

Creative Writing – Less is More: Six-Word Memoirs

The Big Question(s): How can less writing have a bigger impact?

Subject: English 9 (ages 14 and 15)

Time: 75 minutes

Date: Friday, March 15

Lesson Number: 3

Objectives:	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ discuss the elements of a story and how they apply to the six-word short story “for sale: baby shoes, never worn” ❖ practice writing six-word memoirs by summarizing famous stories/ fairytales in six words ❖ write their own six-word memoirs and participate in a Gallery Walk in which they will view and comment on each other’s memoirs 	
PLOs:	<p>C1 write meaningful personal texts that explore ideas and information to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ experiment ❖ express self ❖ make connections ❖ reflect and respond ❖ remember and recall <p>C3 write effective imaginative texts to explore ideas and information to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ make connections and develop insights ❖ explore literary forms and techniques ❖ experiment with language and style ❖ engage and entertain 	
Rationale	<p>Students often think that the key to writing is wordiness – that better writing means more writing and bigger words. This lesson will show them to pay closer attention to their writing: in a six-word memoir, every word counts.</p>	
Materials:	<p>laptop and projector, PowerPoint, writing prompts, six-word memoir book trailer</p>	
Hook and Introduction:	<p>Attendance, introductions, and agenda. Students get their portfolios and name plates and sit down.</p> <p>Writing prompt. Teacher displays a prompt on the screen and students have about 10 minutes to write on the prompt. This is to help them get into the proper mindset for creative writing class and make the mental shift from whatever they were doing last class. It is also a way for them to have more material to add to their portfolios – they will eventually be expected to rework and workshop one of these writing prompt stories. Note: writing prompt is from http://writingprompts.tumblr.com/</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
Development:	<p>Show students the sentence that is often attributed to Hemingway and is said to be the shortest short story: “<i>For sale: baby shoes, never worn.</i>”</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>

- ❖ Ask students how this is a short story. Have them quietly and independently break down the elements of the story, listing the characters, the setting and potential information about the form, the beginning/middle/end. What does this sentence tell us? What is the longer, bigger story/stories implied in these six words?
- ❖ make sure they understand to “read between the lines”: the story is in the words, but also behind them as well (make inferences) – for example, when asking them about the plot, the beginning/middle/end can’t be found by simply dividing the sentence into three parts. You have to think about what the sentence itself is *implying*
- ❖ make sure students explain why they list the things they do (how do you know the characters are the baby and probably its parents? What do you think happened to the baby? Why do you think that?)
- ❖ Emphasize that the power of this sentence is in its brevity – it gives you just enough information to make you want more and try to look for more. It engages you.

Tell students that, today, they’ll write their own six-word memoirs.

- ❖ explain the six-word memoir and the mindset behind it: sometimes, as Hemingway shows, less is more.
- ❖ A restriction of very few words forces you to think about *every* word you’ll use. Is it necessary? Is it accurate? Is there a better word to put there?

Watch Six-Word Memoir book preview: <http://vimeo.com/335019>

Before writing our own memoirs, we’ll practice by writing six-word summaries of famous stories.

- ❖ Ask students to brainstorm a list of famous stories/ fairytales/ fables that most/all of us would know
- ❖ Cinderella, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, etc.
- ❖ Write all these stories on the board and tell students to pick one (or a different one if they think of one) and write a six-word summary of it. Don’t tell us which story it is; we’ll try to guess based on your six-word summary
- ❖ Give students time to write their summaries independently and quietly, then have some volunteers share with the class

Students write their own six-word memoirs. If you had to sum up your life into one six-word sentence, what would that sentence be?

15 minutes

