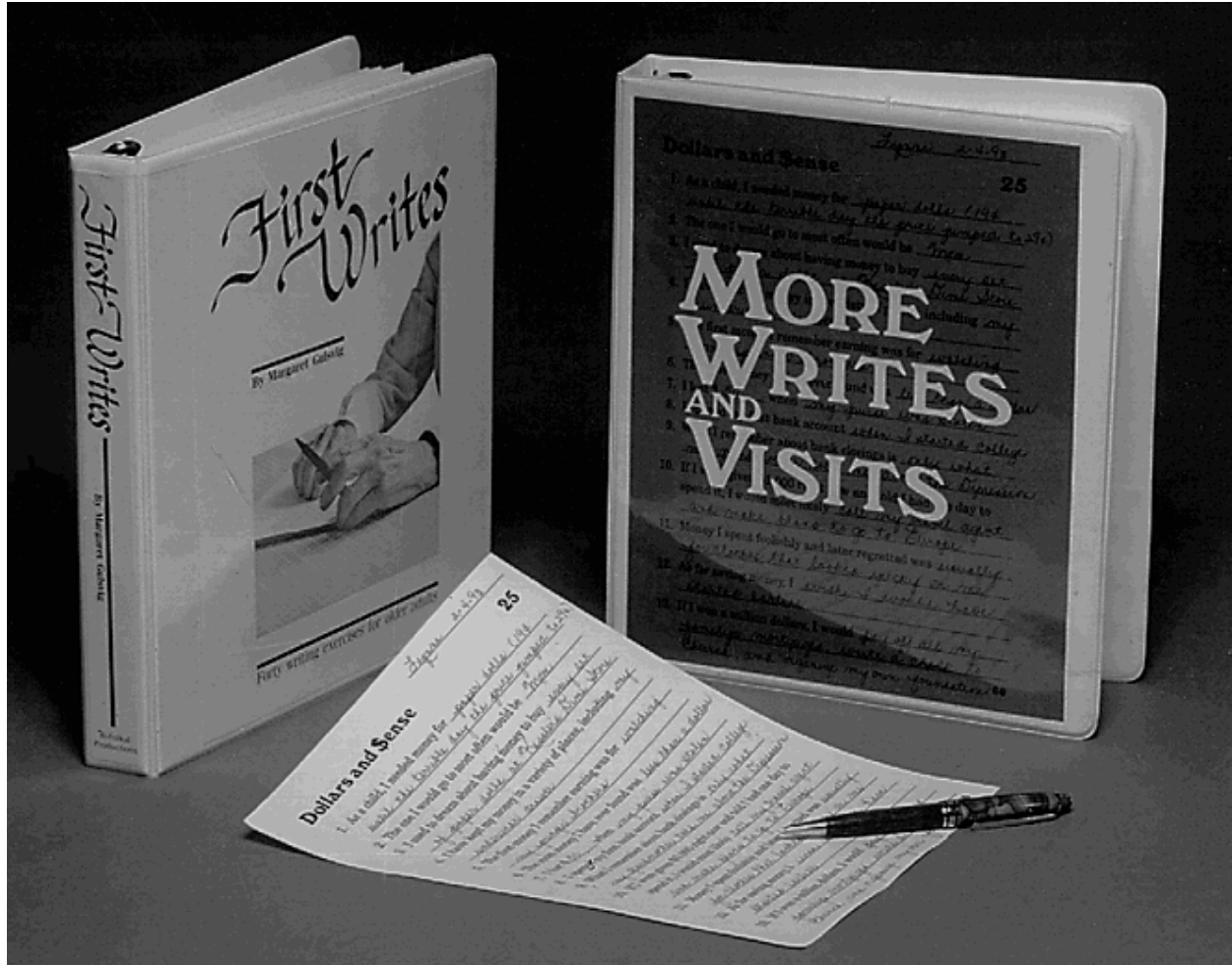


WRITE YOUR OWN PERSONAL HISTORY with First Writes



The hardest part is getting started...

So First Writes has started them for you.

For many, it is easier to finish a sentence than answer a question. So what we have are sentence starts. Topics range from **Heroes** to **Home Remedies** and from **Parades** to **Pet Peeves**. For each topic, at least one page of sentence starts will prompt the memories that turn into stories to share. All in large easy-to read print, these lessons come with the rights for you to photocopy them as often as you want.

Use them for small groups, for one-to-one, for table talks, for room visits. Consider making a book of completed exercises for each of your residents.

First Writes are materials developed and field tested by Margaret Gulsvig to assist

seniors to begin writing their own stories, or to help someone else write theirs. The working exercises can be used for small group discussions, with all ages. The catalyst to stimulate memories and provoke thinking of the past, is called slotting. Consider starting a binder of completed exercises for each person—a great tool for individual visits and discussion! Experiment with using different methods in small group discussions —read one sentence start and let each person in the group finish it. Let one person's memory prompt another's, as an intergenerational "interview" tool for students, family members or volunteer visitors

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"When you buy the forty exercises in the three-ring binder, you have permission to make as many copies as you want or need for those with whom you program or visit. Keep the blank exercises intact for programming forever." *Lynne Martin Erickson May 16, 2013*

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Please go to the www.bifolkal.org for easy to use *First Writes Resources and costs.*

SAMPLE OF WRITING EXERCISES

Home 20

1. One of the homes I grew up in was located in _____
2. It was a _____ house of _____ stories.
3. It had _____ rooms, but we congregated in the _____ most of the time.

