Identity in Transition: Narrative Repair for Changing Times

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Introduction

The broad-shouldered, curious 5th grader at table four started the school year with an unshakable vision for the future. With dark hair spilling across his forehead and into his eyes, he seemed to marshal all his energy for one goal: a chance to compete for a spot at one of the top middle schools in the city. He knew that behavior was important for acceptance so he balled his fists to control the bursts of anger he had struggled to contain in the past. He hunched over difficult math problems and narrowed his eyes with concentration as he wrote. His goal provided a single-minded focus that drove his actions at school and sent him into a burst of tears at signs of failure. Right before the application deadline, his reality changed. He wouldn't even be in the running for a spot at his dream middle school after all. Located across town, the school was too far away for kid-friendly transportation. His parents, perennial education supporters and thoughtful caregivers, just couldn't make the logistics work. Their jobs lacked flexibility and their paychecks had no extra fat for luxury. His parents needed him to stay in the neighborhood so he could walk his young sisters to and from school.

For the 5th graders in my class, disappointment and sudden change are far too frequent. Last year, my students experienced family deportation, apartment eviction, temporary homelessness, gang-related violence, sudden moves due to socioeconomic circumstances, foster care changes, and family separation. About a fourth of my students had a close family member in jail. These changes pile on the disappointments of routine failure or, as with the student I described above, the elusive chance to make it into a "dream school."

In many instances, my students feel *subjected* to change. They can't re-route the buses to make a middle school more accessible, add to their parents' dwindling bank account, or fight an apartment eviction. And yet, their lives and dreams are often thrown into a tailspin by circumstances beyond their control.

In times of transition and unwelcome change, identity is at risk. A parent sent to prison, for example, can suddenly become a primary part of a child's identity. Cultural narratives can make a transition even worse. An otherwise confident 5th grade girl who struggles with the first assignment in her new math class, for example, may feel an immediate threat to her identity as a "good student," especially since the prevailing cultural narrative is that girls are not good at math.[1] Even innocuous changes like moving to a different grade level can leave student identity feeling frayed or in urgent need of defense.

When one student learned his father would be deported, he shrank into stunned silence. He stayed there for

weeks. With arms crossed protectively in front of him and face resolutely turned towards the ground, he disengaged from school work, peers, and even his beloved family. The sudden physical absence of his father meant dramatic emotional, socioeconomic, and familial change. It also threatened his identity as son, family member, American citizen, and future college graduate. He floundered to merge the reality of his father's absence with his personal identity.

Purpose

I wrote this unit for my many students who feel helpless and threatened in the face of unwanted change. As their teacher, I, too, can feel powerless. I can't re-shape the opportunity to attend a middle school across town if their families need them to be home. I can't bring back fathers. What I can do is remind students of the depth of resources within themselves. I can offer chances to strengthen their identity so they can navigate these changes and the inevitable future disappointments.

No one is exempt from unwanted change. Humans of all ages deal with sudden job loss, illness, death, family changes, and other tragedies, yet the unit feels particularly pressing for a high-poverty context like mine. 100% of my school participates in free-and-reduced lunch. My students don't have the luxury of money to cushion the blow of change. An affluent parent who loses a job, for example, can draw on other economic sources to keep their child in the same school. In my community, a job loss may mean sleeping on a relative's couch across town and tearfully switching schools.

Especially in difficult moments of change, identity support is crucial for academic success.[2] The student who missed a chance to get into his choice middle school risks disengaging with academics in the wake of his disappointment. The student with a deported father needs support just to lift his eyes for instruction.

This unit is designed to be taught late in the first semester. Due to the personal nature of identity work, I think it's best if I've formed some relationship with students before launching into the unit. Although designed to last eight weeks, unit pacing will vary based on student reading lexiles.

Objectives

This unit combines academic reading and writing goals with identity work. First, students read and analyze young adult fiction books in addition to several poems. Each offers stories of protagonists navigating unwanted change. In accordance with Oklahoma Academic Standards, the texts I've selected for this unit will require students to engage in discussion and make connections between and within texts.

In response to text and classroom discussions of change, students will write often and in varied forms. Some writing forms we'll use include journal entries, text analysis, text comparison, personal narrative, and personal letters. Using the recursive writing process called for by both Oklahoma Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards, students will analyze their writing based on their intent to communicate. They'll ask themselves questions such as, Does your intended meaning come through in this piece? Is this what you

meant to make the reader feel? By starting with meaning, students harness their writing skills and build new ones in service of their ideas. In the strategies section, I'll discuss the way we'll use audio recording to improve writing reflection.

