

SIX-WORD MEMOIRS

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) was a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize winning American author and journalist. His spare prose is simple and understated. He

Explains his “Ice-berg” theory in *Death in the Afternoon*:

“If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing.”

Legend credits Hemingway with the first six-word story. Though debated, Hemingway composed this story on a napkin to win a bet with his contemporaries. The story was simple in appearance, but understated: “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

In 2006 SMITH Magazine and Twitter reinvented the six-word story as the six-word memoir. They have had over 11,000 submissions.

PART 1

DUE DATE: _____

Your assignment is to:

- (1) Create ONE (1) **REALLY GREAT, WELL THOUGHT OUT, CAREFULLY CRAFTED AND METHODICALLY CHOSEN** six-word memoir.
- (2) Then, you are **to CREATE an art piece** on which your six-word memoir will be displayed. The art piece must, in some way reflect the memoir. These 6-Word Memoirs will be displayed in the hallways of the School for your peers and the staff of MBCI to view. So craft both your memoir and your final display carefully and thoughtfully.
- (3) Write a detailed explanation of your six-word memoir and art style & piece. Explain the rational and motive behind using the words, art style and the art itself. This will provide the answer to the big question, WHY?

PART 2

DUE DATE: _____

(4) Write a 4-5 page story about the 6 word memoir. Remember to Show Don't Tell your story.

Write using the techniques we discussed in class, have a captivating opening, building to a climax with a resolution that allows your reader to realize the lesson you learned. Do not explicitly state the lesson! Strong memoirs imply the lesson through the action and vivid description of their memoir. Remember in the excerpt, 'Finishing School' the reader was not told that Maya learned to stand up for herself and the racism she experienced, we came to see and experience this lesson through the story itself.

Preparing to Create your 6 Word Memoir

Each memoir must be true and tell a story. Mark Tredinnick writes in *The Little Green Grammar Book*, "Every piece of writing, no matter how flat and useful, is a crowd of stories, and each of them is a sentence. Every sentence tells a tale: it names someone (or something) and tells you something about them-what they did; what they are; or what happened to them" (19).

Let's see what story you tell in exactly six words.

Here are some tips:

- ✓ The story should be about YOU.
- ✓ Force yourself to be creative.
- ✓ Make revisions. Put the six BEST words in the BEST order.
- ✓ Remember Hemingway's iceberg theory, sometimes understated is best, some times not.
- ✓ Tredinnick defines a sentence as something that names someone or something else and tells you their stories.
- ✓ Have fun, write a few memoirs, and then choose the best.
- ✓ Create an art piece to display your 6-word memoir that is reflective of the memoir. (Nothing random or last minute!)
- ✓ Write your paragraphs explaining your memoir and art piece.
- ✓ Lastly, check out the following famous 6-word memoir examples for inspiration.

“Antidepressants ruined emo music for me.” –Lucy Waters

“Bachelor Party. YouTube video. Wedding cancelled.” –Daniel Little

“Straight-A student, now flunking judgment.” –Miranda Kaplan

“Normal person becomes psychotic on Twitter.” –Robin Slick

“Was bored, went skydiving, now quadriplegic.” –Daniel Van Werkhoven

“Son of psychopath, survived EuroDisney. Twice.” –Andrew Hall

“Insomniac dreamer; a thousand times goodnight.” Elisa Shevitz

“Goth girl. White dog. Lint roller.” Megan Durham

“I ran with scissors and lived.” –Rienne Smith

“Heart in SF, arm in Vietnam.” –Harlan Stanton

“Neurotic hypochondriac seeks medical attention, please.” –Jessica Lester

“Journalism? Hah! Just make stuff up.” –Dave Barry

“Regularly disqualifying myself for public office.” –Jess Walter

“Smart, tall, independent woman. Men scarce.” –Annie Schmidt

“Straight jacket on the gentle cycle.” –Stewart Rudy

“dam smart-never lerned to spel.” –Rachel Ehrlich

“Awkward girl takes chances. Fun ensues.” –Charlotte Riley

“Losing your identity can be fearsome.” –Robyn Crawford

“Impoverished black male. Harvard Law bound.” –Robert Young

“Hard to write poems from prison.” –Ellen Goldstein

“The militant who became a monk.” –Mike Adams

“Wanted world, got world plus lupus.” –Liz Futrell

“Found true love, married someone else.” –Bjorn Stromberg

“Mistakenly kills kitten. Fears anything delicate.” –Susan Henderson

“Bad breaks discovered at high speed.” –Johan Baumeister

“Ex-wife and contractor now have house.” Drew Peck

“Savior complex makes for many disappointments.” –Alanna Schubach

“Lucky in love, unlucky in metabolism.” –Leah Weathersby

6 Word Memoir Rubric

Ideas/Content:

Your memoir is deep and powerful; instead of being just a basic description of you. It is centered around one main idea.

5 4 3 2 1 (X2)

Word Choice:

You have chosen powerful, vivid, specific verbs and nouns.

5 4 3 2 1 (X3)

Voice:

Your memoir accurately depicts your life, at a particular moment in time. The reader is able to connect the subject with the 'story' that is being told about you.

5 4 3 2 1 (X3)

Explanation:

Written paragraph explains thoroughly explains the story behind your six-word memoir and includes a detailed explanation of why you chose the style of art you did for your memoir and the art it self.

5 4 3 2 1 (X2)

Art Piece:

The text is readable. The picture compliments the memoir without distracting from the text.

5 4 3 2 1 (X2)

Total

/60 Marks

Comments: