

CURRICULUM GUIDE · GRADES 9-12

Includes connections to Common Core State Standards

WRITING MY WRONGS

LIFE, DEATH,

AND REDEMPTION

IN AN

AMERICAN PRISON

SHAKA SENGHOR



CONVERGENT

**Curriculum Guide Prepared by Dr. Ebony Roberts
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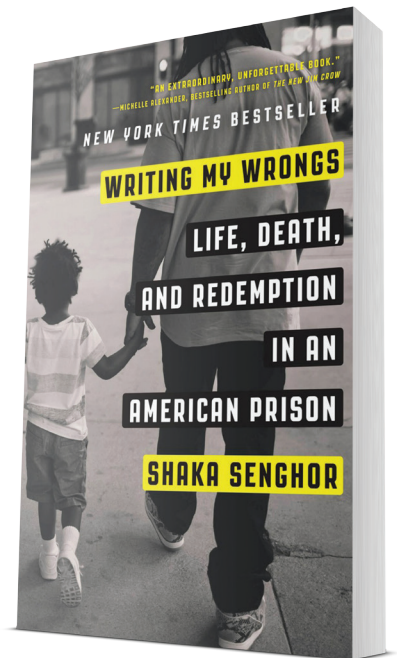
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Writing *My Wrongs* is an extraordinary tale of forgiveness, hope, and second chances. It's the story of Shaka Senghor, who was raised in a middle-class neighborhood on Detroit's east side during the peak of the 1980s crack epidemic. His mother's abuse led him to run away at age fourteen, and after two weeks of sleeping in garages and hustling at the grocery store for food, Shaka turned to drug dealing. Five years later, at the age of nineteen, he would end up in prison for murder. *Writing My Wrongs* (Convergent Books, 2016) is the story of what came next.

Shaka entered the prison system bitter, angry, and hurt, blaming everyone but himself for pulling the trigger on that fateful night. But two years into a four-and-a-half-year stint in solitary confinement for assaulting an officer, Shaka received a letter from his ten-year-old son who told him he knew what he was in prison for—murder. With his son's words hitting him like a ton of bricks, Shaka realized for the first time that he had failed his son and so many of the young men who looked up to him. He spent the remaining years of his incarceration studying and writing. Through journaling, he was able to unpack the baggage that led him to prison. With each stroke of his pen, he reclaimed his humanity and found the purpose in his pain.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SHAKA SENGHOR is a leading voice in criminal justice reform and the president and co-founder of #BeyondPrisons, an initiative designed to uplift the voices and the experiences of those impacted by the justice system. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2016 Ford Man of Courage Award, the 2016 NAACP Great Expectations Award, the 2015 Manchester University Innovator of the Year Award, and the 2012 Black Male Engagement (BMe) Leadership Award. Shaka's 2014 TED Talk received a standing ovation and has been viewed more than 1.3 million times. He was also recognized by OWN as a "Soul Igniter" in the inaugural class of the network's SuperSoul 100, a dynamic group of trailblazers whose vision and life's work are bringing a higher level of consciousness to the world around them and encouraging others to do the same.

ABOUT THE GUIDE WRITER

DR. EBONY ROBERTS is the Program Director for #BeyondPrisons, an initiative designed to uplift the voices and experiences of those impacted by the criminal justice system. She has worked as a school administrator and program evaluator in Detroit, and led the development of an African-centered social studies curriculum. She also co-wrote, along with Shaka Senghor, *Building Bridges*, a workbook for children grappling with the incarceration of a parent. Ebony holds a BA in Social Relations and Psychology and a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, both from Michigan State University.

A MESSAGE FROM SHAKA SENGHOR

Although I grew up in the '80s in a very different era, I can still relate to many of the challenges our youth face today. By the time I turned seventeen years old, gun violence had become a normal part of my life. I watched many of my childhood friends and family members get gunned down in the streets. When I was fourteen, my older brother shot my oldest brother in the neck; at fifteen, my childhood friend was shot to death; at sixteen, my older brother was shot, and years later was shot again, this time leading to his paralysis from the waist down; and at the age of seventeen, I was shot several times while standing on the corner in my neighborhood. By the time I turned nineteen, I had been surrounded by so much violence that I became desensitized to it. I didn't value life—mine or others'—and was quick to anger. I often resorted to violence to handle conflicts and saw my pistol as the “peacemaker.” Years later, when I found myself serving time in prison for second-degree murder, I realized how distorted my thinking was and knew that it was up to me and others like me to break this destructive cycle in our community.



When I returned home from serving nineteen years in prison, I quickly discovered that not much had changed. Just over a year after my homecoming, two of my nephews were shot and one of my childhood friends was gunned down in broad daylight, marking another long and bloody summer for Detroit. Sadly, the gun violence I had witnessed in my youth was just as prevalent nineteen years later.

The sight of mothers crying out for their murdered children, teddy bear vigils to honor the dead, and community members marching and rallying in the name of peace, aroused the activist in me. As I reflected on the tragedy of my youth and the destructive path that led me to prison, I knew that there was no greater time than now to use my voice and the power of literature to counteract the culture of gun violence that is robbing our youth of their innocence and virtually holding our communities hostage. I wrote *Writing My Wrongs* so that no other youth would have to live with the burden of taking someone else's life; so that no other youth would feel alone or misunderstood; so that no other youth would have to live out their most promising years in a prison cell. Saving their lives makes the pain of telling my story worth it.

