



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2008 Volume II: American Voices: Listening to Fiction, Poetry, and Prose

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## **In Their Shoes: Finding Voice through Personal Narrative**

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by Victoria Deschere

Voice is the connective tissue that holds reading and writing together. It is the personality, intonation and enthusiasm in communication. Without it, literature would be form without life, words without sense. Voice is found in the relationship between writer, composition and reader. It is crucial to foster, especially in the teen years when self-concept is newly burgeoning. To develop voice, students must read quality literature and emulate the techniques in their own writing. Furthermore, the students must copy what they hear in their everyday lives: not just to take from the masters, but their familiars as well. The students' personalities blossom in their writing and their lives. Additionally enthusiasm is fostered through the writing of personal narratives: teenagers' lives revolve around themselves. The story they most want to tell is their own, and this passion comes through in their writing. Using the writing process, writing traits, reading strategies, guided comprehension, read alouds and metacognition, teachers will help students walk with another author's stride: deciding if it fits their own personality and intentions. In this unit, students will read autobiographies from a culturally diverse set of writers to analyze and emulate the authors' techniques to develop an authentic, individual voice.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 7; recommended for English Language Arts, grades 6-8)

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