**Make Lemonade: Personal Narrative (Snapshot Essay)**

**Purpose of the Strategy**
In *Make Lemonade*, La Vaughn’s writing is so personal and engaging for many writers because she focuses on one moment of life at a time, and describes it in very specific detail. Because of this, *Make Lemonade* can be used as an excellent mentor text for students as they practice writing personal narratives. Mentor texts are examples of writing that students can mimic, either in style or content or both as part of a scaffolding strategy (Dean, 2006).

The assignment can be used any time during or after a class’s reading of *Make Lemonade*; this scripting was designed to be used near the end of the unit, after students have had time to become familiar with La Vaughn’s voice and style.

**Directions**
1. Ask students to react to La Vaughn’s writing style. Do they like it? Why? How does she make you feel? What are some ways she helps you feel that way as a reader?
2. Hand out the assignment sheet and walk through the expectations. Explain that one of La Vaughn’s strongest strategies as a writer is her use of selective detail. Tell students that they now have an opportunity to choose a moment—captured in a photograph that they like—and write about it, much like La Vaughn does.
3. Supply the students with both the teacher-generated sample essay and an example to use from *Make Lemonade* (La Vaughn’s experience taking Jeremy shoe shopping works well; it is smack in the middle of Part Two).
4. Plan for class time to work on peer editing and revision.

**Assessment**
A possible grading rubric for the assignment is included. Variations will depend on the needs of individual students and classes. It is assumed that students may continue to turn in revisions after teacher feedback for a higher score.
Snapshot Essay: *Make Lemonade*

One of the reasons La Vaughn’s writing is so powerful, so personal to us as readers, is because she focuses on one specific moment at a time. She chooses one memory to write about—one “snapshot” of experience—and then gives us tons of great detail about that moment. Here’s your chance to borrow La Vaughn’s style and really write something great!

For this assignment, you will write 2 to 3 pages about a photograph of your choice (the one requirement is that there must be people in the photo). You will write within one of a handful of genres we have discussed in class: you may compose a narrative about the moment captured in the picture, a letter to or from someone in the shot, a journal entry for the day of the picture, a news article about the moment, or a monologue by one of the people (or objects!) in the picture. If you want to use another genre, you must get it approved by me first.

The goal here is to capture a “slice-of-life” moment. They say a picture is worth a thousand words—you won’t write that many, but try to make your writing just as POWERFUL! Look over your class notes for ideas. How do the authors and poets we’ve read make their writing really pack a punch? Use their techniques!

Here are some things I will look for in your papers (the most important ones are listed first):

- Is this fun to read? (Did you have fun writing it?)
- Is your paper focused? (Does it deal with only one moment, and is the scope narrow enough to cover in detail in a paper this long?)
- Do you use specific, concrete, sensory detail, including vivid adjectives and verbs? Are the details relevant? Do they help you tell your story or just take up space?
- Are your paragraphs cohesive? (Does each paragraph make sense as a whole and only deal with one idea or united set of ideas?)
- Is your paper organized carefully? (Does the order in which you choose to present your information help readers understand your point? Do your ideas follow in a logical order? Is each new idea linked somehow to the idea that comes before it?)
- Did you choose one of the formats listed above, and does the format you chose help you tell your story effectively?
- Is it no fewer than two but no more than four double-spaced pages long?
- Does your paper show correct conventions throughout/have you proofread carefully?

**My first draft is due for peer review: ______________________**

**My final draft is due with my reflection letter: ______________________**
Snapshot Essay: Grading Sheet

Product (125)

Snapshot Essay (110)
- My paper is fun to read. It’s clear that I’m engaged with my topic and that it’s something I care about. My tone is lively and appropriate for the genre I’m writing in. (20)
- My paper is very focused. It only deals with one moment in time. The topics I choose to talk about are narrow enough to cover in detail in a paper this long and are closely related to one another. (20)
- I used specific, concrete, relevant sensory details, including vivid adjectives and verbs, that help me tell my story. Three examples of great detail are starred on my final draft. (20)
- My paragraphs are cohesive and linked: each paragraph makes sense as a whole and it only deals with one idea or one tightly-knit set of ideas. Each new idea links to the one that came before it. (15)
- I used correctly punctuated dialogue in my paper that makes sense with the story I told. (10)
- I chose to write in one of the allowed genres or got mine approved. The format I chose helps me tell my story effectively and isn’t distracting or confusing for my readers. (8)
- I used at least two examples of literary devices from my literary devices notebook. Two of them are labeled and underlined on my final draft. (7)
- My paper is no fewer than two but no more than four double-spaced pages long. (5)
- I used correct conventions throughout my paper and proofread carefully. (5)

