Organize Ideas for a Memoir

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn how to use a planning chart to organize ideas for drafting a memoir.
• Practice organizing their own ideas for a memoir on the planning chart.
• Discuss how to apply the strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Memoir Planning Chart (BLM 4)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the planning chart onto chart paper. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain Organizing Ideas for a Memoir

Say: We’ve brainstormed our memoir topics, narrowed our focus to select the best topic, and now we need to organize our ideas before we start writing. One way we can do this is to use a planning chart that helps us organize the times and events in the period of our life that we are writing about. Today I’m going to show you how to use a planning chart to help you organize your ideas for a memoir.

Model Organizing Your Ideas

Display a Memoir Planning chart like the one below on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Add information to the chart as you think aloud about organizing your ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstances:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My first semester away from home at college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Span:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning when:</strong> The September of my freshman year when I arrived at college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ending when:</strong> The end of that first semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Events:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Getting settled in my dorm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Meeting my new roommate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Going to classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meeting people from all over the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Reflection on the Events:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My experiences gave me a different view of the world that has influenced how I live my life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Memoir Planning Chart (BLM 4)

About “Circumstances.” Say: One of the events in my life that I brainstormed using a time line was when I went away to college. This time in my life was very exciting for me and steered me on a new direction in my life. Model writing the circumstances on the chart.

About “Time Span.” Say: A memoir differs from a personal narrative in that it covers a span of time that includes several events. For my memoir, the time span is that first semester of my freshman year when I left home and started college. Model writing the time span on the chart.

About “Related Events.” Say: This was a very exciting time for me, and one that had an effect on my future. The first exciting moment was when my parents drove me to the town where I would be living and helped me move into my
dorm. For the first time in my life, I would be on my own with no family around me. I met my new roommate, who was from the other side of the country and from a large city. Our lifestyles were very different. I was amazed at all the choices for classes I could study. One subject I chose to study was anthropology. I found that students in my classes came from not only all over the United States, but from all over the world.

About “General Reflection.” Say: Studying different subjects and meeting new people left an impression on me, a girl from a small Midwestern town. Because of this, I came to have a different view of the world, which has influenced how I live my life.

2. Rehearse

Practice Organizing Your Ideas

Invite students to use the Memoir Planning chart to organize their ideas for the memoir topic that they chose during the narrowing the focus lesson.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the ideas they organized on the chart. Invite students to tell why this time in their life is important.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture of an important time in their lives. Ask them to tell you why this time is important, using words and/or gestures. Write key words on self-stick notes and place them on students’ pictures. Help students form sentences using the key words.

Intermediate and Advanced

Encourage ELs to use the following sentence frames to help them talk about their memoir:

The time frame for my memoir is ______.
One important/exciting event was ______.
This time in my life was important because ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: circumstances/las circunstancias.