

YOUNG STORYTELLERS®

MIDDLE SCHOOL STORIES

Mentor Handbook
2023-24

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Our Mission

Young Storytellers equips young people to be the driving force of their own narratives. We're passionate about bringing people together and creating stories to raise the voices of those who don't often get heard.

We believe that when a young person understands the power of their own story—made of their unique background, culture, race, gender, sexuality, immigration status, geographic location, and economic status—it creates a more empathetic and equitable future for everyone.

We raise voices, one story at a time.

We Value:

Belonging

We celebrate originality and individuality. Our community is made better when we can speak fully from our unique perspectives and identities.

Connection

People are at the center of everything we do. Genuine connection requires empathy, sensitivity, and honesty.

Exploration

Being vulnerable and inventive requires a supportive environment. We foster spaces where we can explore ourselves, the communities in which we live, and how we can impact the world.

Play

Play with purpose allows us to investigate the world with wonder. This is how we open the road to creativity.

Equity

Unique identities, backgrounds, and perspectives make the world a better place. We fight against the racism, prejudice, and bias that exist in our systems and cultures so that all people are treated with respect and dignity.

Why We Do This Work

The fundamental intention behind Young Storytellers isn't to create the next generation of writers, but rather to develop creative learning behaviors in young people through the art of storytelling.

In middle school, students work in small groups with a mentor to create stories about the times they have been misunderstood. Actors then perform those pieces. The group setting allows students to discuss personal topics in an intimate environment and work collaboratively with their group. Mentors show up for them consistently and encourage the expression of their creative voice. Throughout the program, mentors give students individualized attention and room to try new things, make mistakes, work through challenges, and make discoveries. We are committed to setting our students up for success, especially by tailoring the experience to their learning needs. The mentor finds out what works and doesn't work for their writers and interacts with them in the way they learn best: visually, auditorily, kinesthetically, or some combination of all three. We hold our middle- and high-school programs in public classrooms in order to reach more students and have a larger impact on them.

The world that young people operate in today is more complex, economically competitive, and interconnected than at any other time in human history. To ensure that students are fully prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century, we aim to develop their ability to recognize and manage emotions, build relationships, solve interpersonal problems, and make effective and ethical decisions. We want our students to realize the impact that their thoughts, feelings, and words can have. This is at the core of all of our programs.

Program Overview

This is a ten-session teacher-led program where middle-school students create stories about times they've felt misunderstood. Through writing exercises, gameplay, mentorship, and group sharing, each student creates their own personal story. During portions of each session, students are divided into small groups where they are supported by mentors who coach them through the writing process and encourage sharing within the group. The program culminates in a live show where actors perform each student's written piece.

Program Outcomes for Students

Students in the Middle School program will improve their ability to:

- Reflect on personal experiences and stories.
- Understand and employ key elements of narrative storytelling.
- Understand multiple perspectives.
- Identify personal strengths, interests, and beliefs.

Weekly Breakdown

Session One: Welcome, Young Storytellers!

The Teacher will... talk about the program, explain and model a game called Hot Seat, and go over past student examples.

You will... answer student questions about yourself, ask students about themselves, and lead the students in creating group agreements.

Your writers will... get to know you by asking (classroom-appropriate) questions and brainstorm agreements that will make them comfortable sharing and writing in a group.

Session Two: Brainstorm Your P.O.V.

The Teacher will... review last week's session, explain and model a writing prompt called Four Square, and explain how they can use these activities to reflect on what's important to them and how they view themselves.

You will... lead the group in a game called, "I Love" popcorn, guide the students in the creation of their Four Square sheet, and guide them in their reflection.

Your writers will... list things they love with the group, identify things that are personally significant, and reflect on how they view themselves in the form of statements that are true about themselves.

Session Three: Brainstorm Prompts

The Teacher will... review last week's activities, lead a Story Share, and model brainstorming potential prompts.

You will... share a short story about a time you were misunderstood and assist the students in brainstorming and choosing their writing prompt for their narrative.

Your writers will... brainstorm personal stories where they have been misunderstood, and identify the topic that they will write about for their personal narratives.

Session Four: Story Spines

The Teacher will... introduce and model the “story spine” (narrative structure outline).

You will... lead students in the game “A Wind Blows” and assist the students in completing the story spine for their narrative.

Your writers will... outline their narrative by completing a story spine.

Session Five: Writing Your Draft

The Teacher will... have the students vote on their Big Show audience, review the story spine format, and discuss how to begin expanding their story spine into the first draft of a narrative.

