



Perspectives Project: Grades 6-12

Six Words Fresh Off the Boat: Stories of Immigration, Identity, and Coming to America

Six-Word Memoirs founder Larry Smith and ABC's acclaimed series *Fresh Off the Boat* welcome you and your family's unique stories for a new book, *Six Words Fresh Off the Boat: Stories of Immigration, Identity, and Coming to America*.

What is a "Six-Word Memoir"?

Six-Word Memoirs is a project founded by the online storytelling magazine, *SMITH Magazine*. Writing in Six Words is a simple, creative way to get to the essence of anything — from the breaking news of the day to your own life and the way you live it. Six Words offers an easy way to engage students and promote collaboration, and we welcome contributions from people worldwide. *SMITH Magazine* has published several books in the Six-Word Memoir series: *I Can't Keep My Own Secrets: Six-Word Memoirs by Teens*; *Things Don't Have to Be Complicated: Illustrated Six-Word Memoirs by Students Making Sense of the World*; *Six-Word Memoirs on Love and Heartbreak*, among others.

For more on Six-Word Memoirs and the many ways the form has been used for self-expression across the world, watch Larry's TEDx talk: bitly.com/tedxsixwords

What, exactly, is the assignment?

Write your own story, "My American Experience," in EXACTLY six words. Yes, just six! No more, no less. Use powerful words, mainly nouns and verbs. Your story does not have to be a complete sentence, but don't just make a list of six unrelated words. Rather, you are choosing six words to describe one main idea about your American Experience.

You can include an image to help tell your story. Be artistic and/or interpretive, though make sure it represents the American Experience you are trying to portray. Also, please, NO SELFIES or SKYLINES!

What are my learning goals?

1. Create a succinct story about you and/or your family by writing a Six-Word Memoir about YOUR PERSONAL VIEW on the American Experience.
2. Amplify your story by adding a visual image to accompany your Six Words.
3. Focus on purposeful and precise writing.
4. Engage in conversation around thought-provoking writing pieces.
5. Think critically about the way you and others view your experience.
6. Showcase your perspective in a creative, innovative, and meaningful way.

Okay, so why ONLY Six Words?

- Six Words gets to the point, the *essence* of an idea.
- Six Words demonstrates the importance of word choice.
- Six Words offers a universal framework to fit a range of learning strategies.

“It is said that you can learn a lot about a person by the contents of a purse or wallet. I’ve learned more by seeing what people can say in six words.”

—Eric K., student at Ridgeview High School in Orange Park, Florida

Let’s look at some examples!

“Adoption created a hearty country stew.”

“Half Jewish. Half Mexican. Totally me.”

“Dad lost accent, not his identity.”

“From Trinidad to Land of Opportunity”

“No, I do not speak Indian.”

See more examples: <http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/fotb>

Note to teachers!

- Share your students work with us and we may feature some of their stories in our upcoming book, *Six Words Fresh Off the Boat*.

Contact: larry@sixwordmemoirs.com

- See how other educators have brought Six-Word Memoirs to their classrooms on the “Six in Schools” blog, <http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/schools>

Now, let's give it a shot!

Begin by writing at least one Six-Word Memoir about you: your personal life, your family, or anything else. The important thing is to make it personal and be honest — in exactly six words. Then write a Six-Word Memoir about your American Experience. This video offers many examples from teens:

<http://bit.ly/teensonvimeo>

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What, exactly, am I supposed to turn in?

1. **Prewriting Template:** list several topics, memories, or favorite places from you or your family's lives that could be used in your Six-Word Memoir. Use the attached template to guide you. Template deadline: _____
2. **First Draft:** Select one or two of your ideas from the Prewriting Template and develop them into a Six-Word Memoir. Read the examples listed in pre-write template to get you thinking. First Draft deadline: _____
3. **Self-Edit:** Try to make at least one type of change—word choice, usage, or punctuation. It is not mandatory to turn in how “edit,” but you may decide to include edit in what you submit for publication.
4. **Final & Publication:**
 - a. **Option 1:** Write or type your Six-Word Memoir. Be visually creative Use different sizes/styles of handwriting and fonts to fit your words
 - b. **Option 2:** Create a Google Slide with your Six-Word Memoir and original picture. Email or share your slide with me.
 - c. **Option 3:** A postcard-sized picture (at least 3.5 x 5 in., or larger) with your Six-Word Memoir written on the back, like a real postcard.

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My American Experience: Prewriting Template

Start brainstorming by making lists of facts about your life and experiences in America. For example: Where do you live? How did you and/or your family settle in America? What are your favorite things about where you live now? Where do you like to explore and what types of food do you enjoy? What important events have happened in you or your family's lives? What makes America special to you? If you or your parents were born outside of the U.S., what traits describe your family's country of origin?

Next, choose six words from your list to summarize an aspect of your American Experience. I encourage you to use mainly nouns and verbs (**strong words**). These examples can be used as mentor texts:

*I'll let my true colors spread.
I'll never let my loved ones go.
Columbus, Ohio: Keep it a secret.
Saint Paul never lived in Minnesota.
Desperate to explore, yet stuck here.
Let's light candles, not curse darkness.*

More examples: <http://sixwordmemoirs.com> & <http://sixwordmemoirs.com/fotb>

This lesson plan was created in partnership with the Arts & Preparatory Academy, a public high school in Columbus, Ohio.