I Remember: Unlocking Memories to Lay the Foundation of Your Memoir

A Memoir Workshop by Jamie Brickhouse, author of Dangerous When Wet: Booze, Sex, and My Mother

Reading Lists

Brainard, Joe. I Remember.
The inspiration for this workshop, Brainard’s I Remember is a literary and artistic cult classic. He turned mundane, seemingly trivial, memories into art. As memoir, Brainard’s method was simple genius: to lay down specific memories as they floated to the surface of his consciousness, each introduced by the refrain “I remember”: “I remember my first cigarette. It was a Kent. Up on a hill. In Tulsa, Oklahoma. With Ron Padgett.” Brainard's enduring gem of a book has been issued in various forms over the past thirty years, praised by writers from Paul Auster to John Ashery and Edmund White.

I Remember These Books about Memoir & Writing

Karr, Mary. The Art of Memoir.
King, Stephen. On Writing.
Lamott, Anne. Bird by Bird.

I Remember These Memoirs

Arenas, Reinaldo. Before Night Falls.
Baldwin, James. Notes of a Native Son.
Chast, Roz. Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?
Fox, Paula. Borrowed Finery.
Karr, Mary. The Liars’ Club, Cherry, Lit.
Handler, Jessica. Invisible Sisters.
Nabokov, Vladimir. Speak, Memory.
Strayed, Cheryl. Wild.
Walls, Jeannette. The Glass Castle.
Wolff, Tobias. This Boy’s Life.

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Memoir Writing Prompts

I remember: set down memories as they rise to the surface of your consciousness, prefacing each one with “I remember.” Hand write them, and don’t allow yourself to edit as you go.

I remember (focused): set down memories as they rise to the surface of your consciousness about a specific event, person, place, time, prefacing each one with “I remember.” Hand write them, and don’t allow yourself to edit as you go.

I don’t remember my birth, but what my parents always told me about was…

Some of my favorite childhood toys and books were…

The worst thing my mother/father ever said to me was…

The teacher who had the biggest impact (positive or negative) was…

The first time I felt like an adult was…

The thing I’ve done I never thought I’d do was…

The most significant event in my life that changed me was…

The material things I can’t live without are…

The people in my life I can’t live without are…

My idea of hell is…

My biggest regret in life I’d never tell anyone about is…

I want to be remembered most for/as…

Write your own one-page obituary

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