

NCTE Standards- 1,2,3, 4,5,6,7,8,9,10, 11, 12

(This lesson is taught in conjunction with a piece of literature quite effectively, especially a memoir. It can stand alone with a few tweaks, as well. This works really well with The Things They Carried.)

Anticipatory Set- Lecture based introduction (with notes) to memoir. The students will watch a clip of Ellen Kerry Davis as she speaks about her early childhood.

Objectives and purpose- The student will juxtapose testimony and memoir, and either write their own memoir, or video the testimony of an older person about a definitive moment in his/her life.

Modeling- If students are not familiar with the memoir, give them the definition and examples. The definition I typically use is from The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, Third Edition and works rather well.

Memoir- A narrative, nonfiction account typically written by an individual that depicts things, persons, or events he or she has known or experienced. Memoirs combine elements of autobiography and biography but are nonetheless distinguishable from both of these genres in scope and focus. Unlike autobiographies and biographies, both of which typically cover an individual's life (at least up to the point of writing), memoirs often cover a much shorter or longer timespan, addressing a particularly important or memorable period in the writer's life or extending back into the past, for instance by recounting family history. Memoirs further differ from autobiographies, which concentrate on the writer's unfolding life and character, in their degree of outward focus and from biographies, which are typically the product of extensive research, in the focus on subjective, personal recollection. Some novels purport to be or to include the memoirs of characters or other fictional persons whose writing have been discovered, recorded or otherwise preserved.

Examples:

The Pianist

Angela's Ashes

Memoirs of a Geisha

Watch Chapters 1 through 3 of Ellen Kerry Davis' testimony and discuss her early life, from the time she begins to tell her story, until she talks about fighting children to protect her younger siblings.

Check for Understanding- Explain memoir as it relates to Ellen Kerry Davis or various pieces of literature. Students should then discuss the implications of how memory works

and perhaps why she has forgotten the name of her father's friend, whilst she still remembers "detesting" hand-me-down clothes. What does this say about her memories?

Also, students should discuss the implications of racism and prejudice as presented by Ms. Davis. How does she deal with these things? What type of effect does it seem to have on her as an adult?

Independent Practice- Students should begin writing their memoir, or find a relative or family member that is willing to be interviewed for the class and help them write a memoir. Students should begin to piece these together and revise/edit for clarity. (This may take up to two weeks).