1. Focus

Explain Using Analysis and Reflection on Past Events

Say: When I write a memoir, I write about specific times, places, and moments that were important to me. To add voice, I want to describe my thoughts and feelings from those times and places. I also want to share insights that I’ve gained by reflecting on these experiences as I look back on them. To add this type of perspective to my memoir, I use language that pulls back from the experience I’m describing. While I describe an event from the past, I also insert something I observe from the present day. I use language that indicates to my readers that I am viewing the events from some distance, with wiser eyes. Today we’re going to look at examples of a writer inserting analysis and reflection in a memoir. We will also discuss how you might voice these kinds of reflective thoughts in your own memoirs.

Model How Writers Use Analysis and Reflection

Display the modeling text on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

Modeling Text

1. Mamá bought us cold glasses of cola-flavored soda pop with vanilla ice cream floating on top. To this day, more than seventy years later, an ice cream soda is like a Fountain of Youth for me, and always hits the spot.

2. But, no matter how much Mamá tried to show us a good time and win our love, she was never that close to Nicky and me. Looking back, I realize it must have been devastating for a young woman to leave her children; no wonder Mamá was always a little distant.

Read example 1. Say: I see that the writer contrasts a detailed memory with a statement that offers perspective about the moment he has described. The words to this day, seventy years later tell me the writer is pulling out of the past to tell me what that memory has meant to him ever since. I can see how stepping out of the story to give perspective from the present day helps make this memoir writer’s voice more interesting.

Read example 2. Say: In the second passage, the writer remembers his mother with a sense of loss. The words looking back signal to me that the writer is introducing his analysis of his mother’s feelings and actions from long ago, now that he can view his childhood with wiser eyes. If the writer had only described the events with the knowledge he had when he was young, we would not have read this important observation about his mother. Again, I see how including this perspective over time strengthens the voice in a memoir.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Analysis and Reflection on Past Events

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that students should think of this sentence as a memory that would be in a memoir that someone wrote many years after the event.

On most days, I ate lunch in the school cafeteria with my friends.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to add voice to this sentence by inserting reflective analysis. Invite students to make up details and add sentences as necessary to strengthen the author’s voice. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be prepared to explain how they added voice by inserting reflective analysis.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite them to read their sentences aloud and explain what they added to insert analysis into the practice text. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own memoirs. Use some or all of the following questions to encourage discussion of inserting reflective analysis in a memoir:

- Which words did you add to give your reader a clue that you were pulling back or offering perspective on the memory described in the practice text?
- Do you think you might want to add analysis to your own memoir? Why or why not?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that writers can make their voice more interesting by including analysis of past events in their memoirs. As you write your memoir, remember to strengthen your voice by adding sentences that include a thoughtful analysis of the experience you describe.

Ask students to identify a section of their memoirs in which they can strengthen the writer’s voice by adding reflective analysis of past events. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their memoirs in which they improved the writer’s voice by adding reflections on past events.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students work with partners or during independent writing time, work one on one with beginning ELs. Model generating oral sentences about the practice text using the sentence frame:

I liked ______.

Write your sentences on chart paper. Invite students to read them with you. Then ask students to generate additional sentences of their own, using the same sentence frame to talk about sharing lunches with friends at school.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice. Supply the following sentence frames to help them add reflections about the practice sentence:

Looking back ______.
Later, I learned ______.
Now I know ______.

All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: describe/describir; memory/la memoria; perspective/la perspectiva.