

Identifying Family Memories

This modelling the tools is incorporated into critical challenges at grade 1, however, it can be adapted for use at all grade levels.

Overview

The detailed suggestions which follow help students explore the sources and feelings associated with family memories. Students are introduced to the concept of memory through physical objects and the story *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*. After establishing an understanding of "memories", students generate memories of various family events. By considering what makes some of these memories more powerful than others, students develop criteria for a powerful memory. Based on these criteria, students decide which of their family memories is the most powerful. Students portray their powerful memory through drawing or dramatization.

Pre-planning

Locate evocative objects:

- Find multiple samples of one or two evocative objects (e.g., a small bag of pine needles, a scented flower, carnival music, sounds of nature, a piece of fur, soft wool material, feather) that will appeal to students' senses of touch, smell and/or sound and invoke memories for your students. Ideally, locate enough of each sample to distribute one to every two or three students. The purpose of giving all students the same sensory experience is to draw out that people will have different memories. If sufficient examples of the same object are not available, give different evocative objects to each group of students.

Decide on the mode of representation:

- In Session Four, students are asked to share their powerful (positive) memory with the rest of the class. We describe two formats: drawing a picture or creating a dramatic representation or tableau (i.e., a silent recreation of a scene from the memorable event using other class members). If the latter option is selected, you will need a camera to record the tableaux for subsequent display.

Session One

Evoke student memories:

- Give each group of two or three students the object you have selected to stimulate their recollection of memories. Ask students to close their eyes and see if the smell, sound or touch makes a picture in their mind. Pose the following questions to extend students' thinking:
 - When did you hear/smell/feel this?

- Does it make you think of a person or a place?
- Who is there?
- What are you doing?
- How do you feel?

Share memories:

- Ask students who were reminded of something to share their memory with the class. Create a web of students' responses. Leave space in the centre of the web to print the label for this web. Discuss why the sense(s) may not make everyone think of something or that students thought of different things. (Perhaps, they had no experience with that sound or had a different experience.) If helpful, repeat this exercise with another object/other objects that evoke(s) different senses.

Define memories:

- Refer to the ideas in the web created above and ask students what we call things that we remember. Introduce the term "memories" and develop with students an initial definition of a memory (e.g., something you remember). Record the title "Our memories" at the centre of the web.

Read story:

- Introduce the book, *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox (see References). In this story, Miss Nancy and a boy named Wilfred Gordon are good friends. When Miss Nancy, who lives in a seniors' home, "loses her memory" Wilfred tries to discover what memories are so he can help her find her memory. As you read the story, ask students to listen how Wilfred learned about memories.

Discuss memories in story:

- Following a reading of the story, ask students how the people in the stories described memories (e.g., "makes you cry," "makes you laugh"). Discuss the meaning of phrases such as "precious as gold" and "something warm." Develop students' sense of the range of emotions (feelings) connected to memories.

Identify feelings about memories:

- Revisit the pictures of Miss Nancy's memories. Create a web titled "Miss Nancy's memories." Recall the objects and the associated memory and brainstorm the feelings that might be attached to those memories. Create a list of feeling words that describe memories (e.g., happy, funny, sad, proud, frustrating). Revisit the web of student memories created earlier and identify and record feelings that might be associated with students' memories.

Refine definition of memories:

- Revisit the definition of memory developed prior to reading the story. Ask students if they want to add anything to the definition.

Generate school memories:

- Invite students to think of memories they might have as a class. "Who can think of a happy school memory?" (e.g., the fun fair). Print the memory and the associated feeling on the board (e.g., happy). Ask the class if this is a happy memory for everyone? What if someone was sick and could not go, then it might be a sad memory for that person. Generate additional school memories. For each memory, record the feelings associated with that memory. Discuss with students that the same event can create a different memory for different people.

Anticipate the next session:

- Remind students that they will be making a memory box so they will be thinking more about memories. Announce that tomorrow students will try to remember things they have done with their respective families.

