

Writer's Notebook: History of a Name-Mini-Lesson

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- Begin the lesson with an exploration of names: the importance of names, how names connect us to our families and historical, cultural, or ethnic stories connected to our names.
- Explore different literary excerpts and focus on the following:
 - What does the author tell us about names in this piece?
 - How/why are the names **important**?
 - How did the character get his/her name? What are **stories** connected to the name?
 - Are there any **cultural markers** connected to the name? If so, how do they shape the story?
 - How does the character **feel** about his/her name? How does the author write about this? Do these feelings change with time?
 - Does the passage reveal how the name shapes the **character's identity**? Explain.
 - How does the author use **voice**: child's voice, adult-looking-back-in-time voice, adolescent's voice, third-person omniscient, etc.
 - Does the author use **writer's craft** and **vocabulary** effectively? How?

Literary Models:

Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life by Amy Krouse Rosenthal pp. 36-37

Primary

- *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
- *Goonie Bird Greene* by Lois Lowry (Ch. 2 pp. 11-21)
- *My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits
- *The First Thing My Mama Told Me* by Susan Marie Swanson

Elementary and Middle Grades

- *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo (pp. 13 & 14)
- *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis (pp. 41-44)
- *Becoming Naomi León* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (pp. 1-6)
- *brown girl dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson (pp. 1-7)
- *Sahara Special* by Esme Raji Codell (pp. 150-164)
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- *42 Miles* by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer (pp. 2 & 3)
- *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman (p. 25)
- *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse (pp. 3-5)
- *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* (pp. 2 & 3) and *Locomotion* (p. 21) by Jacqueline Woodson

High School

- *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (pp. 10 & 11)
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (pp. 59-61)

Discussion and Writing (Remember to be sensitive to students who may not know the “history” of their names...)

1. After reading excerpts, students should jot down connections to their own life experiences.
2. Check out this web site <http://www.behindthename.com/> and write about what you learned; also, be sure to find out any familial information regarding your name. Enjoy! Check this out: <http://www2.howmanyofme.com/search/>
3. Complete the **Name Chart** [adapted from Kirby and Kirby's (2007) *New Directions in Teaching Memoir*]
4. Think about the following as you jot down information you can recall about each part of your name:
 - a. Who named you? Why did they name you that?
 - b. Does your name have a significant meaning?
 - c. How does your name connect to family members?
 - d. What are some of the names that you almost had? Why didn't those names work?
 - e. What are some names that you wish you would have been called? Did you ever change your name?
 - f. What have been benefits of your name? Trouble with your name?
 - g. Nicknames?
 - h. What are the names you have chosen to accept? What are names that have hurt you that you have chosen to NOT to accept?

Name Chart

	Variations	Epithets
First Name		
Middle Name		
Last Name		

5. Complete notebook entry (History of your name); begin your journey as a writer! **Draft your Name Piece.**

“My names are given to me, but they are also names that I choose to take. And the choosing makes all the difference.”

Sahara Special by Esme Raji Codell (p. 160)