

CLASS MAIN IDEA Book

Research Writing Objective: From writing a class book, students learn how authors structure research papers – from selecting and organizing facts to writing generalizations (main ideas) and illustrating.

LESSON 1 Taking Notes

CONNECT

Pick a topic children want to know more about. Once you know they want to find out more, share the idea of writing a book as a class. (If possible, show them books other students have written.)

TEACHING POINT

The hardest part of writing a research book is finding interesting facts and organizing the information into an organized article. It helps if the process is divided into steps. The first step is to select facts and write those ideas into the writer's own words. Tell the students that it is also helpful to know the difference between retelling and summarizing.

TEACH

1. Ask the children to find the page in their science or social studies book you pre-selected.
2. Show students the first sticky note you wrote.
Example teacher wrote: “*spiders spin webs*”
3. Ask the students to read the page and find the sentence that matches the sticky note on the board.
Actual words in the text: “*The tiny spider spins a web that is both beautiful and useful.*”
4. Lead a discussion to see what students notice about the teacher's notes. After several examples, students should be led to see that the teacher...
 - Wrote one fact per sticky note.
 - Wrote the sticky note in “short hand” - not complete sentences.
 - Did NOT *copy* from the book but wrote ideas in her own words.
 - *Spelled* research words correctly. (It saves time if students copy vocabulary words correctly. Words like *spider*, *peccary* and *javelina* will be difficult to edit later.)
 - Did not retell the whole selection; she *summarized*. Often summarizing works by writing “who” + “what they did” on the sticky note. (Retelling is telling the whole story, just in different words.)

In addition, one sentence in the reading may yield 2 or 3 sticky notes. Example: “*Webs are pretty*” may be a second fact the researcher writes from the same words in the text above.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Assign pages to read (from a book for which all students have a copy). Two-three students should work together to read a couple pages and take notes on stickies as modeled. Since each group is reading one section, the students will combine the sections into a class book.

LINK

Say, the reading skill we used today is summarizing. *Retelling* is telling the whole selection all over again. *Summarizing* is telling just the gist: “who (or what)” + “does what.” By taking notes in our own words, eventually we can combine them together to write the whole book.

REFLECT Write a summary telling the difference between “summarize” and “retell” in your daybook. If you can, draw a symbol that will help you remember the difference.”

To get ready... Select a page from the science or social studies text from which to model taking notes. Choose 6-8 facts from the reading. Write one fact on each sticky note. Post the sticky notes on the board.

See page 7 for assessment rubric. You and your students can assess each step of the way or at the end if they keep all the pieces. Keep the sticky notes for lesson 4.

LESSON 2 Understanding Main Ideas

CONNECT Praise the students on the number of sticky notes and therefore facts they collected on the day they read about the topic.

TEACHING POINT Authors writing research articles need to understand how to find main ideas to connect details.

TEACH

1. Tell students that in order to help them sort the facts they gathered they will practice on unrelated facts. Explain that they will have to think broadly to find a category, a main idea that matches all the details in the sticky notes. For example, when thinking about these words – *jacket*, *dress* and *pants* – the generalizing idea that unites all the words could be *clothes*.
2. Assess to see whether students need more examples to understand main idea.

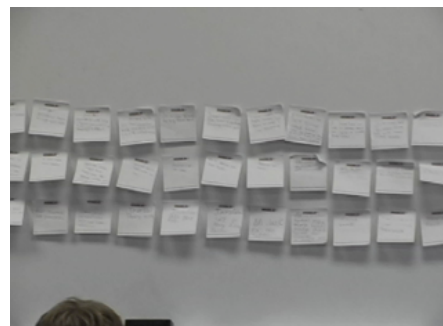
The boy bought his mother a gift.
The boy does his chores when he's told to.
The boy gives his dad a hug when he gets home.
What is a possible main idea? *The boy is a loving son.*

The temperature is 36 degrees.
There is snow on the ground.
The girl wears a heavy coat.
What is a possible main idea? *It is winter. It is cold.*

Dogs eat the food in their bowl.
Sometimes they gnaw on bones.
Dogs also love to eat scraps from the table.
I've seen dogs eat grass.
What is a possible main idea? *Dogs eat lots of things.*