Reflection Letter (15)
- My reflection shows my teacher that this assignment is something I’ve thought about and that I’ve tried to improve as a writer through the unit. I answered several of the reflection questions suggested. (12)
- My reflection is at least one double-spaced page long. (3)

Process (45)
- I brought my picture on time. (Remember that “on time” means “stamped and in my class folder at the end of class on the day it was due or the day we did it in class.”) (3)
- My section of dialogue, baby draft, first draft, and final draft were all on time. I spent the class time we were given to work on them productively. (15)
- I helpfully participated in the drafting circles. My Peer Notes Sheets were all on time. (8)
- I helpfully participated in the peer reviews. My Peer Review Sheets were all on time. (8)
- I helpfully participated in the other class activities (Where’s Waldo drafting, revising for hidden adjectives, etc.) for this unit. My in-class writes and notes were all on time. (8)
- My name has been on every piece of paper I’ve turned in. (3)

Total (170)
We walked into the dark theater practically brimming over with excitement. We’d arrived later than I had hoped—many of the best seats were already full, despite the fact that we’d gotten there almost an hour before the movie started—so my roommate and I scanned the crowd carefully for faces we knew.

“Can you see anyone?” Katie asked me.

“I think so— isn’t that Dallin up there near the top?”

Sure enough, a passel of pals from our apartment complex had started gathering on about the third to last row. We hiked up the steep stairs and asked if any seats were left.

“Awesome outfits, guys!”

“Hey, you made it!”

“Woah! Nice! Cowabunga, dudes!”

“What’re the posters for?”

About half of our friends were dressed up like us, colored Ninja Turtle headbands flashing in the dim light. The new Ninja Turtles movie premier had apparently brought out the kid in all of us, perhaps me most strongly: in the spirit of midnight premiers everywhere, I’d prepared two big posters that said, respectively, “Cowabunga!” and “Dudes!” in the hopes we could get a chant going right before the movie started—you know, like cheerleaders at a football game. Don’t ask me how the half-baked idea had worked its way into my head. Maybe the stress of midterms and jobs was starting to take its toll.

The row up top was, alas, filled, so we settled for seats towards the bottom of the theater. Katie and I settled ourselves in to wait for the movie to start, but soon we turned around and started scanning the theater for cute guys. Our conversation turned to the ever-present question of who was dating whom.

“Is Scott still single?” I asked, trying to sound nonchalant.

“Yeah, I think so,” Katie answered, a sly look in her eye. “Why?”

“Just curious,” I lied. “Hey, do you think he’d do the chant with me, since you are refusing to have any fun?”
“Hey!” she retorted. “I just don’t want to embarrass myself in front of everyone. I dunno, maybe he would. You should ask him.”

Trying to prove I wasn’t nervous at all, I gamboled up the long stairway to where he and his roommates were sitting. I tried not to blush as I explained my plan. Thankfully, everyone seemed to think it was a fun idea, but no one wanted to play along. I brushed off the disappointment with a shrug and went back to my seat.

I couldn’t stay there long, though; I wanted to go talk to the guys again, but I felt too shy. Instead I ended up wandering the theater, “stretching my legs” before the movie and talking to other friends that had met us there.

The Ninja Turtle gods smiled down on me that night, though. To my delight, about two minutes before the show was supposed to start, Scott met me in my ambling and asked if I still wanted to do the chant. “Of course!” I shouted to myself. To him, I said something like, “Yeah! That’d be great!”

And chant we did. By the time the house lights darkened, the room full of college kids and actual kids alike was yelling, “Cowabunga dudes!” right along with us! When the titles started rolling, Scott and I both snuck back to our seats, triumphant but still a little embarrassed. What had I been thinking, really?

I still have no idea, but whatever it was, it must’ve worked. Scott and I are getting married a week from Saturday.