



LESSON 1: Writing From the Heart

Fend off that familiar refrain, “I have nothing to write about!” with this fun activity. Start the year off in a creative way and tap into the things kids are most passionate about.

SUBJECT MATTER

Writing

GRADE LEVEL

Grades K—5

OBJECTIVE

Students explore the writing process by identifying people, places, ideas, or things that are important to them. Students will use technology to write, peer-edit, revise, and compile their final products.

MATERIALS

Computer
 Document Camera
 LCD Projector
 Digital Camera
 HP Laser Jet Printer
 HP Photo Paper
 Heart Map Example
 Blank Heart Map Reproducible
 Various Artistic Media (e.g., crayons, colored pencils, markers)

SET UP AND PREPARE

About 5 minutes to set up equipment

Time required: One 40-minute class. Lesson can be extended over several class periods.

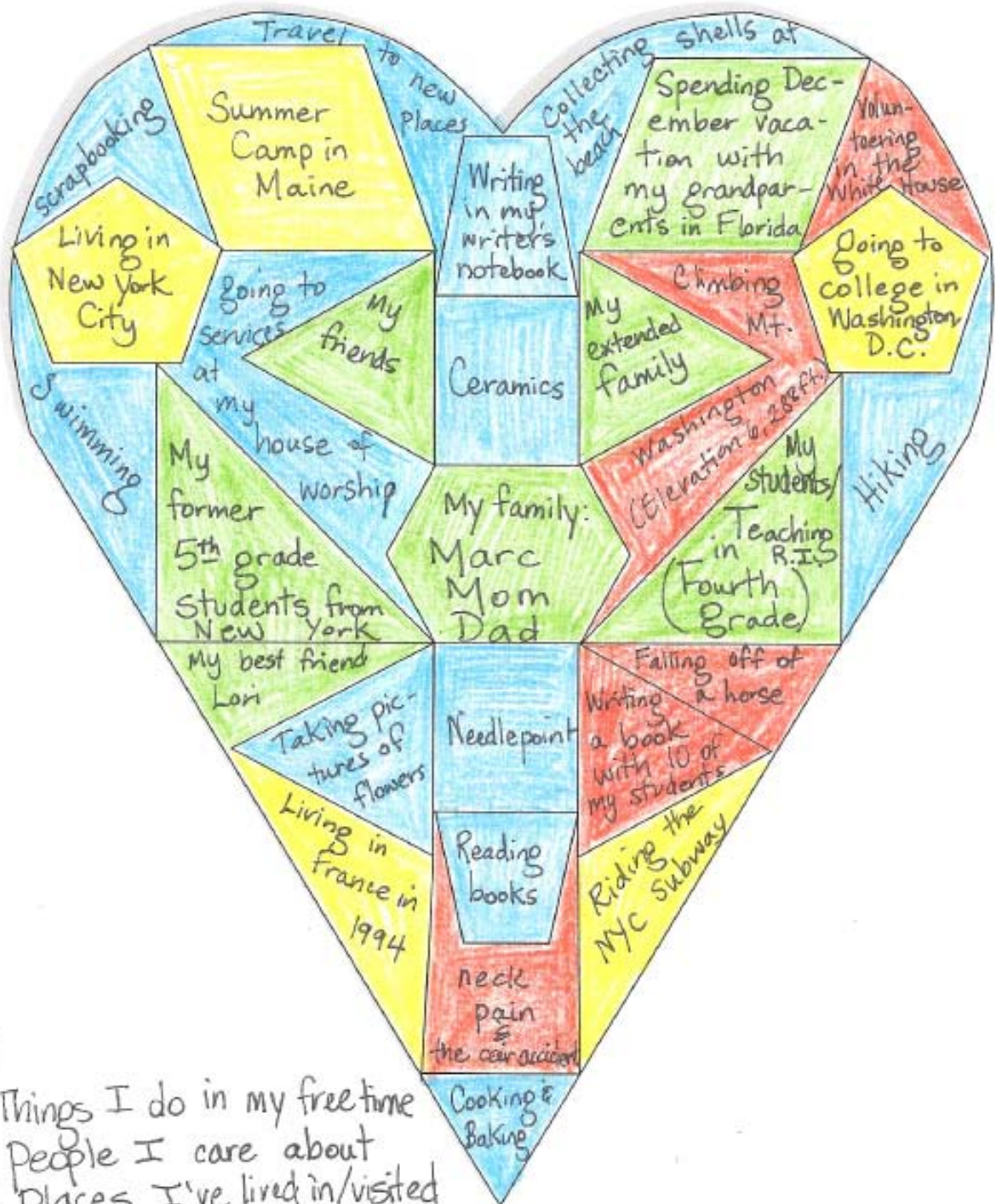
REPRODUCIBLES

Blank Heart Map

DIRECTIONS

1. Gather students in the meeting area of your classroom. Tell students that many writers keep a collection of things they know or care about to draw from whenever they want to write so that they never suffer writer's block.
2. Next, briefly talk about the things that are important to you as a person. Talk about people, places, things, or ideas.
3. In this part of the lesson, show students the Heart Map Template, or create your own by following these steps. Place the heart template underneath your document camera. Start from the center of the heart, placing the most important person, place, or thing in the center of your heart. Then, work your way out using just a few words in each section. Be sure to talk about each section as you're placing it on your map (e.g., “I always saw my grandparents in December. Therefore, I'm going to write 'December with Grandma and Grandpa' in my heart since I have so many memories of spending time with them at that time of the year.”).
4. Take time to answer students' questions before passing out a blank heart map to each student. Encourage students to color in sections of their heart (e.g., they might want to color code it: purple for people, green for places, blue for things, yellow for ideas) once they've filled in all of the sections.
