

November 21 2014 Literature Circle 7<sup>th</sup> grade, session # 5 **Rebecca\_poulson@hotmail.com 747-3448**  
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### **Boy: *Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl**

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Next week is Thanksgiving holiday, so next time we get together will be December 5th.

So over the next two weeks, **read the rest of the book, and write your own mini memoir**, to share on December 5th.

Next book will be *Call of the Wild*, so we can do it in time for Battle of the Books.

Last Friday, only a few of you had bothered to get the book and read it!

As Cora said, haven't you ever worked with middle schoolers before?

But here's the deal - you need to make a commitment, that if you are going to do this literature circle, you have to commit to reading and writing.

If you truly don't have time to read and write, it probably does not make a lot of sense for you to do the literature circle.

So **IF** you do want to continue, our next get together is December 5th, and you need to:

- 1. Type up and get me your Huckleberry Finn essay (easy!) by email, or if you can't do that, let me know and we'll figure out some other way.**
- 2. Finish *Boy* (this is a short book, not only is it just 175 pages, most of those have pictures!)**
- 3. And, write a short mini memoir from a childhood incident that stands out in your memory.**

So the essay and memoir, by short, I mean **a page of handwriting - which is a half page of typed writing, a few hundred words.**

Easy! And fun!

### **Things to notice in *Boy*:**

what you learn about the author's personality from what he writes about and how things are probably exaggerated and simplified

what he wants you to think about him – how he is portraying himself.

Things you notice, and things he points out, that are different from your life today: attitudes and lifestyle, technology, family life, expectations.

One thing that came up in our discussion Friday was the idea that a memoir is not literally true. It is a story. In order to make it more interesting and meaningful, the author leaves things out, puts things together that weren't, and makes things more vivid than they would have been, seen objectively.

While it is possible the Matron had steam coming out of her nose, it is more likely he is putting that in to paint a picture of her fury, and the students' fear.

Roald Dahl seems to use exaggeration of people's physical qualities to express his relationship to them, whether it's the goat legs of the candy shop owner or the fearsome bosom of the Matron, or the watery blue eyes of the Captain.

I get the impression he's still angry, over the way children were treated in these schools, and by certain authority figures such as doctors, at the time.

Also, he was an outsider, in a few ways: while his family was wealthy, he was not from an aristocratic English family; he was Norwegian; and, he was very tall (6' 6" as an adult).

### **Your memoir**

For the mini memoir, go ahead and make it more intense than it really was. Memoir is not strictly, literally true. You are telling a story, just as Roald Dahl was. Try imagining what it looked like, remember what it

smelled like, any details that help tell the reader what that incident meant to you.

And don't say nothing ever happened to you! I had just as boring a childhood as anyone, but I once got pushed up against the fence by the mean girl, played horses on the playground, got swatted by the PE teacher for not putting the wire basket in the locker room back in the shelf (and can vouch for that delay between the smack and the pain, that Dahl describes so well). I recall the first time I heard a grownup criticize another grown up, seeing dead kittens, figuring out how to write the word "purple" "prpl," going to spend the night at my friend's house but walking home because I was scared of her dad.

Think about a time you were treated unfairly - getting a really great Christmas present - or the disappointment when you didn't - doing something for the first time - even little incidents that stick out and you don't know why. Something that happened when you were visiting relatives. Injuries, a time when you screwed up, or saved the day, in a game. Getting in trouble. Being embarrassed, or suddenly aware of how much a parent loves you. The first memory that pops into your head.

So hope to see you December 5th, stories in hand!