

## My Contribution to the Circle Unbroken

By reading the *Circle Unbroken*, contributing to a group-story and using a Promethean Board as a giant notebook, students will reflect on what they've learned about contributing. They will begin to learn about what contributions slaves made to colonial America, and how that applies to their own heritage. They will be able to show off what they've learned and how they can create their own contributions and well-written stories.

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**Learning Objectives:** Students will-

- connect with the reality and legacy of the *Circle Unbroken*.
- prepare for a unit on contributions of unnamed slaves lost in American history.
- experience a creative writing process designed to get students to generate great ideas and put themselves into the narrative.

**Good for these grades/ages:** 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8th

**Time needed for this project:** three class sessions

### Preparation:

- **preface with:** American history/Social Studies
- **student prior knowledge:** reading, writing
- **physical space:** desks and chairs
- **materials & supplies needed:** paper, pencils, Promethean Board and printer.
- **staging:** warm up the Promethean! We used the ActivInspire program to hand-letter the story on the board, and to print and save the screens.

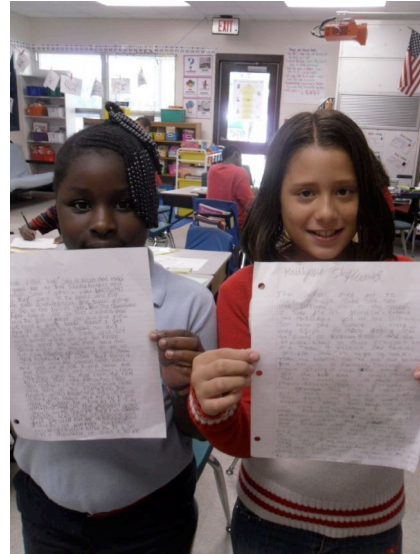
### Key Skills:

- **art-making:** collaborating, brainstorming, story-writing
- **academic:** reading, English language arts and history

**Vocabulary:** contribution, harvest, sacred, basket children, fanner basket, coil (from the book *Circle Unbroken*.)

### Handouts & Informative Resources:

None, other than print-outs of the previous day's work (described in Instruction.)



## Instruction:

### **Day 1.**

#### **Engage by Building Knowledge**

- Read & discuss the book Circle Unbroken.

*Who's this character?*

*Where are they?*

*What is a coil?*

*Why would she...*

- Then review and supplement what the students know about what makes a story; discuss out loud characters, plot, description, the five senses, setting, creativity.



### **Apply**

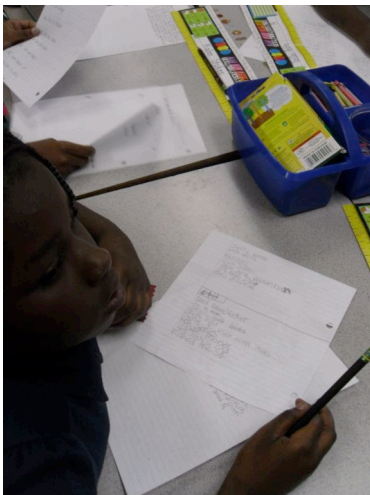
*Now we're going to work together to write one story, and the first step is to brainstorm...*

- Using the Promethean as a giant notebook for all to see, prompt students to brainstorm and create the story.

- Emphasize that this is the time to conceptualize, share, give feedback, enjoy, and view the creative process.

- Creative writing means description, feelings, and writing about what is fun and interesting *to you*.

**pictured here:** Students have pencil & paper for their own notes too.



#### **Step by step, while taking notes on the PB, the class determines-**

- a general topic and theme- "making Sweet Grass Baskets"

- the date and place of the setting- "Iceland, Sierra Leone, and St. Helena Island SC."

- choice details

- 4 distinctive characters

- All students contribute; to decide what does in, sometimes the class votes, and sometimes the teacher has to make the final choice. Encourage discussion to work out details of the story; students are sometimes able to combine their ideas. Some ideas ARE better than others in writing- *why* should

be covered in discussion- what makes sense, etc.

**Day 1 ends** with the students dictating the first paragraph, which the teacher writes on the PB.

**preparation for Day 2:** type up everything captured on the Promethean Board, as a handout for each student, cleaning up as little as possible, leaving \_\_\_\_\_ (blanks) for kids to fill in. They need to make decisions in this process.