5. Once all students have drawn their heart maps, photograph each map with a digital camera so you can print out several copies of the heart maps for them to keep in all of the places where they write. You might choose to hang up their original heart maps in the classroom to help on those days when students cannot come up with something to write about on their own. Save copies of students' heart maps to be used later in their writing-process PowerPoint presentations.
6. Each day during writing time, have students use different sections of their heart maps to craft a story on the computer. Encourage them to pick a handful of ideas, people, or places from their map, and incorporate them into a story using word-processing software. Or, have them start with one person, place, or memory, and build off of it.
7. Have students type their stories, then find a partner and peer-edit each others' work. Have students type comments using a different color text so authors can differentiate between their own words and their peer editors' comments.
8. After editing and revising is complete, have students create PowerPoint presentations on the writing process. They can use the saved photographs of their heart maps, as well as any brainstorming ideas they had, revisions, and final copies of their stories.
9. Have students present their heart maps and stories to the class. Encourage them to use their presentations as a reference each time they have a writing activity to track how their writing has evolved, or create digital portfolios of their electronic writing samples.

Writing from the Heart (Example)



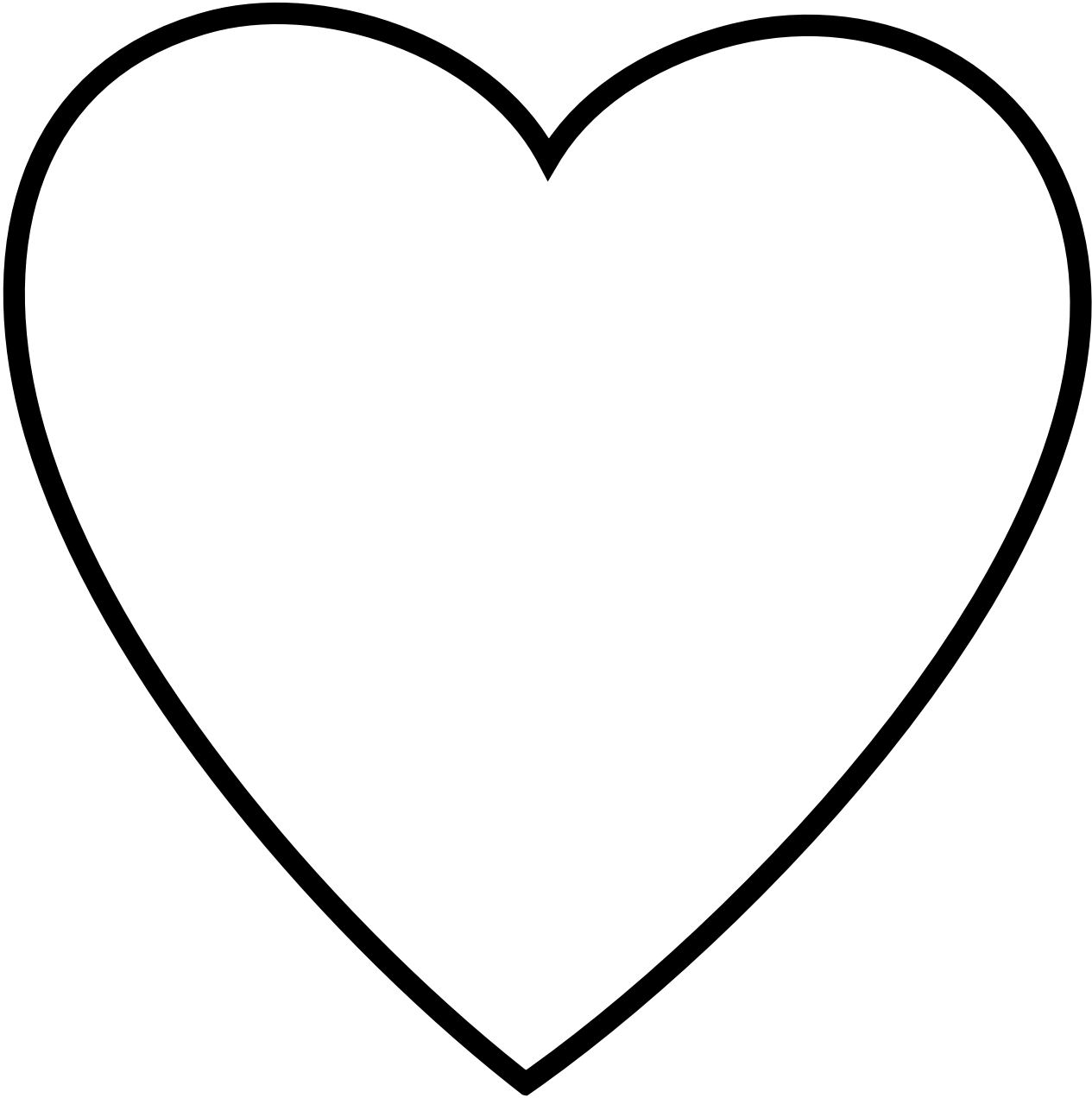
Key:

- = Things I do in my free time
- = People I care about
- = Places I've lived in/visited
- = Defining Moments

name _____ date _____

Writing from the Heart

What's special in your life? Fill this heart with people, places and memories that are most important to you. Be creative with shapes and sizes and color code using the key below.



= Things I do in my free time

= Places I've lived in/visited

= People I care about

= Favorite memories