



Writing Recipe for Groups: Memories

Perfect for

- Being surprised by forgotten memories.
- Discovering important memories.
- Growing writing love.
- An ice-breaker for classes, meetings, retreats, Sunday school, etc.
- Gathering your family around the table for more than food.

Ingredients

- First part of Eileen Spinelli's poem, "Memories."
It's funny
How some things
Never leave
The corner of your heart -
Like...
- Last part of Eileen Spinelli's poem, "Memories."
Some things
Lie loosely buried
Under broken
Honeysuckle years
And never
Go away.



Writing Prep

1. Read first lines of [Eileen Spinelli's](#) poem, "Memories." (See above.)
2. Think to yourself. What are three or four memories that never leave the corner of your heart? Think of moments, objects, places, people, sayings, smells, and songs that might trigger memories.
3. For me, I always remember watching my mom, grandmother, and great grandmother, standing side- by-side eating oranges over the kitchen sink. This is a memory that finds its way into a lot of my writing.
4. Read the last lines of Spinelli's poem (see above).
5. Read my sample poem (on the next page). I borrowed Spinelli's first and last lines to get me started. Plus, I began with the orange memory I mentioned above. Sometimes, using a go-to memory is a great way to get yourself thinking about other memories you might have forgotten.
6. When you read the last section of my sample poem, notice I changed the last lines just a wee bit. I'm sure "honeysuckle years" means something for Spinelli (and I love the sound of the word honeysuckle), but I had to tweak it a bit to make sense for me. I just don't have honeysuckle memories, but I'd sure love to ask Spinelli what she means by that reference.



Memories

It's funny

How some things

Never leave

The corner of your heart-

Like watching three women -

Mom, Grandma, and Great Grandma,

All shoulder to shoulder,

Eating oranges over the kitchen sink.

How it felt to fall asleep in the car

On long road trips

With my head against a pillow

Leaning against a cold window

As rough and tumble landscape

Rushed by like a river.

A first kiss that was obligatory

And not at all like I imagined.

Hearing my grandpa come into a room

And yell, "Where's my Laurie? There's my Laurie!"

He never spelled my name right,

But that's OK.

Listening to the soundtrack



Of *A Star is Born* over and over again.
Singing every Streisand song with a brush microphone
In my best friend's living room.

Hearing a wolf howl from a Yellowstone ridge,
But feeling it deep in my gut.

Hiking with two girlfriends,
But thinking about my true love
Back home,
And for the first time,
Understanding how it felt to be content.

Stopping for gas in Mojave,
Buying frozen solid bon bons,
Then, when we were on the road again,
Throwing them out the window,
One by one,
For no reason at all
Except maybe to laugh
And scream with delight.

Like getting to school early
One September morning,
Wanting to get to the copy machine
Before all the other teachers,
And hearing,
"We're under attack."



Some things

Lie loosely buried

Under stacks of years,

And months and weeks,

And days and minutes,

And never

Go away.

Written by Lorrie Tom under the influence of Eileen Spinelli's poem, "Memories."

Bolded lines are borrowed from her poem.

Time to Get Cooking

1. Tell writers to Memories at the top of their paper.
2. They can begin and end with Eileen Spinelli's opening lines, but writers can also use their own, too.
3. Suggest that writers begin with the go-to memory (recall that mine is the oranges line). Let that memory inspire the next one. This is a fun way to discover surprising and forgotten memories from your life. This is one of the great joys of writing.
4. Then, write a list of memories that never leave the corner of their hearts using the quick write method.
5. Quick write means:
 - a. Write for 8 minutes, 6 seconds without stopping or talking.
 - b. Keep pen/pencil/keyboard moving the entire time.
 - c. If writers get stuck, write **I'm stuck I'm stuck I'm stuck** until they aren't anymore. Cross that part out later.
 - d. Don't worry about spelling.
 - e. NO talking or getting up or asking questions once writers are seated and writing.
6. Quick write PRO TIPS:



- a. I slowly get to a writing spot (often strategically near someone I know will be struggling or disrupting) and I say, “Darlings, when my pen hits the paper, it will be silent in here cuz I’ve got some hard thinking to do in the next 8 minutes and 6 seconds! I need to think!” Show yourself/your writers that nothing is more important in that moment than writing.
- b. I always write with them, and drumroll, I hope you do, too. It will change everything. Promise.
- c. “Oh...Mrs. Tom, you’re so mean. I really can’t ask another question during a quick write?” Nope. Interruptions ruin the writing mojo. And I say, “Trust yourself as a writer. You can answer your own questions...at least for the next 8 minutes and 6 seconds.”
- d. I always say something like, “Scientists have determined that the perfect amount of time for this piece is 8 minutes and 6 seconds.” The accuracy of that data is a lie, but honestly, time’s up when I finish writing my piece! Often, I give writers a one minute warning – and then ask, “Does anyone need just a bit more time?” Then, I tack on another 30 seconds or so.

7. Why Quick writes grow writing love:

- a. Quick writes grow writing love because writing fast for a short period of time helps writers outrun the inner voice that says, “You can’t write. You are bad at this!”
- b. Tell your writers this very thing! Continue with, “We’re in this together. We don’t have time to listen to that nasty voice. Let’s go for it!”

Share Your Words

- 1. When writers are done (or even if they aren’t), do **SAYBACK** sharing with a partner.
 - a. In SAYBACK, writer reads his/her piece ALOUD and listener says back what they heard as a golden line, using the exact same wording in the writer’s piece. That’s it. No suggestions. No corrections. Celebrate a phrase or sentence that’s great (i.e. a golden line) and move on.
 - b. And don’t just switch papers and READ the writer’s piece. Listen to the writer read his/her piece. The writer needs to feel and hear the sound of his/her words out loud. This is one of the best ways to notice what’s working and/or not working in the piece.



2. Then, ask every student to select one golden line and write it on an index card. That's a line that stands out to you the most. It's good to get the in the habit of noticing what writers are already doing well. Remind writers that if they hear something good, they can do that in their writing, too!

3. Here are options for sharing golden lines:

- **Golden Line Mixer:** When you say, "Go," writers get up with their index cards and walk to another person in the group. One person says, "Hi, my name is _____. Here is my golden line: _____." Then, the other person shares his/her name and golden line. Then, they both move to other writers in the class. When you say, "Stop," writers go back to their seats.
- **Snake Sharing:** Every writer picks one golden line from his/her piece. Writers stay in their seats. Then, pick a starting person and an ending person in whatever way you like. Next, point to everyone else in the group (connecting all the other writers like a big ole snake). The starting person reads Room ____ Memories + his/her golden line on the index card. Then, everyone just reads their line when it's his/her turn so the piece sounds like one giant poem. This is a technique I recycle a lot!

Publishing

1. Collect golden lines on index cards and type one poem. You could call it Room ____ Memories (or Troop 1224 etc.).

This is a recipe you can do more than once. You'll never write the same version more than once. Some memories stay with us all the time, but some are triggered by the day you write. Of course, this can also become a list of story ideas that writers could develop more deeply in the future. Enjoy.

Always writing,

Lorrie