I've been a mentor and big homie to many misguided and angry youth who, like me, had been victims and perpetrators of gun violence but had not adequately dealt with the trauma of their experiences. It wasn't until years into my incarceration—and much self-reflection and analysis—that I realized I suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) when I got shot at seventeen. Angry and afraid, I reacted to my personal trauma, and the accumulative effect of witnessing high levels of violence, by carrying a gun with me every day. Through journaling, I discovered that I had emotional trauma from my childhood and my life in the streets that I had failed to process in a healthy way. When I realized what I was experiencing, I had an “aha” moment and recognized that there were countless young men and women in our community going through the same thing. Ultimately, this unprocessed emotional trauma is at the root of the violence we see.

It is my hope that by sharing my experiences and, more importantly, giving students an opportunity to share theirs, they will begin the healing process and unpack the pain that keeps them imprisoned in fear, anger, and hopelessness.

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Every day our youth are bombarded with destructive influences. The number of high school dropouts, teenage mothers, and violent teen deaths has grown exponentially over the past twenty years; but there is hope. Shaka Senghor, a mentor and the author of *Writing My Wrongs*, has become a beacon of light, inspiring students with his story of redemption.

Convicted of second-degree murder at the age of nineteen, Shaka entered prison angry and bitter. He blamed everyone for his circumstances, from his parents to his teachers, refusing to take responsibility for his decision to shoot on that fateful night. But once he began unpacking the trauma from his childhood and his life on the streets, he was able to understand the pain that led him to prison.

Through its discussion questions and writing exercises, this curriculum guide encourages young men and women to think deeply about their own experiences and challenges them to process their emotions in a healthy way. As you embark on this journey of self-discovery and self-analysis with your students, you will see how powerful literature can be in helping them to heal and grow emotionally.

PURPOSE OF THIS CURRICULUM GUIDE

The *Writing My Wrongs* curriculum guide is a resource for teachers, librarians, and program directors interested in using *Writing My Wrongs* with their youth. It was developed for the following specific purposes:

- To help students process the text and the emotions that may arise
- To provide opportunities for students to think critically and to address the issues that impact them and their peers
- To help teachers engage productively and honestly with their students around tough issues such as abuse, violence, punishment, and forgiveness

This guide addresses the primary themes of the book and provides suggestions for teaching and learning, suggestions for assessment and suggested readings for further exploration. It provides a range of activities and resources for teachers of language arts and social studies, anchored by manageable excerpts from *Writing My Wrongs*. Writing exercises have been included as a means to help students process their thoughts and emotions as well as develop their writing skills. Each exercise builds on the themes addressed in the book and hopefully will inspire deeper reflection than the discussions alone could provide.

“Hurt people hurt people” is a truism that speaks volumes about the causes of violence in our community. This guide will help students understand and address the causes and the consequences of violence and to imagine a world where hurt people are not broken further by a criminal justice system that is broken and failing.

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POWER OF STORYTELLING

A beautiful storyteller, Shaka takes readers on a roller coaster ride of emotions as he navigates life on the streets and in prison, getting you as close to his experiences as possible. It is our hope that students who read *Writing My Wrongs* will connect deeply with Shaka's story, understanding not only what led him to prison but also what leads so many young men and women down a destructive path. Many of our youth are stuck in a cycle of poverty and violence and do not know how to break through the barriers that keep them stuck. In *Writing My Wrongs*, we hope students see a way through the storms they may face and find hope, understanding, and love in Shaka's story.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DELIVERY

Reading *Writing My Wrongs* may bring up a host of emotions for both you and your students. Be prepared to help students unpack their emotions and to process your own. Adolescents are going through an exciting but challenging period of discovery and growth. They are experiencing significant changes in their physical, emotional, intellectual, and moral development and look to the adults in their lives for guidance and validation as they navigate life. These changes, of course, vary at each grade and at different ages.

There are multiple ways your students may react to talking about *Writing My Wrongs*. They may react passively, indicate deep sorrow, express anger, or respond in an unpredictable way. Some students may become visibly upset; others may need more time to process what they're feeling. This guide will help teachers engage productively and honestly with their students, recognizing that sometimes discussions of abuse, violence, trauma, and punishment can evoke strong reactions.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

An open, safe learning environment is important in helping students process what they might be thinking or feeling as they read *Writing My Wrongs*. Home and school influences should be considered as students may be dealing, or have dealt, with some of the issues discussed in *Writing My Wrongs*. With this in mind, it is important for teachers:

- To recognize that students bring their own experiences to the discussion and add an invaluable perspective
- To create a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings and where they feel respected and heard
- To create an opportunity for students to debrief following emotionally charged discussions
- To be an active facilitator in students' discussions, which may include encouraging students to move beyond their comfort zone and to take on a more active role in discussions

You and your students should make decisions together as to the appropriate groupings for various activities. These groupings will provide opportunities for peer-to-peer teaching, sharing, and other collaborative efforts among students. Also, they may help students feel safer, and therefore, more willing to speak and to take learning risks.

SECTION 2 CURRICULUM DESIGN and CONTENT

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

This curriculum guide is designed to support teachers in the analysis and the discussion of *Writing My Wrongs* with their students. Intended to open up dialogue between you and your students and to exercise their analytical skills, we have created discussion questions and writing exercises for each theme. These questions are provided to help your students think critically about the themes of the book. Coupled with the writing exercises, they will build reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, allow them to connect the book to their own lives, and provide opportunities for them to learn from their classmates. With the writing exercises, students are asked to respond to writing prompts in different formats and for different audiences—some are creative, some are analytical. We recommend giving students a few vocabulary words that you would like them to use in their writing.