Session Two

Review understanding of memories:

- Remind students of the story of Wilfred and Miss Nancy and the definition of memories developed previously. Offer several statements and ask students whether or not each statement is a memory and why or why not (e.g., "I once lost my dog." "My dog's name is Dublin"). Students might use a "thumbs up" or "stand up" response for yes and a "thumbs down" or "sit down" response for a no. After each statement and response, ask students to provide reasons for their response. To determine how well students understand the concepts, cut out multiple copies of the eight cards found on [Sorting Memories](#) and ask students, as you read aloud each card, to sort the cards in two piles: those that are memories and those that are not. Identify the card by referring to the graphic and when it is clear everyone has the card, read the sentence asking students to place it in the correct pile. Check the piles for accuracy. Alternatively, you need not cut out the cards, but simply ask students to print an "M" in those boxes that are memories.

Generate family memories:

- Remind students that yesterday they thought of school memories and explain that today they will think about family memories. Ask students how a family memory is different from a school memory. Point out that a family memory is not just about the student, but must involve someone or something in their family. As an example, share a family memory that you have. Perhaps select an object from your memory box. Include descriptions of your feelings as you recount your memory. Ask students to identify the feelings that your memory evoked (e.g., happy, sad, funny). Invite several students to share a family memory with the rest of the class.

Record family memories:

- Give each student a copy of [Family Memories](#) and invite students to draw up to four "draft" pictures of different family memories—one in each of the spaces in the circle. Encourage students to draw simple pictures to help them remember the idea, not finished drawings to share. Assist students in thinking of memories by using think/talk/draw prompts. After each prompt, students should think of a memory, tell a partner about their memory and then draw it in "draft" form. Encourage students to select four memories that are associated with different feelings. Students may be ready to eliminate the "talk" portion of this strategy after one or two times and just listen to the prompt, think of a memory and draw it. The following format for prompts may be helpful:

Think of a time in your family when . . .

- you laughed so hard you could not stop
- you had such a good time you did not want it to end
- you were so excited you could hardly stand it
- everyone was worried or sad
- you just felt warm and cozy and glad to be there
- everyone felt proud.

After students have illustrated their memories, scribe or ask students to write in the space provided a sentence that tells about the feeling associated with the family memory (e.g., I felt _____ when _____).

Share memories:

- Invite students to share one family memory with the class. In sharing, they should tell about the memory and how it made them feel.

Session Three

Share two "powerful" memories:

- Print the word "Powerful" on the board and ask students what they think powerful means. Students may come up with synonyms such as "strong" or "tough." Print the word "Memories" and ask students what they think a powerful memory might be. What might make one memory more powerful than another? Give an example of two memories such as:

One day we went to visit a friend who looks after sick birds. I got to take a bird for a walk. It was a small falcon. I wore a glove and the bird was attached to the glove with a string. Each of us had a bird to walk. Mine was the smallest. We must have looked like a parade, walking our birds. I was a bit nervous around the birds, but it was very exciting. I don't think a lot of people get the chance to walk a bird.

Every year we go to my grandma's for Christmas and we do the same things. On Christmas Eve we put up the tree. We have barbecued hamburgers for dinner. Grandma

says that's so there won't be any leftovers. Grandpa always reads the Christmas story and we get to open one present on Christmas Eve. It is a very special time and I look forward to it for all of December. I love having all our family together for a special time.

Discuss the memories:

- Ask students which memory is the more powerful to them and why. The first one could be considered powerful because it only happened once and that makes it very special. However, the second one might be harder to forget because it happens again and again. Note that it is the only person holding the memory who can judge its power. Based on the discussion, develop criteria for a powerful memory. Two criteria might be: a memory you will never forget, a memory that has strong feelings.

Present the critical challenge:

- Refer to the family memories that student drew previously. In partners, ask students to describe everything they can remember about each memory (e.g., the sequence of events, who was involved, how they felt, why it is important). Students consider each of those memories in light of the criteria for a powerful memory and answer the critical question:

What is your most powerful family memory?

Once students have decided which memory is most powerful and have explained why to their partner, they can put a sticker next to the picture of that memory.

