

Knowledge Organiser

Year 8 Summer 1: Memoir Unit

Section 1: Definition and History

- Literary form in which the author relates experiences from their own lives.
- Memoirs focus on the author's thoughts and feelings about events, what they have learned and how they integrated the experiences into their life.
- The term memoir comes from the early 15th century Anglo-French word *memorie* meaning "written record" or "something written to be kept in mind." It resembles the English word *memory*.
- This genre has been around since ancient times. One of the earliest memoirs being Commentaries on the Gallic Wars by Julius Caesar.
- Famous people are not the only ones to write memoirs, ordinary folk also have interesting stories to tell!

Section 2: Conventions/Methods/Techniques/Devices

- Use of tense
- Sensory language
- Specific or precise details
- Emotive language
- Dialogue
- Descriptions of people
- Descriptions of place

Notable memoirs:

- *My Journey to the Stars* by Astronaut Scott Kelly
- *Remember My Name: My Story from First Pitch to Game Changer* by Mo'ne Davis
- *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'round* by Kathlyn J. Kirkwood
- *El Deafo* by Cece Bell
- *This is Your Time* by Ruby Bridges
- *Becoming Kareem: Growing Up On and Off the Court* by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
- *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Wilson

Section 3: Elements of a memoir

An Emotional Journey – The memoirist goes through some type of emotional evolution over the course of their story, which helps readers identify with the author's struggles.

Obstacles – These are the things standing in the way of the author getting what they want or need. This builds tension within the story and keeps the reader engaged.

Point of View – Memoirs are always told in first person point of view, using I/ me/ my.

Theme – A memoir is tied together by a common topic, premise or lesson. A memoirist aims to capture all the key and critical moments that have a special significance.

Truth – The most defining characteristic of a memoir is that it needs to be a truthful story. Readers must trust that the author is writing the truth, even if these stories are sometimes exaggerated.

Voice – The author must choose their own voice for writing: the way they convey their thoughts, their word choices and patterns, and their storytelling approach.

Section 1: Definition and History

Task 1: Look/cover/write and check the definition and history of the term 'Memoir'

Section 2: Elements of a Memoir

Task 2: Learn/cover/write and check the six main elements that serve to communicate the story or the author's life.

Task 3: Give an example of each keyword, this can be your own example or use a memoir we have read in class.

Section 3: Conventions/ Methods/ Techniques/ Devices

Task 4: Learn/cover/write and check the techniques that all memoirs include.

Task 5: Write your own definition of these key terms, giving an example for each one. Your example can be your own or from a memoir you've read.

Extended Task 1: Look through the list of additional memoirs. Pick one of these and research either the author or find an extract online to read a section of the memoir. While you read, see if you can identify examples of the conventions or methods that are used in memoirs. Keep your annotations and show your teacher. If you read an extract that you think could be shared with your class, bring it to school and show your teacher!

Extended Task 2: Pick a celebrity or person that has some significance in your life. What do you think they would write in their memoir? See if you can come up with 3 significant moments from that person's life, as if you were helping them plan their own memoir. Next term you will write a short and personal text so see how successful you are in planning or coming up with ideas to talk about.