This curriculum guide is designed to help students master essential skills in reading comprehension and writing. It is aligned with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives. The Common Core Standards referenced in the guide are provided in full in the Appendix. The learning objectives for each activity, discussion question, and writing exercise have been identified and color coded with descriptions available in the Appendix.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Activity I

Have students respond to the following statements by indicating “yes” in the box next to each statement that they agree with and “no” in the box next to each statement they disagree with. The statements included here are provided as examples; feel free to add others. Students must commit to agreement or disagreement—no conditional responses. Be sure to tell them that there are no “right” or “wrong” responses. This activity can be used for additional discussion and analysis once students have read the book. ■ ■ ■

STATEMENTS	BEFORE READING	AFTER READING
Parents are responsible for their child's poor decisions.		
Spanking a child is not child abuse.		
Everyone is redeemable.		

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Activity II

Have students respond to the following questions in pairs or small groups:

1. What makes childhood sacred? Why should children be protected? ■ ■
2. What does it mean to “lose” one’s innocence? Provide examples to support your definition. ■ ■ ■
3. What should be done to protect children? Who’s responsible for children’s safety? ■ ■
4. Identify some adult experiences children should not be exposed to. Then, rank them in critical order. For example, does sexual activity rank above or below smoking? You might want to use small post-it notes or scrap paper so that you can move around the choices as you decide. ■ ■
5. Though adolescents are at the threshold of adulthood, they are still considered children. Do you agree or disagree that adolescents should be treated and, therefore protected, as children? Use concrete examples to explain your conclusion. ■ ■

Activity III

Have students respond to the following questions in pairs or small groups:

1. Shaka grew up in Detroit. Compare and contrast Detroit with your city or with a large city close to you. You can use pictures and images along with words. Share your findings. ■ ■ ■ ■
2. Discuss what you know about prisons and prison life. How is jail different from prison? ■ ■ ■ ■
3. Why is prison reform a “hot” topic in the United States? ■ ■ ■ ■

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

Activity I

Have students use small post-it notes or scrap paper to mark passages as they read, and then identify any themes that they see emerging among the passages they select. If different colors of post-it notes are available, have them use colors to mark each theme (e.g. choices, consequences, identity, second chances, forgiveness). ■ ■ ■ ■

Activity II

Share the following scenario with students and have them discuss in pairs or small groups: If Shaka’s story becomes a TV series or a movie, and you have the job of selecting sound and music, determine what sounds and what music you’d suggest for different events, chapters, sections, and/or themes. ■ ■ ■ ■

Activity III

Have students keep a journal. Certain passages may touch them deeply. Invite them to write poems, song lyrics, and/or rap lyrics that they freestyle for themselves or share with the class. They may also choose to illustrate poignant scenes with drawings or photos. Encourage them to schedule a poetry slam, open mic event, and/or art show to showcase their work. ■ ■ ■

POST-READING ACTIVITY

Analyzing Key Ideas

Have students select quotes from the text that seem to signify key ideas that Shaka hoped readers would take from the text. Then, have them explain why these quotes are important to the larger themes of the book. ■ ■ ■

THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

The response to *Writing My Wrongs* has been phenomenal. Parents, primarily mothers of boys, educators, celebrities, politicians, and everyday folk have praised the book's honesty and the power of Shaka's story. The book touches everyone differently, but there have been common themes in the feedback, themes we build upon here in this curriculum guide—the innocence of childhood, the power of forgiveness, the causes and the consequences of violence, the brutal reality of prison, the meaning of transformation and second chances, and the hope for a system that helps, rather than hurts, those who need our compassion the most. There are seven themes total:

- Innocence of Childhood
- Our Common Thread
- Relationships
- Unpacking Trauma
- Prisons as Punishment
- Transformation and Redemption
- Beyond Prisons

The selected themes are based on the ideas from the book that resonated most with readers and have the greatest potential to engage youth in the issues that affect their daily lives. We provide opportunities for students to comprehend, to evaluate and synthesize information and ideas from the book, to conduct research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to create a range of texts using their own voice and informed by their own experiences.

You are free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge you consider most helpful for meeting the objectives of each theme and the Common Core State Standards. You are encouraged to supplement the guide with additional materials to support students' understanding and encourage deeper reflection. Some materials have been suggested.

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THEME 1: INNOCENCE OF CHILDHOOD

Childhood is the age span ranging from birth to adolescence. For centuries, children took on adult roles and responsibilities in order to support their family. There are now laws to protect children from abuse, but they are still exposed to an adult world that can be brutal and unforgiving. In *Writing My Wrongs*, Shaka loses his youth and the innocence of childhood to the streets when he starts selling drugs. He quickly gets caught up in an adult world with adults who do not care that he is still a child. With this theme, students will explore the innocence of childhood. They will have opportunities to think critically about childhood and the impact of childhood experiences on a child's developing sense of self.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the role of parents and other trusted adults in a child's development
- Understand the impact of childhood experiences on a child's developing sense of self

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Once a child is traumatized, what happens to his/her sense of self? If comfortable, provide examples or stories from your experiences, or from someone you know. ■ ■ ■
2. Shaka lost his innocence once he started selling drugs and became part of the street culture. What can parents and school personnel do to make sure children hold onto their innocence despite everything going on in the world? Who else should play a role in childhood development? Relatives? Neighbors? Family friends? Churches? Youth organizations? ■ ■
3. In *Writing My Wrongs*, Shaka wasn't the only one to lose his innocence. Identify two other individuals in the book who lost their innocence and explain how this happened. ■ ■ ■
4. Would Shaka's childhood have been saved if his neighborhood had had "safe houses," safe places for children in need of immediate help or safety? Does your neighborhood have identified safe houses/places? ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write a letter (or a song or poem) to your childhood self and share the messages that you wish someone had shared with you about life. ■ ■ ■ ■

