrambling. A small reprieve, and a lesson learned. I added it to the left ventricle in my heart to fill the blood within my body with empathy.

I didn't have her class until 5th period which was after lunch so I used that opportunity to wrangle up all of the classmates I could find for my last-minute project. I still hadn't finished when getting to her class, and I even asked to borrow scissors and glue. I begged her to present last, and she mercifully obliged. I added this to the right ventricle in my heart, to flush oxygen through my hands. I was furiously cutting and pasting, and it was my turn to go up. As I snipped my last picture and pasted it to the now crinkled poster board, I went up to the front of the room, sheepishly explaining my project. Just as Oskar had done in our novel, I traced all of my classmates' hands and wrote words within their respective hands to describe each of them. After presenting all of the hands, I thought my grade would at least be a "D". The room was silent, save for the whispers being exchanged. I looked toward my teacher whose tears spilled across her pink cheeks. I was horrified thinking that I'd bored her to literal tears. Alternatively, all of my peers began to clap for me, and my teacher expressed how blown away she was at my idea.

Madame knew that "Sometimes our best lessons are learned in the present, but only embraced in the future". When assigned, 9/11 was still relevant to my generation, but the generation I now teach could only tell you that it was a tragedy. Time stopped and we lived it. Why did we process something that happened in 2001? Though it was 2009, we were still in the throes of students' parents being deployed to Iraq and Iran, one of which was in our own classroom. In our graduating class, we also had an Arabic student, a student who lost her sister to cystic fibrosis, and generally, emotionally confused teenagers trying to make sense of it all, just as our protagonist did. Retroactively, I realize the "recursive" nature of a teacher is the bending over "backward [for] design". It's all just rebranded phrases of the same thing. Teachers teach with the end in mind, not because it was taught, but because they want to start from where students are right now; We've survived life long enough to be present in this room together. Despite the grief and loss we have all endured in different ways, we can do it together. We begin with the end in mind because we deserve to give ourselves the accolades we have earned simply from living through these things to be where we are now, however broken or marred. She taught a life skill; she taught a human skill. We cried at the end of the book, though many of us couldn't

quantify it in our semi-developed frontal lobes. I tried to digest it in my hippocampus, and it imprinted on my cerebellum.

In order to “walk the talk” of the path that I pave for my students, I think about my 8th year of teaching. Am I teaching these lessons with fidelity? Am I using enough buzz words from the district to impress them when in conversation? Am I following the new rubric for my observations well enough? Did Madame Ancelet care about these same concerns? Am I as pivotal as Madame? Why am I asking so many questions about myself, rather than my job? The answers to these questions are both limitless and finite. At the end of it all, to ground myself, the statement I’ve concluded is: I’m not Madame Ancelet, because I am Mrs. Sanders. “I carry [her] heart with me (I carry it in/my heart)”, but I have created another heart, my heart, built from the hearts of others, to share with the world.

Finding Currere

A discovery poem derived from William Fredrick Pinar's "The Method of 'Currere'"

By: Chelsie Sanders

My conceptualization of the temporal
permits Me to sketch an outline of what it is I'm after.
I want to try to understand;
I have chosen to explore it, (and hence
I bear the responsibility for it).
But it limits my view,
and I need to make it more manageable and coherent.
It's not necessarily a *logical* concept,
but a lived one,
a felt one.

There are many of My interests and hobbies, whose life has gone out of them.
There is no submerged value here, and I am not succumbing to popular attitudes of defeat.
I have free association.
It moves Me biographically and multi-dimensionally to be this free.
(this is not as I <u>want</u> to see it, because I have mentally escaped
from this dimension– don't worry, I <u>might</u> return).

I back off.
I Illuminate the myriad of surfaces as I'm told
because I am subservient.
There is an over-identification with the sense of My world around Me.
I think.
I am not only thinking;
It is I who thinks.
But I am not my thoughts.
I am more than they;
Coffee taste in my mouth.
Thoughts are in my head.
"More Power" The deep structure of My being speaks to me.

This view of Myself
very simply,
makes Me an artist.
Conceptual,
dialectical,
misleading,
and veiled.
Through my art,
I see you partly,
as if you were someone else.

I,
logical and unfounded,
in frequent human meetings,
desire my conceptual realm.
I have an obligation to paint a tangible, conceptual portrait in these human meetings,
loosening My identification with ontological realities.
A spoilt sample.
A transcendental perspective of my views would be better,
for Those who wish to experiment with Me.

Regressive–
The past hovers over the present.
Be absorbed; Slip into complexity.
Into that rift between dimensions.
The sight and sound
where we dwell to have lunch.
Maybe mine, probably yours.
Ignored but not absent,
My subconsciousness perpetuates itself.
Formation of habit, force of habit, happens here.
To ascertain
what is taken for granted,
I loosen Myself from this dimensional rift.
We aim at freedom,
requiring entrance into the past,
Becoming an inter-reflective infantile once again.

Painful character de-crystallization is subtle.
The past is not to be succumbed to.
I avoid completely specific identification.
But to what extent did I absent Myself in fantasy?
Or Interrupt My presence in the past?
The public conceptions of My status,encapsulate and blur My view.
Anger,
hatred,
and becoming awake.
My physical body is absent in the present moment.
It exists still; I-reenter it.
Printing My body into reality.
Progression, regression, and back into the present to transform, once again.

Progressive–
In a slightly darkened room,
Breathing and relaxation.
The future of tomorrow, of next week.
I try to discern My private life.

I freely disassociate and avoid the rational.
An imagined futuristic state.
Do not force; the strain distorts.
I return to the chair.
I am temporarily emotive with the dreaded anticipations from others
that lurk outside the door.

