

**Duration:** 3 class periods of 45-55 minutes

**Adaptations:** "When Someone Helped Me," Upper Elementary (4-5), Narrative Writing; and "Bad Things Lead to Good, High School" (9-12), Narrative Writing

**Lexile Measure:** 670

### Learning from Experience Intellimetric™ Prompt:

We learn many things from experience. Think about an experience that you had that taught you an important lesson. What was the experience? What lesson did you learn from this experience?

Write a narrative about an experience you had and the important lesson you learned from it.

As you write, remember your story will be scored based on how well you:

- Develop a multi-paragraph response to the assigned topic that clearly communicates the purpose of your story to the audience.
- Describe the characters, setting, and conflict using meaningful sensory descriptions and details that enable the reader to visualize the experiences in your narrative.
- Organize your story in a clear and logical manner, including a beginning, middle and end.
- Use well-structured sentences and language that are appropriate for your audience.
- Edit your work to conform to the conventions of standard American English.

### Day One: After Reading *Touching Spirit Bear* to Chapter 13 (offline)

- 1) Students use their writer's journal to generate a list of common elements used when we write in the narrative mode. (3 minutes)
- 2) Students share some of these to quickly review as a class such elements as setting, characterization, plot development, conflict, dialogue, sensory description, etc. (3 minutes)
- 3) In groups of three or four, students complete [Elements of Literature](#), filling in the graphic organizer based upon the novel *Touching Spirit Bear*. Review as a class. (14 minutes)
- 4) The teacher asks, "Writers often use descriptive language in their stories. Where in the Elements of Literature chart would we include information about sensory description?" (Answer: setting and style sections.) Teacher directs students to a specific passage of *Touching Spirit Bear* (any of the Chapters 8-12 work nicely), chosen for its intense sensory descriptions. Individually, students reread the passage, taking notes in their journal about the sensory description they notice. (8 minutes)
- 5) Teacher hands out [Sensory Descriptions](#). Students form groups of three and using a jigsaw format, identify elements of sensory description in the *Touching Spirit Bear* passage. In the jigsaw format each student takes responsibility for two different types of sensory description. For example, one person in the group is responsible for visual and auditory examples, the second student finds descriptions of smell and taste, and the third person focuses on touch and emotional descriptions. Review as a class. (17 minutes)

### Day Two: Brainstorming and Prewriting (offline)

- 1) In their journals, students write their initial responses to the prompt: *We learn many things from experience. Think about an experience that you had that taught you an important lesson. What was the experience? What lesson did you learn from this experience?* During this stage, students are thinking about their own lives. (10 minutes)

- 2) Teacher leads a discussion beginning with Cole from *Touching Spirit Bear* by Ben Mikaelson, referencing Cole’s learning experience through Native American Circle Justice. Teacher then plays two clips from Author Series: Interview with Ben Mikaelson, “Storytelling,” and “Emotional Autobiography.” Students listen carefully and take notes. (15 minutes)
- 3) Working from the example of Mikaelson’s life, students engage in a class discussion and draw parallels to their own lives and experiences.
  - What advice does Mikaelson have for young writers?
  - What lessons did Mikaelson learn during his early childhood and school years? What hardships did he endure?
  - Was Mikaelson damaged by his negative experiences, or did he overcome them? Are both options possible?
  - How did Mikaelson create the anger in Cole?
  - What lesson did Mikaelson learn from Buffy? How did he carry it over into his entire life?
  - What lessons will you write about? How were you able to derive them from negative experiences? What advice would you give to someone going through a similar situation? (15 minutes)
- 4) Returning to their journal entries from the beginning of class, students complete the [Narrative Outline](#), students begin mapping their own experiences in story form. More advanced students or students with a desire to be more thorough may opt to use the [Narrative Wizard](#) (in written form or online) instead. The Narrative Wizard goes through the prewriting process more slowly and more comprehensively. (10 minutes)
- 5) Students complete the Narrative Outline and/or Narrative Wizard for homework.

### Day Three: Adding Sensory Details and Drafting (online)

- 1) Returning to their journals, students consider their outlines from yesterday. Returning to the narrative about their own experience (the focus of the prompt), students write one sensory detail for each of the senses discussed two days ago: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, and emotion. (5 minutes)
- 2) In pairs, students share their experience with their partners. Partners ask questions to help the author think of more sensory details he or she could include in his or her narrative. Here are some examples of questions that partners might ask:
  - **Sight:** You mentioned your brother. What does he look like? Could you include a physical description of him?
  - **Hearing:** One of the biggest differences when moving from the city to the country is probably the noise. How are the noises different for your character, especially at night?
  - **Touch:** It sounds like your character is uncomfortable in her own clothes on the first day of school. How might you give more details using the sense of touch?
  - **Smell:** Your story will probably be set at a carnival, and you mention the smell of popcorn, but there are lots of other smells you might include. Can you think of any?
  - **Taste:** You do a great job of describing the sight of all the food spread out for Thanksgiving dinner. What did it taste like?
  - **Emotion:** I’m able to witness your main character being stunned, but I’m not sure why he is stunned. Could you bring out this emotion a bit more? (15 minutes)
- 3) In a feedback session, students take turns telling the class about one sensory detail from their partners’ story that they found particularly vivid. (10 minutes)

# “Learning from Experience”

Middle School (6-8), Narrative Writing

- 4) Using their Narrative Outlines and the sensory details they wrote in their journals, students begin drafting their narrative essays in MY Access! (20 minutes)