2. Write an autobiographical poem, essay, or song lyrics about your life and how the environment you grew up in shaped the person you are today. ■■■
3. Relive a positive memory from your childhood. Describe how you felt, what you thought, and why this memory is special to you. ■■■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 9-10.3, 11-12.3; Range of Writing 9-10.10, 11-12.10

MATERIALS

- “When the Trees Stop Giving Fruit” by Shaka Senghor: <https://medium.com/@ShakaSenghor/when-the-trees-stop-giving-fruit-a-tale-of-a-dying-detroit-neighborhood-27ce47c523e5#.z9g9ni1km>

THEME 2: OUR COMMON THREAD

What makes us human? With this theme, students are asked to answer this fundamental question and examine the threads that connect us to each other—compassion, kindness, tolerance, understanding, and love. Shaka’s story is a reminder of the power of humanity, and what we are capable of—forgiveness, empathy, hope—when we connect with our own, and others’, humanness.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the basis of our humanity
- Identify what connects us as humans
- Understand the true meaning of forgiveness and how it can be achieved

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes humans different from other living things (animals, plants)? Make three columns—humans, animals, and plants—and list the differences between each. ■■■
2. What makes us human is the same no matter what language we speak or what ethnic group we belong to. What connects us as humans? Use flip-chart size paper, large post-it notes, or computer graphics to illustrate what connects us as humans. ■■■
3. What are some examples of humanity at its *best*? What are some examples of humanity at its *worst*? Provide evidence from the news, social media, or your own examples. ■■■
4. How was Shaka able to reclaim his humanity? Give examples from the text. ■■■

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5. What impact did the letter from the victim's godmother have on Shaka? What were your thoughts after reading that letter? ■ ■ ■ ■
6. What does forgiveness look like to you? Would you be able to forgive someone who had killed a loved one? Would the circumstances make a difference in your ability to forgive? ■ ■
7. Can you forgive without an apology? If you received an apology but the person did not seem sincere, would that make a difference in your ability to forgive? How can you tell when an apology is sincere? Share when you've received or given a sincere or an insincere apology. Explain whether it takes a bigger person to apologize or to accept the apology. ■ ■
8. On page 5, and again on pages 261-263, Shaka writes about the impact of the letter he received from his victim's godmother. How might his life have been different if he had never gotten that letter? ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write a letter, poem, or song or create art describing an experience where you felt really connected to someone else. ■ ■ ■ ■
2. Shaka wrote an apology letter to his victim. Write a letter of apology to someone you have hurt. Will you send the letter? Why or why not? ■ ■
3. Do you have any regrets about things you've said or done that hurt yourself or others? Write a letter of forgiveness to yourself, releasing the guilt and the shame you might feel. ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 9-10.3 and 11-12.3; Range of Writing 9-10.10 and 11-12.10

MATERIALS

- Prologue (pgs. 1-6)
- Afterword (pgs. 261-263)
- *SuperSoul Sunday* Interview with Oprah Winfrey: <http://www.supersoul.tv/supersoul-sunday/the-act-of-forgiveness-that-shaped-shaka-senghor>

THEME 3: UNPACKING TRAUMA

Trauma is defined as a “deeply distressing or disturbing experience.” Traumatic events like abuse, abandonment, or sexual assault can lead victims to experience extreme anxiety or what is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They may also experience problems with self-esteem and difficulty building or maintaining healthy relationships. Too many of our youth have experienced, or witnessed, more trauma than we can imagine. Within this theme, students will examine the causes and the consequences of violence and the link between trauma and the cycle of violence. Students will be encouraged, with the support of a caring adult or adults, to identify traumatic experiences in their lives and to consider the impact of these experiences on their development.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify signs of child abuse
- Think about ways to address child abuse
- Consider the short-term impact of gun violence
- Consider the long-term impact of gun violence
- Understand the causes and consequences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Identify signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Understand the link between trauma and violence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is trauma? What are some ways that people deal with traumatic experiences? ■ ■
2. What do you consider abuse? What is physical abuse? What is emotional abuse? What is verbal abuse? ■ ■
3. Shaka was raised in a two-parent home but had an abusive mother. What are your thoughts on physical abuse used as discipline or punishment? What are the laws in your state? ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
4. When was Shaka first exposed to violence? What happened? ■ ■
5. What are the risk factors for violence (e.g. drugs/alcohol, abuse)? Which risk factors were present in Shaka’s life? Is poverty a risk factor? If so, provide evidence for your argument. ■ ■ ■ ■
6. What are some ways we deal with anger, fear, or pain? How did Shaka deal with his anger, fear, and pain? ■ ■ ■