Analytical–
Idiosyncratically, the fabric of My institutional life is inherently analytical.
Am I drawn?
Am I repelled?
I desire a detachment from experience:
what is? what was? what can be?
How plausible is it?
In the clearer light, I juxtapose
past, present, and future.

Finally *Synthetical–*
Concretely, as if in a mirror, I stare.
The consciousness of being.
Illuminate My present, please.
Or do I obscure it?
Liberal refinement,
or distortive trilling?
How do I get to a higher level of being?
Stream of consciousness– that has to be it!
Make it all of a whole.
My physical body is the tangible manifestation
of all that occurs in and through it.
It is part of the self–myself– which is an appendage.
Accessible to Myself and others.
My mind is in its place,
and I am placed together in my mind.

This I Dream

By: Sarah Arceneaux

Where It Began

"It's all going to work out," I whisper to my younger self as I think back over the last twenty-two years in education. It brings me back to a time way before those years. The very beginning of this journey…

As a young girl with pigtails in my hair and the smell of dried up glue on my fingertips I can vividly remember the warm hugs of Mrs. Warden as she welcomed each of us to our first day of school. It was at this specific moment I felt the ripple of a stirring deep down. It had me going home and lining up each baby doll, along with my little brother, to 'play' school with my mom's faded maroon roll book. The green chalkboard, covered on the edges with dust, hung on the unpainted wall in our garage, always tempting me to write with the broken chalk sitting in the bucket below.

The years continue. An inkling of a desire to be a teacher began to grow deep down as I sat in the corner classroom of the second floor building during my last year of elementary school. Ms. Scarborough had a way with words and she developed in me a yearning to write creatively. We wrote stories and poems. I wrote a children's book about being nice to others who were different from me and another book titled *The New Kid*. In these writings, I found my voice and continued to visualize myself in front of the classroom instead of on the first row with bright eyes and a smile on my face.

Over the next few years, those schoolgirl dreams began to change. It began to bother me when I would hear the whispers, "She's going to be a teacher just like her mom" and "teaching is what she was made to do." The hours became consumed with football games, dances, homework, term papers, and relationships. I bled the garnet and grey that covered the walls of my high school. I had a new passion. A new dream. My time was now filled with music. Piano, singing, jazz choir and musicals were my life, and this new dream was developing as I sat in different classrooms, in different desks that were too small for comfort. Education became a necessary means to the future and my future was taking on a melody of its own as I continued along this journey.

The Calling

In every journey there are roads that take sharp turns. I finished my first year of college as a vocal performance major, and my road towards education began to open wider. The feeling of joy was just not there. Singing became a chore. It was robotic and I could not see myself doing it for a living. Something was missing and I needed a change. I began to think back to the early days of playing school and writing creatively. I thought back to what my report card comments: *talks too much, bossy, rolls her eyes at authority*. I remembered back to the feeling of helping someone learn and the want to guide and teach others. It was through those memories that swirled around that the stirrings of being an educator from my younger self were again growing stronger within me. The sound of the *calling* felt loud and it was as if everyone around me was able to also hear it. That *calling* to be a teacher came from within and overwhelmed me. Dreams changed again and this time, I never looked back.

After The Call

The exact moment I began teaching is still etched in my mind. The excitement was palpable as I pulled on the double doors of the school where I had once attended myself, many moons before. The smell of the hallways was the same. Some of my same teachers who I had were next door to me. They were now my coworkers. The questions of what will this first day, this first year, this career bring danced in my head. I knew I was where I was meant to be. Education was in my blood. Education was in my heart. The want and desire for all kids to have a great education was always strong within me. I wanted every child to know that they were cared for and heard. I wanted my students to feel comfortable in my classroom that eventually became a home. A place of rest. A place where community was strong and conversations were deep. I wanted my students to know that each day was a new day. A new beginning. They received a smile each morning as they entered the room because I was truly excited to see them.

Where it's Going

'Public education is my jam' is printed on my t-shirt as I bee-bopped down the hallway towards my ELA classroom. This was the life I made. This is the life I wanted. This was who I was. This is the piece of the puzzle that was needed to continue the path before me. What I dream for the future of education is a continuation and multiplication of this story. I want all people to feel valued. I dream that students and teachers would know they matter. I want others to feel the community I had when I began this journey. The cheers and accolades of those around me who were all headed in the same direction. The same goal: teach the children. The dream is still there. It's growing. It's continuing every day. There is more I need to learn in this profession. There is more we need to learn in this profession.

How can we get all kids reading?

When will we stop the comparison game?

Why don't people respect the profession?

Where are the new applicants?

Why aren't people knocking down the doors of the administrators?

There will always be issues but there is so much potential out there if we are willing to listen.

To teach is joy! The tide is shifting and times are changing but I believe they are changing for the better. Education. Public education is still the best profession out there.

The Tapestry of Life
By: Sarah Arceneaux

Remembering.
The moment my teaching career began
like it was yesterday
The first row weaved together
as the flash of the camera imprinted the exact instant on my mind
The crisp air only added to the anxious feelings that rolled
throughout
Setting up a pattern to start something new
The feeling of nervous energy was palpable
as thoughts danced in my head
of what the day would bring

Experiencing.
Constant excitement on my face
radiating through my body
as I think about all of the things to do:
-places to be
-notes to write
-teachers to meet
and another spreadsheet to complete
A new section adding texture, adding ideas
The whirring and motion of what needs to happen
or should happen next
keeps the process moving throughout the day
Joy encircles the moments and is telling of those who I work with
on a daily basis
Collaborating with others sets me at ease
keeping the pace of the job as the tapestry continues to grow
I check my calendar yet again
which keeps me going and fills my cup

Expecting.
The future is bright, filled with innovation, creativity, and collaboration.
feelings of confidence and growth
permeate the walls while ideas are tossed and flow up and down
and through the hallways
excitement about learning will be felt to the core
The stitching continues as the thread is running out
Days turn to weeks and months turn to years
the times will forever continue
Education will inevitably change
We are forever growing
The memories will continue to lead the way into what is yet to come

Connecting.
A single thread is woven together with another of hope and confidence
Joy is displayed in the approachable nature of this profession
As the story is told and the tapestry unfolds
there is a feeling of anticipation of what's to come,
what is ahead
One thing I know is IT will be bright and
I am completely where I am meant to be.