You will... guide the students in drafting the first part of their story spine into the beginning of their narrative.

Your writers will... draft the beginning of their narrative using their story spine as a guide.

Session Six: Writing From Your P.O.V.

The Teacher will... explain and model a game called Emoji Quick-Write and explain how to incorporate feelings, phrases, and actions into our draft.

You will... help your group complete the Emoji Quick Write, lead a group discussion about the student example “Introvert,” and guide the students in turning the rest of their story spine into the middle and end of their narrative.

Your writers will... complete the Emoji Quick Write, discuss the example, and finish the first draft of their narratives.

Session Seven: Table Reads

The Teacher will... have students reflect on their intention when writing their narrative, introduce the sharing process, and teach how to give warm and cool feedback.

You will... read your group's first draft narratives out loud for the group and facilitate the feedback process.

Your writers will... share some information about their narrative, why they're writing it, and which sections they want feedback on. The writer whose story is being read will write down feedback while the other students will each give one piece of warm and cool feedback.

Session Eight: Revise

The Teacher will... explain the revision process and discuss the plan for the Big Show with the group.

You will... guide writers through reflecting on the feedback they received during the prior session and assist writers as they make final revisions.

Your writers will... look at the feedback from the prior session and make revisions based on how they want to tell their story.

Session Nine: The Big Show!

The Teacher will... introduce everyone, go through the run of show, connect the writers to the actors performing their pieces, and MC the Big Show.

You will... help your writers practice their red carpet walk and introductions, introduce your group, and watch the actors bring the student narratives to life.

Your writers will... connect with the actor reading their story, watch their words acted out, and feel celebrated for their accomplishment.

Session Ten: The Farewell

The Teacher will... lead the whole class in a game, lead a class discussion about the Big Show and Program, and facilitate student surveys.

You will... facilitate a group discussion on the Big Show and Program and connect with your group one last time.

Your writers will... reflect on their Young Storytellers experience, give feedback via survey, and say goodbye.

Mentor Commitment

- Attend a mentor training & complete an online background check.
- Mentor a group of 4-6 writers (students in middle school public classrooms).
- Attend all sessions, which, except for the Big Show, are between 50 and 90 minutes long, held once a week at a local middle school.
 - All will attend the Big Show and bring their writers an appreciation card.
 - In Session Nine, we invite actors to act in the Big Show, where they perform a staged reading of every student's work.
- Lead group conversations and games, and assist writers with writing prompts.
- Help type up your group's narratives (as needed).
- Act as a cheerleader and coach for your writer. Ask open-ended questions and teach structure. All ideas will come from the writers.

Mentor Agreements

As a Young Storytellers Mentor, **I commit to upholding the Young Storytellers values of belonging, connection, exploration, play, and equity** so that we can continue raising student voices, one story at a time.

I commit to doing my best to respond to communication from a Head Mentor, teacher, or any Young Storytellers staff within 48 hours, knowing that some requests can be time-sensitive. **If a schedule conflict arises or if I am running late, I will communicate with as much notice as possible.** I acknowledge that my communication and attendance directly impact the student's experience.

I understand that conflicts can arise with classrooms and program communication. YS staff, school staff, and volunteers do their best to bring our programs to students. **If misunderstandings/challenges arise, I will approach these conversations and moments with kindness, empathy, and patience** while assuming good intentions on behalf of all parties.

I commit to upholding the YS Worldview with understanding and intention so that we can continue creating a more empathetic, equitable, and accessible space for our students, volunteers, and all our communities.

Behavior Management

(The Young Storytellers Way)

We believe that every behavior exhibits a need.

- For example:
 - Someone who is talking a lot may feel the need to feel heard and seen.
 - Someone who is withdrawn or quiet may need more trust in the group or might be feeling overstimulated and need a chance to ground.
 - A person who is distracted may need an opportunity to take in their surroundings when they spend most of their day focusing on and thinking about school.
 - Someone moving around a lot or talking loudly might need to expend some of their energy.
- It is not our role to identify or address every need, but this framework and acknowledgment allows us to **approach with empathy** when there is behavior that needs to be addressed.

Address behavior by establishing trust and care.

- If you feel comfortable, **we recommend redirecting disruptive behavior towards positive behavior or speaking with a student one-on-one**. We don't want to shame them for their behavior, but approach them with curiosity and neutral language.
 - Redirecting behavior might sound like "Hey, I appreciate how excited you are to talk today, can you read what we have so far out loud for the group?" or "I notice you're ready to move today, why don't you act out what the character is doing in the scene?"
 - When speaking one-on-one, you might want to check in with them about how they're doing outside of this session. That might sound like "Hey, I notice you don't seem to like anyone's ideas today, is there anything that's stressing you out about this session or at school?" or "I appreciate your eagerness to share and it makes me see you as a leader in this group. I was wondering if you'd be able to help me come up with some questions to get others to share their ideas like you?"