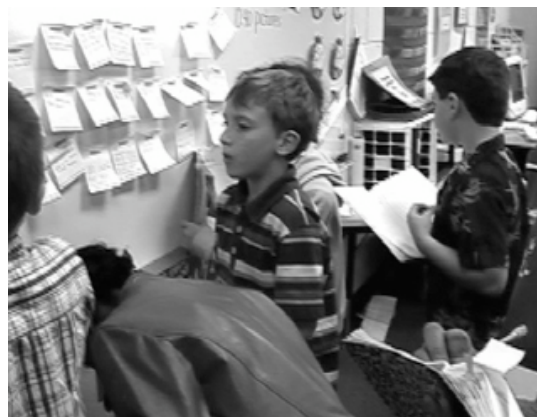
They will eat a big meal together.
The family will get together for Thanksgiving.
They will play a game of football in the backyard.
They will watch football on television.
What is a possible main idea? *The family will get together for Thanksgiving.*

To get ready...Post all the sticky notes the students wrote yesterday on the whiteboard.



ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask the children to take their daybooks to the board and read the sticky notes posted there. Ask them to find details that are related and write the main ideas in their notebooks. Guide this process. As the students analyze the sticky notes, ask questions like, Which 2 sticky notes (details) go together? Can you find another that goes with it as well? Why? What category does that fit under? Are there other categories or are all or details about the same thing? In the javelina research we did, the children found (1) places they live, (2) what and how they eat, (3) javelina babies, and (4) how javelinas look and act like pigs. Of course, students will write down ideas that don't work. That's okay. Let the children make an initial list.



LINK Since we collected facts from our research, we have to organize them into main-idea groups. We started that process today by practicing thinking about main ideas with information unrelated to our research. Then we looked at the facts we collected and started thinking about the main ideas that are represented. We made a list of possible main ideas for our book.

RELLECT (Choose one.)

1. What is the main idea of the lesson today? (What is the main thing I wanted you to learn today?) Write your thoughts in your daybook.
2. Draw a picture that shows how details are related to main ideas.

LESSON 3 Finding the Main Ideas

CONNECTION

Read 2-3 reflections from the daybooks. Read points you want highlighted. Clarify misconceptions and answer questions raised in the daybook writing as well.

TEACHING POINT

The next step in writing a book is to sort the facts into categories.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Gather the children around the sticky notes posted on the white board. Ask them to share the main ideas they discovered. Let the children write one main idea at a time on the whiteboard. Then, let one child at a time read a sticky note that matches that main

idea and move it to the right place on the whiteboard. Keep moving the sticky notes until there are only a few left. Ask all students to agree.

LINK

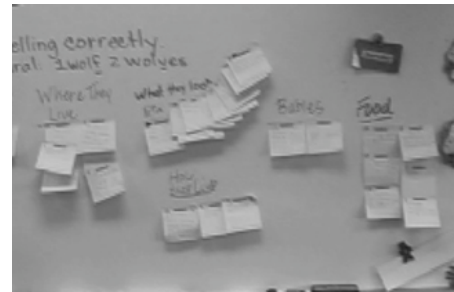
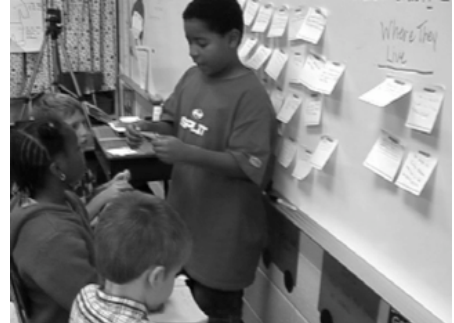
When the students sort their sticky notes tomorrow, they will encounter some problems just like they did today. Ask the students to remember what they did to solve the problems. What happened when we found...

1. Duplicate facts? (Threw them out.)
2. Wrong facts? (Threw them out. If we weren't sure, we put them in the right pile to double-check later.)
3. Facts we couldn't read? (Checked with the author or threw them out.)
4. Unrelated facts? (Put them together as a category like "other interesting facts" or threw them out.)
5. Categories that didn't have enough facts? (If it is important, do extra research on the computer or use other books later to fill in the gaps.)

REFLECT

Write the difference between a *detail* and a *main idea* in their daybooks.

To get ready...Post all the sticky notes the students wrote yesterday on the whiteboard. Students need daybooks.