Where Strangers Become Friends

By: Molly Jumonville

This is the world I want to live in–
A shared world.
A world where strangers become friends–
Laughter and voices rise like a wave above the noise
To connect to an ever-changing current of understanding.
A shared world.
Each droplet of water combines to create an endless ocean of connection.
The ebb and flow of a shared world.
A world where strangers become friends.

The Hand of an Educator

By: Molly Jumonville

The Hand of an Educator

No matter the setting, each story deserves to be told.
The blank page ever advancing.
Ink from a pen in the hand of an educator.

It Was Once Hers

Light covers the desks in a flash with the click of an overused switch.
I step back into the hall, remove the metal plate that reads “Mrs. Lafleur,” and replace it with my own.
My mind wanders to thoughts of her first day.
The fluorescent lights humming above my head bring me back to the moment.
Fear settles in the pit of my stomach like an unwelcome friend from my past.
Yellow, cotton sweater hugs my shoulders with the promise of safety.
Messy bun sits atop a head full of aches.
The evidence of sleep perpetually peeking out of the corner of my eye.
I look down to see cords tangled like roots under my feet.
Laughter travels the four white walls seemingly stirring up dust, air thick with unfulfilled potential.
I clear my throat at the front of the room.
Silence.
Blue-seated, gray-topped desks squeak as they shift their bodies to face me.
Their open gazes directed my way— Expectant, hopeful, apathetic, bored.
I speak, and I hope I’m being heard.
They shuffle into the hallway as quickly as they can.
I look back, and the rows are no longer straight.
My mind wanders again to thoughts of her first day.
The fluorescent lights humming above my head bring me back to the moment.
Darkness envelops the room in a gray blanket with the click of an overused switch.

Is This for Me?

I mentioned I was lost, and they handed me a map.
No instructions. No pins marking a path.
“Thanks”, I say.
The map seems to overcomplicate a simple solution to a complex problem.
“Where should I begin?”
“Trust the process!” they say.
Each intersection is overrun with those who would rather speak than listen.
Everywhere I turn, streets are paved with voices struggling to be heard over the rumbling of the metacognitive wheel.
“Should I turn here?”
Their gaze locked on the window tinted with ego.
Silence fills the car. I know they hear me. Why won’t they listen?
The key to connection, they say, is transparency.

Drops slowly drip down the window in sync with the ones trailing down my cheeks.
“Just stay straight, right?!” I yell with more force to ensure a response.
“You’re doing great!” they haphazardly respond as rain starts to pound the windshield.
“Is this some kind of test? Or do you not know the answer?”
My anger builds with each slap of the blade.
Hands grip the steering wheel–leather creaking against the weight of each knuckle, reminding me about what is in my control.
Roundabout, again and again.
There is no clear exit.
I question myself at every turn.
This map seems to overcomplicate a simple solution to a complex problem.

Now, It is Ours
The click clack of my worn kitten heels claps on the stairs.
The stage is dark.
Murmurs dance in the air.
I step into the spotlight.
My hand covers my face. I peek out to a room full of doubt.
The audience has been here before- same show, same lines. The actor is new, but the audience sees more of the same.
They know the actor wants applause, but only when prompted by a pause.
The stage is just out of reach. Each audience member, an actor, but they’ve unwillingly settled into their seats.
The spotlight burns, and I step back, not out of fear but to make room. The lights dim.
I remove my heels, and I am grounded again.
They join me on the stage not as understudies or to audition—no script to be read.
We create a circle, collaborating and combining our voices.
An ensemble.
I speak–not to perform, only to ask: What can I do for you?

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This I Dream:
A found poem collected from *Because of a Teacher*, curated by George Couros [commented on by me].
By: Kara Rutherford

[She] was the *exact kind of teacher* I wanted to grow to be.
[She] was passionate. [She] was fun. [Her] love for people and for learning radiated in all [she] did.
[She] knew that a great story could help [her] connect to students and connect students to content.
We've all had teachers who genuinely enjoyed our company and got excited about the experiences they were creating. [Maybe I could be like that one day.]

[When I came into my own classroom] I realized relationships needed to be the foundation of this work.
When I changed my mindset from what I taught to who I taught, the real work came into focus. I began to understand the immense connection between personal and authentic relationships and student-learning outcomes.
[Like the teacher who inspired me, I knew that] when we are excited about what we are doing, other people will be excited, too.
[In my classroom, I committed to] be the weirdo who dares to enjoy.
[But still] I often felt like I did not belong with colleagues or supervisors who I thought were more intelligent, better equipped for the work, or in possession of attributes of success I thought I lacked.
The best teachers are incredible learners, and they want to be pushed to grow, as long as they know the person pushing has their back.
But great administrators won't simply stay out of your way. They'll also make you a better educator.