Your head mentor, partner teacher, and school liaison are your best support system.

- If you don't feel comfortable addressing behavior one-on-one, or if you think a behavior warrants a more serious response, talk to your head mentor or partner teacher. They want to and are trained to assist, but they don't know what they don't know so they need your help to keep them updated on what's going on with the students you're working with.
- You can make agreements with your groups and take this philosophy as you think about behavior management, AND you can call in the leaders to help you because you're not alone in this.

- The schools and teachers have their own best practices. We respect that we are in their space and follow their lead around how they manage the whole class. They will manage discipline.

Our purpose is to provide a structured, stimulating, and comfortable environment for students to creatively explore.

- The head mentor or partner teacher goes through the agenda and explains all the activities to guide us through very carefully thought-out lesson plans.
- Mentors are there to guide students through a process that may help them express themselves. We do that by helping them create a story, but if they're really not into it, it's okay to give them some space. We want them to feel comfortable throughout the process, even if it means the final product looks different.
- Head mentors and middle/high school partner teachers also send out information to mentors before each session about what is going to happen during the session with the intention that mentors read it and go into the sessions prepared to work with their students, which helps foster this comfortable environment.

We are not here to provide punishments, threaten, or control behavior – we don't have that power.

- We are often not full, active members of the school community and are guests in their space, so we leave that to those who are like the teachers and administration.
- **So when we talk about consequences, we view them as restorative, rather than punitive.**
 - We come up with agreements together in the first session. We might say, "If you're late, you have to do a silly dance" so the classroom is still a fun space where we can experience things together.
 - If it's too chaotic to focus, the consequence is we're going to take a breath together to ground ourselves. If participation is low, the consequence might be that we do a shakeout to warm our bodies up.
 - If someone breaks an agreement, the consequence may be that it's named and we review the agreements.
- All of this is in service of fostering a positive, consistent environment.

A Note on Safety

Young Storytellers is a safe space for all. We've got a few rules to support our safe space:

- Young Storytellers does not allow isolated one-to-one interaction between an adult and child inside any closed room, vehicle, bathroom, or any area that could be considered private.
- As a friend, you can share and advise your mentee, but know your limitations. Problems that your mentee may share with you regarding substance abuse, molestation, and physical abuse are best handled by professionals. Mentee disclosure of any child abuse (sexual, physical, or neglect) must be reported immediately to your partner teacher and the YS Middle and High School Programs Director. (If you're not sure who this is, ask your head mentor!)
- Abuse of a mentee by a mentor or staff member is forbidden.
- Harassment of fellow volunteers will not be tolerated.
- If you experience or observe abusive behavior, immediately notify your partner teacher and the Middle and High School Programs Director.

Disregarding this policy is grounds for immediate dismissal and relevant behavior will be reported to local authorities.

A Note on Not Writing Violence

Young Storytellers sees violence as a last resort in resolving conflicts. While we recognize the possibility that violence may be a present reality in our students' lives, violence—whether armed, unarmed, the use of deadly force, or force capable of causing bodily harm—is to be avoided in our writers' stories.

Mentors should encourage students to look for the most creative, least destructive solutions in their lives as well as storytelling; this is both to promote the value of life and the value of creative thinking. Further, mentors should encourage students to promote human health, happiness, and understanding, not ignorance and human suffering. If a personal story includes violence, the mentor and teacher can support the student in minimizing it in their story so that it is not glorified.

Questions mentors can ask regarding violence in scripts:

- *Is this act of violence central to my story? Do I need to include it?*
- *If it is central to my story, can I write about it factually and not include descriptions that glorify it?*
 - *Mentors should coach students through this.*
- *What message does your violent act say? Can I frame it so that a lesson is learned?*
 - *Mentors can present frames like, "From this, I learned..." or "Afterwards, I realized..."*
- *Who is the audience you are writing for?*
- *Is it absolutely necessary or gratuitous?*
- *How does this support the views/feelings expressed in your narrative?*

Finally, remind students before writing that if they disclose any harm that has been committed by them or against them in their stories, it will need to be reported to the appointed authorities.

