



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2025 Volume II: The Art of Writing and Revision

Finding Your Voice: Reading, Writing, and Revising Personal Narratives

Guide for Curriculum Unit 25.02.11, published September 2025
by Alison Wollack

This unit uses mentor texts and explicit instruction to support students in writing a personal narrative for college applications. Even though this unit names college applications as its focus, this content can be used for personal narratives in all levels of high school.

The unit begins with the analysis of five published personal narratives from Sherman Alexie, Lynda Barry, Roxane Gay, Amy Tan, and Alice Walker. As students read these narratives, they will focus on the author's public point and how they engage the reader. Students will then move to writing their own personal narratives. After writing a first draft, students will learn about organization, voice, word choice, and fluency. Each of these techniques will be broken down further. For example, organization includes beginning a story, transition words, and ending with a sense of resolution. As students learn about each new technique, they will revisit the mentor texts to see how the authors effectively employed those skills. With this new knowledge, students will revisit their own personal narrative and revise their writing for that specific technique.

Through workshops, ongoing reflection, and multiple rounds of revision, students will not only end the unit with a polished personal statement but with a deeper understanding of the writing process.

(Developed for IB English Standard Level Part II, grade 12; recommended for English, grades 8-12)

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2025 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use