

### III. Writing Exercises

Each of the following writing exercises will be based on the historical figure you researched in the previous workshop as well as the information you have been gathering over the course of the Institute. However, because you are writing historical fiction, you may use the historical record as a starting point to craft a compelling and engaging narrative—in this case a fictional memoir written for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

A memoir is how one remembers one's own life. (Gore Vidal) The knowing one knows by heart. A recollection and reflection that is altered through the lens of time. How you remember. Unlike a biography or autobiography, it does not start at the beginning of a life and continue along a given timeline, but rather is a series of snapshots, thoughts written in short chapters. In writing memoir, you need to be willing to leave things out. As in this case, a memoir can stem from a precipitating event.

1. Write a 6-word memoir for your character. Share.  
Some examples: For sale, baby shoes, never worn. (Hemingway) Not quite what I was planning. Took veil, left, found earthly delights. Oldest of 4 sisters, still recovering.
2. Think briefly of a setting for your character before, during, or after the battle. Then, describe that scene, just the scene—the sights, the sounds, the smells. Don't overthink. Just start writing, and write continuously for 5 minutes. Share experience in trying to complete this exercise.
3. Now, put yourself in the scene. Write continuously for 7 minutes. Write without inhibition. Recall how you felt, the thoughts that were running through your mind, whom you were with, what you did. Tell the truth, but tell it slant. (Emily Dickinson) Share writing with group.

Demonstrate SAYBACK as a method of critique. In sayback, each member of the group listens to the writer read her piece and makes note of words or phrases that particularly resonate with them. Once the writer has finished, members of the group respond by repeating the words or phrases that resonated with them. Pause briefly between words so that other members may chime in if they also chose that word.

4. Write a short (1 or 2 paragraph) reflection on what it meant to be at the "crossroads".
5. Discuss classroom applications.