

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for enrolling in our narrative and memoir in-service which begins in a few weeks. We know you'll enjoy this class, and that you'll leave with many new ideas to build or improve units/lessons on narrative writing you create for your students.

As part of this class, you will participate in a writer's workshop, producing a short memoir that you can share with your own students. You will not only have a final draft to share, but you will also be able to share all the steps of your process. Author Donald M. Murray believed that 85% of the writing process should be dedicated to the pre-writing step. I believe that much of this 85% can be spent just thinking about the topic before you ever put a pencil to paper; I personally do most of my "pre thinking" about writing topics while driving from place to place. For that reason, I am alerting you two weeks before class begins what the topic of your short memoir will be. You do not need to do any writing about this topic. You just need to think about the possibilities.

Topic: You will be writing about a teacher from your past who made a difference in your life. Ask yourself these questions, as I believe that one of them might provide the seed that will fuel your memoir: "What teacher from your past would be most proud of the things you do in your own classroom?" "What teacher from your past influenced you to become a teacher?" "What teacher from your past made learning the most enjoyable and valuable?" "What valuable lessons did you learn from a teacher from your past?"

On the first night of our class, you will have an opportunity to speak to others about the teacher you choose to write about. Speaking stories out loud is also an important part of the 85% that should be pre-writing. Please do not come to class with anything written. There will be plenty of time for that.

For now, think about the questions above. And be prepared to come and talk about what you've been thinking about.

We're looking forward to the first night of class in a few weeks.

--Corbett & Dena Harrison, Northern Nevada Writing Project