

# TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE

## LESSON PLAN

**Your name:** Sarah Dohrmann

**Genre(s) taught:** argumentative writing, poetry, & personal essay writing

**Grade(s) taught:** 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>

**Your students' special needs (if any):** I had a few students with IEPs, mixed in with general ed students

**Lesson Objective:** (Think of your main goal for the whole residency; now articulate this lesson objective and how it will achieve your overall residency goal. For example, if your overall goal in a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade fiction-writing residency is that each student writes a short story, this lesson objective may be that each student writes five internal and five external character traits of their story's protagonist, with detailed description. Remember to make your lesson objective measurable.)

*Each student will write a scene from their life that will later serve as the "supporting evidence" of something they believe in; then they'll write one sentence that simply states the belief that their scene exemplifies.*

**Common Core State Standards:** (Refer to the Anchor Standards for Writing at [www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W))

**All standards listed below are ELA standards for the 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> grade:**

### **Text Types and Purpose :**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.B

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

**Production and Distribution of Writing:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 9-10 here.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

**Range of Writing:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**Guiding Questions:** (i.e. What is a character? What is a characteristic? How do our inside thoughts show up on our outside? Etc.)

“When you write an essay like this, you look in the mirror and see who you are and what makes up your character.” –Howard White in his This I Believe essay, “The Power of Hello”

This is not so much a guiding question as it is a guidepost. How can you write from your higher self and not your lower self? When you write an essay about what you believe, you need to tap into the part of you that makes you “you,” not the reactionary or miserly you.

I suppose the guiding question would be: *What is your personal philosophy?*

## LESSON

**Ritual** (What is the opening activity you ask students to do each time you come; 5 mins):

Me: “Repeat after me: ‘I have a voice!’”

Students: “I have a voice!”

Me: “My voice is powerful!”

Students: “My voice is powerful!”

Me: “My voice can change the world!”

Students: “My voice can change the world!”

**Introduction/warm-up activity** (Brief activity that leads students into the topic or objective for the day, which will connect with the main activity; 5-10 mins):

[DAY BEFORE ACTIVITY: Read Assata Shakur’s poem “Affirmation” and write a poem about all the things you believe in—your ideas, your personal philosophies, the people in your life, your favorite activities, the joys in your life, etc; the poem can be found here: <http://thefeministwire.com/2013/05/affirmation-by-assata-shakur/>]

Review the 5 W’s and the H that is required for every scene: Who What When Where Why & How

Review symbols for close reading (attached).

Distribute a copy of Howard White’s essay for [thisibelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org), “The Power of Hello” (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93536198>);

Tell students you’ll want to discuss three questions after we’ve listened to a recording of Howard White read his essay.

Display three questions on the board:

1. What is Howard White's personal philosophy? What does he believe?
2. What happened in his life that caused him to have this belief?
3. How does his belief influence him now? Or: How does he use this belief now?

Play the recording of Howard White reading his essay while students follow along.

**Main activity** (20-25 mins):

1. Discuss the above-mentioned questions.
2. Display the three questions again, this time to discuss another essay:
3. Distribute a copy of another *This I Believe* essay written by a teen writer named "Emily" called "Beauty Is More Than Just Skin and Eyes" (<https://thisibelieve.org/essay/96502/>). Ask a female student to read it aloud, then ask a male student to read this aloud. (I don't know why I do this, only that I think it's important for a male student to enter into this voice.)
4. Discuss the three questions in relation to Emily's essay.
5. Ask students to get out a fresh piece of paper and a writing utensil, and to clear the space in front of them of bookbags, books, or other clutter.
6. Turn down lights.
7. Ask students to shut their eyes and place their hands palms-down on their laps or on the surface of their desks.
8. Guide them through a meditation asking students to recall an event in their life that sticks out for them—it could be seemingly small, or a big event, doesn't matter. Either way, the event must be something that your mind goes back to often. Remember exactly what happened. Who was there? What was the weather like? When did this take place? How old were you? What time of day was it? Did anyone say anything? What did they say, exactly? What feelings were going through your body at the time—were you sweating? shivering? Etc. etc – you're basically trying to get students to "see" the scene as it was at the time. (You are also giving them their 5 W's and their H.)
9. Ask students to open their eyes and begin recording this event without speaking. I did timed writing exercises so that students did feel like this went on too long. I would extend the timed exercises a lot, too, because as the residency went on, many students needed more time to write.
10. Ask students to reread their poems from yesterday. Is there any belief there that "matches" this scene they just wrote? If not, what is the simple belief you're describing here? Write this belief in no more than one sentence at the top or bottom of your page (i.e. "I believe in not giving up on people you love, no matter how hard it is"; "I believe that hard work pays off").

**Closing** (How did you ask students to reflect on their learning? 5 mins):

With limited share time, ask each student to read aloud only their one belief sentence (this is a really powerful reading, especially if done without calling on people, but having them just simply state their belief as they go around).

<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p><i>Chart paper with the three guiding questions.</i></p>	<p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p> <p><i>Personal philosophy</i></p> <p><i>5 W's and the H</i></p>
<p><b>Additional notes:</b></p> <p><i>See below.</i></p>	
<p><b>Did you use any multi-modal approaches? If so, what intelligences were you appealing to? (refer to page TK of the 2013-2014 handbook)</b></p> <p><i>Spatial (visualizing with the mind's eye), Verbal, Intrapersonal</i></p> <p><i>Also used audio</i></p>	

**Future work:**

- I had a worksheet for students that separated their essays into three parts, using the guiding questions we had for the reading of the essays (see attached).
- After worksheets are completed by hand, students are given computers and asked to type their essays, editing them as they go.
- I read the typed essays, then gave comments for revision.
- They emailed their revised essays to me for publication.
- I got release forms for parents to sign and then submitted the essays to [thisibelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org) for possible publication.