

Echoes of the Past: Creative Writing for Legacy Building

Amanda Johnson, WVU Extension Associate Professor and Agent – Jefferson County

Margaret Miltenberger, WVU Extension Associate Professor and Agent – Mineral County

Educational Objectives

- Participants will brainstorm ideas to generate a list of potential stories to write.
- Participants will learn and apply writing techniques like specificity, authenticity, and organization to capture their memories.
- Participants will learn the importance of preserving their life stories and create a plan to share their memories with family and future generations.

Introduction

Your life is a story waiting to be told—a journey woven with experiences, memories and dreams. Legacy writing lets you capture this journey for generations to come. This lesson explores the power of legacy writing and offers practical tips to start, even if you've never journaled before.



Understanding Legacy

As individuals, we imprint ourselves upon the world through our actions, beliefs and the stories we share. Legacy encompasses the entirety of what we leave behind—the tangible and intangible aspects of our existence (Hunter & Rowles, 2005). It is a testament to our values, beliefs and the impact we've had on others, offering a sense of purpose and immortality (Bauman, 1992).

The Legacy Writing Journey

Our lives unfold as narratives, with each moment contributing to the larger story of who we are. Legacy writing invites us to reflect on these moments, weaving them into a narrative that transcends time. Every memory, from childhood adventures to career milestones, holds significance in our story .

Discovering Your Stories

The journey begins with introspection, as we reflect on the defining moments that have shaped our lives. Consider the stories of resilience, love, loss and triumph that have sculpted your identity. These moments

– continued –

are chapters in your life's book that can be shared with future generations.

Crafting Your Narrative

Armed with a wealth of experiences and memories, it's time to breathe life into your story. Whether you've kept journals throughout your life or are beginning anew, trust in the authenticity of your voice. Embrace the key moments, emotions and lessons that resonate with you, allowing them to flow onto the page.

Legacy Writing Tips

- Delve into memories purposefully, reliving moments from the past. Identify the pivotal moments that have shaped your path, whether tender or triumphant. Write sincerely and vulnerably, letting your true self shine. Embrace creativity through various mediums: journals, digital stories or oral retellings.

Brainstorming Activity

Generate a list of potential stories to include in your legacy writing journey.

Instructions:

- Read excerpts from best-selling memoirs that show descriptive or expressive writing. Here are possible books:
 - "The Glass Castle: A Memoir" by Jeannette Walls
 - "Finding Me" by Viola Davis

"My biggest discovery was that you can literally re-create your life. You can redefine it. You don't have to live in the past. I found that not only did I have fight in me, I had love."

- "Gaining Ground: A Story of Farmers' Markets, Local Food, and Saving the Family Farm" by Forrest Pritchard

"I was poking around the barnyard at dusk, waiting for the chickens to return to their coop. A coyote had recently discovered the flock, watching

camouflaged from the tall grass until no one was around, and then brazenly pricking off a hen or two in broad daylight."

- Distribute brainstorming sheets, allowing time for reflection.
- Guide participants to explore memories, defining moments and themes.
- Prompt for at least five story ideas, from childhood to life events.
- Lead a discussion for sharing ideas and insights.
- Encourage collaboration, feedback and exploration suggestions.

Creative Writing Process

The journey of creatively telling your life story involves several key steps. Begin by reflecting on your experiences and outlining the significant moments. Identify themes and choose a narrative perspective that resonates with you. Develop characters, set scenes vividly, and use dialogue to bring your story to life. Use descriptive language and sensory details to immerse readers in your narrative. Edit and revise to refine your storytelling. Infuse your unique voice and personality throughout the process, making your life story an authentic reflection of who you are.

Different Forms of Legacy Writing

Legacy writing is a versatile medium, with many ways to share one's story with the world.

- **Personal Essays:** Delve deep into specific moments or themes in your life, exploring topics such as love, loss, resilience and personal growth.
- **Memoirs:** Craft a comprehensive narrative that chronicles the entirety of your life journey, from childhood to old age.
- **Anecdotes and Stories:** Share individual stories that show who you are, offering glimpses into your experiences.



Activity: Writing Your Story

Guide participants through the process of crafting their life stories, providing practical tips and techniques for effective storytelling.

Instructions:

- Discuss writing approaches: Explore mediums like essays, digital storytelling or oral recollections.
- Review potential stories: Help participants choose one.
- Provide writing tips: Stress specificity, authenticity and emotion. Encourage sensory details.
- Guide story crafting: Start with outlines, captivating openings and emotional exploration.
- Allow time for writing: Offer support, foster collaboration and feedback.

Benefits of Sharing Stories

Sharing one's life story transcends mere storytelling—it is an act of connection and legacy building. By sharing your story, you:

- Gain greater self-awareness as you reflect on the milestones and challenges that have shaped your journey.
- Experience a sense of joy and fulfillment in connecting with others, fostering understanding across generations.
- Find healing and validation in sharing your experiences as you navigate the complexities of life.
- Leave behind a timeless legacy that serves as an inspiration for future generations.

Conclusion

Whether through personal essays, memoirs or individual anecdotes, your life story is a narrative worthy of celebration. Embrace the transformative power of legacy writing and embark on a journey that will resonate for generations to come.

In the words of Maya Angelou, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside

you.” Let us embrace the opportunity to share our stories, for they are the echoes of our past and the legacy of our future.

Record Your Story (Free): These are traditional methods to help you record your life story in a format that suits you best. Ask a family member to help if you want to share this process with a loved one.

- **Written autobiography:**
 - Use a word processing software, like Microsoft Word, Google Docs or Scrivener.
 - Take advantage of features, such as spell check, grammar suggestions and formatting options.
 - Write and edit your story with these user-friendly tools.
- **Audio recordings:**
 - Invest in a high-quality microphone for clear sound capture.
 - Use audio recording software, like Audacity, GarageBand or Adobe Audition.
 - Edit recordings to enhance quality and remove background noise, ensuring a polished result.
- **Video recordings:**
 - Use a good quality camera or your smartphone's camera for visual capture.
 - Employ video editing software, such as iMovie, Adobe Premiere Pro or Final Cut Pro.
 - Enhance storytelling with effects, transitions and background music for a compelling narrative.



Resources to assist in telling your story:

Storyworth captures and preserves personal stories via a subscription service. Subscribers get a year of story prompts for one person, customizable questions and a hardcover book compiling the stories. Additional copies can be ordered, and subscribers can include photos, edit stories and adjust question frequency. The service allows flexibility in question frequency and supports multiple storytellers per account. Additionally, Storyworth offers the option to gift subscriptions and choose the date for the gift email to be sent. <https://www.storyworth.com/>

2024 Cost:

- \$39: Black and white interior, up to 480 pages
- \$79: Color books, up to 300 pages
- \$99: Color books above 300 pages, up to 480 pages

AILifeStory is a platform that can be used to connect generations through storytelling, guided by values like authenticity, empathy, innovation, collaboration, preservation and accessibility. Users can create engaging autobiographies by answering AI interviewer questions, customizing with photos, and using features like voice-to-text and customizable templates. They can export and share their stories, ensuring preservation for future generations. <https://www.aillifstory.com>

2024 Cost:

- Monthly: \$29
- Annually: \$228

2024

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