**Day 2** begins with reviewing a typed summary of the characters, ideas, and the first paragraph. Try using a colorful paper, like pale green.

Ask a student to read aloud what the class has already accomplished, and then recommence the group story-writing on the Promethean Board.

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> session devoted to writing, keep students on track by reminding them to connect the elements of the story: *Keep in mind what you've already written!*

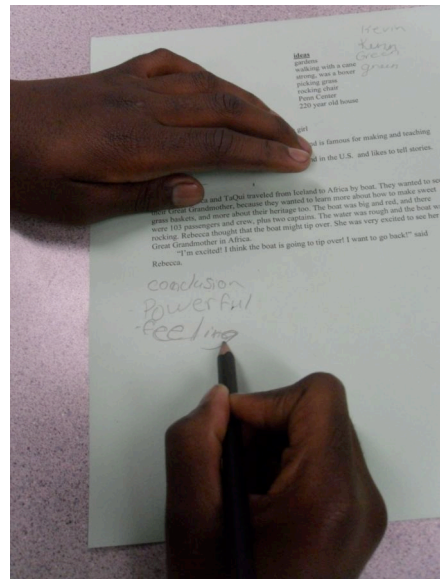
As a group, the students narrate to

- write dialogue
- describe everything- use colors, sounds, flavors, smells and sensations— all five senses plus intuition.
- decide what happens next in the plot
- figure out onomatopoeia
- discuss transitions and word choice, like "disembark."

**To end Day 2,** stop at a natural transition point, the end of a scene (and point that out to the students.)

Preview the next day's in-class assignment (which is to write the final section, as per the momentum of the plot.)

- note their ideas for the final scene.
- explain expectations for the conclusion (powerful and with feeling) and make students aware that the teachers will decide when that conclusion has been reached successfully.



**preparation for Day 3:** type up the story, for handout for each student.

### **Day 3**

- Everyone gets a copy of the incomplete story.
- read it out loud
- remind students that they are doing creative writing, that they should write about what is fun and interesting to themselves.
- advise them to dive right in to their individual writing of the final scene and strong conclusion. Conclusions should make a statement, be satisfying, and reflect how the character and writer feel and what they've learned.
- This is their time to **reflect**.
- while students write quietly, teachers should read over their shoulders, offering continuous feedback and encouragement.  
*You don't know what to write? How do the characters feel now? What has she learned? After all this, what does he want to do next? How did the character feel about this five years later, or twenty-five years later?*
- If there's time, ask a few students to read their endings out loud.



#### **Assessment:**

high marks for-

- being fully involved in the group story-writing process (contributing ideas, details, description, characters, concepts, vocabulary.)
- writing a strong conclusion on their own.
- being creative and descriptive in the group and individual process.

#### **2011 Standards:**

creative writing/ELA: personal narrative / brainstorming / genre- short story, historical fiction  
45.2 Create narratives containing details and a sequence of events that develop a plot.

45.3 Create written descriptions using language that appeals to the readers' senses.

45.4 Create written pieces (for example, skits and plays) to entertain others.

#### Social Studies:

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Standard 4-2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the settlement of North America by Native Americans, Europeans, and African Americans and the interactions among these peoples.

4-2.6 Explain the impact of indentured servitude and slavery on life in the New World and the contributions of African slaves to the development of the American colonies, including farming techniques, cooking styles, and languages. (H, E)

### **Artist commentary**

This group writing process uses the smart board to be transparent about How To Write. Each step is out loud in the students' and teachers voices, and viewable to all. Creative writing is about sharing information, not having the right answer. When a student has a voice in creating a great, original story, he experiences self-esteem, technique, confidence, self-expression and commitment to task.

### **Teacher reflection from Jennifer Bryant, Whale Branch Middle School:**

On past projects, these students had not worked so hard on the concept, the ideas we got were basic and repetitive. In this activity, they were thinking out of the box, thinking "oh, that's doesn't make sense." It was good that we adapted, chose to spend the final day doing individual writing, because that's what they needed and that's what would have to be done differently, from the original plan.



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