4. My bedroom was

5. The attic was

_____ and I

6. The lawn was _____ and we had

_____ trees

7. The house was heated by

8. The things I liked about this house included _____

9. Things I disliked:

10. I moved from this house in _____
because _____

11. I have moved _____ times in my life.

12. My feelings about moving:

13. Of later homes, the one I liked the most was in _____

14. What I liked best about it was

15. We had many neighbors throughout the years but my favorites

were _____ because _____

16. We put in our first oil (or gas) burner in

17. We first had hot running water
in _____

18. Today my home

19. Our most expensive house was

Assignment

Many of us have lived in several houses in our lifetimes. Which one do you think of first when you hear the word “home?” Write a description of that place and tell why it means “home” to you. Or, write a story about why you would or would not like to return to a home in your past.

Comments

Participants in this lesson realized they had a new label for themselves: “the attic generation.” Most of them could remember digging around or just playing in the attic. Rainy days made great “attic days.” The other room that we talked about was the parlor. Many could remember parlors which were kept shut by sliding doors except for special occasions such as a death when the deceased lay in state until the day of the funeral.

The experience of returning to an old home many years later brought the same response from everyone who had done it: “It was so much smaller than I remembered it!”

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Memories of Mother 32

1. My mother’s name was _____

2. I called her _____

3. She was born at _____ on

4. She met my father at _____

5. In a family of _____ children, I was the

6. Her eyes were _____; her hair _____

7. Words that describe my mother are _____

8. Things that made her happy were _____

9. The sorrows in her life were _____

10. She worried about _____

11. In my mind's eye I see her wearing _____

12. Her main enjoyment at home was _____

13. She liked to go to _____

14. She was very good at _____

15. She never really learned to _____

16. What other people thought about my mother was _____

17. A saying she often repeated was _____

18. She made sacrifices so that I could _____

19. My favorite story about my mother is about the time _____

20. She died in _____ of

Assignment

Paint a word picture of your mother for the grandchildren or other relatives who never knew her. Try to explain why they would have liked her, or what it would have been like to spend a day with her.

Comments

It was inevitable that someone would start singing “M is for the million things she gave me...” But though they could hum the melody, the exact words eluded them. That is until they came to the last lines, “Put them all together, they spell MOTHER, A word that means the world to me.” The fond memories of mother included her sacrifices and her worries. Those who had been members of large families remembered hand-me-down clothes. It took ingenuity for mother to restyle and resize them.

The lines for the song “MOTHER” in themselves offer a beginning for a discussion:

M is for the million things she gave me.
O means only that she’s growing old.
T is for the tears she shed to save me.
H is for her heart of purest gold.
E is for her eyes, with lovelight shining.
R means right, and right she’ll always be.
Put them all together, they spell MOTHER,

A word that means the world to me. Each line suggests discussion points, beginning with the first one—what are some of the “million things” your mother gave you? What other things that relate to “Mother” begin with each of these letters.

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Memories of Father 33

1. My father’s name was

2. I called him

3. Other people called him

4. He was born on

 at

5. He was the _____ child in a family of _____ boys and _____ girls.

6. His schooling included

7. He met my mother

8. He had _____ hair and _____ eyes.

9. His most prominent feature was his _____

10. He was about _____ tall and weighed about _____ pounds.

11. I inherited from my father

12. He made his living as a

13. His favorite leisure activity was

14. He lived _____ years, dying in
_____ of

15. My best memory of him concerns the time he _____

16. He laughed when

17. I saw him cry
when _____

18. I saw him angry when

19. The thing(s) I did that made him proud were _____

20. The thing(s) I did that made him angry were _____

21. I treasure my possession
of _____

22. The best picture I have of my father was taken _____

23. He held offices in (political, town, church)

24. The one word that describes him is

25. My favorite story about my father

Assignment

Write a story about your father, either describing him in detail or telling one incident about him that stands out in your mind.

Comments

The activity director posted stories written by residents on a Father's Day bulletin board in the lobby. The display was of great interest to all the residents who could make their way down to the lobby, and to visitors to the home. Once there, they had to make their way through the crowd of the authors themselves who spent considerable time admiring their own achievements. One of the stories was read at a Father-Son banquet, to the delight of the writer.

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Dollars and \$ense 26

1. As a child, I needed money for _____

2. The one I would go to most often would be _____

3. I used to dream about having money to buy _____

4. I have kept my money in a variety of places, including

5. The first money I remember earning was for _____

6. The most money I have ever found was _____

7. I lost \$_____ when

8. I opened my first bank account _____

9. What I remember about bank closings is _____

10. If I were given \$1,000 right now and told I had one day to
spend it, I would most likely _____

11. Money I spent foolishly and later regretted was _____

12. As for saving money, I

13. If I won a million dollars, I would _____