I had no interest in ever becoming a school administrator.
I wanted to be someone worth following, but the way I saw it, school administration was not in my career path.
I figured I could learn from the experience of going through the process.
[After all,] when opportunity knocks, you have to be willing to answer the door.
I couldn't believe it, but I got the interview.
I expected to get the job about as much as I'd expect to win a game of one-on-one with Michael Jordan. I was going to walk in and give it my best, learn from the experience, and enjoy the opportunity.
She was looking for the best person for her school.
[She] fitted the job to my strengths while filling a need that she believed the school had at that time.
I had no idea what I'd done to deserve this team, and the imposter syndrome set in quickly.

[But even though I feel as though I am not enough, I remember:] we have everything we need, in this moment, to do the things that matter most in this world: connect with others, be there for them, and guide them.
We have to make time and take action in order to make sure that the people we work with are OK.
[As a leader, I] want educators to enjoy doing their jobs [the way I did].
I [will] brag about, lift up, and bring attention to just how amazing the people on my staff are.
[I will] recognize, acknowledge, extend.
The culture of learning [I will] cultivate [will be] as nurturing for the adults as it [is] for the kids.
[Every day, I will] focus on doing right by the kids, [my] staff, and the community.

When we normalize imperfection, caring deeply, being human, and learning, we start a chain reaction that empowers others to do the same.
When we create enthusiasm and happiness around others, we inspire them to enjoy in very authentic ways.

[Every day I will remind myself to] lead with gratitude in [my] heart.
[Because] this work is about loving and caring for kids. Everything else, and I mean everything else, is secondary to that.

Couros, George. *Because of a Teacher: Stories of the Past to Inspire the Future of Education*. Impress, LP, 2021.

WRITING MINI-LESSONS

Think It, Know It, Show It

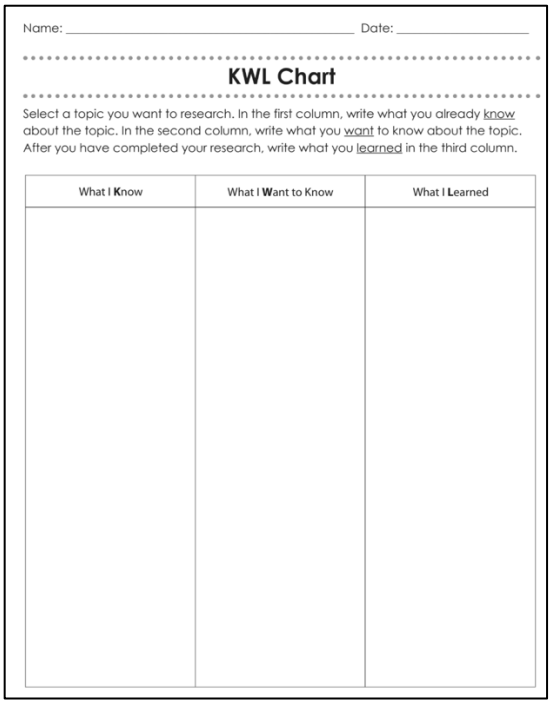
Created by: Michelle Salts and Emily Weber

Text Type	Informative/ Expository
Grade Level(s)	6-12
ELA standard(s) addressed	• Anchor Standard RI 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. • Anchor Standard W 2. Write informative/explanatory texts.
Lesson Objectives	• TLW identifies a reliable source and analyzes it for specific information. • TLW produces an informative/explanatory text in a creative format demonstrating an understanding of foundational unit concepts. • TLW explains how and why their creative product shows the specific information reflected in the source.
Materials/ Resources	• Laptop/Chromebook • CRAAPS Method Handout • KWL Chart • Google Doc • Pencil/paper • Promethean Board

Mini-Lesson Procedures	1. Use established classroom procedures to assign partners or groups of three.
	2. Assign or allow students to select a topic or concept related to a new unit. (Consider front-loading essential understanding and/or vocabulary.)
	  ○ Examples:
	  ▪ In the 7th grade unit, *The Giver*, concepts such as **dystopian**, **utopian**, **anarchy,** and **authoritarian societies** will be important to understand.
	  ▪ In the 9th grade unit, *A Lesson Before Dying*, the essential question, "What makes us human?" could be addressed in this lesson.
	3. Each group should make notes about their topic on a KWL chart prior to researching their topic.
	4. Each source should be evaluated using the CRAAP method.
	5. Use the linked graphic organizer to guide the process. Virtual Stations: Brainstorming, Revision, and Reflection
	6. Students will select a multimedia medium, such as a video, play, social media-styled post, or song, to creatively reimagine their topic and accurately reflect their informational text. Students could personify concepts or present their research in an engaging manner to help teach their topic to other students.

	○ Students should accurately represent the key facts, themes, and insights from their informational writing while using creative techniques such as personification of concepts, metaphorical storytelling, humor, or character dialogue to bring their topic to life. ○ Examples: ▪ How a bill becomes a law: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgVKvqTItto ▪ *Inside Out* film (the introduction of emotions) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1S0RKRRyqhQ ▪ Cumcumba Video: Science Centered, Benefits of the cucumber https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Hc65D12fV8Y 7. Students will present their projects and teach their assigned topic to the class.
Differentiated Instruction	• Choice in method of demonstrating understanding through written, visual, audio means (product). • Individual, partner, or group work based on student needs (process). • Scaffolded research support (process).
Connection to critical writing, including next steps	Foundation for Culminating Writing Task (primarily Research Simulation) and/or evaluating sources and/or synthesis of research information.