Different Types of Learners

- **Kinesthetic learners** are highly physical and learn by doing. Get them on their feet! Have them act out a part of the story.
- **Visual learners** can't stop doodling or need to in order to focus. Ask them to draw their characters and story ideas and describe their drawings to get their words out.
- **Auditory learners** learn best by discussing concepts and need to hear their ideas. Read their scripts out loud with them and then discuss how to proceed.
- **Students on the autism spectrum** can be overstimulated in a room full of writers and mentors. Give them a short and clear time limit.

Session Games & Activities

The remainder of the content in this packet includes key exercises and writing steps from the curriculum. Your training facilitator will take you through some of the prompts in order to prepare you for mentoring. Some exercises your teacher will ask you to complete before a session. You may also complete some exercises with your group in the classroom.

Session One: Welcome, Young Storytellers!

PLAY (games and exercises you will play and/or lead with your group)

Hot Seat

Your partner teacher will explain and model this game for the class. Then you will break off into your groups and lead this game with your students.

Purpose: To help writers connect with their mentors. For mentors to model vulnerability for their writers.

Instructions:

1. You are going to play a game where writers will ask you questions, and then you will ask them questions.
 - a. Reinforce the rules of the school/classroom/agreements and that we want to be respectful of each other.
2. The teacher will help brainstorm things they want to know about you and/or things that people sometimes ask each other when first meeting. Things like:
 - a. What kinds of things did you like to do in middle school?
 - b. What do you wish people knew about you/better understood about you?
 - c. Why did you sign up to volunteer for this program?
 - d. What do you do (for your job and/or for fun)?
 - e. Where did you grow up?
 - f. Anything else they want to know (within reason).
3. Lead a conversation with the writers taking turns asking you any questions the group brainstormed. Writers can also ask you other questions they come up with during the conversations.
4. The teacher will have you switch, and then you can ask your writers questions. You will ask something, and then they can go around and give their answers. We want the writers to feel comfortable with you, and each other, so if this turns into a conversation – great! Let it flow naturally, rather than like an interview. Here are some questions you could ask the

group:

- a. What are your favorite TV shows or movies?
- b. What do you wish people knew about you?
- c. What kind of person do you want to be when you are an adult? What kind of responsibilities do you want to have (friends, career, family, activism, etc)?

LEARN (helpful tools to communicate the day's lesson to your group)

Examples

Read the below examples from last year, then discuss the questions below.

Title: Split in Two

Once upon a time, I was a little boy who had a group of close friends. There were about eleven kids in this group, two of which were girls and the rest were boys, I mean four of the kids were also six years old. Our parents knew each other so we always played together. In that group, however, it seemed that the boys and the girls were always fighting. The little kids just went off and did whatever, but that's not important.

Every day, I wanted to play with both the boys and girls together, but I was always scared I would be judged for doing it. So I would only play with what people expected, the boys. I would always feel bad for the girls, yet I would only play with them when the boys were not around. What I didn't like about the boys were the games they played. One person can only have so much baseball, kickball, and football in their life. Football is the same thing over and over and that for me is really boring. Kickball is literally kicking a ball pretending it's baseball. Baseball is on a whole different level of annoyance. My dad forced me to play baseball for a long time and forcefully made me enjoy it. So naturally now I despise baseball with every fiber of my being.

But one day, I openly started playing with the girls because it's a free country. That and the fact that I wasn't going to play baseball again. Mostly because I would always be in the outfield and no ball would roll there, so I concluded that grass is more fun. As the boys were choosing the teams I saw the girls playing tag and hide and seek. I wanted to play those games so I walked right over to where they were playing and they reluctantly let me play.

Because of that, the girls did not violently despise me like they used to. They even started wanting to have me around. Plus, they didn't play a single game of baseball.

Because of that, all the boys started teasing me and laughing at me. For a little bit, I regretted my decision to play with the girls.

Because of that, I only played with the girls, mostly because I had no other choice. We had so much fun and laughed so hard. Sometimes I missed playing with the boys, but there was no way I would trade the games with the boys for the fun and games I experienced with the girls.

Until finally, we had so much fun and we didn't care what other people thought. So soon some of the boys came over to us and played with us. We played a few rounds of capture the flag and dodgeball. Everyone had a lot of fun. There were only a few arguments and for the most part, we all got along.

And ever since then, we all played along in harmony with only a few full-blown attacks. :)

Title: Introvert

Once upon a time, I was a stereotypical quiet person. I looked like the walking definition of an introvert, but on the inside, I was the complete opposite. I had a loud and silly personality I kept hidden.

