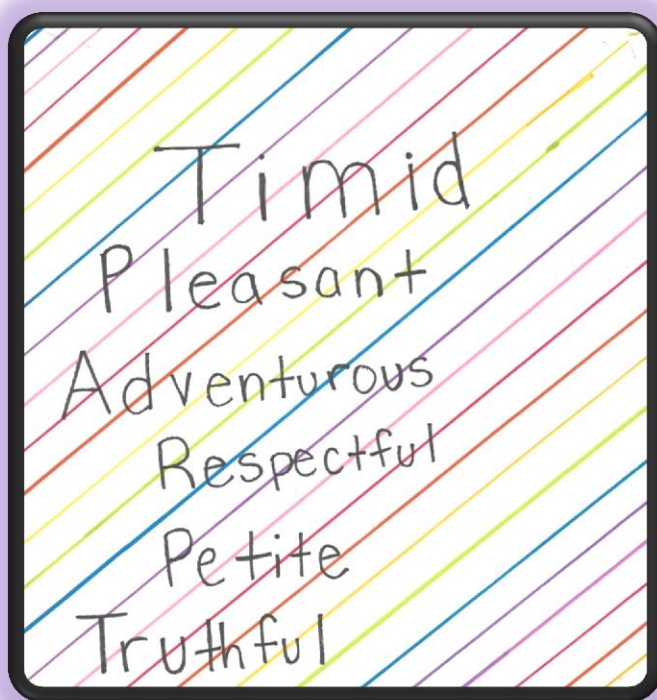


# Ice Breaker Activity

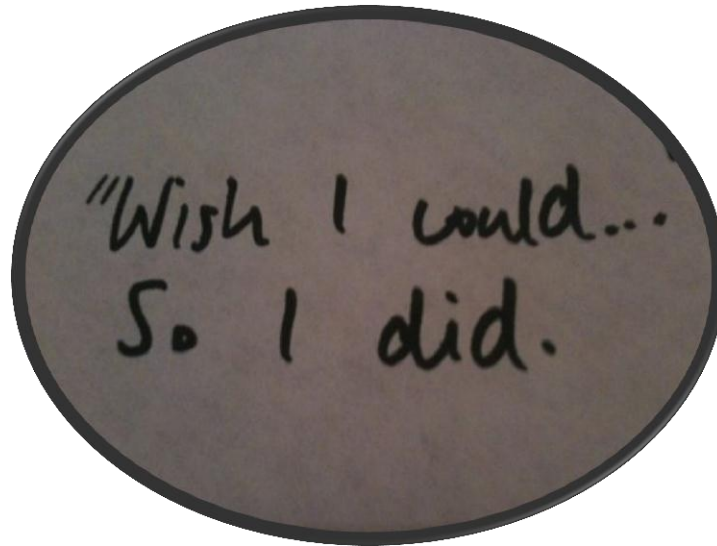
**First Day of School-**  
The Six-word Memoir



# The Six-Word Memoir

## Teaching Notes:

**Introduction-** Six-word memoirs have been around for more than fifty years. It is a particularly fun activity to do with your students at the beginning of the year because you can post their work on a bulletin board as you get to know them, or use Smith Magazine's electronic [publishing site](#) and your students become published on the web!



I like to start with students pairing up and interviewing each other. Make sure they practice active listening and take a few notes. Then, have the students use highlighters to note words and phrases that popped out at them. Return the notes to the interviewee to add any information that the listener didn't get. From the notes, students have a ready-made resource to cull words for their six-word memoir.

I share previous student examples of six-word memoirs and one of my own. Then I give them a piece of brightly colored copier paper. I make sure that I have a variety of colored paper choices, some with frames and some just plain. Students are encouraged to put some sincere thought into reflecting the six words that sum up their lives, their experiences and who they are at this moment in time. Printable handouts follow for students that can be photocopied and distributed.

If you liked this activity, please be sure to rate it and provide feedback! Follow me at my Teachers Pay Teachers store site for updates and freebies! @dlaughey (Twitter)  
<http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Deborah-Aughey>

# The Six-word Memoir

A [memoir](#) is French for "memory." It is a style of writing an autobiographical account of one's personal life and experiences.

Your memoir can be six independent words or phrases, for example:

**Family. Love. Action.  
Connecting. Giving back.**

You can even tell a story. American author Ernest Hemingway once wrote a story in just six words and is said to have called it his best work.

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."



Word choice is very important. You can use alliteration, rhyme, metaphor, parallel structure, imagery, etc. You can be abstract, literal or even metaphysical. You can go chronological, thematic, or even construct your memoir in the form of a question.

This class focuses on language and rhetoric. Therefore, diction, style, intention, audience, purpose and tone are incredibly essential. Ask your partner, "What did you do over the summer? What are your favorite things? What characteristics define you? What is weird and interesting about you? What are you thinking about these days?"

Be an active listener, take notes, clarify, elaborate and then switch. Review the notes with a highlighter. Do any words or phrases jump out at you? If so, note them for your

partner. Give your partner the notes on your interview. He or she can add anything that you omitted. Use your interview notes to construct your six-word memoir.

Here are some examples of very short stories from [Wired Magazine](#).

Failed SAT. Lost scholarship. Invented rocket. - William Shatner	Easy. Just touch the match to ... - Ursula K. Le Guin
Computer, did we bring batteries? Computer? - Eileen Gunn	Help! Trapped in a text adventure! - Marc Laidlaw
Gown removed carelessly. Head, less so. - Joss Whedon	Thought I was right. I wasn't. - Graeme Gibson
Automobile warranty expires. So does engine. - Stan Lee	Dinosaurs return. Want their oil back. - David Brin
It cost too much, staying human. - Bruce Sterling	Please, this is everything, I swear. - Orson Scott Card
I'm your future, child. Don't cry. - Stephen Baxter	Corpse parts missing. Doctor buys yacht. - Margaret Atwood
I'm dead. I've missed you. Kiss ... ? - Neil Gaiman	Time traveler's thought: "What's the password?" - Steven Meretzky
"I couldn't believe she'd shoot me." - Howard Chaykin	

Interested in publishing your six-word memoir? Click on the Smith Magazine link and get your six words onto the Internet to start a public conversation and leave a legacy.

"Six Word Memoirs on Life Stories." *Six Word Memoirs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 July 2012.  
<http://www.smithmag.net/sixwords/>

"Wired 14.11: Very Short Stories." *Wired.com*. Conde Nast Digital, Nov. 2006. Web. 16 July 2012. <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.11/sixwords.html>

# *The Six-word Memoir*

## *Notes*

★ What did you do over the summer?

★ What are your favorite things?

★ What characteristics define you?

★ What is weird and interesting about you?

★ What are you thinking about these days?

★ What is your favorite Facebook or Twitter status that you ever posted?

★ What are three adjectives that your friends would use to describe you?

# Examples of some six-word memoirs (used with permission)

