



# Smithsonian Education

## **LESSON PLAN**

**TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_ (*Suggested*) From Repeated Story to Reflective Essay

**TARGETED GRADE LEVEL:** 9-12

**STANDARDS** (National Center for Education and the Economy)

- 1) The student produces work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.
  - i) Examples of literary genres include:
    - (a) A reflective essay.
    - (b) A memoir.
    - (c) A short story.
    - (d) A short play.
    - (e) A poem.
    - (f) A vignette.
  
- 2) The student responds to a non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes; that is, the student:
  - (a) Evaluates the impact of authors' decisions regarding word choice, style, content, and literary elements;
  - (b) Analyzes the characteristics of literary forms and genres;
  - (c) Demonstrate how literary works (both fictional and non-fictional) reflect the culture that shaped them.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Think about important traditions in your family. They are repeated because they are important in some way. They define us. Generally, the “messages” are not explicit, but they are passed down because they are special to us. They can give us some insight into the world and we often tell stories about these traditions with family members, friends, and communities. Think about a tradition that has meaning to you, something that adds to your knowledge or identity. Often times the tradition has taught you something that you want to pass on to someone else or continue in the future.

The stories about these traditions often become the seeds of essays—small, “unimportant” experiences might become, on reflection, insight into the large, important themes and patterns of life. Essays like these are used for college applications and are found in magazines and newspapers.

- Have students quick write about the tradition and then retell the story to a partner.
- Ask them to review their quick write and add details.
- Have them look for patterns and then develop a draft of the story to a partner, this time including both a concrete and an abstraction. For example you might begin by describing the concrete details of a family tradition (e.g. how to make a piñata) and then move from that description to the more abstract meaning that piñata for you and your family.

### **Structure of the assignment**

- Students may begin their story with a paragraph or so that defines and explains the abstraction and then illustrate it with a concrete story.
- Another possibility might be to tell the story (narrate the concrete event) and follow it with the abstraction. Both should be woven together.
- Remind students to use what they learned from models read in class (for example: Newspapers and magazines).

### **Questions to prompt writing**

- What will you pass on?
- What occasion/experience are you writing about?
- What abstractions and reflections do you include?
- What is the larger meaning of your tradition?
- What are the relationships between the concrete, abstract and reflective sections of your story?
- Do you end your story by connecting the concrete experience with a more universal truth?