

Lesson Plan: The Author in You - A 4-Week Journey into Self-Expression

Materials Needed for the Unit:

- Notebook or journal for writing
- Pencils, pens, and colored markers/pencils
- A small cloth bag ("Sensory Bag")
- Various small, textured objects (e.g., a smooth stone, a piece of sandpaper, a cotton ball, a small bell, a mint)
- A collection of paint chips from a hardware store
- Scissors and glue stick
- Construction paper
- An empty shoebox
- Old magazines, newspapers, or printed photos for collages
- Optional: Story cubes or a story-prompt app/website
- A three-ring binder or folder with brads for the final portfolio
- Optional: Craft supplies for decorating the portfolio (stickers, ribbon, fabric scraps, etc.)

Week 1: The Power of Words - Painting Pictures with Language

Goal: To understand how sensory details and figurative language (similes and metaphors) make writing come alive.

Day 1: The Five Senses

- **Activity: Sensory Bag Exploration.** Fill the cloth bag with various small objects without the student seeing. Have them reach in, feel one object, and describe it using only their sense of touch. Then, have them pull it out and describe it using sight, smell, sound (if any), and even taste (if appropriate, like with a mint). Record the descriptive words for each object in their journal.
- **Writing Practice:** Ask the student to write a paragraph describing their favorite food as if they were explaining it to someone who has never tried it. They must use words related to at least four of the five senses.

Day 2: Similes and Metaphors

- **Introduction:** Explain that a **simile** compares two different things using "like" or "as" (e.g., "The cloud was fluffy *like* cotton candy"). A **metaphor** makes the comparison directly (e.g., "The cloud *was* cotton candy in the sky").
- **Activity: Comparison Hunt.** Read a few short, simple poems or a chapter from a descriptive book together. Hunt for examples of similes and metaphors and highlight them. Discuss what two things are being compared and why the author might have made that comparison.

Day 3: Hands-On Poetry

- **Activity: Paint Chip Poetry.** Spread out a variety of paint chips. Ask the student to choose one

strip of colors. For each color shade, they must write a short line of poetry inspired by the color or its name (e.g., for a color called "Ocean Deep," they might write "A secret held in dark water").

The lines together will form a short poem. Glue the completed paint chip poem into their journal.

- **Wrap-up:** Review the concepts of sensory details, similes, and metaphors. Discuss how these tools help a writer express a specific feeling or idea.

Week 2: The Rhythm of Writing - Exploring Poetic Forms

Goal: To experiment with different poetic structures and sound devices to see how form shapes expression.

Day 1: The Sound of Words

- **Introduction:** Discuss sound devices. Focus on **onomatopoeia** (words that sound like what they mean, e.g., "buzz," "crash") and **alliteration** (repetition of the first sound in a series of words, e.g., "slippery snake").
- **Activity: Sound Scavenger Hunt.** Go for a walk or sit quietly in the house for 10 minutes. In their journal, have the student list every sound they hear. Next to each sound, they should write an onomatopoeia word for it (e.g., "dripping faucet," "chirping bird," "rumbling truck"). Then, challenge them to write a few phrases using alliteration to describe what they heard.

Day 2: Structured Poetry - Haiku and Acrostic

- **Introduction:** Explain the rules for two simple forms:
 - **Haiku:** A Japanese form with three lines. Line 1 has 5 syllables, Line 2 has 7 syllables, and Line 3 has 5 syllables. Usually about nature.
 - **Acrostic:** A poem where the first letter of each line spells out a word or name when read vertically.
- **Writing Practice:** Have the student write one haiku about something they saw on their sound scavenger hunt and one acrostic poem using their own name.

Day 3: Free Verse Fun

- **Introduction:** Explain that **free verse** poetry has no rules! It doesn't need to rhyme or have a specific rhythm. It's all about expressing an idea or emotion in a way that feels natural.
- **Activity: Emotion Poem.** Ask the student to choose a strong emotion (e.g., excitement, frustration, peacefulness). Have them brainstorm images, sounds, and feelings associated with that emotion. Then, guide them to shape those ideas into a free verse poem. Remind them that where they break the lines can add emphasis.

Week 3: Building Worlds - Creating Characters and Settings

Goal: To learn the basics of narrative storytelling by developing a unique character and a vivid setting.

Day 1: Character Creation

- **Activity: Character Collage.** Using old magazines or drawing supplies, have the student create a visual representation of a fictional character. As they create, ask them questions to fill out a

"Character Profile" in their journal:

- What is their name and age?
- What do they look like?
- What is their biggest dream? What is their biggest fear?
- What is one secret they have?

Day 2: Setting in a Shoebox

- **Introduction:** Discuss how a story's setting is more than just a place—it can affect the mood and the plot. Is it a spooky forest, a bustling city, or a quiet bedroom?
- **Activity: Diorama Time.** Have the student choose a setting for the character they created yesterday. Using a shoebox and craft supplies, they will build a diorama of that setting. Encourage them to add small details that tell us more about the place and the character who lives there.

Day 3: The Spark of a Story - Plot

- **Introduction:** Explain that every simple story needs a beginning (introducing the character and setting), a middle (where a problem happens), and an end (where the problem is solved).
- **Activity: Story Prompts.** Using story cubes or by writing simple prompts on slips of paper (e.g., "finds a mysterious map," "gets lost," "meets a talking animal"), have the student generate a simple problem for their character. Brainstorm together how the character might solve that problem in the setting they created.
- **Writing Practice:** Write one paragraph that introduces their character in the shoebox setting, hinting at the problem to come.

Week 4: The Expression Portfolio - Culminating Project

Goal: To apply all the skills learned by revising, polishing, and presenting a collection of creative work.

Day 1: Polishing a Poem

- **Task:** Look back at all the poems written over the past two weeks (Paint Chip, Haiku, Acrostic, Free Verse). Choose one to revise and perfect for the final portfolio.
- **Revision Focus:** Read the poem aloud. Do the word choices create strong pictures? Could any words be replaced with more powerful ones? Check for sensory details and figurative language. Write or type a final, clean copy of the poem.

Day 2: Writing the Short Story

- **Task:** Using the character, setting, and plot idea from Week 3, write a complete short story (about 1-2 pages).
- **Writing Focus:** Remember to include:
 - A clear beginning, middle, and end.
 - Sensory details to describe the setting.
 - Dialogue or actions that show the character's personality.

Day 3: The Portfolio and "Author's Reading"

- **Activity: Assemble the Portfolio.**
 1. **Create a Cover Page:** Design a creative title page for the "Expression Portfolio" with their

name as the author.

2. **Write an Author's Statement:** Write one paragraph explaining their creative process for either the poem or the story. What were they trying to express? What part are they most proud of?
3. **Assemble:** Put the cover page, author's statement, polished poem, and short story into the binder or folder. They can also include their paint chip poem or character collage.

- **Culminating Activity: The Author's Reading.** In the evening, set up a special "reading" for the family. The student will present their portfolio and read their polished poem and a favorite excerpt from their short story aloud. Celebrate their hard work with applause and praise! This final step validates their effort and shows them the power of sharing their creative voice.