

There are many ways to enter your memoir. We'll look into family artifacts, heirlooms of spirit, and histories of our nicknames as starters.

Everyone has a story, everyone experiences suffering and joy, and someone will be comforted by your story. We will look into the driving issue behind your story and find connections between you and other writers who have tackled memoirs in a variety of ways. We'll discuss how strong emotions might be re-lived as you write, and how your personal experience can create universality, the difference between memoir and autobiography, and how to structure your narrative as a series of poems. A list of published memoirs and a guide for thinking will be provided ahead of the workshop. You are worth writing about and you may be positively surprised by the response you get, even from your relatives.

Quotes from Bibliography

iron cooking pot (79) Poet Warrior Joy Harjo

what is passed is not always material, but magic (78) Poet Warrior Joy Harjo

poem on paper (275) *Brown Girl Dreaming* Jacqueline Woodson

composition notebook (154) *Brown Girl Dreaming* Jacqueline Woodson

1. Is there an object left to you by someone in your family? What memories does it evoke?  
Would you pass it on?
2. Make a timeline of your nicknames starting with the one you remember best. Go back and forth in time. You could draw it as a radial form if that suits your thinking.
3. Central driving issue or question. Some memoirs deal with a limited time. It isn't a life review like an autobiography
4. How is it connected to larger issues creating universality?
5. Exterior time line: second daughter's day on earth (3) *Brown Girl Dreaming* Jacqueline Woodson  
What happened in the news on the day you were born? Went to first grade? First shot a gun? Kissed somebody? What is it connected to now?  
Interior time line:  
Realized you were...? Understood racism? Knew your parents were...?
4. Time and Place: In addition to actual geographical setting.  
Where were you when? We typically ask this about JFK assassination, first men on the moon, 9/11. Where was your father when he learned you were born? Where were your parents when they named you? Where was your first bed?

5. Emotional pacing and the use of form: Line length, traditional structures like sonnets

6. Writing Scenes

- Each poem may be a scene in your life.
- Include as many sensory images as possible
- The order in which you begin writing may not be the final sequence
- There may be flashbacks and foreshadowing
- You may need to take side trips into research
- Look at unpublished poems you may have forgotten about.
- Consider writing strongly emotional memories within forms like sonnets

Bibliography:

Poet Warrior	Joy Harjo	W.W. Norton 2021
A Space Between	Anna Citrino	Bordighera Press 2019
<i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i>	Jacqueline Woodson	Puffin Books 2014
<i>Cures for Hysteria</i>	MaryAnn L. Miller	Finishing Line Press 2018
<i>The Singer of Alleppey</i>	Pramila Venkateswaran	Shanti Arts Publishing 2018
<i>Slamming Open the Door</i>	Kathleen Sheeder Bonnano	Alice James Books 2009
<i>The Warrior</i>	Frances Richey	Penguin Books 2009