Finally, students participate in their own identity-supporting work, mostly in the form of personal narrative writing. The goal here is to support self-adequacy narratives and provide strategies for managing identity during moments of change. After all, self-orientation in a new situation can make all the difference. Psychologist David Yeager and his team of writers put it this way: "When individuals perceive that they possess sufficient resources to cope with the situational demands posed by stressors, they experience *challenge*. However, when situational demands are seen as exceeding resources, individuals experience *threat*."[3] A self-narrative focused on positive aspects of identity, as Cohen et al, explains, "gives people enough optimism to 'stay in the game' in the face of daily onslaught of threats, slights, challenges, aggravations, and setbacks." [4] In other words, while this unit's goal for identity support is immediate, the ultimate goal is to offer students strategies for managing lifelong identity changes.

This unit acknowledges that trauma may be part of managing identity during unwanted change, but the focus is not on trauma management specifically. Rather, students engage in identity work meant to support changes of many kinds. Later, I'll discuss the four specific identity work approaches that shape the reading and writing work students will do.

Philosophy

Hilda Lindemann Nelson describes personal identity as narrative tissue that stretches from the past into the future. It is constructed of multiple stories. In other words, identities are narrative representations of ourselves that are influenced by family, community, culture, and experiences.[5] The narrative nature of identity means that stories are selective; some occasions play a significant role in how we understand ourselves while others adopt a background role or are forgotten altogether.

Especially in moments of change, new stories can prompt a reconsideration of our narratively-constructed identity.[6] Sometimes, the result is an identity crisis. Consider a student who finds herself struggling in a new math class. She must choose how this new experience fits into her larger identity as a student. She might re-interpret her past math class success as worthless or lacking rigor and, therefore, her identity as a good student falters. In the same experience, the student might recall different moments to bolster her identity as someone who struggled in past math classes but persisted. This interpretation allows her to adapt personal identity by re-interpreting current struggles. Now, she can imagine her future struggle in math class as one of gritty pursuit of difficult math concepts instead of failure or lack of ability.

As we add new experiences to our repertoire, we naturally edit, re-interpret, and exchange old stories for ones that seem to describe us better. Sometimes, the narrative pruning and shaping are forced by new, prominent events in our lives. Unwanted change - especially the abrupt, traumatic kinds that students often experience-poses two specific risks to this process, each of which is addressed in this unit and described below.

Stock Narratives

First, students risk falling back on what Hilde Lindemann Nelson calls master or stock narratives. Master narratives, widely-known generic stories or plots, are shortcuts to understanding the world but are often oppressive and incorrect.[7] For example, the stereotype of black men as violent is a hurtful, racist, and wholly untrue master narrative. Other master narratives depict girls as bad at math, a child with a father in prison as abandoned or headed to prison himself, or a family in poverty as not caring about education. As Erik Erikson once described, identity development is both individual and communal,[8] so it's not surprising that many scholars have pointed out that cultural stereotypes and community ideals influence identity formation in forms of master narratives.[9]

When used with individual stories, master narratives apply racist, sexist, classist, and otherwise oppressive ideas directly to personal identity. Having a father sent to jail already changes economic and familial realities, but adding the narrative of parental abandonment or a lack of love to the situation is further damaging and likely untrue. Hurtful stories like these often impact our students' identities. Consider a student who misses a great deal of school due to her family's suddenly unpredictable housing situation. If she's treated as a troubled student due to her persistent absences, the master narrative that equates kids who don't attend school with kids who don't care about education may start to infiltrate her identity.

Narrow Identity Conception

The second risk to personal identity in transitional moments is losing sight of multiple aspects of identity. Narrow identity conceptions are precarious and therefore more fragile in moments of change.[10] A student whose identity is dominated by athletic success, for example, may experience severe identity damage if she becomes suddenly injured and unable to participate in sports. Similarly, the student who wasn't accepted at his middle school of choice risks major identity setbacks if his identity rests primarily on his high academic honors.

Text Selections

In this unit, students explore texts for models of adapting, changing, and bolstering identity. The first two texts in this unit are teacher-selected but students will have a chance to choose a third text that mirrors their own experiences or simply includes stories students wish to explore. Because students are at a range of reading levels, I'll combine out-of-class reading assignments with in-class support including discussion, close-reading analysis, and graphic organizers. Although the texts are introduced briefly here, I offer examples of analysis and identity work throughout the next section.