LESSON 4 Putting Details in Order

CONNECTION

Read 2-3 reflections from the daybooks. Read points you want highlighted. Clarify misconceptions and answer questions raised in the daybook writing as well.

To get ready... Put the teacher's set of sticky notes on the board from the science or social studies demonstration lesson.

TEACHING POINT

Tomorrow each group of students will work to put the facts written on their sticky notes in a logical order. In addition, once they are in order, the group will write a main idea sentence to start their paragraph. Today, we will practice using the teacher's research from day one.

TEACH & ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

1. Reread the sticky notes.
2. Ask the students to put the sticky notes posted on the white board in logical order. Let students come to the board and move the sticky notes around.
3. Discuss decisions students are making and why facts go together.
 - Put like facts together in a paragraph (*Webs look like lace. Webs are almost invisible.*)
 - Put more general, main-idea sentences first. (*Spiders spin webs to trap insects.*)
 - Order the facts in sequence. (The most logical order for these facts is: *The insects get caught in the sticky webs. The insects struggle and die. The spiders can then use the insects for food.*)

LINK

We've collected facts. We put the facts into related groups. We decided what the main idea for each group of facts. Today we saw that it takes a lot of problem solving to figure out the order of the details. There is not just one way. However, the facts should be sequenced logically. The author should be able to explain why she chose to put the facts in a specific order.

REFLECT

In daybooks, students record what they learned about the importance of putting details in logical order in a paragraph.



LESSON 5 Main Idea Leads

TEACHING POINT

Once each pair of writers has the facts in order, they will need to write a main idea sentence to go with the facts. Today we will practice writing main idea sentences about different information before students work with their own research.

TEACH

(1) Share the examples to demonstrate what might happen to groups.

- The temperature is 36 degrees; there is snow on the ground; the girl wears a heavy coat. (It is cold outside. OR, it is winter.)
(Often, the main idea can be written more than one way and both are right.)
- The boy bought his mother a gift; the boy does his chores when he's told to; the boy gives his dad a hug when he gets home. --- (The boy is kind.) *(Try to think of **one** word that is the main idea for all --- **not** like, "The boy is kind and thoughtful and generous.)*
- Dogs eat the food in their bowl; sometimes they gnaw on bones; dogs also love to eat scraps from the table; I've seen dogs eat grass. (Dogs eat lots of things.) *(When writing main ideas, we have to think generally, globally. The main idea must include all facts even when they might seem a bit unrelated.)*
- They will eat a big meal together; the family will get together for Thanksgiving; they will play a game of football in the backyard; they will watch football on television. (The family will get together for Thanksgiving.) *(Sometimes the main idea is already included in the list of facts.)*

(2) Show the students the teacher's example. The main idea WAS one of the sticky notes (bold type).

(3) Write the rest of the notes into complete sentences.

(4) I write the paragraph on every other line for editing later.

Spiders spin webs to trap insects. *The webs look like lace. They are almost invisible. First an insect flies into a sticky web and gets caught. Then it struggles. It cannot get free so it dies. The spider then uses the stuck insect for food.)*

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Students put their sticky notes in order and write a main idea sentence. (Each pair will need to remember to throw out duplicates and check the facts for accuracy using the text. If time, some students could consult the text or other texts for more facts to fill in the gaps they find in their paragraph.)

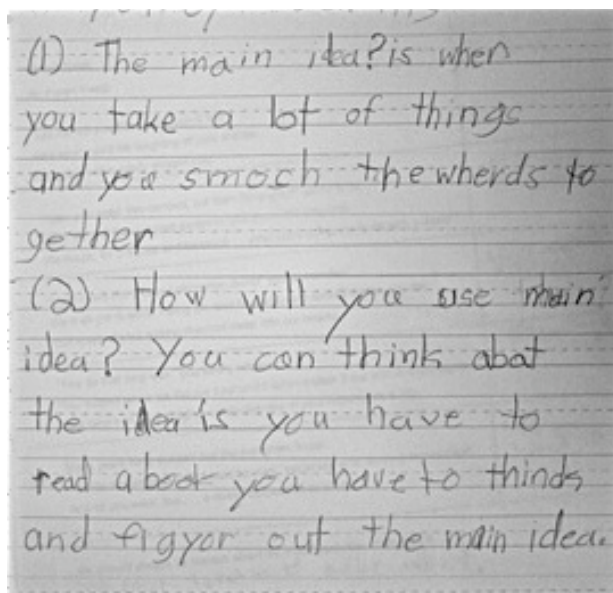
REFLECT

Students (1) explain *main idea* and (2) how they wrote a good main idea sentence.

