



*English Language Arts*  
**UNIT FRAME MODEL**

*Voice and Personal Narratives*

**I. INSTRUCTIONAL CONDITIONS**

**A. Course Information**

1. This unit plan was created for a traditional, yearlong eighth grade language arts classroom. It can be adapted to a remedial or advanced (“honors”) setting or other grade levels by changing reading samples to align with the classroom level and atmosphere.
2. The theme for the first semester has been identity. The “Personal Narratives” unit takes place after a literature study on S.E. Hinton’s novel *The Outsiders* and coincides with our school’s first semester “focus on grammar.” “Personal Narratives” kicks off the rest of our year working on the six traits of writing (one trait at a time), this time placing an emphasis on developing voice.
3. The class meets five days per week for 55 minutes each day.
4. The unit will last for three weeks.

**B. Student Information**

1. **General Class Population:** This course is designed for the average eighth grade student (13–14 years of age) who has completed and passed the year-long seventh grade language arts curriculum. Most students are fluent English speakers and are on-track with the current class material.
2. **Special Needs Population:** Three students in the class have special needs and therefore require certain accommodations and modifications.
  - a. Student “C” has a normal IQ and no IEP, but he does have a 504 Plan due to a rare birth defect/disorder that affects his ectodermal structures. According to his 504 Plan he is allowed to leave the room at any time necessary to refill his water bottle from the cold dispenser in the teachers’ lounge. I abide by his 504 Plan at all times. Also, although he tested proficient on the AZELLA and has passed the two-year monitoring period, he continues to grapple with remembering grade-appropriate and technical vocabulary in English. He often needs to “talk it out” (i.e. say the sounds or describe the word he is trying to think of to a peer or teacher) or reference a Spanish-English dictionary. I allow these informal accommodations at all times, including assessments.
  - b. Student “E” has an average IQ but has an IEP for stuttering and receives Speech Therapy services quarterly. Her stutter is under control; I have noticed it only once so far when she became flustered during a class discussion. Her IEP also includes socio-emotional goals

for interpersonal behavior. Student “E” does not relate well with her peers, and at times appears ostracized by them. I follow her IEP at all times and place her in groups with tolerant peers to positively encourage her social relationships. For “extemporaneous” speaking situations I notify her in advance of topics to diminish stress.

- c. Student “L” has a diminished IQ (she scored two points above the mild mental retardation cut-off) and an IEP that requires her to only “maintain” her skills and abilities. She also has a 504 plan for physical disability (missing digits on right hand). I abide by her IEP and 504 Plan at all times and work with her one-on-one when I can. The special education teacher (or a paraprofessional) also comes to help her in the classroom twice a week. She receives simplified texts for classroom reading and her assessments are reviewed and modified by the special education department. She also uses adaptive technology for writing (a laptop with a program that reads her writing back to her). I let her showcase her strengths in front of the class whenever able; for example, she is excellent at identifying certain parts of speech so I call on her often for this.

## II. TOPIC

### A. Voice in Reading, Writing, and Sharing Personal Narratives

## III. UNIT OUTCOMES

### A. Student-Friendly Objectives

1. As a result of this unit, the student will be able to:
  - a. Read and classify a personal narrative.
  - b. Evaluate and demonstrate writing techniques with good voice that enhance a narrative’s effectiveness.
  - c. Proceed through all steps of Kathy King Dickman’s (KKD) Writer’s Workshop model (brainstorming, pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) with the assistance of peers and technology.
  - d. Share their personal narratives to the class.

### B. Key Terms

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Narrative             | 9. Event sequence       |
| 2. Personal narratives   | 10. Dialogue            |
| 3. Six traits of writing | 11. Pacing              |
| 4. Voice                 | 12. Reflection          |
| 5. Context               | 13. Transition words    |
| 6. Point of view         | 14. Descriptive details |
| 7. Narrator              | 15. Sensory language    |
| 8. Characters            |                         |

**IV. ALIGNMENT (COMMON CORE STANDARDS)**

<http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/elastandards/6-8ela>

**A. Speaking and Listening Standards, Grade 8****1. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 8 Language standards 1 and 3 on page 52 for specific expectations.)

