Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn that writers share thoughts and feelings as they relate factual events or evidence in a memoir.
• Practice using this strategy in memoir writing.
• Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: “We Shall Not Be Moved” from The 1960s: Times of Change
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain Sharing Thoughts and Feelings Along with Factual Events or Evidence

Say: When I write a memoir, I tell a story about how I remember an important experience in my life and why it is important to me. I include factual events and evidence to help describe the time, place, and characters in my story. I also add my thoughts and feelings. Adding my thoughts and feelings to the facts helps readers understand their special relevance to my story and allows them to hear my unique voice. Today I’m going to discuss an example of this narrative strategy, so that you can learn to use it in your own memoirs.

Model How Writers Share Thoughts and Feelings Along with Factual Events or Evidence

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read the text aloud and ask students to listen for a place where the author shares her thoughts and feelings about the factual evidence she presents.

Grandpa David Greenspan was living with my mother and father in the Bronx, a section of New York City, when I was born in 1944. A homespun philosopher and “peacenik,” he had left his Polish homeland as a young man in 1910 rather than fight in the army. Though steeped in Jewish tradition and culture, with an extensive library of religious books, he did not practice any religion. A tailor by trade, he dressed impeccably. To me, a young girl, he looked regal.

Modeling Text

Say: In this passage the writer tells me important factual information about her grandfather, a significant character in her story. I like the way she saves her personal point of view for the end of the paragraph with the closing sentence, “To me, a young girl, he looked regal.” These words help to establish the writer’s voice and help me understand the writer’s attitude toward this member of her household. It doesn’t matter that he was an ordinary man who lived with her parents and was not religious; to the writer, he appears regal, like a king. He is someone of great importance and is worthy of respect. By adding her feelings to the facts she presents, the writer shows the importance of her grandfather in her life. The use of thoughts and feelings alongside facts helps me connect to the writer’s voice and personality, which is particularly important in a memoir.
2. Rehearse

Practice Adding Thoughts and Feelings to Factual Evidence

Ask students to write two factual sentences about a person who has been a positive influence in their lives. Then ask students to add one sentence describing their feelings about that person. Remind students that the first two sentences should contain factual events or evidence only. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain how the third sentence relates to the first two.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite them to read aloud their sentences and explain how the thoughts and feelings relate to factual evidence presented in their sentences. Record sample students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own memoirs.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned about a narrative strategy used by writers to share thoughts and feelings alongside factual events or evidence in a memoir. A writer does this to help the audience understand the writer’s voice and to show the relevance of the factual events to the writer’s story. As you write your own memoir, you can use this strategy to help your readers understand your memories and insights.

Ask students to identify a section of their memoir that they can improve by adding thoughts and emotions along with facts. 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 used explanations of thoughts and emotions along with facts to help establish their unique perspective.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning and Intermediate

While other students work with partners or during independent writing time, work one on one with beginning ELs. Model generating oral sentences about an important person in your life by using the following sentence frames:

He is ______.  She is ______.

Record 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 frames.

Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: strategy/la estrategia; voice/la voz.