State Memories

Fourth Grade  Writing, Social Studies  65 minutes

Standards: W.4.8, W.4.6

by Catherine Crider  June 1, 2015

In this lesson, your students will practice writing about places important to them through poetry. By the time they are done, students will have become better writers and taken a walk down memory lane!

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to recall information from personal experiences and organize it in the form of poetry.

Materials and Preparation

- Pens or pencils
- Paper (lined for writing and unlined for illustrations)
- Coloring utensils
- Map of the United States
- A New England Scrapbook by Loretta Krupinski
- Computers
- Books with state facts
Lesson

**Introduction (10 minutes)**

- Call students together near where a map of the United States is posted.
- Have students identify where Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont are located.
- Tell students that this region is called New England.
- Show students *A New England Scrapbook*. Explain to students that the author has written poems about things that are unique and special to New England.
- Read the first two pages, which explain what the author believes New England is.
- Next, read the students a few selected poems from the book, such as “New England is Maple Syrup,” “New England is Lobster,” “New England is Thanksgiving,” “New England is Cranberries,” “New England is Lighthouses,” or “New England is Four Seasons.”
- Discuss with students that these are all things that are unique to New England. Explain that when people think about New England, these are the things they identify with it.

**Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (10 minutes)**

- Have students think about some things they identify with their school that make it different from other schools.
- Make a list of these on the board or on chart paper. Students may list things like special routines, special ceremonies, or even special field trips.
- Take a student vote on one of these ideas to write a poem about.
- As a group, write a poem modeled after those from *A New England Scrapbook* entitled “[School Name] is [Winning Topic].”
- Guide students to write about key aspects of the winning topic that make it and their school special.
- Remind students about how poems are structured and how they can use rhyming and other literary devices in their poetry.
Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling *(5 minutes)*

- Have students think about what they do in their state and things that make their state special.
- Make a list on the board of student ideas. If students have lived in other states or have family that lives in other states, encourage them to make a list of special things about those states as well.
- If students need help coming up with more ideas, suggest that they research the state either online or in books.
- Inform students that they are going to write their own poems about either the state they currently live in or another state of their choice. Have them model it after the poetry in *A New England Scrapbook*. The title of the poem should be “[State] is [Special Thing].”
- Ask if students have any questions before they begin writing on their own.

Independent Working Time *(15 minutes)*

- Once students are writing independently (or in small groups), circulate the room, clarifying misconceptions and conferencing with students as needed.
- Display *A New England Scrapbook* as a reference for your students.
Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment:** For students who need a greater challenge, encourage them to do research into what they are writing about. Invite them to incorporate interesting facts into their poetry or write additional poems about related topics.
- **Support:** For students needing assistance, pair them with other students for transcribing and brainstorming. Brainstorm a list of potential topics as a large group to help students find a suitable topic to write about.

Technology Integration

- Have your students publish their poems on a class or school website or on an online forum.

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Review

Assessment *(10 minutes)*

- Throughout the lesson, use the level of student participation and the quality of student answers to informally evaluate the success of the lesson and the level of student growth.
- For homework or if additional time allows, ask your students to write another poem. This poem can also be examined for evidence of student growth.

Review and Closing *(15 minutes)*

- Call students together, and have them share their poetry. Ask students about any literary devices they consciously chose to use in their poetry, and point out any literary devices they may have used without even being aware of it.
- Remind students that poetry is a style of writing that many people use to record previous memories or experiences. Explain that the particular poem they just wrote was focused on something special to a particular state or group of states, but they can also organize poetry around any type of place or person.
- If time allows after the lesson, instruct your students to peer revise, edit, and publish their poems on the computer.