The first unit text is *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. The novel follows the protagonist, Esperanza Ortega, from her wealthy upbringing in Aguascalientes, Mexico, through dramatic changes. The sudden murder of her father leaves her family fortune controlled by ill-intentioned family members and forces her to flee to the United States with her mother and three servants.

The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis is the second text. Set in Afghanistan, it centers on an eleven-year-old protagonist, Parvana, and her family, who struggle to adjust to the major life changes caused by Taliban

control. When her father is violently arrested, the family is plunged into deeper poverty. Since Parvana is the only household member who can possibly pass as a male child, she dresses as a boy in order to gain access to the outside world.

The third book is individually selected by students. Although I'll provide a list of books with brief explanations on the changes and challenges the protagonists face, students may search in our school library, the public library, and elsewhere for books that catch their interest.

We'll also examine a variety of poems including "The Pruned Tree" by Howard Moss and Langston Hughes' "Dreams" and "Mother to Son." "The Pruned Tree" personifies a tree as it views its recently loss of limbs as a chance to take a new shape and to interact with the world in a fresh way. Despite his wounds, the tree oozes with optimism for a future where his losses fuel crisp new growth. While the tree affirms its own identity during a moment of challenge, "Mother to Son" features a parent's voice urging her son to keep moving forward in the face of difficulties. The mother contextualizes her son's struggles in the breadth of her own difficult life.

Approach

This unit is fiercely optimistic about who students are and what they can do. Too often, students in high-poverty schools like mine are consistently and systematically underappreciated for the character, resilience, and brilliance they bring to the classroom. The identity work described here is designed to support the wonderful elements of identity that students already have, especially those parts that are at risk of damage in moments of change. Instead of asking students to adopt new and unfamiliar identity aspects, students celebrate the pieces of their identity that have helped them navigate past changes and imagine a bright, resilient future.

In this unit, students participate in four types of identity work: 1) bibliotherapeutic examination of identity during change, 2) self-affirmation acts, 3) broadening identity stories, and 4) forward-looking stories. Each type of identity work functions as what Hilde Lindemann Nelson calls "counterstory." Counterstories purposefully disrupt master narratives.[11] In counterstories, students can take back self-narration by re-telling their story.

Consider a male student who throws a few punches in a playground tift and suddenly feels like a "bad kid" despite a spotless school record. For a black student, the racist master narrative might explain the incident as inherently violent. While acknowledging the error of throwing punches, the much-needed counterstory can contextualize this incident in a long history of school friendships or point out the self-defense in which the student was engaging. Without the counterstory, the student risks re-interpreting his identity as violent or "bad."

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy, the use of books to examine situations, actions, and stories of others to make individual meaning, is particularly suited for classroom identity work. In most classrooms, books are far more accessible than school-based therapy and the approach fits nicely with our focus on literature.[12]

Through books, students peek into changing lives and traumatic events of protagonists without being forced to disclose details of their own trauma or change.[13] Librarian Gina Seymour, who has used bibliotherapy to help students manage grief, notes that the slight distance between reader and subject offers safety to process.[14] In this unit, students follow the *Esperanza Rising* protagonist as she mourns the loss of her father. Esperanza waffles between anger and debilitating sadness. Throughout the text, she looks for comfort in gifts from her father and in connections to things he loved. By reading about and discussing a character instead of one's self, students can try out solutions or feelings that they might not be comfortable expressing for themselves.

Bibliotherapy matches text to student experience in order to "frame the conversation around ways that people survive, overcome, and adapt to hardships and challenges."[15] The three books included in this unit can't possibly reach the breadth of students' experience with change but they offer a start. Characters deal with sudden socioeconomic instability, migration, family illness and death, imprisonment, and more. In *The Breadwinner,* I imagine many students connecting to the family sacrifices that Parvana must make for her family's economic well-being. Like the student who walks his sisters to school instead of attending his middle-school of choice, Parvana deals with disappointment and anger as she's thrust into completing chores for her family instead of attending school or playing at home.

