Personal Essays and Storytelling: Trevor Noah, Nelson Mandela, and Nadine Gordimer

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In this unit we will use the memoir *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah as a mentor text to teach personal essay writing. Mentor texts are examples of great writing that teachers use as models for students. Students will study memoirs and personal essays, which are closely related genres of writing. Memoirs are collections of personal essays or stories written by an author, interlacing specific themes throughout the novel. Students will analyze writing techniques, and identify the plot progressions, literary elements, and major themes. Using journaling entries and plot mountain diagram prewriting strategies, students will develop their own personal essay as the culmination of this unit.

Noah's memoir uses dynamic storytelling to share stories of his childhood in South Africa. Noah grew up as a biracial child and was raised by his mother. Because interracial couples were prohibited, his mere existence was illegal during apartheid. While Noah's memoir will be the main text in this unit, other notable South African writings are featured. Students will read and study excerpts of Nelson Mandela's memoir "*Long Walk to Freedom*" and essays written by Nadine Gordimer. By studying writings by Mandela and Gordimer, students will learn other styles of writing as well as gain deeper knowledge into the recent history of South Africa.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 5; recommended for English Language Arts, grades 6-12)