

Genre Study of Memoirs: Responding to Readings

- How does the title invite you as a reader and fit the story?
- What kind of lead did the memoirist choose: action, dialogue, reflection, or description? What does the lead do for you as a reader?
- What verb tense did the memoirist choose: past or present? How is the tense choice effective here?
- How is the memoir structured, e.g. vignettes, flashbacks, flash-forwards? How does the memoirist move events through time and space? How does he or she indicate transitions in time?
- What does the memoirist do to help you make a movie behind your eyelids? What sensory details help you to be there, in the scene, and see, hear, and feel it?
- What kinds of word or phrase choices – especially verbs – bring the story to life?
- Is there dialogue? Does it sound real? What does it reveal about people, their feelings, and their relationships?
- Is there a climax to the action? How can you tell?
- How and where does the memoirist describe thoughts and feelings and invite you into his or her head and heart? (VOICE)
- What's the theme or so what?
- how does the conclusion affect you as a reader – what feeling or insight does it leave you with, and how did the memoirist achieve it?
- What else do you notice, like, and want to remember as you prepare to write a memoir of your own?