Through this unit's selected texts, students examine how characters respond to changes that reflect the ones they face in real life. Research suggests that the approach can help students cope with issues, solve problems, and promote identity growth.[16]

Self-Affirmation Acts

Acts of self-affirmation, the second type of identity work featured in this unit, are stories of self-adequacy that remind students of past experiences, skills, and character traits. The goal is to remind students of what has helped them overcome challenges in the past so they can more confidently face current obstacles. This identity work is particularly helpful during what Cohen & Sherman call "stressful transitions and choice points" or what this unit refers to as moments of "unwanted change."[17] The simple act of reminding oneself of tackling past challenges or making it through a transition can "bolster coping and resilience for the next adversity."[18]

While most of our self-affirmation work will be done in writing, our texts illustrate that it can be as simple as reminding yourself of past success. In *The Breadwinner,* Parvana must become increasingly bold in order to make enough money to keep her family afloat. She draws on tiny acts of self-affirmation for courage. Before tackling each new challenge, she reminds herself of her last success. First, it's just walking to the market to buy bread. When she passes as a boy, she reminds herself of this accomplishment before attempting to continue part of her father's business in the market. By reminding people of the psychosocial resources at their disposal, acts of self-affirmation accomplish two things: 1) they help put a current threat in context, and 2) they help people deal with a threat rather than simply avoid it.[19]

For my students, self-affirmation might be as quick as telling a story of a time a student tried multiple methods to solve a math problem (resilience!) or how the student used a rejection from a writing contest to making improvements on her next submission. For some students, acts of self-affirmation can result in significant academic gain.[20] In this unit, students will participate in their own acts of self-affirmation by writing narratives of managing change in the past and reflections on the strengths that have contributed to success in some area of their life.

Broadening Identity Stories

The third type of identity work in this unit is intended to broaden students' self-concept. A multi-faceted identity offers a buffer to painful change. With a more expansive view of identity, one rejection or failure does not shred the entire narrative tissue.[21] In the case of the injured student athlete, the pain of a sudden end to her athletic career may be mitigated with a more expansive view of self that includes her familial ties, academic success, and musical skills. Unfortunately, losing sight of a multi-faceted identity is at particular risk during moments of change.[22] The student frozen with disappointment when his middle school dreams became impossible may need to remember that in addition to being a high-achieving student, he is also a loyal friend, creative writer, fierce athlete, and valued community member. By remembering that he is more than just a good student, what he interprets as a catastrophic event in one part of his life does not destroy his identity entirely.

In the case of *Esperanza Rising*, the protagonist is plunged into a new socioeconomic reality. Suddenly, she is no longer distinguishable from her former servants. Now, Esperanza must work alongside people she barely noticed in the past. Eventually, she shapes her identity around more than material wealth. She finds joy in caring for the young children at the migrant camp, in learning new skills, and in having a good attitude during difficult times. By broadening her sense of identity, Esperanza can weather the challenges that life in a new country demands.

Positive Forward-looking Stories

The fourth identity strategy is future-oriented. When Hilde Lindemann Nelson describes identities as narrative tissues, she points out that our understanding of identity stretches into how we imagine the future.[23] These "forward-looking self-constituting stories" dictate not only the way we see our future, but also influence how we act now.[24] A student who imagines a future in college, for example, subtly adjusts their current actions in an orientation to her future self.

The opposite seems to be true as well; students with a negative view of their future act differently in the present. In Kristy Matsuda's study of adolescent gang membership, her team found that a negative future narrative influenced their decisions. Even if they wanted to do well in school, for example, adolescents in her study feared that it wouldn't work out for them or help their future anyway.[25] Identity work to create positive forward-looking stories may be particularly important for youths in high-poverty contexts. Some studies suggest that adolescents with low-socioeconomic status tend to adopt more indifferent attitudes towards their future as an adult including what work they will do.[26]

Our shared unit texts offer additional examples. In *The Breadwinner*, Parvana keeps a steady focus on the hope that her father will return and Taliban rule will lighten. In some ways, this idea of the future keeps her moving. She wants her family to be healthy and stable when they welcome her father home. She reads forbidden books because she dreams of the days when she can return to school. For Esperanza, her future hope lies in returning her mother to health and bringing her grandmother to live with her. She learns to work, contribute, and save her meager wages in anticipation of a brighter future. In this unit, students write their own future-oriented stories including a letter in the spirit of Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son" poem where students imagine the hopeful future their parents wish for their children.

Future-oriented stories are also a chance to counteract master narratives. In a recent *Urban Review* article, Rodrick Carey describes a low-income student in his study who believed his teachers viewed him as a

troublemaker who didn't turn in much homework. Still, his family believed he could go to college, even though his parents had not been able to.[27] Using forward-looking stories, a student like the one described above can draw on community and family belief for the future even in the face of other obstacles.

Strategies

Identity-work, especially the four types described above, naturally fits with middle grade reading and writing goals. The reading and writing strategies described below are used throughout the unit to support the academic and identity goals of this unit.