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7. Our communities have experienced a lot of gun violence. Have you experienced gun violence first hand? How did that make you feel? Has anyone you know experienced gun violence? Cite examples. ■ ■ ■
8. What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder? Who often experiences PTSD, particularly after returning from deployment? What are some symptoms of PTSD? ■ ■ ■
9. What can happen when trauma is not recognized or treated? Share any personal experiences with family members or friends who experienced trauma. Did they get counseling or other treatment? ■ ■
10. Name two specific examples in the book where Shaka was traumatized. How did he respond? ■ ■
11. On page 137, Shaka writes, “Throughout the whole ordeal, no one hugged me. No one had counseled me or told me that everything would be okay. No one came to talk to me and explain all of the emotions I was feeling. No one told me that if I didn’t find a way to deal with the fear I felt, I would become paranoid; would reach a point where I would rather victimize someone else than become a victim.” What should have happened to Shaka once he was shot? What services should have been made available? What services are available in your area for children who have experienced trauma? ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write about a painful experience and how it made you feel. ■ ■
2. Write about a time when you saw someone else being abused and how it made you feel. Did you intervene? Should bystanders assist? Today, people are more likely to record the incident than jump in to help. Why? ■ ■ ■
3. Create an alternate scenario that might have occurred if different decisions had been made on the night Shaka shot his victim. Write a four paragraph creative writing piece describing the new conclusion to that incident. Use your imagination to create a new “story” about that night. Include at least three different decisions made by Shaka and/or his victim that eventually lead to the new outcome you create. ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 9-10.3 and 11-12.3; Range of Writing 9-10.10 and 11-12.10

MATERIALS

- Chapter 3 (pgs. 21–24)
- Chapter 7 (pgs. 71–79)
- Chapter 11 (pgs. 109–115)
- Chapter 13 (pgs. 133–137)
- Chapter 17 (pgs. 169–174)
- *SuperSoul Sunday* Interview with Oprah Winfrey: <http://www.supersoul.tv/supersoul-sunday/why-shaka-senghor-chose-a-life-on-the-streets>

Illustrating Cause and Effect

To help students understand the consequences of violence and trauma, ask them to identify examples of cause and effect from *Writing My Wrongs*. Identify at least one example together as a class. Use the chart provided below or chart paper or post-it notes.

CAUSE	EFFECT

Next, ask students to identify an example from the book in which one effect had multiple causes (domino effect), and then complete the graphic below using the examples they have identified. In small groups, have students discuss each cause and how it led to the resulting effect. Use the diagram provided or draw the dominoes, labeling each one with the exact cause and the effect. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



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THEME 4: RELATIONSHIPS

Humans are highly social beings, building relationships and creating communities wherever we go. We connect to others through common ties (e.g. family), interests, values, and beliefs. Our family relationships play an important role in our development and help shape who we become. The theme of relationships is woven throughout *Writing My Wrongs*. We learn about Shaka's relationship with his mother and father, his son L'il Jay, and the friendships he builds while he's in prison. Here, students will explore the theme of relationships and think critically about the power of relationships to help or to hinder our development. Students will examine their own relationships and how they have been impacted—positively or negatively—by the people in their lives.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the dynamics of healthy and unhealthy parent-child relationships
- Understand the power of mentors
- Understand the impact of street culture on views of women and male/female relationships
- Understand the impact of healthy and unhealthy friendships

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In your opinion, which do you believe has a greater impact on our development—our biology or our environment (nature vs. nurture)? ■
2. How did Shaka's relationship with his parents impact him? ■ ■ ■ ■
3. Although Shaka does not blame his mother for the decision he made to shoot on that fateful night, what role did she play in the path he took? ■ ■ ■ ■
4. What role have your family and friends had in shaping who you are? How have they helped shape your life? Has their influence been mostly positive or mostly negative? ■ ■ ■ ■
5. What role did older inmates have on Shaka's early development in prison? Provide examples from the text. ■ ■ ■ ■
6. Do you have any mentors whom you look to for guidance? If so, what impact have they had on your life? ■ ■
7. As a sibling, a babysitter, a tutor, and/or a coach, are you a mentor for younger children? How do you provide positive experiences for them? ■ ■
8. What impact did selling drugs have on Shaka's views of women? Give examples from the text. ■ ■ ■ ■

9. What role has hip hop and street culture played in the rise in misogyny over the last twenty years? What role has the media played? ■ ■ ■ ■
10. What are the signs of a healthy relationship? What are the signs of an unhealthy relationship? Create two columns, one marked “healthy” and the other marked “unhealthy.” ■ ■
11. How do you get away from an unhealthy relationship? How would you handle a situation where you are being bullied? ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write about an abusive relationship, whether personal or someone else’s. Describe the dynamics of the relationship and how that relationship has impacted the person being abused. ■ ■ ■ ■
2. Describe an ideal relationship where you feel supported and loved. What makes you feel loved? What does “support” look like for you? ■ ■ ■ ■
3. In *Writing My Wrongs*, we learn about the different people who had a positive impact on the author’s life. Identify the person who you think had the biggest impact on Shaka’s life. Write three paragraphs to persuade others to agree with you. Your first paragraph should introduce the person and describe the positive influence he/she had on Shaka’s life. The second and the third paragraphs should persuade readers to agree with your position by using specific examples and quotes from the book. ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 11-12.3; Range of Writing 11-12.10

MATERIALS

- Chapter 3 (pgs. 24–31)
- Chapter 5 (pgs. 59–60)
- Video by Shaka: “I was the victim of rape” <https://youtu.be/dSOwTpdn4p8>
- Chapter 14 (pgs. 146–148)

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THEME 5: PRISONS AS PUNISHMENT

Prisons have been used in the United States as a form of punishment since the American Revolution. The belief that those who are sent to prison are “bad” or “evil” has been used to justify the inhumane treatment of inmates. However, the reality is that good people make bad choices. Many of those who end up in prison have come from broken homes and poor neighborhoods; they are hurting from abuse, neglect, abandonment, and may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to the high levels of violence they see in their homes and neighborhoods. Within this theme, students will take a closer look at the American prison system and the impact of prisons on our communities. They will be challenged to think deeply about prisons, punishment and the impact of this violent culture on the men, women and children who are sent there.

