

The Truth of a Memoir

1. Question & Research Task

Have you and a friend ever witnessed the same event but told different stories about what happened...without either of you lying? How is that possible?

We live in a world that some have dubbed a [post-truth](#) society. With this in mind, is truth [subjective](#)? And, if so, what makes one person's memoir true or false?

Science and law enforcement alike have long known that our memories can be inaccurate. But memory is the basis of memoir. Knowing this, how true can a memoir really be?



Watch the above clip from “Keeping up with the Kardashians.” How much of the memoir that you just read do you think is true? How much should truth matter in a memoir?

Image Source: [People.com](#)

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

What is the relationship between truth and memoir?

2. Information Sources

Use the links below to explore topics associated with memoir and memory. Be sure to examine at least one source from each category. You may want to consider two sides of each issue.

Everyone must read this article by Jeanette Walls, author of *The Glass Castle*:

- [Truth and consequences: why memoirists don't always have the last word](#)

Memory

- [Memory](#) reference article
- [How reliable is your memory?](#)
- [Why eyewitnesses get it wrong](#)
- [Eyewitness memory is a lot more reliable than you think](#)
- Test your eyewitness skills at [the invisible gorilla](#)
- [Memories fade over time](#)

Memoir

- [Just the facts: 5 ways to craft accurate and interesting memoir scenes](#)
- [When is Lying in Memoir Acceptable? 3 Key Issues](#)
- [How True and Factual Does Your Memoir Have to Be?](#)
- [Fake Memoirs](#)
- [Memoirs: whose truth- and does it matter?](#)
- [In memoirs, varieties of truth; Facts are always important. But so is a thoughtful retelling of a good story.](#)

Truth

- [Post-truth: what Oxford's word of the year says about modern discourse](#)
- [How to Know Your Emotional Truth](#)
- [This is, and no mistake](#)
- [Truthiness](#)

Feel free to search for additional sources using the BCPS Databases in the [Apps Portal](#).

What do these sources indicate about memory, memoir, and truth?

SLIDE NAVIGATION

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George Bernard Shaw wrote, “All autobiographies are lies. I do not mean unconscious, unintentional lies. I mean deliberate lies.”

How do we distinguish truth from lies in memoir?

Image Source: [Pixabay.com](#)

***NOTE: If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.**

3. Student Activity

Use the information sources on Slide 2 to organize information supporting and refuting a claim.

1. Create a claim about the relationship between memoir and truth.

Consider:

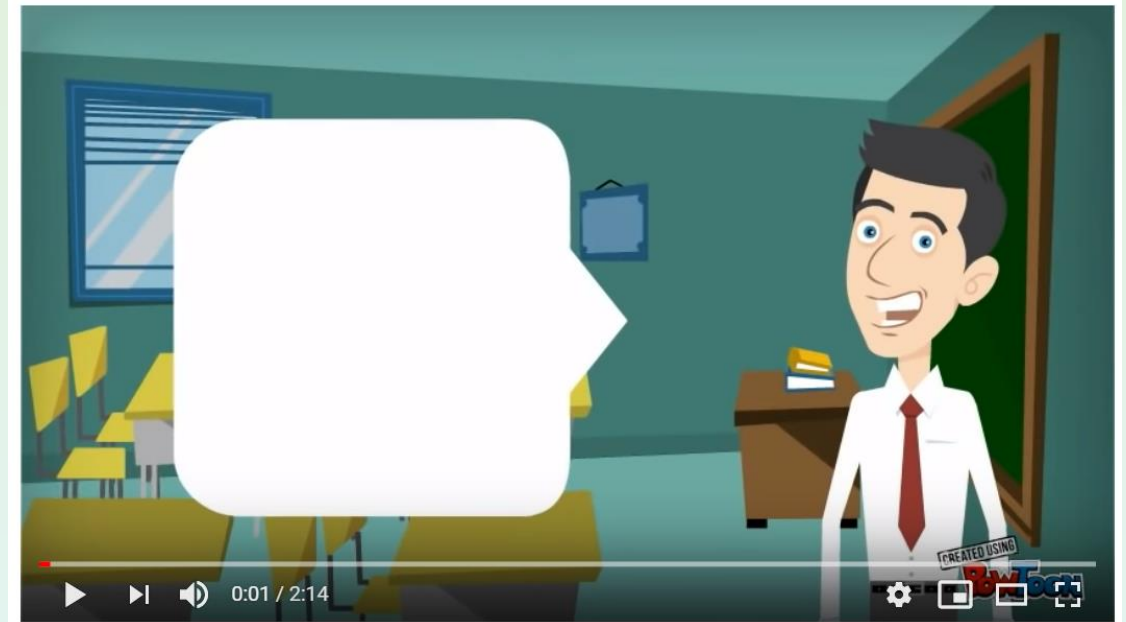
- What is the relationship between truth and memoir?
- What are the expectations and conventions of a memoir?
- How is memoir different from autobiography?
- What is the responsibility of the writer to his/her readers?
- Is truth subjective?
- How important is truth in a memoir?

Remember: a strong claim will be stated as fact but open to debate. It will answer your inquiry question.

2. Use the [note-taking sheet](#) or [NoodleTools](#) to organize information from your research that supports and refutes your claim.

