

“Ode to Family Photographs” short project

Throughout this unit we have been looking at short stories with young characters who are going through changes or learning more about what type of person they want to be. The stories have been told from different voices. We have heard from a soft, and sometimes silent voice (think of Roger in "Thank You M'am") and we have heard from a calculating and sometimes indistinguishable language voice (think of Victor in "Seventh Grade"). Now it is time to hear one of your stories from your voice.

The Task: Using family photographs as inspiration, tell a story through images and words about an important time in your life.

Step 1: Read an example

[“Ode to Family Photographs”](#) by Gary Soto



This is the pond, and these are my feet.

This is the rooster, and this is more of my feet.

Mama was never good at pictures.

This is a statue of a famous general who lost an arm,
And this is me with my head cut off.

This is a trash can chained to a gate,
This is my father with his eyes half-closed.

This is a photograph of my sister
And a giraffe looking over her shoulder.

This is our car's front bumper.
This is a bird with a pretzel in its beak.
This is my brother Pedro standing on one leg on a rock,
With a smear of chocolate on his face.

Mama sneezed when she looked
Behind the camera: the snapshots are blurry,
The angles dizzy as a spin on a merry-go-round.

But we had fun when Mama picked up the camera.
How can I tell?
Each of us is laughing hard.
Can you see? I have candy in my mouth.

Step 2: Analyze**What do you notice?**

1. What can you “see” in the poem? Write the words and phrases of images in the poem.
2. How is it structured? How do you see or hear the poem’s structure? Is there rhyme? Line length? Ideas grouped? Patterns? Write what you notice.
3. What theme or message is the author conveying with the images, sounds, and structure of this poem?

Name _____

7_____

Date _____

Step 2 continued: *What do you like?* **A)** Read through the poem again. Write down **words, phrases, lines,** and **big ideas** you like.

B) Look over what you've written. What is it about these words, phrases, lines, and ideas you like?

Step 3: Find Inspiration (brainstorm)

Get on Facebook, Instagram, Google+, computer files...wherever you and your family keep family photos. Find photographs of yourself and your family when you were younger, taken at places and events that you remember fondly.

When you have some photos selected, spread them out...or scroll through them. Are there time periods, people, or places that stick out? For each photo, **write a short phrase for what it makes you think of or feel.** You might number the photos and keep a track of your phrases.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Name _____

7 _____ **Date** _____

Step 4: Write YOUR Poem

DUE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

With your chosen photos, what "story" do you want to tell? Think about the big ideas and theme from Gary Soto's poem.

"I want my poem to tell the story of _____ **."**

Think: How will you order the words and phrases of your photos to tell your story?

Using "Ode to Family Photographs" as a model, write a list poem below based on your photos and the phrases you chose for each. Your poem doesn't have to be humorous like Soto's. You might even like to try more of a "documentary" list poem.

Name _____

7 _____ Date _____

Step 5: Revise YOUR Poem

DUE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

After you have a first complete draft, use the group writing workshop to get feedback on your poem. Take your time and make changes where you think they should go. **Print** your final poem alongside a family photo of your choice that represents the "story" the poem tells.

Your Photo

Your Poem