Supporting Materials:



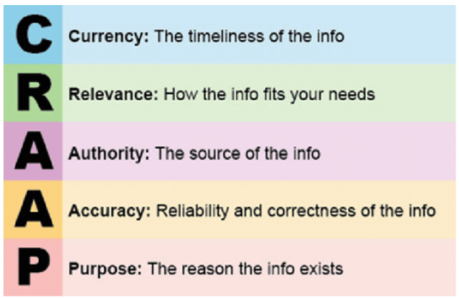
Name: _____ Date: _____

KWL Chart

Select a topic you want to research. In the first column, write what you already know about the topic. In the second column, write what you want to know about the topic. After you have completed your research, write what you learned in the third column.

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

CRAAPs Method



What type of source is it?
- ☐ Scholarly Article
- ☐ Magazine
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Book
- ☐ Website

1. Currency: the timeliness of the information. When was the information published or posted? Is it recent enough to be relevant to your thesis? Why or why not?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain:

Websites Only: How recently has the website been updated?

2. Relevance: the importance of the information for your needs. Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain:

Is the information at an appropriate level?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain:

Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain:

3. Authority: the source of the information. Who is the creator or author? What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?

What are the author's qualifications to write on this topic?

*Websites Only: does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? (examples: .com, .edu, .gov, .org, .net)

4. Accuracy: the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content Is the information supported by evidence?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain:

Are there citations or a bibliography included?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical Errors?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

*Websites Only: Do all the links work?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Purpose: the reason the information exists. Do the creator(s) make their intentions or purpose clear?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain:

Are there any political, ideological, cultural, religious, or personal bias?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What is the topic?	
What is the source title?	
How do you know your source is credible? (link CRAAPS)	
What specific information are you looking for as you research?	
What information do you already know about your topic?	

Virtual Stations		
#1: Brainstorming	#2: Revisions	#3: Reflection
• Who needs to know this—and why? • What facts, examples, or visuals could support my explanation? • What do I already know, and what do I still need to research? • How can I make this topic clear and interesting to someone who knows nothing about it? • What angle or perspective makes this topic unique or powerful?	• Did I clearly explain my topic with facts, examples, or evidence? • Is my information accurate, organized, and easy to follow? • Does my creative product reflect the same message as the source material? • Are the visuals, layout, or audio clear and purposeful? • Would someone understand the topic just from looking at your product? • Did I balance creativity with accurate, informative content? • What could I change or add to make this more engaging or effective?	

Character Confessionals:

Created by: Matthew Canone and Georgia Elliott

***Note:** This lesson is using *The Crucible* as the text but can be adapted to any 9-12 text.

Text Type	Literary Analysis
Grade Level(s)	9-12
ELA standard(s) addressed	SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, while respecting intellectual property; convey a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, address alternative or opposing perspectives, and use organization, development, substance, and style that are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
Lesson Objectives	• TLW create a reality television-style confessional from the POV of a main character unpacking the events of the scene. • TLW evaluate five chosen confessions, one from each character option, for the accuracy of the character's description.
Materials/ Resources	• Chromebook • *The Crucible* (this lesson can work with any anchor text) • Characteristics List
Mini-Lesson Procedures	**Act 1 was completed in class the previous day** 1. TTW review the plot points of Act 1 with the students, calling on individual students to recall. 2. TTW introduce the assignment, inviting the students to choose between the main characters Abigail Williams, John Proctor, Rev. Parris, Tituba, or Mary Warren to record their confessional. 3. TLW use their annotations from Act 1 to create a brief list of examples supporting their characterization. a. For example, a characteristic of Abigail is that she is capable of violence. This is supported when she threatens the other girls if they tell the truth, "I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and will bring a pointy reckoning that will shutter you!" 4. Using their Chromebook and their list of characteristics, TLW record a 1-2 minute confessional video from the point of view of their chosen character, recapping their perspective on the events of Act 1. 5. Once all recording is finished and submitted to Google Classroom, TTW ask for volunteers to show the confessionals to the whole class, ideally getting one example of each of the five characters.

	6. After each viewing, TLW discuss in groups whether or not they believe the confessional is an accurate depiction of the character.
Differentiated Instruction	1. Students are given a choice of characters to record their confessionals. 2. Grouping will be intentionally varied by students' ability.
Connection to critical writing, including next steps	This activity will help support students in their summative assessment of a literary analysis.

"Anchoring with Imagination:" Creative Writing in the Style of Broadcast Journalism

Created by: Elyse Landry and Jacob Rummel

Text Type	Informative/Explanatory
Grade Level(s)	9-12
Standard(s) addressed	US.1: Analyze ideas and events in the history of the United States of America from 1776 to 2008 and how they progressed, changed, or remained the same over time. US.2: Analyze connections between events and developments in U.S. history within their global context from 1776 to 2008. W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. RL.9-10.6: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in works of literature drawing on a wide reading of world literature. TH-CE-H4: Write scripts for classroom, stage, and media performances, using various forms of technology
Lesson Objectives	1. Explain a topic(s)/concept(s). 2. Analyze the significance of the topic(s)/concept(s) regarding their impact throughout time. 3. Demonstrate effective oral communication and presentation skills by sharing a self-created piece with an audience.
Materials/ Resources	1. A text if applicable (ex: historical article, a novel such as *Of Mice and Men*, etc.) 2. Computer with access to a word processor and/or slideshow software. 3. Paper and pencil
Mini-Lesson Procedures	1. Warm-up/Extended Bell Ringer a. Exquisite Corpsing: students in groups of 3-4 will participate together in either a single round or multiple rounds of the collaborative, creative writing exercise, Exquisite C (explained below), b. Exquisite corpsing procedures: i. All students start with a blank sheet of paper to complete the next step. ii. Students write a line and drop the last word on the next bottom line and fold the paper hiding the top line.

iii. Students pass their papers to the next student and that student has to write a line inspired by the dropped word.
iv. This pattern continues for x amount of rounds. You can do one long round, or multiple short ones.
v. Students will be given a topic to focus on, so no matter what the dropped word is, they must do their best to connect their next line back to the provided topic.

c. Students will focus their corpsing on their subject, be it a historical time period or figure, a mathematical theory or formula, a fictional world or character, a scientist or scientific breakthrough, etc.
Ex: students might write about the Industrial Revolution, or the discovery of the double helix, or the character progression of Jefferson in *A Lesson Before Dying*.

