

8A: Perspectives & Narrative

This unit aims to teach students to read like writers. They practice paying attention to the craft of writing: to the moves a good writer makes to shape the way we see a scene or feel about a character—to stir us up, or surprise us, or leave us wondering what will happen next. Students closely read a variety of short, engaging examples of narrative non-fiction, analyze both the themes and the techniques of each author, and practice applying these techniques to their own narrative writing.

Core texts your student will read:

- Excerpts from *Going Solo* by Roald Dahl
- "Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan
- "My Mother's Garden" by Kaitlyn Greenidge

What your students will do/learn:

- Students experiment with some of the narrative writing techniques used in the texts they read, including writing focused descriptions with strong verbs and vivid details to capture the feeling of a moment; speeding up and slowing down a moment in writing; and using dialogue and description to capture characters and points of view.
- Students learn key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used language or details or evidence.
- Students analyze and discuss how the adolescent characters in "Fish Cheeks" and "My Mother's Garden" define themselves and their families compared with how society may view them.
- Students write consistently throughout the unit, developing their idea or claim about the text and providing textual evidence.
- Students will write an end of unit essay responding to the following prompt: Are the mothers featured in "Fish Cheeks" and "My Mother's Garden" role models for their daughters? Why or why not?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. What techniques did you use to try to communicate about the experiences, the people, and the feelings in the narrative writing you did as you read Amy Tan and Kaitlyn Greenidge's writing? Which did you find to be the easiest to use? The hardest? Which one made the biggest impact on your writing?
2. What does Roald Dahl notice most about being a fighter pilot in World War II when he writes about it in *Going Solo*? The excitement? The danger? Something else?

3. How do the experiences of Amy Tan in “Fish Cheeks” and Kaitlyn Greenidge in “My Mother’s Garden” relate to your experiences and the experiences of people you know? Do you think these are experiences and feelings shared by many teenagers?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you used precise details to show, not tell? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “In your writing, I really like how you describe the smile and the welcoming words of that cafeteria worker. With those details, I could understand how kind she was to you on your first day in a new school.”)
5. How would you describe the mothers in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden”? How would you describe their relationships with their daughters?