Before starting, have students complete a KWL chart about prisons and the American prison system, starting with What I Know and What I Want to Know. Once they have completed their research, have them complete the What I Learned column and discuss any misperceptions they may have had.

K WHAT I KNOW	W WHAT I WANT TO KNOW	L WHAT I LEARNED

OBJECTIVES

- Learn the truth about solitary confinement
- Understand prison culture and the cycle of violence
- Understand that prisons do not rehabilitate
- Learn about the criminalization of mental illness

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is prison culture? How is prison culture maintained? ■ ■
2. How did Shaka contribute to the cycle of violence in prison? Give examples from the text. ■ ■ ■
3. What surprised you most about Shaka's experience in solitary confinement? ■ ■ ■
4. What are some alternatives to solitary confinement? ■
5. What should be done differently with men and women with mental illnesses? When were many of the mental health institutions in the United States closed? Why did they close? ■ ■ ■ ■
6. What is punishment? Generally speaking, does punishment work? ■ ■
7. How do adults correct undesirable behavior? Give examples from print or online media to support your answer, or use examples from personal experience. ■ ■ ■
8. What should a rehabilitation model for prisons look like? What key components must be present for the model to be effective? What shouldn't be included? ■ ■ ■
9. What has been the impact of a punitive prison system? On inmates? On the guards? On the inmates' families? On society? ■ ■ ■ ■
10. Who benefits from prisons? Research the number of prisons in the United States and in your state and county. How many of these prisons are federal prisons? State prisons? Private prisons? When and why did private prisons become an alternative to federal and state-operated prisons? How many people are currently in prisons in the United States? In your state? In your county? Why are so many prisons built in small towns? How many people in your area are employed in prisons? What is the cost of prisons to taxpayers? ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
11. Do you think prison "saved" Shaka? Provide examples from the text to support your argument. ■ ■ ■ ■
12. "The officers had no vested interest in helping me turn my life around. In fact, to most of them, I meant job security . . ." What does Shaka mean in this quote? ■ ■ ■
13. Given this discussion, what outcomes are expected when a person is released from prison? Research what resources each parolee is given when released from prison. Is it adequate? What is the recidivism rate in your state? Why is the recidivism rate so high? ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

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WRITING EXERCISES

1. Describe an ideal prison that you believe would have the greatest rehabilitative impact. In your essay, consider how families, and children in particular, would be included in an inmate's rehabilitation. How does your ideal prison compare with prisons in the United States today? In other countries? ■ ■ ■ ■
2. Write about the relationship between mental illness, crime, and prisons. How are they connected? ■ ■ ■
3. After researching the prison population in the United States, in your state, and in your county, create pie charts by hand or in a computer program to illustrate the ages of inmates, the length of prison sentences, the number of inmates in solitary confinement and on death row, and the race/ethnicity of inmates. What did you learn from this activity? What data was most surprising? ■ ■ ■ ■
4. Write a report on the history of solitary confinement. What was your opinion of solitary confinement before you started the research? Did your opinion change? If so, why? Debate the pros and the cons of solitary confinement. ■ ■ ■
5. Recent legislation has addressed the sentencing of children to adult prisons and/or to solitary confinement. Legislators have also addressed the sentencing of children to life without the possibility of parole. What is the legislation in your state? What do you think about these laws? ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 9-10.3 and 11-12.3; Range of Writing 9-10.10 and 11-12.10

MATERIALS

- Chapter 10 (pgs. 93–97)
- Chapter 12 (pgs. 123–128)
- Chapter 14 (pgs. 139–151 and 154–156)
- Chapter 18 (pgs. 177–181)
- Chapter 19 (pgs. 185–195)
- Letter to Kalief Browder: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shaka-senghor/if-i-could-talk-to-kalief_b_7546392.html
- *SuperSoul Sunday* Interview with Oprah Winfrey: <http://www.supersoul.tv/supersoul-sunday/shaka-senghor-on-how-prison-culture-defies-spiritual-law>
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander: Introduction and Chapters 1–4

THEME 6: TRANSFORMATION AND REDEMPTION

Religion, spirituality, hope, forgiveness, and second chances are themes that run throughout *Writing My Wrongs*. Here, we examine the themes of transformation and redemption through the example of Shaka's life.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand redemption and how it is possible
- Understand the power of self-reflection and analysis
- Understand the power of literature and writing
- Understand the role of spiritual development in personal transformation
- Recognize the power of hope

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about your worst moment. How would you feel if you were defined or judged by that one moment? ■ ■ ■
2. Are there behaviors or attitudes that you need to change but find it hard to change? ■ ■
3. What do we mean when we talk about “redemption”? ■ ■
4. Can we all be redeemed, no matter what we've done? ■ ■
5. The subtitle of the book is “Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison.” Using examples from the book, what does Shaka's story teach us about life, death, and redemption? ■ ■ ■ ■
6. What does it mean to have hope? What are some things you hope for? Use post-it notes or scrap paper to rank order or prioritize your responses. Take a moment to evaluate your hopes. Re-rank them, if necessary. What does the order say about your priorities? Which ones do you need help achieving? ■ ■ ■ ■
7. Is it possible for someone to truly transform his/her life? Does this mean he/she becomes a new person? ■
8. How do you know a person has transformed his/her life? Thinking of Shaka's transformation, identify examples from the book as evidence that he changed his life. ■ ■ ■ ■
9. What other stories have you read or movies have you seen that involve themes of transformation and redemption? Describe any parallels you noticed with Shaka's story. Divide your paper into columns or create columns in Word or in Excel to prepare to discuss this question. ■ ■ ■ ■
10. On page 193, Shaka writes, “. . . with pen and paper, I clung to my sanity.” What does he mean? ■ ■ ■ ■