2. Main Activity: Script-writing

Instructions: Students will stay in the same groups as the warmup, and prepare and present a report as if they are "reporting back" to a present-day audience, sharing their observations, experiences, and insights from the chosen context. This activity is designed to deepen understanding, encourage perspective-taking, and enhance communication skills through immersive, creative engagement with the subject matter. All students in previously created groups are responsible for writing the script, and the groups will decide which students will be the anchors that present to the class at the end of the assignment. The recommended number of anchors is 1 to 2, but the whole group can present if they want.

The following is a brief overview of the different components to be included and are expanded upon below with a Social Studies example:

- **Beginning**: The student will explain the broad idea/concepts of where they are/were, or about the specific person/character they witnessed.
- **Middle**: "And in breaking news": The student will focus on no more than two main storylines from that time or place or about the fact/concept that has been picked.
- **End**: The student will explain the implications of what happened during their travel, and/or how it has affected the modern world, depending on what the student chose.

Example for Social Studies:

Student Directions:
1. **BEGINNING** – Set the Scene (30–45 seconds)

	Start your broadcast by introducing your location and time period. Include the broad historical context: When is this happening? Where are you? What is going on globally? *Use phrases like:* • "Good evening from the year 1944. I've just arrived in Normandy, France…" • "This is [Your Name], reporting from Berlin in the final days of World War II…" • "We're broadcasting from the U.S. home front, where rationing and war bonds are shaping daily life…" 2. **MIDDLE** – "And in Breaking News…" (1–2 minutes) Announce 1–2 major events or developments with clear, factual reporting. These can be military events (D-Day, Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima), political moves (rise of Hitler, signing of treaties), social effects (women entering the workforce), or technological developments (radar, atomic bomb). Include quotes, fake interviews, or eyewitness accounts if desired. *Use urgency and clarity like a real news report:* • "In breaking news, Allied forces have stormed the beaches of Normandy…" • "Civilians in London are taking shelter once again tonight, as the Blitz continues…" • "President Roosevelt addressed the nation today after the attack on Pearl Harbor…" 3. **END** – Wrap-Up & Modern Relevance (30–45 seconds) End your report by explaining the long-term impact of the events you covered. You might reflect on how WWII shaped the modern world—politically, socially, technologically, or culturally. *Consider closing with:* • "These events would go on to reshape the balance of power across the globe…" • "The sacrifices made here would echo through generations to come…" • "From this chaos, the United Nations would later be born…"

Differentiated Instruction	Rather than writing a script and performing it live in class, students could create a comic strip, video, slideshow presentation, a structured essay, a poem or song, etc.
Connection to critical writing, including next steps	Students have to critically report and analyze either a historical event or figure, scientific breakthrough/concept, fictional world, mathematical theory/person, etc. Students have to organize the information in a cohesive manner.

Write Into the Text: Creative Writing to Emulate Author Style

Created by: Meradith Maxey and Chelsie Sanders

Text Type	Literary Analysis
Grade Level(s)	6-12
ELA standard(s) addressed	**RL.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text. **RL.4** Determine figurative and connotative meanings; analyze how diction (including analogies and allusions) shapes tone and meaning. **W.3** Establish context, use narrative techniques (dialogue, pacing), structure events clearly, use vivid language and sensory details, and conclude appropriately. **W.5** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a different approach, focusing on how well the purpose and audience have been addressed. **SL.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. **LS.2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. **LS.5** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Lesson Objectives	• I can understand what a literary analysis is and how it explores the various components of everyday fictional texts that connect to my personal life. • I can engage with the themes, characters, and cultural elements of a literary text through a piece of creative writing which will build into a literary analysis. • I can compare my literary analysis with a peer's and identify similar and different literary devices. • I can work with a partner to determine what affect literary devices and stylistic choices have on the reader and the writing as a whole.
Materials/ Resources	• 2-3 prompts (relate to anchor text/unit themes) based on the unit's central message or events within the work. • Chromebook • writing utensil(s) • Predetermined definitions of literary elements (e.g., theme, characterization, metaphors, symbolism, foreshadowing) ○ This lesson is somewhat dependent on having been explicitly exposed to literary analysis/literary devices.

Mini-Lesson Procedures	**1.** Give 2-3 broad creative writing prompts BEFORE reading literary texts. The prompts should be based on the themes and cultures of the unit. **2.** Students will individually choose a prompt to write about. It must include all the elements under the comparisons tab. a. 3-5 paragraphs b. protagonist c. conflict d. symbol (at least 2) e. central theme f. figurative device(s) g. 1st or 3rd person *** the quantity and specifics of these will be altered depending on scaffolds/grade levels* ***Possible prompts:*** **Example for High School Unit: *Things Fall Apart*** Choose one of these two prompts to create a story: • "You're exiled from your state for 8 years… how does that play out?" • "Your friend of 10 years betrays you, what was the betrayal and what does the aftermath look like?" • "Your society is forced to accept a new language that challenges all of your traditions. This is a completely new language that is created by the government. How do you and/or your community respond to this shift?" **Example for Middle School Unit: *Call of the Wild*** (middle school) • "You and your family are driving home from a long vacation. The car breaks down suddenly and there's no civilization in sight." • "Imagine you and all of your peers show up at school and there isn't a single adult on campus" **Can be transformed into a narrative writing task* Comparisons: • Character development • Commonalities in subject matter • Symbolism • Theme/moral lessons • Setting • And any other literary devices that make sense to the respective grade level **3.** After students read the event (e.g., Things Fall Apart: Okonkwo's exile, or betrayal in Okonkwo's eyes from his clan) (e.g., Call of the

