

Mapping Our Memories

An Annotated Map Workshop by Vanessa Ziff Lasdon

Intro: (7 minutes)

- 1.) Share my story about Best Friends (3 minutes)
- 2.) Discuss how I might have come to this story, this tiny moment zoomed in on with a magnifying glass (30 sec.)
- 3.) Discuss what's memorable about the piece: setting, characters, conflicts and emotions. Writing from a place full of vivid memories is how a writer's voice comes alive and makes a movie in the reader's mind. Good writers view writing from a camera lens, not a pen or pencil. (1.5 min.)
- 4.) Show memoir books filled with narratives by famous authors who also came up with childhood stories. Also show literary magazines with stories written by kids. (30 sec.)
- 5.) Imagine their maps! I share my finished map on the overhead. (1.5 min.)

And explain:

Everyone is a storyteller. The magic lies in believing that your experiences are worth sharing, that what you notice is worth celebrating, that you have a unique voice. Today we will celebrate our unique personal stories by drawing neighborhood maps in order to share and write about childhood memories. By the end of this workshop, you will walk away not only with a map of personal short stories and a draft of your favorite, but also a new appreciation for the wealth of ideas you possess -- ideas worth publishing!

Instruction (12 minutes) Modeling and Storytelling

- 1.) Pretend and explain how I'd draw the beginning of my map in front of them. Notice how I didn't start with the hospital b/c I can't remember that far back. I start with my most vivid early memories at age 4 (2 min.)
- 2.) Storytell each annotation, spending the most time on divorce, Wonderland/Lucia, and Molly's castle. (7 min.)
- 3.) Ask them which stories seemed like hidden gems, which held the most energy or intrigue. (1 min.)
- 4.) Then, using my magnifying glass, explain how I would take those ideas and decide which one I wanted to write most at that moment. I have so many stories to tell, and all of them in time are worth telling, so I'll keep them in my writer's notebook. Writing about my own experiences is called a personal narrative, which is realistic fiction, truth sprinkled with fiction (memory + imagination -- see easel with definition). (2 min.)