Every day, I wanted to better express myself and show who I truly was. I wanted to face the world as my true self comfortably and confidently. But one day, I realized that being yourself is easier said than done, or maybe it wasn't. "My friends seem to be happy being themselves, so maybe it was as simple as doing," I thought out loud.

Because of that, I started to act differently with my friends and became louder, in a sense of talking more. I was happier, I think, but were my friends? That thought started a whirlpool of confusion and concerns in my mind. Because of that, I wondered what they thought of my changes and the new person I had become. Maybe they liked the other me more. I spent my free time in my room dwelling over this. Staring up at the blank ceiling, but not paying attention to anything my eyes saw. 'Should I be myself? Is this my true self?' I wondered.

Sometimes I wanted to be loud and silly other times a bit quieter, but wasn't that what I wanted to change about myself? "Isn't that why I'm here in the first place?" I asked myself. Thoughts spinning in my head overwhelming me, drowning me. The confusion came time and time again knocking me down like waves in a storm crashing against each other. This was all just too much. Too much for anyone to take, I just wanted to... "AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!" 3 seconds of silence passed and everything suddenly calmed.

"Did I scream out loud?" I asked hoping that I didn't. Why does self-expression have to be so confusing? I just want to be happy being myself. "Why does this have to be so confusing? Why am I so confusing?" I asked myself. It seemed as simple as understanding myself and then doing what makes me happy. I laid in my bed finally paying attention to what I was looking at. I felt so misunderstood. I misunderstood myself and what direction my personality wanted to go, so other

people probably misunderstood me as well. I somehow convinced myself it was just my issue and that no one would really understand.

Because of that, I went back into my shy corner and hid myself and my opinions. But I didn't feel happy this way, or the other way. Hiding was tiring and restricting. Showing myself was scary and uncomfortable sometimes. I was constantly confused and conflicted by my internal and external personalities. 'Will this ever get easier?' I thought constantly.

Until finally, I realized it's almost impossible to be yourself because you are always changing. Expected and unexpected changes will keep your personality alive and, at times, confusing. You can't put a label on someone because someday they might rip it off and change completely or they'll stay the same because of that label. And ever since then, I've tried to better understand myself and what makes me happy because, in the end, that's what's important.

Title: The Case of the Terrible Cereal

One day when I was young, I was at home eating cereal for breakfast. I took a bite. Crunch. And I thought to myself, "Ugh, this is disgusting!"

I leaned over and I told my dad about it.

"Stop exaggerating," he said.

I wasn't exaggerating. It really tasted horrible. It smelled horrible, too. I simply couldn't eat it. I set the bowl aside.

"But Dad, it tastes like a dead turtle!" I exclaimed.

He just sat there and he stared at me. I felt so misunderstood, but what else could I do? There was a big possibility that I was eating poison and my dad didn't even care.

Then my sister walked in. "Hahah, what's going on? Why aren't you eating your cereal?" she asked me.

"It tastes like a dead turtle," I responded. Again, they both just looked at me like I was crazy or something. I knew I wasn't. They just didn't believe me.

"You want to try it?" I asked them both.

"If it tastes normal, will you keep eating it?" my sister asked me. And that seemed fair. They would see. They would see how horrible it was. They would see the pain and suffering that I had been experiencing for the past ten minutes.

My sister picked up the spoon. She scooped up some cereal. She brought it to her mouth, and ..."Ewwww! Ewwwwww!" she exclaimed.

Her lips puckered up. Ha! I wasn't crazy.

"Oh you two," my dad said, "Gimme that."

And in one swift motion the cereal was in his mouth and on the carpet.

"Oh wow, that milk is spoiled," he said.

The taste of being right was sweet, but what wasn't sweet was having to scrub spoiled milk out of the closet. But after that, they never seemed to doubt me and I never made them eat

anything that I knew was disgusting.

Group Conversation About Examples

With your group, discuss the examples on **pages 3-6**. Ask students, “What did the writer feel misunderstood about?”

CREATE (activities that your group will complete in class - it's helpful if you do too!)

Class Agreements

In this program, your students will be sharing things about themselves, their creative ideas, and their writing. List one thing that you might want the class to agree to that may help them feel comfortable participating in this program. Keep these in mind when facilitating this discussion with your group and having your writers brainstorm agreements.

1. _____

because,

Session Two: Brainstorm P.O.V.

PLAY

"I Love" Popcorn

Purpose: For writers to quickly express things they care about.