	Wild: Buck is kidnapped, Buck becomes a sled dog) have students who responded to the same prompt pair up. a. Partners will then compare their individual prompts to the event chapters in the novel as b. Students will determine the following in a **"me v. the novel"** format by switching papers **<u>to determine what affect their stylistic choices had on the event itself</u>.** i. The main theme in the chapter which was focused on in the text vs. what I wrote ii. The literary devices (e.g., allusion, metaphor/simile, mood) vs. which ones I used iii. The tone and style of the event vs. the ones I used iv. The setting of the event and how it affects the reader vs. how my setting affects the reader v. Conflicts surrounding and within the event versus my conflicts vi. The use of dialogue vs. my use of dialogue vii. and any other devices the educator deems appropriate for grade level c. Students will determine what they learned about how authors use literary devices to express meaning through a think-pair-share where they make a bulleted list with at least the previous 7 literary elements (more may be added upon teacher determination). **4.** Students will now rewrite their own stories after having understood the events of the novel. They must adjust their literary devices and analysis to their rendition of the event(s). Their goal is to attempt to emulate the style of Chinua Achebe/Jack London in order to better understand the impact that even small details can have on the reader. a. After identifying the literary elements, students will make a new copy of their old draft and revise it to better match Chinua Achebe's/Jack London's writing style. b. Students may not use dialogue, symbols, etc. directly from the text, but rather they are allowed to be inspired by it. **5.** Teacher will grade these and choose 4-5 students' papers. Teacher will remove the names of the students who wrote these papers and they will be put into a Google Drive folder to share with students. The students will vote on one paper that they feel best targets the literary devices and which reveals implicit analysis of the book. **6.** Lesson exit: Students will answer the following questions: a. How did creatively writing before you read the event in the novel help you to better understand the novel? b. What were the similarities and differences between your writing and Achebe's/London's writing?

	c. What did you notice about the literary techniques that Achebe/London used after modifying your own? d. Which devices do you think most impacted the altering of the story when you rewrote it and why?

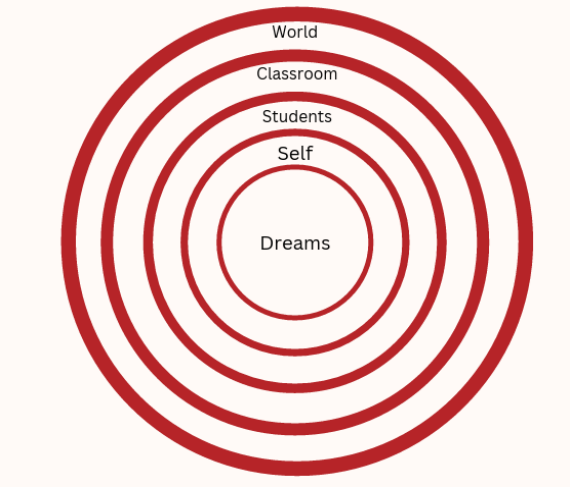
Differentiated Instruction	• Sentence stems such as:
	  • "The theme of my story is…" or "The lesson that the novel intends to teach us is…"
	• Paragraph frames for creative writing such as:
	  • My setting is:
	  • My character is/are:
	  • My conflict is:
	  • My dialogue is:
	• Allowing oral storytelling with peers or 1-1 with teacher before writing
	• Reduced word count/literary device options with same standard expectations. Perhaps gradually adding in more
	• Provide a vocabulary bank for words
	  • (e.g., exile, betrayal, tradition, allusion, irony, etc.
	• Allowing translation devices
	• Pairing high and low learners
	• Encouraging the use of personal culture in their narratives
	• Using another lens (e.g., male focused, female focused, time period focused)
	• Encouraging layering
	  • a symbol with multiple meanings
	• Extending
	  • Alternate endings
	  • Alternate beginnings
	  • inverting the story based on another lens
	  • RL.9:Identify and analyze how modern literature borrows from and transforms traditional literature (e.g., hero's journey, biblical allusion, trickster archetypes).
	  • Video, visual art, audio, multimedia enhancements
	
	• *Prompts may be modified to align to literary elements of the unit/anchor text.*
	• *Determine the most pressing literary devices to focus on–not all devices may be relevant in your class/grade level.*

Connection to critical writing, including next steps	• Next steps–analyzing literary devices across various forms of media. • Understanding the role these devices play in stories and how a literary analysis explores these devices and their effects on the story. • Comparing/contrasting the analyses of other pieces of literature to this one, going deeper into analysis

From the Inside Out:
Building Believable Characters Through Reflection, Imagery, and Narrative Elements
Created by: Sarah Arceneaux, Molly Jumonville, and Kara Rutherford

Text Type / Overview	Narrative: This narrative writing activity guides students through developing a believable character by exploring the character's past, present, and future using the Method of Currere. Through prompts, thematic images, and concentric circles, students reflect on their character's background, emotions, relationships, and growth to craft a well-structured and descriptive narrative. The activity supports Standard W.3 by emphasizing character development, dialogue, imagery, and logical event sequencing.
Grade Level(s)	6th-12th
ELA standard(s) addressed	Anchor Standard W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
Lesson Objectives	• Students will be able to create a believable character by including details about their personality, background, feelings, and how they change throughout a story. • Students will be able to include dialogue and detailed plot elements, as well as create imagery using descriptive language in their narratives.
Materials/ Resources	-A Game of Stories predetermined content-specific prompts. *Disclaimer: Some cards in this game are not appropriate for the classroom. The teacher should review the cards prior to the lesson. ***This lesson was adapted from writing exercises facilitated by the National Writing Project of Acadiana.*
Mini-Lesson Procedures	**Method of Currere-Past, Present, Future** **Example text to use for PD/modeling is *Finding Nemo***: Marlin ***Variations:*** You could use this activity with any text or topic that works for your class/students. **Directions:** 1. If needed, complete a plot diagram of the storyline.