To be ready... type the sentences under "Teach" on sheets of paper in a font big enough for the class to see or to view under the DocCam. Make sure every child is working in a small group. Make sure each group has a set of sticky notes to write into a paragraph.



NOTE: Students should keep all drafts in a works-in-progress folder.



EXAMPLE of reflection (left):

Students record learning in daybooks. A 2nd grader writes, "The main idea is when you take a lot of things and smooch the wherds together (sic)."

"How will you use main idea? You can think abot the idea is you have to read a book you have to think and figyer out the main idea (sic)."

Full text of one research book (below): My third-grade students wrote these paragraphs. Notice the different levels of writing – how some pages are more detailed than others. The main idea is bolded. Each paragraph then became one illustrated page (photo page 9). (One paragraph = One page)

Javelinas are very interesting. Their real name is peccaries: (pec'-u-rEz)

Peccaries are either of two tropical American animals that gather in herds, are active at night, and look like, but are much smaller than, pigs.

Javelinas act like pigs in some ways, but not in others. They squeal. They eat sloppy like pigs. They love the mud. But, they hide in bushes. Javelinas have rounded backs like their cousin, the pig. They have necks that look like a collar. Javelinas have hooves like a deer and are hairy like a bear. Their noses look like a pig's and they have pads like a football player.

Javelinas are crazy looking. Javelinas grow to be about 20 inches or 50 cm. tall. Javelinas have round heads. Their teeth are pointed and sharp. They have hair around their necks.

Javelinas can be found in a lot of places. They live in South America. Some live in Mexico or the United States. They live in the mountains, the rainforest, or the desert. If you go to the rocky canyon in the Arizona desert you might see Javelinas. They live in the wild near neighborhoods.

Peccaries often kneel to dig for food. They eat cactus and roots. They also eat small animals.

Peccaries live in groups called herds, which help them protect each other. Javelinas have a liquid called musk to keep track of the herd. Javelinas stick together.

LESSON 6 Revising

CONNECT Ask student to share their stories from their daybooks where they recorded their process for writing main idea sentences.

TEACHING POINT

Authors set aside their writing for a day or more. Then, they come back to reread. They look for spots that might be confusing to their readers. They read their work aloud or to others to see if they can improve their projects in any way.

Revision and editing are different. Revision means to add, subtract, combine or rearrange details so that *the meaning makes sense*.

TEACH

Explain that you have typed their pages just the way they wrote them.

They will analyze the papers to see what needs to be changed. Share some examples from the science demonstration. Model the kind of revising that needs to be done.

(What you're doing next is a sentence-combining lesson --- demonstrating that there are several ways to fix a problem the students may see. Also, if students see editing errors --- misspelled words, missing punctuation or capitalization --- they can fix that also as they add, subtract, combine or rearrange details. Whereas the emphasis is on *revision* – making the page make sense --- you can't help but fix *editing* problems if you see them.)

- *Javelinas are like pigs they have rounded backs.* (Students should punctuate the sentence as two sentences or make a compound sentence by adding a word like “because.”) **Add or combine**
- *Spiders got webs.* (Students should consider the word choice of “got” and change it to “spin.”) **Rearrange**
- *Spiders make webs that trap insects.* (Students might consider inserting the word “sticky” before webs to make the meaning clearer.) **Add**
- *Spiders spin webs. The insects get stuck in the webs. The webs are almost invisible.* (Students should consider re-ordering the sentences. *Spiders spin webs* and *the webs are almost invisible should go together*. Or, they could combine 2 of the sentences into something like *Spiders spin webs that look almost invisible*.) **Combine and rearrange**
- *Spiders spin webs. Spiders spin webs. Insects get stuck in webs.* (Cross out duplicate information.) **Subtract**
- *Spiders spin insects like delicate webs.* (Sometimes a sentence just doesn't make sense at all. Change it to something like: *Spiders spin delicate webs that trap insect*.) **Rearrange**

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Give the typed pages back to the writing groups that wrote the originals. Give them time to read the typed version. After they do, they work on revising. If they finish their page, they should trade pages and check another group's work. If they have extra time, they can edit the work as well.

