



# Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning--and Triumph Over Tests

By Katherine Bomer

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Memoir is more than writing down memories; it's a powerful motivator for children to write and revise. Working with familiar material, students explore their lives, learn new and sophisticated elements of craft, and engage deeply with content to uncover personal and universal meaning. By teaching with memoir, you can help students exceed official standards for writing, both in class work and on tests, while also giving them a tool for making sense of their place in the world.

In *Writing a Life*, Katherine Bomer presents classroom-tested strategies for tapping memoir's power, including ways to help kids generate ideas to write about, elaborate on and make meaning from their memories, and learn craft from published memoirs. She describes dozens of ideas for minilessons, teacher - student conferences, peer conferences, writing activities, prompts, and revision strategies. She then crosses the literacy spectrum to show how studying mentor memoirs can enrich students' reading by building strong reading-writing connections. In addition, Bomer presents a curricular unit that prepares students for writing tests by systematically and explicitly helping them transfer the content and skills they develop in writing memoir to the demands of standardized assessments.

Every student has a story to share. With *Writing a Life*, you'll have the inspiration, the strategies, and the materials you need to help them write it beautifully.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

“This depth of attention to a single genre is unprecedented in books on the teaching of writing. Until now, for this depth, teachers used books written for aspiring writers and translated them into sensible classroom practice. Katherine brings writing and teaching together exquisitely in this beautiful book.”—Katie Wood Ray, Author of *About the Authors*

“Smart teachers will read this book. Smarter teachers will use it as a guide. The smartest ones will read it, use it, and then return to it for inspiration, reflection, and, ultimately, for hope. In *Writing a Life*, Bomer takes us beyond the craft of writing memoir to the purpose and passion of this genre.”—Kylene Beers, Author of *When Kids Can't Read - What Teachers Can Do*

“*Writing a Life* has become my new Best-book-in-the-whole world. Like a best friend, this book understands what I need without my naming it, and responds in ways that are as deep and as pure as the human spirit.”—Lucy Calkins, Author of *Units of Study for Primary Writing*

#### **About the Author**

Katherine Bomer, author of *Hidden Gems* and *Starting with What Students Do Best*, is one of the field's most gifted writers as well as one of its most gifted teachers of writing. In more than two decades of teaching and consulting, she has used her writers' eye to focus on how craft isn't just an instructional goal but an instructional tool that allows writers to go grow well beyond the range of most publically available assessments. An internationally known consultant and frequent keynote speaker, Katherine began her consulting career with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. In addition to *Writing a Life*, she is the coauthor of the Heinemann title *For a Better World* (with Randy Bomer) and delivers on-site PD through Heinemann Professional Development Services. A published poet and essayist, Katherine is also coauthor (with Lucy Calkins) of *A Writer's Shelf*. She began over fifteen years ago as a professional developer with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. A classroom teacher for ten years, she now works with teachers in elementary and middle schools throughout the country. As a frequent speaker at conferences and institutes, she combines a teacher's practical advice, a writer's love of language, and a powerful plea for social justice.

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