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11. While Shaka was in solitary confinement, he started journaling. On page 191, he writes, “For the first time in my life, I could see my anger for what it was: a destructive force that would tear me apart unless I found a way to change.” How did journaling help Shaka transform his life? ■ ■ ■ ■
12. Reflect on the people and the events that contributed to Shaka’s transformation. What ultimately led Shaka to change his life, and was this an internal or external factor? Divide your paper into columns or create columns in Word or in Excel to prepare to discuss this question. ■ ■ ■
13. Shaka’s life plays out in his childhood home, on the streets of Detroit, in the county jail, and in prison. These settings all play a role in Shaka’s evolution. Explore the role these settings had on Shaka’s development. Why is each important to Shaka’s evolution? Which setting is most important to his story and why? Map the scenes in your life. How does your life compare and contrast with Shaka’s early life? ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write about the thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes that you need to change to become a better person, and then write about what you need to do to make those changes. Set reminders in your smartphone or elsewhere to remind yourself to revisit this document periodically. ■ ■ ■ ■
2. Write about a time when someone inspired you. What did he/she do or say? What impact did that have on you? Was this a famous person or someone closer to your daily life? Why did you select this person? ■ ■ ■
3. Review the list of things you hope for (from #6 in the discussion questions). Write about the thing you are most hopeful about and why. ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 9-10.3 and 11-12.3; Range of Writing 9-10.10 and 11-12.10

MATERIALS

- Chapter 10 (pgs. 97–106)
- Chapter 19 (pgs. 191–199)
- Song: “The rose that grew from concrete” by Tupac Shakur
- *SuperSoul Sunday* Interview with Oprah Winfrey: <http://www.supersoul.tv/supersoul-sunday/the-letter-that-transformed-shaka-senghors-life>
- TED Talk: “Why your worst deeds don’t define you” <https://youtu.be/GtXyGFMBWBs>
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley: Chapters 10–11

Compare and Contrast

Students will compare and contrast different aspects of Shaka's life. Have students complete a Venn diagram to illustrate the similarities and the differences between the Shaka who went to solitary confinement for assaulting an officer and the Shaka who walked out of solitary confinement four and a half years later. Use paper plates or a computer program to create the Venn diagram below. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



Next, have students create a Venn diagram that considers the similarities and the differences between them and Shaka before and after his four-and-a-half-year stint in solitary confinement. Have students examine their Venn diagram and respond to the following prompts:

- Write about the characteristics that you share with the younger Shaka.
- Write about the characteristics that you share with the older Shaka.
- Write about the characteristics that you share with both versions of Shaka.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■



THEME 7: BEYOND PRISONS

Since 1973, the number of men, women, and children incarcerated in the United States has increased five-fold and in a given year, 7,000,000 people have been under supervision or control via the parole and probation system. In 1994, former President Bill Clinton signed the Crime Bill, which led to a historic boom in the prison industry with a devastating impact on Black, Brown, and poor white communities. This final theme explores the idea of a world beyond prisons by challenging students to think about how we create a more just and humane justice system. They will be asked to identify and research prisons in other parts of the world and what the American justice system can learn from countries that are more progressive. As a culminating activity, students will write about a world without prisons and the changes that need to be made in society to create this reality.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the cause of the prison boom
- Understand the consequences of mass incarceration
- Understand the impact of incarceration on families and communities
- Identify ways to create healing spaces in our communities so that prisons are no longer needed

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What caused the prison boom in the 1990s? ■ ■ ■ ■
2. What impact has incarceration had on your family specifically? ■ ■ ■ ■
3. Do prisons “work”? (Teachers, take a poll via a show of hands or have students line up on opposite sides of the room. As the reasons are made to support the “yes” or the “no” positions, allow students to change to different sides of the room. What was the final consensus? What did students learn from this exercise?) ■ ■
4. What does it mean to give someone a second chance? Give examples from personal experience or from print or online media. ■ ■ ■ ■
5. What comes to mind when you hear “beyond prisons?” ■ ■
6. What should be the purpose of prisons? Compare your response with the current purpose of prisons. ■ ■ ■ ■
7. Locking up more people has not reduced crime rates. Why have higher incarceration rates not had the intended impact on crime rates? ■ ■

8. On page 263, Shaka writes, “In an era of record incarcerations and a culture of violence, we can learn to love those who no longer love themselves.” What does he mean? What can be done to “love those who no longer love themselves”? ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
9. How can stories like Shaka’s help your generation? Future generations? ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2 and 11-12.2; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 9-10.1a, 9-10.1d, 11-12.1a, 11-12.1d, 9-10.4a, 11-12.4a.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Research the impact mass incarceration has had on Black, Latino, and poor white communities. Why are these communities disproportionately affected? ■ ■ ■
2. What is the Prison Industrial Complex and how does it work? Give some examples of how the Prison Industrial Complex manifests itself. To start, research private prisons and private businesses that supply goods and services to prisons. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
3. Imagine a world without prisons. How would society be different? How would crime be addressed? What changes would need to be made to create a world without prisons? ■ ■ ■ ■
4. From your perspective, what does a real second chance look like? Give examples. ■ ■ ■
5. On page 85, Shaka talks about the differences between the schools in Detroit and the prisons he visited. What does this say about our priorities as a country? Do you agree or disagree with his analysis? Use real life examples to support your argument. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes 9-10.3 and 11-12.3; Range of Writing 9-10.10 and 11-12.10