Instructions:

1. The teacher will explain the rules of the game before breaking off into groups.
2. Have students sit in a circle, or stand if sitting is not reasonable.
3. Model going first, by standing up and stating one thing that you love. "I love..."
4. Everyone who also loves that thing has to stand, or popcorn up, to show that they also love it.
5. Everyone sits for the next round.
6. Choose a direction for play. The student sitting next to you will then stand up and state something they love, waiting for others who share that love to popcorn up.
7. Go around the circle until everyone gets a chance to name something they love.

LEARN / CREATE

Four Square

Your partner teacher will model this activity for the class. Then you will break off into your groups and lead this activity with your students. For each quadrant, think of 3-5 characteristics that you would use to describe yourself.

Physical Descriptions	Emotional Descriptions
<i>What words would you use to describe what you look like?</i>	<i>What words would you use to describe the kinds of emotions you commonly feel/express?</i>
Intellectual Descriptions	Social Descriptions
<i>What classes/subjects do you enjoy?</i>	<i>Describe your friends/friend groups. What are you like when you are with them?</i> <i>Describe your family. What are you like when you are with them?</i>

Now list 2-3 firmly held beliefs that are important to you. They can be about:

- How you think people should treat each other
- What you think is important
- People, relationships, family, traditions, behavior, etc.

1. I believe that . . .

2. I believe that . . .

3. I believe that . . .

SHARE

Writers Reflect Via Quick Write

- Ask writers to take a minute to look over what they wrote in the Four Square exercise on **page 8** and reflect on the “I Love” game.
- Let them know that they are reviewing the things they said they love/like, their key characteristics, and beliefs in order to help them select three things that are true about them right now.
- They can select some of the things they wrote about today or they might come up with new ideas.
- Ask them to turn **page 9** and identify three things that are true about them right now. This is how they view themselves.
- An example is given.

Three Things That Are True About Me
Ex: I care deeply about animals.

Session Three: Brainstorm Prompts

PLAY

Story Share

Purpose: To share possible stories about being misunderstood and spark connection

Instructions:

1. The teacher will lead this activity with the whole class. Everyone will sit in a circle facing each other.
2. The teacher will ask the following prompts, and ask everyone to silently reflect on them.
 - a. “A time that someone thought you had done something that you didn’t do.”
 - b. “A time that someone thought you were different from who you really are. For instance, they thought you were lying about something but really you are honest.”
 - c. “A time you wanted something so bad, and no one else understood why.”
3. Mentors will then take turns briefly sharing one experience they thought of from the prompts – keep it short! Summarize your story in about 2-3 sentences, so that many people have the chance to share.
4. Writers will then get a chance to share their experiences. They can share something from one of the prompts, or an idea sparked by another person’s story. Not everyone needs to share during this time.
5. The teacher may end the Play section here, or may send you off into writing groups to continue talking. If you go into groups, you can ask writers who did not get to share in the large group if they have a story to share.

LEARN / CREATE

Use this time to help your writers think about different times in their lives when they felt misunderstood. Students will sit with their Workbooks and you will call out the prompts, giving time in between for students to jot down notes. Ask your group to jot down anything that comes to mind about that time. This worksheet can be found on [page 10](#) of the Writer Workbook.

Brainstorming Worksheet

Prompts	Your Idea
There was something you really wanted, but someone else didn't understand why it was important to you.	

Someone wanted you to do something you didn't want to do and they couldn't understand why it was a problem for you.	
You felt like you got in trouble for something that wasn't really your fault.	
You felt like someone wasn't really listening to you.	
A time you really loved something that others didn't understand.	
You had a hard time understanding yourself.	

Once complete, ask your group to consider the following questions.

- Which 1-3 prompts did you have the most to write about when brainstorming?
- What kinds of thoughts and feelings came up when thinking about those experiences?
- Was there an experience that you had the most memories and feelings about?
- What experience do you want to write about more? Circle the experience(s) that you have chosen.

SHARE

Writers Reflect

- Ask students to finalize which prompt they want to expand upon and fill out the prompt below on **page 11** of their Writers Workbook.
- Share with a partner if time.

Writing Prompt	How were you misunderstood?	What was really true?
Example: I will write about the time I was accused of cheating on a test.	Example: My friends thought I had cheated because I got a perfect score.	Example: I am honest. I studied hard and earned that grade.

Session Four: Story Spines

Have small groups stand in a circle. One person stands in the middle of their circle and says “The wind blows...” followed by something that is true about themselves. (“The wind blows anyone who loves chocolate.” “The wind blows anyone who has a sibling.”) Everyone in the circle who agrees with the statement has to switch places. Watch for the last person to find a spot in the circle, and that person must go to the middle spot and name something true about themselves. You, the mentor, can start by standing in the middle.

