

Memory Bank: created by Doug Manuel

This exercise can be performed in a large or small group and will take about an hour or an hour and a half. Ask the students to dig deep into their memory banks to try to remember their very first memory. This will be an excellent opportunity for you to share one of your earliest memories with the student, which will be a wonderful conversation starter. After a brief discussion of these memories within your group, ask the students to write down as many images they can about this memory. Ask them questions like: 1. Who was present in this memory—family members, friends etc? 2. Were they indoors or outdoors? If indoors, what room? What did that room look like? What objects were in that room? If outdoors, were they at a park or playground? What objects and landmarks do they remember being around them? 3. How do they remember feeling? Did they feel safe, afraid, happy, or sad? Challenge the subjects to think of a concrete way to describe these abstract feelings. For example, if they were afraid, try to get them to think of a simile to encompass this abstraction—maybe something like: “I was as afraid as a black kitten wondering around the neighborhood without its mother.”

If the students are willing, have them perform this exercise with three other early memories. After that ask the students to write a poem or a story about these memories utilizing the materials they generated from free writing.

Finally, when the students begin to finish and are getting ready for performance work with them to identify their “money lines” or any lines from their pieces which they really like. Work with the students to have them look up and create eye contact during their performances when they utter their best lines. Have a conversation about the importance of pacing and eye contact while one is reading aloud.