

Surfacing Stories:



Transforming the Ordinary to the Extraordinary

Presented by:
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Brainstorming

Often, the first time that I engage students in writing for my classroom, I will do so first by inviting them to brainstorm memorable moments that they've experienced or witnessed. I will web my own set of experiences so they can view it, while they web, or list their own on a sheet of paper (I typically use 11" x 17" tabloid paper for brainstorming). It's not important that they capture the details of the story, but rather that they put some statement or reminder that prompts them to recall a story or situation they've experienced. For example: I usually begin by providing them an example of a story from a time that I was supervising a bunch of youth kayaking at a summer camp. I simply record "underwater bear" rather than any other summary. It tends to make students curious about the story.

I will generate several examples and then share one or two stories from the examples through oral storytelling, trying to stimulate connections that might surface stories they recall. In part, I want to cultivate a culture of storytelling so that it is valued and students are eager to share their own memorable moments. I also want to create a web or list of potential story ideas that they can come revisit if they're ever feeling "blocked."

As students work to fill in their brainstorms, I will circulate, add more examples to my own brainstorm, periodically ask for volunteers to share their stories, and encourage students to add stories when they make a connection to someone else's story. I also provide opportunities for students to share in partners or small groups, with the general objective of creating a momentum with their brainstorming. I also invite them to take the brainstorms home, to share them with their families and to continue to make additions over time.

I will often leave my brainstorm up for a week or so, and students, curious about some of the memories / stories I've listed get to request a story and I will share the details.

A Collection Of Good Quality Questions to Pose During Interviews
(Collected from student examples – Grade 6/7 Division 4 – 2013)

- What is the origin of your name? / Why were you named?
- Why did you choose to name me _____?
- Why did you decide to come to Canada? Why did you leave _____?
- What was your like life in _____?
- How did you feel coming to Canada?
- What were your first thoughts about Canada?
- How did I deal with coming to Canada? / How did I deal with moving to another country?
- How do you think your childhood was different from my childhood?
- How has your experience in Canada been different from where you came from?
- What are some of the advantages or disadvantages of living in Canada?
- What were you like when you were young?
- What was I like when I was little?
- Do you notice any similarities or differences between your experience growing up and my experience growing up?
- When I was young, what were some of my favourite things or my favourite things to do?
- How were you welcomed when you came to Canada? Were people friendly to you?
- How was your immigration experience?
- If you could choose between _____ and _____, what would you choose and why?
- What are some of the safety concerns you have living in Canada? If you don't have any concerns, why do you feel safe here?
- If you could go back in time, what's one thing you'd change about your childhood?
- What do you remember about your life before I was born / adopted?
- What are some of your proudest achievements?
- What do you think have been some of my proudest achievements?
- How did you accomplish those things you're proud of?
- What advice would you give to someone working on achieving a goal / dream?
- What are some interesting things that have happened to you in Canada?
- What has been your most memorable / important experience in Canada?
- What were some of your first impressions when you met me?
- Why did you choose Canada instead of any other country?
- How was your school experience different from my school experience?
- What new discoveries did you make when you came to Canada?