Helpful Tips:

- As the group becomes more comfortable with the game, you can encourage them to say more personal statements, like things they value and care about.

LEARN / CREATE

Story Spine Worksheet

Your students will be writing their story spines (outlines) this week. They should follow this structure. Please assist them by floating around the group as they write. You can also model your own experiences using this structure to better help them. If students finish early, they can share their story spines with you or a partner, or they can share them out with the group.

Beginning: Introduce your character (you), the setting, and the inciting incident (the misunderstanding).

Once, I was...

(Who were you in general? How old were you when this story took place? Where did it take place? What were you like?)

But one day...

(The inciting incident: Explain the misunderstanding that happened.)

Middle: How did things change? What were the consequences of being misunderstood?

Because of that...

(What did you do?)

Then...

(What happened next?)

(Optional) Next...

(Then what happened?)

End: How did the story resolve itself? What did you learn?

Until finally...

(We find out what happened in the end)

Now I know...

(What lesson did you learn? How do you want the world to see you going forward?)

Title: What is a word or short phrase that you would like to call your piece?

Session Five: Writing Your Draft

CREATE

Begin First Drafts

Support your group as they write out the beginning section of their story spines using complete sentences and details. Students can keep the sentence starters from the story spine, or rewrite them if they prefer. They will do this on a computer or iPad (if they have access to one in their classroom) or on the blank pages below.

Beginning:

Once, I was... (Who were you in general? How old were you when this story took place? Where did it take place? What were you like?)

But one day...

(The inciting incident: Explain the misunderstanding that happened.)

Session Six: Writing From Your P.O.V.

PLAY

Emoji Quick Write

Purpose: This will help writers identify key phrases they use in their everyday speech. This is done in order to help them craft the dialogue in their narratives.

- Have your writers write down some of the emotions that the class discussed and listed on the board in the column titled “Emotion”.
- Everyone can draw a simple emoji next to each emotion, and write down something they typically say when you feel these emotions.
- Lastly, have your writers brainstorm a section (or sections) of their narrative when they might be able to use the phrases they recorded in their chart.

Emotion	Draw Emoji	Phrases - What do (or might) you say when you feel this emotion?	Is there a section in your narrative where you could use this phrase?

CREATE

Finish First Drafts

Support your group as they write out the middle and end sections of their story spines using complete sentences and details.

Middle: How things change/the consequences of being misunderstood)

Because of that...

(What did you do?)

Then...

(What happened next?)

(Optional) Next...

(Then what happened?)

End: How did the story resolve itself? What did you learn?

Until finally...

(We find out what happened in the end)

Now I know...

(What lesson did you learn? How do you want the world to see you going forward?)

Optional Extension Activity:

Word Choices & Patterns of Speech

- Ask your writers to share at least three characteristics they recorded in the character section of their outline from Session Four.
- They should write their top three characteristics down in the “Personal Characteristics” column in the chart on **page 21** of their Writer Workbook.
- Have them brainstorm how each characteristic might influence the types of words they use and their pattern of speech.

Personal Characteristics	How might that influence the types of words you like to use while speaking? For example, someone who describes themselves as sensitive may start a lot of sentences with “I feel or it felt like” and mention lots of emotions and feelings.	How might that influence how you speak? For example, someone who describes themselves as direct/no-nonsense might like to get right to the point and speak in short sentences.
1.		
2.		
3.		

Session Seven: Table Reads

PLAY

The teacher will instruct all writers to consider the following prompts:

“I chose to write this story because...”

Ask them to think: “Why did I choose this story, over all the others?” Or... “Why does the world need to hear this story?”

LEARN

Sharing Process

1. You will be reading the narratives out loud today.
2. Help your group decide what order they’ll be going in.
3. Listen carefully as the writer shares information about their narrative.
 - a. Writer shares:
 - i. What is their favorite part of their narrative?
 - ii. What about their narrative are they still working on (something they want ideas and feedback around)?
 - b. Read the narrative out loud.
 - c. Direct the group to the warm and cool feedback sentence starters on **page 23** in their Workbooks (see below). Then can use those to help share their praise and suggestions.
 - d. Praise: Everyone in the group will share one thing they liked about the narrative.
 - e. Suggestions: The group can give feedback on what the writer wanted feedback on.
 - i. If time, ask if there is anything else the group would like clarity on. “I was unsure about...”
 - f. Writers can record feedback on **page 23** in their Workbooks (see below).
 - g. Take turns so every writer gets to hear their piece and receive feedback.

