

2.16 My Story Is...

Student Objective

Students will reflect on, and draw from, their own past experiences to tell their stories.

Overview

Each student has a story to tell. Knowing the stories that exist in a classroom community helps build deep relational capacity. Poetry allows students to explore their culture and create their stories by providing an opportunity to communicate using metaphor, imagery, and symbolic language to describe experiences or pieces of who they are. Through poetry, students use language to find voice, self-representation, and connections to community, as well as build speaking and listening skills. In this writing activity, students will use poetry as the vehicle to tell their stories.

Materials/Set-Up

- Educator Resource:
 - 2.16a: Beach Ball Questions
- Student Handouts:
 - 2.16b: Pre-Writing: My Story Is...
 - 2.16c: My Story Is... Example
- Beach ball, with teacher-generated questions written on it

Instructional Steps

- Write the questions from the Beach Ball Questions resource, or questions of your own, on the beach ball.
- Toss the ball up in the air. Whoever catches it answers one of the questions. Repeat until all students have responded.
- Explain to students that their answers to the questions tell one small part of their story, and they will now be reflecting and drawing on their past experiences as they craft a poem called “My Story Is...”
- Guide students through pre-writing by using the Pre-Writing: My Story Is... handout to brainstorm and capture their thoughts.
- Direct students to create a poem that tells their story, using the My Story Is... Example handout or a poetry format of their own choosing, based on their personal style of presentation. It may be a running list of descriptive words, a song, or a format as shown in the example. The main purpose is to capture their story.
- Share your story with students, as well.
- Allow time for students to share their poems in small groups, and for volunteers to share with the whole class.

Extension

- To increase scaffolding, provide a poetry format that uses sentence frames or sentence starters. This is especially helpful for English language learners.

Beach Ball Questions

- Who is the most significant relative in your life?
- What is one of your favorite family traditions?
- What is your favorite childhood game?
- What breakfast food do you most vividly remember smelling when you were young and waking up in the morning?
- What is the best advice that you have ever received?
- What is the worst advice that you have ever received?
- What is your favorite “throwback” song?
- What are the names of your parents/guardians?
- What is one significant thing that you have lost?
- What is a phrase that you always heard when you were younger?
- Who is your best friend, and where did you meet?
- What is your favorite poem, novel, or short story?



Pre-Writing: My Story Is...

Brainstorm information about the stories in your life. This is your story, exclusive to you! Imagine your life story filling the pages of a blank book. Draw on a particular moment in time, or take a broad approach by looking at your entire life up to this point—there is no right or wrong way to do this. Have fun with it! After all, it is your story.

Use the following list to stimulate your thinking. Jot your notes here or on a blank piece of paper.

- Parents' and significant relatives' names
- Special foods or meals
- Family-specific games or activities
- Nostalgic songs
- Stories, novels, or poetry that you'll never forget
- Phrases that were repeated often
- The best things that you have been told
- The worst things that you have been told
- Ordinary household items that have a special meaning
- Family traditions (holidays, birthdays, weekends)
- Family traits
- Religious symbols, rituals, or experiences
- Heroes who your family admired
- Stories about specific family members who influenced you
- Accidents or traumatic experiences
- Losses
- Joys
- Location of memories, pictures, or mementos
- Places where you have lived or traveled
- Activities or hobbies

My Story Is... Example

“My Story Is...”

Used with permission of Mervin Jenkins, AVID Center Eastern Division Assistant Director.

My story is a southern breeze wearing pine-sap perfume.

My story is long, dark, dirt roads illuminated by a full moon.

My story is an innocent small town gone wild—open doors now locked shut.

Excuses in the form of ifs, ands, and buts.

My story is “Get up, get out, and make something happen.” Don’t be passenger, be captain!

My story is dreams coming true.

Built on the backs of freedom fighters, creative writers.

My story is one of many found deep inside us.

My story is being united, paying homage, giving hope, and keeping a promise.

My story is real—my story is honest.

My story is the one you’ve heard a thousand times. But not quite like this, this one’s mine.

All 40 years, all 480 months, all 2,087 weeks,

All 14,611 days, all 300,664 hours, all 21,039,840 minutes.

Now, use the **My Story Is...** format to tell your story.

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2.17

The Important Thing About Me

Student Objective

Students will learn about each other through interviewing and writing about one another.

Overview

This activity allows students to identify key aspects about one another and share those within the larger learning community. Students will interview each other to learn the attributes of each person. Student stories are shared as students develop communication and writing skills while promoting community within the classroom.

Materials/Set-Up

- Student Handouts:
 - 2.17a: The Important Thing About... Example
 - 2.17b: The Important Thing About...
- Photographs of each student and book binding materials

Instructional Steps

- Pass out The Important Thing About... Example handout to students and read it aloud. Ask them to pay special attention to the pattern.
- Ask students to think about other ways that the example could have been written. What types of attributes could describe a person? Be sure to have them focus not only on physical traits, but also on “invisible” attributes, such as sense of humor, compassion, loyalty, birthplace, and talents: the person may be an excellent writer, be good at math, play football, like spaghetti, etc. They will be interviewing each other about these attributes, and the purpose of an interview is to dig deeper and learn all that they can about that person.
- Have students develop their list of interview questions, using the note-taking format appropriate for their ability level (e.g., two-column or three-column format for elementary and Cornell format for secondary).
- Pair students up and allow time for each partner to interview the other by asking their questions and recording answers in their notes.
- Each student then uses The Important Thing About... handout to write about their partner, listing all of the details and determining which attribute they think is the most important about their partner. They should be able to justify their thinking. The page should be illustrated and include either a drawing of the person, a photograph that the student brings in, or a printed image taken from a digital camera in class.
- Students then introduce their partner to the class by sharing the page that they created.

- Additional options are available for this activity:
 - Pages can be bound together to create a book, *The Important Things About Our Class*, which could then become the class's family photo album. When new students join the class, they can learn about others in the class by reading it, as well as having their own page created to add to the book.
 - Pages can be posted on a wall display with the title, "The Important Things About Our Class."

Extension

- To increase scaffolding, for younger students, create a list of interview questions on chart paper that they can use when interviewing each other. For students who are not yet writing, utilize parents, guardians, and community volunteers or buddy students from a higher grade level to serve as scribes.
- To integrate technology, let students have fun taking digital photos of each other to print and use in the book. In addition, allow students to type and print their final copy, and then either add clip art or print and add original artwork to illustrate their page.



The Important Thing About... Example

The important thing about me is that I do not quit.

I'm like the sun.

I rise every morning.

I try to illuminate the way of others.

I am not a person immune to failure.

I'm a person who does not let failure define me.

And I try again.

But the most important thing about me is that I do not quit.

The Important Thing About...

Name: _____ Date: _____

The important thing about _____ is...

_____ is like...

_____ ...

_____ ...

_____ is not...

_____ is...

And _____ ...

But the most important thing about _____ is...