3. List the sources you have used in [MLA format](#) (you may use [NoodleTools](#) via the [Apps Portal](#) to assist you).

4. Revise your claim, if needed, based on your research.



Making a Claim

Click on the above video clip to remind you how to develop a strong claim.

Image Source: [YouTube](#)

4. Assessment Activity

What is the relationship between truth and memoir?

Write a well-developed paragraph to support your revised claim. Be sure to include information that you gathered from sources on Slide 2 as well as information from your own experiences reading a memoir. You may use Word or Schoology to record your response before submitting it to your teacher electronically.

Please list your sources in MLA format following your paragraph. Note: Preformatted citations are available in database sources; citations for web sources can be formatted using NoodleTools.

Your response will be assessed using [this rubric](#).

Be prepared to share your claim in a class discussion.

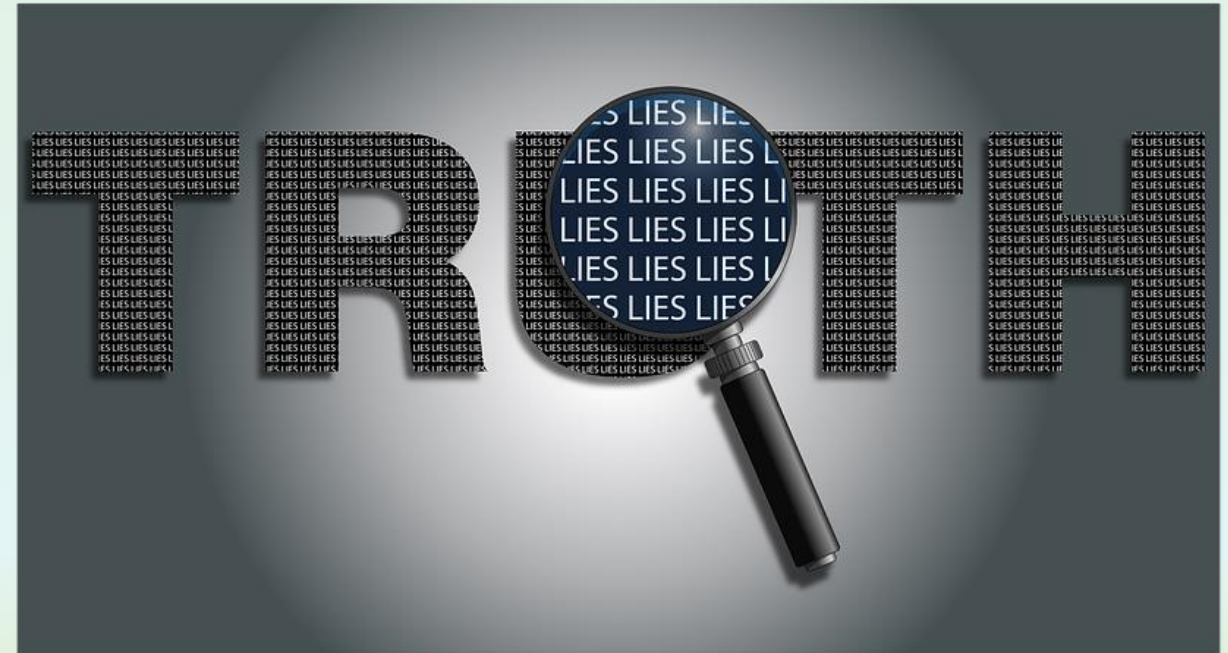


Image Source: [Pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com)

5. Enrichment Activities



Author Jeanette Walls writes about her childhood experiences in the memoir *The Glass Castle*.

Image Source: [Larry D. Moore CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

***NOTE: If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.**

In the [article](#) you read by Jeanette Walls, she says of her famous memoir *The Glass Castle*: “My brother, my sisters, and my mother have all said that while they felt my book was substantially true, any memoir they would have written would have been entirely different.”

How do you think *The Glass Castle* would be different if it was written by another member of the family? Would a different perspective create a different truth?

Find a short section of the memoir and recreate it from the perspective of a different person in the book. You may use [this excerpt](#) or another excerpt of your choice.

You may write this assignment or use a digital storytelling digital tool such as PowerPoint, Google Slide, or Sway.

An effective assignment will:

- Include the page numbers of the book being referenced.
- Use first person POV pronouns (I, me, we, us).
- thoughtfully reimagine the truth of a scene from another character’s perspective.
- Be at least seven sentences or seven detailed slides in length.

6. Teacher Resources

Learning Standards Alignment

Content Learning Standards

[Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy](#)

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners - Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

SLIDE NAVIGATION

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Grade 12 Unit 1

Objective: Students will analyze information from multiple sources in order to create and support a claim about the relationship between truth and memoir.

Time Frame: 1-2 90 minute class periods

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in any BCPS Digital Content in the [Apps Portal](#) included in this lesson.
- Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) on BCPS Innovation Hub if needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Consider using Philosophical Chairs or Socratic Seminar to facilitate a class discussion. This can help students process information or act as an additional assessment.

Last updated: July 2022 Report broken links to [BCPS Library Media Programs & Digital Resources](#)

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