REFLECT (Choose one.)

Explain *revision* in daybooks. List the revision changes they made in their daybooks.

To get ready ... type what the students have written so far. Type both authors' names on the page as well. (I use at least 36 pt. font, 8 x 11 sheets of paper and skip every other line.) Post the pages on the board with magnets. Write sentences for “Teach” part of the lesson in a way that can be seen by all.

LESSON 7 Editing (or Proofreading)

CONNECT After reading through the daybooks, read selections that explain the revision the students did yesterday. My favorite is my third grader who wrote, “Revision is like cleaning a messy window.”

TEACHING POINT

Authors look at each page one last time to see if everything makes sense (*revised* correctly) AND if everything has been *edited* correctly --- that means everything is spelled right, the capitals and punctuation marks are in the right places, and we have used our English writing manners (grammar).

TEACH

Gather the children in a semi-circle next to the whiteboard. Ask the students to bring their *chairs*, *daybooks* and *pencils* with them. This lesson takes a long time.

All students will serve as editors for the book. They will go through the book page by page to look for any final editing mistakes that need to be fixed. The teacher will record the corrections they find by crossing out, inserting, writing in the margins, fixing spelling and punctuation, etc. on the pages posted on the whiteboard.

As the class discovers errors, ask students (who can) to record the learning in their daybooks. For example, in the book we completed, these are just a few of the problems we discussed and the children recorded...

how to spell there, their, and they're, wolf – wolves
 plurals vs. possessives vs. contractions (when to use an apostrophe)

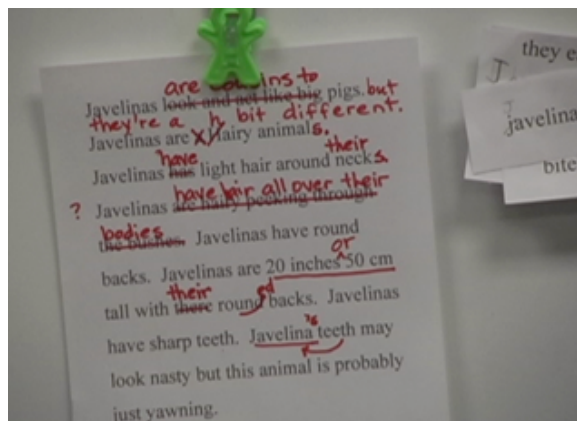
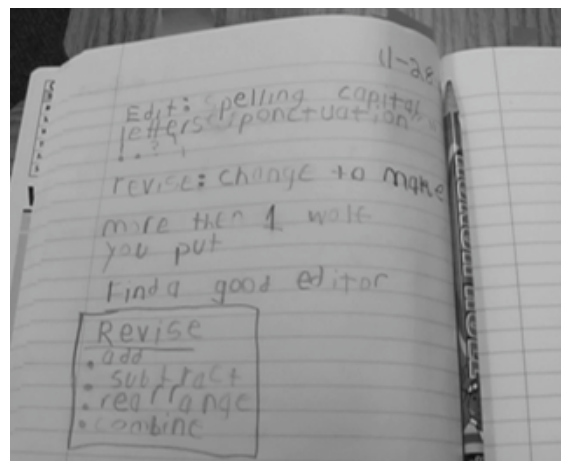
spelling of many third grade words ... problem, went, they
 Must use a period at the end of a sentence. Can't separate sentences with commas.

REFLECT (Choose one.)

Ask the students to record what *editing* is in their daybooks. Compare *editing* and *revising* in their daybooks.

Make 2 lists – one for actions take while revising and one for actions taken while editing.

To get ready...type the pages again with the changes this time. Post the pages in order on the whiteboard, each with one magnet. Have a colored marker on hand.



LESSON 8 Illustrating

CONNECT Today we are going to illustrate the page. Since two of you worked on a page there will be two illustrations to go along with each page. You should illustrate *different* details.

