

**Program: Memoir Writing for Young Adults**  
**By Alison Eagles**

Program	How to write a memoir	
Target Audience	Intended for older teenagers, perhaps in grades 11/12. This program can also be adapted for younger teens.	
Purpose	The objective of this program is to introduce teens to the concept of memoirs and autobiographies, and to help those who are interesting in writing about their own lives in the form of a memoir or diary, to get started.	
Benefits	To Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gain empowerment through sharing their stories</li> <li>● Build literacy and writing skills</li> <li>● Allows teens to experiment with writing in different formats, besides essays for school</li> <li>● Reading each other's' stories can help see new perspectives and foster empathy</li> </ul>
	To Partner School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can help get students engaged in writing, since they are writing about things that are relevant to them</li> </ul>
	To Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased awareness of these items in the collection,</li> <li>● May improve interest in reading for teens who don't like to read fiction</li> </ul>
Features	Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This will begin with the facilitator of the program describing what a memoir is, and perhaps reading some excerpts from popular YA memoirs.</li> <li>● Everyone has a story to tell - read intro*</li> <li>● Participants will then be led in a brainstorming session, involving "diagramming" their lives using this worksheet as a template  <a href="http://leeclassroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Memoir-Diagram.pdf">http://leeclassroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Memoir-Diagram.pdf</a></li> <li>● Followed by a period of time for working individually on their own writing</li> <li>● Wrap-up, group discussion about what participants learned, and a discussion of empathy</li> </ul>

	Length	Approximately 1 hour to 90 mins
	Delivery Season	This program could take place at any time. One option could be to offer the program for teens about to graduate, as they are moving on to a new stage in life, it may provide an opportunity to reflect on their lives and experiences, which may inspire them to think about future goals.
	Attendance Numbers	This would work better with groups of about 5-10 participants
Resources Required	Collection	Some samples of memoirs from the library's collection that teens may be interested in reading
	Staff	This program could be led by one or two staff members
	Staff Time	Staff will require a few hours of preparation time for each session. The initial delivery of the program may require more time.
	Partners	Having a guest or local author come to speak to the group would also be valuable, if possible, but not required.
	Support Resources	Some helpful items from the library's collection include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>On writing: a memoir of the craft</i> / by Stephen King.</li> <li>● <i>Memoir writing for dummies</i> / by Ryan Van Cleave.</li> <li>● <i>The complete idiot's guide to writing a memoir</i> / by Victoria Costello.</li> </ul> (These are found in HPL collection) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use some of the books included in the memoir book list?</li> <li>● Diagram outline: (<a href="http://leeclassroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Memoir-Diagram.pdf">http://leeclassroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Memoir-Diagram.pdf</a>)</li> </ul>
	Space	Reserve one of the program rooms in the library.
	Equipment	This program will require: tables, chairs, computers, printers, as well as some relevant online resources and

		<p>books from the collection</p> <p>Participants can bring their own notebooks or device they prefer to work on.</p>
	Estimated Costs	<p>The most significant cost would likely be food. In addition to staff time, there would be some cost associated with use of paper and other printing costs.</p> <p>Total estimated budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Food - \$50 per event</li> <li>● Paper/printing - \$10 per event</li> <li>● Creating promotional materials - \$10</li> </ul>
Promotion	<p>This program will be promoted through the regular channels for library events, including the library website, and a community message board accessible in the teen space. If possible, it might be a good idea to reach out to some high schools in the area, connecting with teachers of English or creative writing classes.</p> <p>Other methods of promotion will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promoting on social media (Library’s Facebook page, Twitter)</li> <li>● Word of mouth</li> <li>● Print brochures (available at circulation, and throughout the teen space of the library)</li> </ul>	
Evaluation	<p>Output will be measured by counting the number of participants attending each session</p> <p>Outcomes will be measured by surveying participants about their reflections on the experience. Some survey questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do you feel more prepared to start writing about your own story?</li> <li>● What is one thing you wish had been talked about that was not covered?</li> <li>● Would you recommend this event to a friend?</li> </ul>	

\* “Consider this exchange that Frank McCourt, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Angela’s Ashes* and other memoirs, had with a skeptical student: “Mr. McCourt, you’re lucky,” the author recounts in *Teacher Man*. “You had that miserable childhood, so you have something to write about. What are we gonna write about? All we do is get born, go to school, go on vacation, go to college, fall in love or something, graduate and go into some kind of profession, get married, have the 2.3 kids you’re always talking about, send the kids to school, get divorced like 50 percent of the population, get fat, get the

first heart attack, retire, die.”

“Jonathan,” McCourt replied, “that is the most miserable scenario of American life I’ve heard in a high school classroom. But you’ve supplied the ingredients for the great American novel. You’ve encapsulated the novels of Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald.” (Kita)

#### References

Kita, J. (n.d.) How to write your memoir. Readers digest. Retrieved from  
<http://www.rd.com/advice/great-tips-on-how-to-write-your-memoir/>

Lee, M. (2017). *Starting your memoir: Diagram your life*. Retrieved from  
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