Recursive Writing Process

The recursive writing process allows students to consider, write, and revise their ideas as many times as needed. Versions of the process apply to students at all writing abilities and can be used from early elementary school into college and career settings. The writing process allows students to consider their narratives more than once and, like the narratively-constructed identity that this unit supports, progressive drafts of writing nudge students to consider the ways they interpret or frame their stories. Throughout the process, students will focus on analyzing if what they meant to communicate (intent) is matched with what is actually on the page. The writing process will be supported by mini-lessons of prose, paragraph, and punctuation.

Audio Reflection

Writing can be difficult and sometimes my students need to talk about their ideas and process out loud what they're trying to do and how they think they're meeting the goal. In this unit, I'll ask students to record audio reflections using a handheld audio recorder or a cell phone recording app to talk about their intentions and their writing. One-on-one conferencing might offer similar benefits for student processing and reflection but with twenty-eight students in class, scheduling can be too infrequent. With audio reflection, I can assign students to process, reflect, or evaluate at any stage of the writing process. For example, before writing about self-affirmation acts, students can record their musings on different moments of accomplishment as brainstorming. The recording holds them accountable to complete the work but I've also found that I learn a great deal about student thinking when they aren't inhibited by fear of written error.[28]

Class Discussion

Since many students enter with below-grade-level reading skills, class discussion will serve as a scaffolding for comprehension and analysis. We'll use group discussion to examine authors' intent, characterization, and other literary elements. Later, it will take on a more experimental role as students experiment with giving characters advice and comparing their own experiences. Class discussions will alternate between small groups, pairs, and whole class conversations.

Classroom Activities

Sequentially, the following classroom activities should take place after group discussion and guided exploration of text and ideas. These activities offer a more independent place for students to engage in self-exploration and respond to major unit themes. By merging Language Arts objectives with identity-work strategies, students can meet academic goals while engaging in identity care.

Although each activity fits with this unit's texts, they are easily adaptable. Simply model each activity using a character from a shared text you choose before students work on their own.

Map of Changes

On a chronological timeline, students map out moments of their lives when they experienced change. Keep in mind that recalling so much history and organizing them into a timeline of change can be a daunting task for some students. Our memory naturally minimizes some changes. A scary trip to a new place can quickly ease into a benign memory when we're comfortable with our new surroundings. To prompt a range of life changes for the timeline, list specific areas that students must include on their timeline. For example, I'll ask students to include changes in school, personal or athletic arenas, geographic changes, and family changes. Some students may wish to work in layers, first creating a timeline of school changes and then starting at the beginning of the timeline again to layer on events from another part of their life.

The life map serves as brainstorming for the subsequent activity but it's also an act of self-affirmation. As students chronicle the changes in their lives --even the ones they had forgotten-- they also remind themselves of the challenges they've overcome. When a student adds a timeline marker of her family's month in a homeless shelter, for example, it's a mental high-five that she's still standing. For some students, a map of changes may have an identity-broadening effect as well. A student who was just cut from the club soccer team that she spent all summer practicing for might note how many other areas of her life are present on the timeline.

Navigating Change Narrative

Using a moment from their map of changes timeline, students draft an essay about the strengths and skills that helped them navigate unwanted change. One student could choose a grade-level transition where he didn't back away from failure while another might select an unwanted move to a new neighborhood where she coped by making friends with people she didn't like at first.

This assignment is purposefully-optimistic: students are asked to reflect on specific strengths and skills to get them thinking about their own adequacy. The narrative students write serves as a classic act of self-affirmation, a chance to remind themselves of the parts of their identity that help them get through challenging times. Even students who tell stories in which they reacted badly at one or more points during a change still show a willingness to learn from being wrong. Intentional self-correction is worth celebrating!

In this activity, the writing process lends itself perfectly to the slow, careful thinking of purposeful identity work. After each draft, students should read for intention. Some students might notice that their writing portrays change and resolution with no action from the characters in the story. But is that true? How, exactly, did the character react or respond to the change? A second or third draft revision that includes more character

action gives students credit for their part in adjusting to change. Just as first drafts beg for thoughtful revisions, student stories deserve careful attention to oversimplification and reliance on damaging master narratives.

Letter of Advice

In this activity, students compose letters of advice to a fictional peer experiencing a similar change. For example, a student who recently weathered an apartment eviction might offer advice to an imaginary student forced to leave her home. The map of changes they created earlier in the unit may provide helpful ideas so that students can self-select the situations on which they want to give advice.