TEACHING POINT

Authors usually send their writing to publishers. Publishers select artists to illustrate the work. In our case, we will illustrate our own work. Illustrating your own work can be harder. Since you know your writing, you might select to draw a picture that doesn't quite match what's on the page unless you reread to check. Read carefully to be sure that the illustration *matches* the text on the page. In addition, you will be drawing 2 different illustrations today. Another skill you will be working on is collaborating and reaching consensus with a partner.

To get ready... type the pages one last time. Make all the changes. Make sure they are perfectly typed and ready to mount in the book.

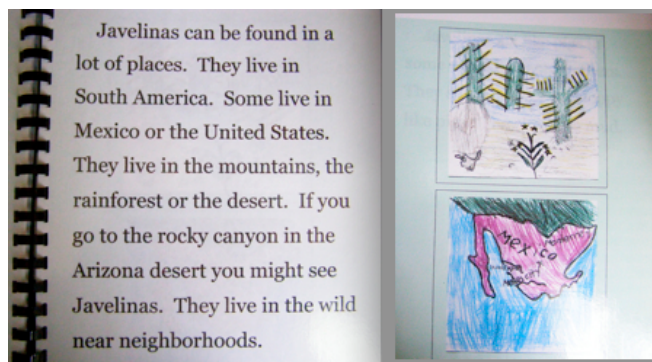
Select paper for students to illustrate. The template I used is on page 11. Select one line to illustrate from your teacher text. Colored pencils for all

TEACH

1. Model drawing illustrations to match text using a sentence you've selected from your science example. Think aloud as you sketch an illustration for one paragraph: Reread. Talk out loud about what you might draw. Talk through your challenges and solutions. *Ex: I can't really draw a spider so I think I'll draw a web.* Since 2 people will be illustrating one paragraph, talk through a possible second drawing that could go on your page.
2. Share drawing tips:
 - How to draw in detail in drawings
 - Using the full space staying inside the space given you for the book (Show the size of the paper the students will use. My students each drew on ½ sheets. The template is on page 11.)
 - Making the illustrations big enough to see.
 - Drawing in pencil first, and then coloring with colored pencils
 - You may want them to label their pictures or write a caption. If so, you will have to model.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

1. Distribute the typed texts.
2. Students discuss possibilities with their partners and then draw different pictures. (Depending on your class, you may have them come to you and explain what picture each will be drawing before you distribute drawing paper.)
3. Give children time to draw illustrations in colored pencils on the sheets you have provided them.



REFLECT Ask students to explain (1) what *details* they selected to illustrate in their daybooks and (2) what they learned about *illustrating* a book.

Teacher Homework: Cut the finished pictures and mount them on colored paper along with the text that matches. Either ask students or make a title page, a Table of Contents, a dedication page. Laminate the book. Read it! Celebrate and put it in your classroom library.

LESSON 9 Assessment

You and your students can assess each step of the way or at the end of the project. Review the steps and recall the names of the parts: *summary, retelling, main idea, detail, revision, editing, paragraph, selection, illustration*. Students refer to their daybooks for recall and evidence.

Main Idea Book Project Assessment Name _____

0 – didn't do 1- got by 2 – good job 3 – outstanding work!

Lesson		Student	Teacher
1	Took notes from the pages assigned. Could write in own words.		
1	Can explain summary and retelling in daybook.		
2	Can explain the difference between a main idea and a detail.		
3	Sorted details written on stickies in a logical order.		
3	Can explain the difference between main idea and detail in daybook.		
4	Wrote a main idea sentence for his/her page.		
4	Can explain how the main idea sentence was chosen in daybook.		
5	Revised page so that it made sense.		
5	Can explain <i>revision</i> in daybook.		
6	Participated in editing session. Offered suggestions. Recorded new learning in daybook.		
6	Can explain what editing is in daybook.		
7	Illustrated page appropriately.		
7	Can explain how to illustrate a paragraph (in daybook).		
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 39			

Reflective Essays

Students might also write reflective letters about the project detailing what they learned and pointing to the evidence in their daybooks, their drafts, and the published book. Referring to the list on this page should help students remember the lessons you taught. Questions to jumpstart reflection include:

1. What did you know about writing a research book before we began our project?
2. What did you learn about writing a research book?
3. What are the most important lessons you learned that you would use in other projects?
4. Of what are you most proud?
5. What do you think you still need to learn or what do you think you still need to learn more about?

one ½
sheet
per student,
cut to size

