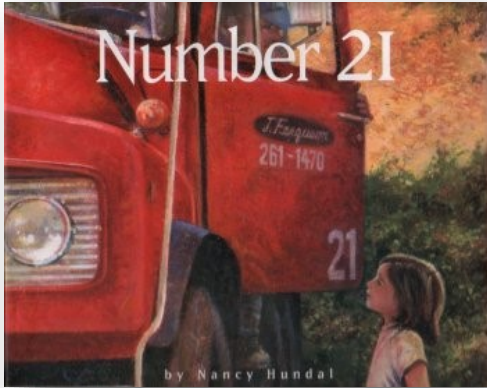


Writing Trait: Ideas and Organization

Learning Intention: This book is used at the beginning of a memoir unit to teach students that a narrow writing focus produces a better memoir. Why? Because it allows the writer to include lots of wonderful details. And readers crave details!

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By Nancy Hundal

Before Reading

Before reading have students ask a variety of questions based on the front cover illustration and the title. If students begin making comments rather than asking questions, have them begin with the words, "I wonder..."

After listening to their questions, explain that this is a real story that took place when the author was a young girl. Nancy Hundal is retelling one of the stories from her life.

During Reading

Ask students to listen carefully to the events in this book. Explain that you will be asking how long would it take for these events to actually occur? Give the following options for students to choose:

- one year
- a month
- a full day
- an afternoon

After Reading

After listening to this memoir, tally the responses to the questions above. It may be necessary to walk through the events and ask how long would each take, then add up the total amount of time. We want students to understand that some of the best stories we can tell, occur in a very brief amount of time. For instance, instead of writing about all the events that happened during a week of school, a more powerful piece of writing would zoom in on one event that occurred during the week.

Once our students understand that a memoir needs a very precise focus, it's time to draw a picture, with labels perhaps, that show a favourite moment in their life. Capture their language as they describe their picture. The way they tell the story often represents how they will eventually write a story.



Transcribed Audio: Um, this is me... This is me um... This is me at the movie theatre on Mother's day. My whole family is with me and and when I was at the movie theatre, it said, I'm all around you.



Please scan this QR code to hear this writer tell the story of their picture! This oral language was used to offer descriptive feedback.

To scan this code, open your phone's camera and hover over the code. A link will appear. For older phones, download a free SCAN app.

This sample is from Nanaimo school district. It's from The Island Literacy Network's Writing Continuum,

From a transcript or audio file, a great list of strengths may be shared with the writer (drawer!). And from there, next steps are established. This chart is from the Island Literacy Network's Writing Continuum.

BC Performance Standards	6 Traits (based on Culham & Spandel)	Strengths	Possible Next Steps
Meaning	Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movie theatre experience offers a clear focus about one topic • Picture conveys clear meaning when combined with explanation by the child • Several details are contained in the child's explanation 	<p>Add more details to his illustrations to explain his story</p> <p>May begin to label picture with beginning letter</p>
Style	Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages audience with his passionate explanation 	
	Sentence Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses complete sentences when telling his story 	
	Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a few descriptive words and phrases (ex. whole, movie theatre) to tell his story 	
Form	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The explanation offers a sense of 'beginning' and 'middle' 	When talking about picture, add an 'ending' to the story
Conventions	Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct use of upper and lower case to print name in a left to right direction 	