Memoir Peer Edit

Your name:_____________________ Author’s name:________________________

One of the cool things about a memoir is that the rules are not so strict as they might be for other forms of writing. You should be picking something fairly significant to write about, but that may not be the case. However, if your memory is fairly mundane (and even if it’s not) you should be attempting to “go to town” on showing, not telling. So this edit will focus less on what you’re saying and more on how you’re saying it.

Take the memoir of a peer and read it through, slowly. Don’t write on the paper at all.

After that, reread the paper again and do the following:

1. Examine the introduction. If this was the start of an assigned book in class, would you look forward to reading it? Does it make you want to read it? Why? What specifically does the writer do to hook you? Why not?

2. Using a highlighter, highlight all passages where you could see, hear, taste, feel, and/or smell what was going on in the story.

3. Non-vivid verbs. If the person is using run of the mill verbs, they need to change those. For example, why look when you can glance? Why eat when you can chomp? You don’t need to come up with the vivid verbs; just underline them.

4. Circle any examples of figurative language. Figurative language uses figures of speech, a non-traditional way of saying something. It’s all those poetic approaches to language: metaphor, simile, personification, symbol, irony, allusion, hyperbole, etc. Memoirs without these can be flat. Memoirs with too many can be forced. Use them, but use them sparingly.

5. Mark in the margins all the places where the author is presenting scene (the close-up of location and action). Is there too much? Not enough?

6. Mark in the margins all the places where the author is presenting musing. If there isn’t any, where might you put it? What should they be musing about?

7. Dialogue. If there is dialogue is it realistic? Do people really speak this way? If there isn’t dialogue, mark places where it might be used.
8. Examine the conclusion. Does it all the reader to reflect on the significance of the memory?

9. Finally, examine the memoir for grammatical errors. Circle all that you find.