

* SPARK

Memory Line

GRADES 6–12

TYPE
NARRATIVE
POETRY

Students plot significant memories on a timeline in this reflective writing activity.

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

Students will recall and write about impactful memories using descriptive, sensory language.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

This activity asks students to plot significant memories onto a timeline, which helps them to create an approachable list of real life moments to write about. Before you begin, first determine a common time frame you'd like to use for the memory line. You can try one or both of the below options, or create your own:

- A memory line of the past year
- A memory line that starts with each student's birthday and ends at age 10 (focusing their reflection to childhood memories only)

Start by drawing or projecting a blank memory line on the board so that you can quickly model the steps for students to create their own.

Students will begin with a blank piece of paper, turn it to landscape orientation (or hotdog, if you prefer), and draw a

line across the middle of the page. Ask students to mark the start and end point of the memory line with the parameters you've predetermined.

Students will then create their memory line using the following key, plotting a minimum of 5 memories on the line. It may be helpful for students to decide on all memories they'd like to include first before they begin plotting.

- A) A time you were surprised
- B) A time you were lost or confused
- C) A time you felt happy
- D) A time you felt free
- E) A time you were hurt

Remind students that their memories don't have to be earth-shattering to be remarkable. Sometimes a small interaction can leave a lasting impression upon our memory, and upon us. If it stands out in their memory, it's likely worth writing about.

Once students have their memories plotted, ask them to choose one moment to be the subject of a 5-10 minute freewrite. The purpose of this freewrite is to explore the memory through writing and try to recreate that moment in time: what did they see? Feel? Hear? Challenge students to surprise themselves and write something that they didn't know they remembered!

As an optional extension, ask students to turn their freewrite into a poem using the following guidelines:

- Minimum fifteen lines
- Incorporate concrete nouns: For example, students could choose a liquid of any kind to include (e.g. tears, melting snow, Capri Sun, etc.) OR mention a specific piece of furniture (e.g. bunkbeds, La-Z-Boy, kitchen table)
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Reveal a secret and tell a lie (and never tell anyone which is which!)

- Include sensory details (especially sound, smell, taste, and touch)
- No end rhyme structure—really!
- At least one example of figurative language: metaphor or simile