

# MEMOIR GENRE STUDY

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*“Making sense of memoirs enable us to make sense of our lives.” –Heather Lattimer*

## **REASONS WE READ AND WRITE MEMOIRS:**

- Figure out our experiences and to connect with the experiences and wisdom of others.
- To learn the stories of other individuals and to share our own.

## **UNLIKE BIOGRAPHIES, MEMOIRS ALLOWS US TO:**

- Get inside the heads of other people
- Experience a moment in their lives from their perspective
- Connect with the experience—to feel emotions
- Empathize with the response
- Appreciate the learning that took place
- Find community in what can be an isolating world
- Cause readers to reflect upon and better understand their lives and experiences

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF A MEMOIR:**

- A memory; a description of an event from the past
- Written in the first person; told from one person’s point of view
- Based on the truth
- Reveals the feelings of the writer
- Has meaning; shows what the author **learned** from the experience
- Focused on one event; about one point in the author’s life
- About the author’s experience more than about the event itself

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*PICKING A MEMOIR TOPIC WITH \*SEED IDEAS\**

## **WAYS TO SHOW MEANING IN TEXT: SHOW, DON'T TELL**

***Through the character's actions.*** "I tuck the kitten under my jacket and run out of the woods."

***Through the character's dialogue.*** "Don't worry,' I tell it, stroking its scabby head until the mewing is replaced by a faint purr. 'Everything will be okay.'"

***Through the character's thoughts.*** "I feel the warmth of the kitten through my shirt and start thinking of names."

***Through comparisons.*** "This time I was alone. Lucky for you I was, I think to the kitten. Otherwise, David or Claude might have decided you'd be good practice for their slingshots."

***Through descriptive language.*** "The kitten is a scrawny thing with burrs and bits of wood caught in its hair, where it still has hair, and pus coming out of its eyes and nose."