Although this activity mimics the self-affirmation goals of a narrative, the difference in writing genre offers a chance to advise in second person. Some students may be more willing to give vulnerable advice and explore their feelings when they don't have to claim it so directly in first person. Giving advice functions as a positive forward-looking story. Although students aren't directly claiming future actions for themselves, they get the chance to explore models of how they *might* respond to future changes. Writing to someone else is a chance to imagine a future that they aren't yet able to claim themselves.

Since letter writing may be an unfamiliar genre for some students, we'll practice writing fictional letters of advice from the main characters of our shared texts before embarking on individual work. For example, students might pose as Parvana scribbling advice on taking on extra family chores or as Esperanza doling out suggestions for handling the loss of her homeland.

Family Interviews

As the capstone activity to the unit, students will interview at least one important person in their life, preferably a parent or grandparent, about what identities they hope to pass on. It's a chance to allow a role model to create a hopeful, forward-facing story. What kind of person does your grandmother want you to be? What advice do they have for you when you are experiencing difficult change? What hopes does your father have for your future?

Using handheld audio recorders or cell phone recording apps, students will record their interviews before they turn them into a written product. After they've listened and reflected on their interview(s), they'll write a vision for the future statement in which they combine their own dreams with those of their family and community. I suggest a bit of creative space for the process here. Students who choose to interview more than one role model or family member might start by just compiling future visions before figuring out how to insert their own views while others might jump straight into a first-person future vision with a family member's words as back-up.

For some students, a family interview will provide much-needed affirmation. For others, it may bolster parts of their identities that aren't always celebrated in school. For example, a parent may invoke an important aspect of faith or cultural history that can broaden a student's identity. But most importantly, this activity helps students to envision a future successful self.

Conclusion

Unwanted change is a human experience not specific to class, age, or school location. It cracks the stability of everyday routine and shakes the comfort of what we know. Too often, the threat of damaged identities is cast aside for more concrete solutions or ignored in the face of pressing academic needs. I hope I've demonstrated here that identity during changing times deserves attention in the classroom. The research, strategies, and activities in this unit offer ways to shore up student identities now and serve as longer-term reminders of the great wealth that's already inside our students.

Endnotes

1. Claude Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi, 214.*
2. Audra Bull, "Are You Talkin' to Me?"; Krista Waldron, "Reading, Writing, and Recidivism."
3. David Yeager et al., "How to Improve," 1079.
4. Geoffrey Cohen et al., "Reducing the Achievement Gap," 334.
5. Hilde Lindemann Nelson, *Holding and Letting Go*, 84.
6. Ibid, 85.
7. Hilde Lindemann Nelson, *Damaged Identities,* 62.
8. Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis*, 22.
9. Niobe Way et al., "I'm not Going to," 408.
10. Lindemann Nelson, *Damaged Identities,* 90,
11. Ibid, 7.
12. Erika Dajevskis et al., "Therapy by the Book," 33.
13. Mary Anne Prater, et al., "Using Children's Books," 6.
14. Gina Seymour, "The Compassionate Makerspace," 28.
15. Dajevskis et al., "Therapy by the Book," 34.
16. Prater, Johnson et al., "Using Children's Books," 6.
17. Geoffrey Cohen, et al., "The Psychology of Change," 337.
18. Ibid, 337.
19. Cohen et al., "The Psychology of Change," 355.
20. Cohen et al., "Reducing the Achievement Gap," 1307.
21. Cohen et al., 2014 "The Psychology of Change," 350.
22. Lindemann Nelson, *Damaged Identities*, 62.
23. Lindemann Nelson, *Holding and Letting Go*, 86.
24. Ryota Ono, "Learning From Young," 757.
25. Kristy N Matsuda et al., "Gang Membership," 441.
26. Susanne Alm, "The Worried," 555.
27. Roderick L. Carey, "Keep that in Mind," 732.
28. Marissa E. King, et al., "Uninterrupted and On Their Own."

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Appendix

5th Grade, Common Core State Standards

In this unit, students write inventively by creating an imaginary audience, writing as a character from a fictional text, and invoking a family member's voice. They create personal narratives too. In each case, students are exploring how the writing process works and, as the CCSS suggest, finding ways to make a universal process their own. The unit's focus on identity supports analytical reading and writing standards that analyze challenge and change within text.

Narrative writing with real or imagined events: writing strand 3

Using the writing process: writing strand 5

Analyze how characters respond to challenge and change: reading strand 2 and 3, writing strand