Session Four

Introduce the idea of sharing memories:

- Revisit the powerful memories selected the previous day and explain that students will now share their powerful memories with the rest of the class. If any students have a powerful memory that is upsetting, encourage them to choose to share another, more positive memory. As indicated earlier, we discuss two formats for students' sharing of their powerful memories: drawing and dramatic representation. Each option is described separately

Draw the memory:

- **OPTION ONE:** The drawing option unfolds in three stages: (1) telling a partner, (2) drawing and writing about the memory and (3) sharing it with the class. Organize students into pairs, so that they can tell their partner about their most powerful memory. Students may want to use their puppets to tell the story. After talking about the details of their powerful memory with their partner, invite students to record their memory in a more detailed picture. Use [My Powerful Family Memory](#) for students to illustrate and write about their memory (or have scribed, perhaps, by a buddy from an older class).

When students have completed their writing and drawing, ask them to share their memory and its representation with the entire class.

Represent the memory dramatically:

- **OPTION TWO:** The tableau option unfolds in four stages: (1) model how to develop a silent role play, (2) prepare and practice the tableau, (3) present it to the class and (4) write about it.

(1) Demonstrate how to do develop a silent role play (or a tableau—a freeze frame snapshot) using one of the memories introduced at the beginning of the previous session (e.g., finding the falcon or Christmas time). Model the following steps for developing a tableau with a group of student s so that the class is clear about how partners can cooperate:

- One student tells the rest of the group about his/her powerful memory
- The group decides what is the one most important moment during the memory (e.g., releasing the bird)
- The student explains who of his/her family (and other people) were present at the important moment
- Students pick who in the group will take on the role of each person in the memory
- All the actors stand together pretending that they are part of the memory
- Each person must have the feeling that their person might have felt (e.g., scared, happy, nervous)
- At the right moment, everyone stays perfect still as though they were frozen right at the most important part of the memory
- Take a photograph of the tableau.

(2) Organize students into groups of three to prepare and practice their tableaux. Help students find a way to decide who will share their powerful memory first. After they have told their memory to their group, students are to work together to prepare a tableau that illustrates each powerful memory. You may want to walk the class collectively though each of the steps discussed above and you may prefer to have each group present one tableau before getting back together to develop and present a second and (eventually) a third tableau.

(3) Following sufficient practice time, gather the class in a circle. Each student group presents its tableau for the class. Photograph each presentation. Ask the class to watch the role play and when it is finished, to try to identify the powerful memory. Students tell why they selected that memory as their most powerful.

(4) Distribute [My Powerful Family Memory](#) for students to paste the picture of the tableaux in the space provided and to write about (or have scribed) their memory and why it is powerful.

Identify learning:

- When all students have shared their memory (regardless of the option followed) discuss what is the same about the memories and what is different about the memories (e.g.,

memories create different feelings). Ask students what they learned about families (e.g., people in families do different things, people in families like different things, someone's family moved here from far away). Record students' statements about memories on a chart that can be retained for further reference.

Add to memory box:

- Suggest that students keep the record of their powerful memory with the other items that will become their memory box.

Assessment

Assess family memories:

- Use the first three criteria on the rubric [Assessing Family Memories](#) to assess students' current understanding of their family memories. The sources of evidence for each of three criteria on this rubric are listed below:
 - use responses on [Sorting Memories](#) to assess their understanding of the concept of "memory"
 - use responses on [Family Memories](#) to assess their recall of family memories
 - use responses on [My Powerful Family Memory](#) to assess their ability to identify and explain a powerful memory

Use the results of these assessments to decide about the level of support students will require in the next challenge. Reaching the "basic understanding" level on the rubric may be an appropriate objective for many early primary students.

References

Books listed as references have not been reviewed or approved by Alberta Education.

Mem Fox, *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* Illus. Julie Vivas (Toronto: Puffin Books, 1987).



Credits

This lesson is taken from *Celebrating Families*, edited by Mary Abbott, Carole Ford and Roland Case (Richmond, BC: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2002), pp. 27–34. Permission granted from The Critical Thinking Consortium for use by Alberta teachers.

Documents

The following documents are referenced in the above modelling the tools.
They can be adapted for your needs and re-saved.

Graphic Organizers

- [Family Memories](#) 
- [My Powerful Family Memory](#) 

Assessment

- [Assessing Family Memories](#) 

Lesson Material

- [Sorting Memories](#) 