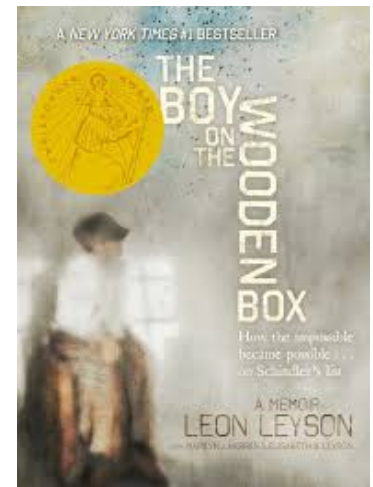
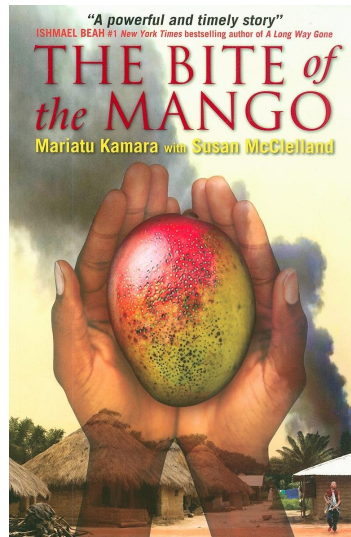
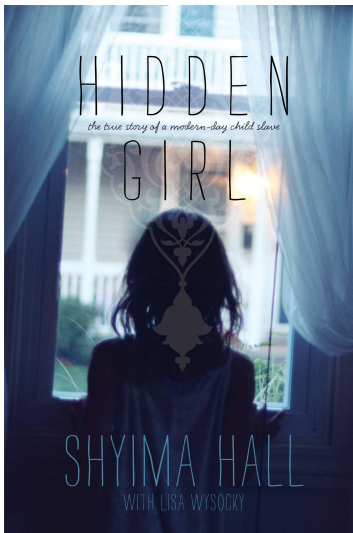


Memoir Unit

Why we read memoirs...

The purpose of this unit is for students to discover *real* experiences through the eyes of *real* people in *real* events. Memoirs allow for the reader to develop an admiration for someone while developing the potential for improving the quality of life of the reader. Our memoir unit is being used to inspire you as you reflect on your own life through journaling and activities.

You will be responsible for selecting ONE of the following three memoirs:



Each of these memoirs is about 200 pages. You will be responsible for completing the reading of your chosen memoir on March 22nd A day, 23rd B day. This means you will have to pace yourself to read about one-third of your book each week or about 70 pages. You will have time to read in class on some days, as well as participate in activities with your classmates who are reading the same book.

1. The Boy on the Wooden Box by Leon Leyson

With the arrival of the Nazis, nine-year-old Leon Leyson's life was changed forever. His once carefree existence turned into a life of fear and suffering. Food became more and more scarce. Leon was always hungry, always searching for something to eat. He was brutalized and eventually was separated from his family. He firmly believed that he would not survive the war. Incredibly, his father had the good luck to be hired by Oskar Schindler, a Nazi Party member who had come to Kraków to make his fortune. As the Nazi treatment of the Jews grew increasingly harsh, Schindler chose to protect the Jews who worked for him, using his money and influence to save over 1,000 lives, including young Leon's. He did this at great risk to himself.

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Leon Leyson's story of survival during the Holocaust, is told with simplicity and passion. It is a story that raises significant questions about social responsibility, the human potential for good and evil on many levels, and the ability of even seemingly powerless people to resist injustices. Written in 2012, many decades after Leon Leyson's experiences of the 1930s and 1940s, this memoir teaches readers about the Holocaust and connects them with the powerful story of a boy and his family. Leon Leyson's survival is ultimately an uplifting story of the power of human resilience and love in the face of evil.

2. The Bite of the Mango by Mariatu Kamara with Susan McClelland

As a child in a small rural village in Sierra Leone, Mariatu Kamara lived peacefully surrounded by family and friends. Rumors of rebel attacks were no more than a distant worry. One day 12-year-old Mariatu set out for a neighboring village, but she never arrived. Heavily armed rebel soldiers, many no more than children themselves, attacked and tortured Mariatu. During this brutal act of senseless violence they cut off both her hands. Stumbling through the countryside, Mariatu miraculously survived. The sweet taste of a mango, her first food after the attack, reaffirmed her desire to live, but the challenge of clutching the fruit in her bloodied arms reinforced the grim new reality that stood before her. With no parents or living adult to support her, and living in a refugee camp, she turned to begging in the streets of Freetown. As told to her by Mariatu, journalist Susan McClelland has written the heartbreaking true story of the brutal attack, its aftermath, and Mariatu's eventual arrival in Toronto, where she began to pull together the pieces of her broken life with courage, astonishing resilience, and hope.

***3. Hidden Girl: The True Story of a Modern-Day Child Slave* by Shyima Hall with Lisa Wysocky**

Eight-year-old Shyima El-Sayed Hassan is living in a poor neighborhood near Alexandria, Egypt, when her parents sell her into slavery to a wealthy Egyptian family to pay off a “debt” owed to them by her older sister Zahra. Shyima, never having attended school, is forced to work day and night, given little clothing and food, and seldom allowed to go out or bathe. Shyima lives in hope of returning to her family; however, when her captors move to the United States and she has minimum phone contact with her family, her hopes diminish and her anger toward her parents increases. Speaking no English and having no education, Shyima is easily controlled by her captors—she is abused, both verbally and physically, and lives in fear that bad things will happen to her and her family if she does not obey. Living a life of fear, confusion, and betrayal, and unable to communicate with the outside world, her future appears grim until an unidentified person becomes suspicious and US government officials begin an investigation. Shyima’s journey from slave to US citizen is one of hope and perseverance.