**B. Writing Standards, Grade 8****1. Text Type and Purposes**

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

**2. Range of Writing**

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## 3. Production and Distribution of Writing

4.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
5.	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 8 on page 52.)
6.	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

## V. ESSENTIAL QUESTION

A. What are personal narratives and what purpose do they serve?

## VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

A. **Project Prompt:** Write your own 500+ word personal narrative to share with the class. Take what we have learned these past few weeks about how good voice makes an effective narrative in order to finely craft your story: context and point of view, narrative techniques, language (both concrete and figurative), reflective conclusion, etc. Though you must turn in a written work to receive credit for the assignment, you have an opportunity to choose the format of your narrative and how you share your story in our class Feather Circle on the last two days:

1. Prose narrative
2. Narrative poem
3. Write and record a song (turn in the lyrics)
4. Video or multimedia presentation (turn in the transcript)
5. Storyboarding
6. Other, teacher-approved medium (approval deadline TBA)

B. **Feather Circle Presentation:** Students will share their personal narrative project in a class Feather Circle on the final two days of the unit to reinforce the concept of sharing our stories and the community it builds.

C. **Interactive Notebook and Reflective Writing:** Throughout the unit, students will keep an interactive notebook of responses, quick writes, drafts, notes, and a final three-paragraph reflection (what they learned about personal narratives, what they

learned about themselves and their classmates, and their critique of the unit) to turn in for a journal check grade.

- D. **Enrichment:** Students' personal narratives will be published in a class book and/or on the class website.

## VII. COHERENCE

- A. As part of Kathy King Dickman's Writer's Workshop, students will be exposed to personal narratives daily and doing quick writes directly afterward. Not only will this have them writing routinely over time, but the texts and excerpts will be excellent examples of their genre and as a class we will pause during reading to discuss technique, examples of good voice, reader reactions, predictions, etc. (Directed Reading and Thinking Activities). This way students will become familiar with personal narratives and what makes them effective and engaging.
1. On Friday of Week I (after a week's worth of exposure to personal narratives), students will watch Phil Kaye's TEDxMiddlebury video "Why We Share Stories" and read a level-appropriate informational text on the neuroscience of sharing stories and participate in an experiment that demonstrates the findings of the article in order to help answer the humanistic aspect of the unit's essential question.
  2. On Monday of Week II, students will complete pre-writing activities to channel their quick writes into possible personal narrative topics (these are individualized). Week II will focus on drafting personal narratives and exploring resources for creating multimedia culminating projects (i.e. Animoto, Garage Band, etc.)
  3. Week III will be editing/revising and publishing. Students will proceed through all steps of the Writer's Workshop model with the assistance of peers and technology in order to produce, revise, and publish writing throughout the unit.
  4. On the last two days of the unit, students will participate in a Feather Circle in order to present their personal narratives.
- B. Students will keep Interactive Notebooks during the unit to track their quick writes, drafts, responses and notes from mini-lessons on narrative techniques and voice (these will take place Weeks I and II) in order to be able to evaluate and apply effective writing techniques and voice in their personal narratives. Also, after the final Feather Circle Presentation, students will be writing a final reflection on the unit in their notebooks.

**VIII. CULMINATING ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT**  
**A. PROJECT PROMPT RUBRIC**

					SCORE
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VOICE</b></p> <p>The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.</p>					<p>The writer seems indifferent to the topic and the content. The writing lacks purpose and audience engagement.</p>
					/6
					x5 = _____
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>IDEAS</b></p> <p>This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</p>					<p>As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details.</p>
					/6
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ORGANIZATION</b></p> <p>The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.</p>					<p>The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure.</p>
					/6
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WORD CHOICE</b></p> <p>Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.</p>					<p>The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.</p>
					/6
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SENTENCE FLUENCY</b></p> <p>The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.</p>					<p>The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading</p>
					/6
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONVENTIONS</b></p> <p>The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.</p>					<p>Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.</p>
					/6
					<b>TOTAL</b>
					/60

## IX. DIFFERENTIATION

### A. Types of Texts

1. Narrative excerpts will vary greatly in terms of topic and content, style, and level (i.e. prose, poetry, picture books, personal narrative video, etc.) in the hopes of reaching students of all levels and interests. Readings will be completed through read-aloud (i.e. as a whole class, in pairs, etc.) and Directed Reading and Thinking Activities.
2. Following the KKD Writer's Workshop, the daily quick writes are free writes—there is no prompt aside from the text excerpt itself. Students are able to respond in any way they wish and at whatever level they are at.

### B. Culminating Activities

1. **Project Prompt and Feather Circle Presentation:** Students have multiple options to choose from in terms of the format of their project to meet different needs. For example, Student “E” could choose to do the video, that way her Feather Circle presentation would be pre-recorded and edited (no stuttering). Although a written component is required, students will have the ability to peer edit twice (the first time will be teacher-assigned peers and the second time will be student-choice) and have a conference with the teacher before the written portion is due. Time will be scheduled for Student “L” to be able to use her assistive technology with the Special Education department during drafting time.
2. **Interactive Notebooks:** These notebooks are individual to the student and are therefore done at their own level and graded for completion (not necessarily content).