	For PD/modeling: complete a quick plot of the storyline of *Finding Nemo* using the notes below: **The Beginning** * Marlin is a clownfish living in the Great Barrier Reef * He's overprotective of his only son, Nemo * Marlin lost his wife and other eggs in a barracuda attack **The Problem** * Nemo gets captured by a scuba diver * Marlin, despite his fears, sets out to find Nemo **Marlin's Adventure** 1. Meets Dory, a forgetful blue tang fish 2. Faces dangers like sharks, jellyfish, and whales 3. Travels across the ocean to Sydney, Australia **Marlin's Growth** * Learns to trust others and take risks * Becomes braver as he faces his fears * Realizes he needs to let Nemo be more independent **The Reunion** * Finds Nemo in a dentist's office aquarium * Works with Dory and Nemo to escape back to the ocean **The End** * Marlin returns home with Nemo * He's less overprotective and more relaxed as a parent 2. Focus on the main character of your text. Complete a writing prompt from the perspective of that character. *For PD/modeling:* focus on the character of Marlin and complete one of the writing prompts below. **Past:** Students respond to a stem from the character's POV. Stems from Esther Perel's, *Where Should I Begin*? • If I could whisper in the ear of my younger self, I would say… • A person who doesn't know they've impacted my life is… • When I was young, I would spend hours daydreaming about… • I owe a thank you to… 3. Teachers will review two juxtaposed images that relate thematically to the anchor text with the purpose of building context and understanding prior to reading. *For PD/modeling:* Marlin clinging to Nemo at the school drop-off line vs. Marlin proudly watched Nemo swim off to school.

	Present: Find and use images that connect thematically to each unit's anchor text or supplemental text. This helps build visual context for students as a starting point for their writing. 6th Grade: *Esperanza Rising* 7th Grade: *Restart* 8th Grade: *The Call of the Wild* English I: Photojournalism English II: *Things Fall Apart* English III: *The Great Gatsby* English IV: *Hamlet* Teachers will display guiding questions to help students build out details based on the images for their narratives. • Select an image that represents something related to your narrative's main character. • What emotions does this image evoke? • What aspect of your character's personality could this image represent? • Using this image, what sensory details (sight, sound, smell, feeling) stand out? • Write down 5-10 details or questions inspired by this image. 4. Teachers will guide students through a third narrative brainstorming activity using Concentric Circles that will help build out more details for their writing. **Future:** Students create a Concentric Circle (A Bullseye) for a character in the text to consider the future for the character.  A. Draw a circle in the center of the paper and draw four concentric circles around it. Write the word **Hopes** in the center circle. B. Each additional circle represents a different level.

	We recommend: 1) self 2) family/close friends 3) future 4) world *Note that these could be changed based on your personal experiences and/or preferences. C. Once each circle is labeled, write memories associated with character development throughout the text. Tip: Try to record 3-4 memories in each circle. C. Then, select one memory from each circle that you remember vividly and can write about. **Variations:** • If you would like to select a different topic, substitute the word "education" in Step A for a different topic/theme. Suggestions include "family," "goals," etc. • You might also choose to change the focus of the concentric circles. Instead of age ranges, you might select sub-topics. For example, if you choose to write about family, one circle might say "parents," another has the name of your siblings, and a third with the name of your pet. *For PD/modeling:* Using Marlin from *Finding Nemo* Center Circle-Hopes Circle Two-Self • Marlin hopes to be less overprotective • He wants to be brave enough to rescue Nemo • He wants to prove to himself that he can face challenges Circle Three-Family/Friends • Deep down, Marlin hopes Nemo will become more independent • He wants Nemo to grow up strong and confident • He wants to be the good father that he and his wife both dreamed of being Circle Four -Future • Marlin could inspire other fish with his adventure tale • He might help other parents balance protection and freedom • Marlin might be more open to new experiences Circle Five- World • He might help other parents balance protection and freedom • After his adventure, Marlin hopes for a world where it's safe to explore • He wants Nemo and other young fish to learn and grow without fear
Differentiated Instruction	Throughout each activity, students are given multiple prompts to choose from, as well as multiple images to use as visual prompts. In addition, students have the opportunity to discuss and share with partners or small groups. They can give one another feedback using the provided

	conversation stems from the Guidebooks curriculum, ensuring they have the opportunity to practice speaking, listening, and writing skills.
Connection to critical writing, including next steps	These narrative activities assist students to master the writing objective; students build out narrative details pertaining to character development as well as plot development and using descriptive language. The intention of each activity is to help students think deeper about the characters they will create in their narratives. After completing the three activities, students will have an abundance of details they can use to compose their final narrative task. Each unit supplies teachers and students with an optional narrative organization frame that helps students to organize elements of their narratives into a more concrete structure. They will use that frame to turn their brainstorming details into a draft of their complete narrative.