Feedback Organizer

Warm Feedback

- “I appreciate how you...”
- “It was clear that you worked hard on...”
- “It was really interesting when you...”

Cool Feedback

- “You may want to consider...”
- “Have you thought about...?”
- “It was unclear to me when you...”

Praise:

What did the group like about your personal narrative?

Suggestions:

What suggestions were given to you based on what you wanted help with?

Performance Ideas:

How would you like your personal narrative performed? What emotions do you want expressed?

Session Eight: Revise

PLAY

Reflect On Last Week

- Have the writers think through the following questions about their own narratives:
 - What did they already know about their narratives before last week?
 - What did they want to find out about their narrative? What did they want feedback on?
 - What did they learn about their narrative last week?
 - What praise did they receive?
 - What did people have questions or ideas about?
 - Did anyone want more information or details?
 - Ask everyone to go around the group and share 1-3 things they are going to change about their narrative today.

LEARN

Revision Process

Float around the group and help any writers who are stuck around revisions.

1. The class is going to revise their pieces so they're ready for the show. All narratives will be performed in the following session.
2. Narratives should be one page long - some people might need to make cuts.
3. They can begin revisions by making the 1-3 changes they discussed earlier.

SHARE

Big Show Plan

Make sure the writers know what's going on next session.

- In two weeks, writers will:
 - See all their creative work performed live in front of their peers.
 - Share the inspiration behind their creative ideas.
 - Wear something special/their favorite outfit for the show!
- Discuss: Ask writers how they are feeling about the Big Show? Do they feel excited? Anxious? Any questions?
- Affirm that feeling nervous is to be expected and give tips to ease nerves:
 - Share your feelings with trusted friends or loved ones. Often saying our feelings out loud helps ease them.
 - Remember the why: Your voice and story are important and needed. Your story deserves to be heard and celebrated.
 - Deep, calming breaths are powerful in moments of stress!
- Write your group appreciation notes! Each student should receive a note, from you, that states why you enjoyed working with them. Your teacher will collect these in the next session.

Session Nine: The Big Show

Session Begins - Big Show Prep (with everyone - teacher, writers, actors, and you!)

- **Introduction**
 - The partner teacher will welcome everyone and give a general run of show for the day.
- **Writers & Actors Connect**
 - Divide into groups so that each writer is with the actor performing their piece today.
 - Writers will play **Hot Seat** with their actors and chat about their narratives.
- **Rehearse**
 - Actors practice.
 - Writers divide up into their groups to practice the red carpet walk and introductions.
 - All writing groups will walk the red carpet and have their names introduced at the beginning of the show. Each group will walk to the stage and you (their mentor) will introduce, by name, each student and then tell what you enjoyed about working with the entire group.
 - All groups will go through this process and performances will begin once all students have been seated.

Big Show

Teacher Intro

Intros & Performances

- Introduce each group
 - Teacher introduces the group's mentor.
 - You then introduce the members of the group as they walk down the red carpet to the performance area.
 - Share what you enjoyed about working with the group.
 - Repeat this until all groups have been introduced and walked down the red carpet.
- Actors perform pieces.

Finale:

- Teachers will thank everyone.
- Ask all writers to stand and face the audience. Congratulate them on their wonderful work!
- APPLAUSE!!
- Take a group photo (teacher, writers, actors, and you!)
- Remind writers about The Farewell, our last session.
- Make sure to give your teacher the appreciation cards you wrote for your writers before next week's session.

Session Ten: The Farewell

SHARE

Group Discussion: Discuss the below with your group.

- **Big Show Rose and Thorn**
 - What was your favorite moment of the show?
 - Did you have a least favorite part of the show or one you wish had been different or better?
- **Program Takeaways**
 - What did you learn from this experience?
 - Are you able to do anything now that you couldn't do before?
- **Moving Forward**
 - How can you continue the spirit of this program after today?
 - Talking points to help guide this section:
 - Remind them that they get to keep their Workbook. They can use the process in the Workbook to continue writing.
 - If they mention how their mentors helped them, help them think of people that can help them (if needed) at school and home. They can also always help each other by sharing their ideas.
- **Program Rose and Thorn**
 - What was your favorite part of our time together?
 - Did you have a least favorite part of the process or a part you wish had been different or better?
 - This reflection can also be found on **page 28** of their Workbooks.

CONNECT & CLOSE OUT

Give all the writers in your group their appreciation cards. Let writers read them and take some time to connect and praise them for their hard work one last time.