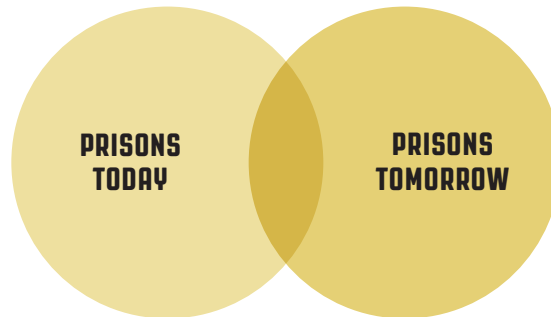
MATERIALS

- *SuperSoul Sunday* Interview with Oprah Winfrey: <http://www.supersoul.tv/supersoul-sunday/shaka-senghor-how-do-you-rejoin-a-society-thats-so-unforgiving>
- President Barack Obama visits federal prison: <https://youtu.be/3hGZ7AMk39Q> and <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/obama-set-visit-oklahoma-prison-push-criminal-justice-reform-n393056>
- *60 Minutes* segment on German prisons: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/this-is-prison-60-minutes-goes-to-germany/> and <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-overtime-yoga-in-prison-germany-5-star-slammer/>
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander: Chapter 6

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Compare and Contrast

Have students create a Venn diagram on paper, with paper plates, or a computer program to compare and contrast prisons today and what prisons could look like. Students will use the Venn diagram to illustrate the similarities and the differences between both prisons. ■ ■ ■ ■



APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

Shaka discovered his love for writing while serving time in solitary confinement. He credits writing with saving him, helping him create a world outside of prison where he could dream. Writing is a powerful tool and we hope students will use the writing exercises in this guide to explore the themes in the book and to examine their own lives. The writing exercises give students opportunities to communicate their thoughts and feelings and an opportunity for teachers to assess whether the objectives of each theme have been met. In addition to the writing exercises, personal reflection through the regular practice of journaling can be extremely effective for debriefing after difficult conversations. Journaling can help students process their emotions on their own terms and at their own pace. Journals can be kept private or can serve as a space for dialogue with students by writing back and forth.

APPENDIX

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

CCSS.RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION

CCSS.SL.9-10.1a and 1d Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.SL.9-10.1d Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented

CCSS.SL.11-12.1a Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.SL.11-12.1d Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

CCSS.SL.9-10.4A Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.SL.11-12.4a Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

WRITING

TEXT TYPE AND PURPOSES

CCSS.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the Narrative.

CCSS.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
- d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and

sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the Narrative.

RANGE OF WRITING

CCSS.W.9-10.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.W.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Reference: http://www.corestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/ELA_Standards1.pdf

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Bloom's Taxonomy is a framework that categorizes learning objectives and describes the cognitive processes expected of students during an activity.

REMEMBERING

■ **Recall or retrieve previous learned information.** Key Words: defines, describes, identifies, knows, labels, lists, matches, names, outlines, recalls, recognizes, reproduces, selects, states

UNDERSTANDING

■ **Comprehending the meaning, translation, interpolation, and interpretation of instructions and problems.** State a problem in one's own words. Key Words: comprehends, converts, defends, distinguishes, estimates, explains, extends, generalizes, gives an example, infers, interprets, paraphrases, predicts, rewrites, summarizes, translates

APPLYING

■ **Use a concept in a new situation or unprompted use of an abstraction. Applies what was learned in the classroom into novel situations in the work place.** Key Words: applies, changes, computes, constructs, demonstrates, discovers, manipulates, modifies, operates, predicts, prepares, produces, relates, shows, solves, uses

ANALYZING

■ **Separates material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood.** Distinguishes between facts and inferences. Key Words: analyzes, breaks down, compares, contrasts, diagrams, deconstructs, differentiates, discriminates, distinguishes, identifies, illustrates, infers, outlines, relates, selects, separates

EVALUATING

■ **Make judgments about the value of ideas or materials.** Key Words: appraises, compares, concludes, contrasts, criticizes, critiques, defends, describes, discriminates, evaluates, explains, interprets, justifies, relates, summarizes, supports

CREATING

■ **Builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements.** Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure. Key Words: categorizes, combines, compiles, composes, creates, devises, designs, explains, generates, modifies, organizes, plans, rearranges, reconstructs, relates, reorganizes, revises, rewrites, summarizes, tells, writes

Reference: Anderson, L.W., Krathwohl, D.R., Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Rath, J., Wittrock, M.C. (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

Praise for Shaka Senghor and *Writing My Wrongs*

“[A] harrowing [portrait] of life behind bars . . . gritty, visceral . . . Senghor writes about the process of atonement and the possibility of redemption, and talks of his efforts to work for prison reforms that might turn a system designed to warehouse into one aimed at rehabilitation.”

—MICHIKO KAKUTANI, *The New York Times*

“Shaka Senghor’s terrific and inspiring book affirms that we are all more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. This beautiful and compelling story of recovery and redemption offers all of us powerful truths and precious insights as we seek recovery from decades of over-incarceration and excessive punishment.”

—BRYAN STEVENSON, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative
and bestselling author of *Just Mercy*

“No one has forced us to look at the core questions about humanity and our broken criminal justice system with more authenticity and clarity than Senghor . . . If Senghor’s tale is any indication, redemption, mercy, and grace aren’t just emotional ideals or spiritual buzzwords. They are the sharp, effective tools that can be used to rebuild lives and communities, one person at a time.”

—ERICA WILLIAMS SIMON, *TIME*

“An extraordinary, unforgettable book. *Writing My Wrongs* is a necessary reminder of the deep humanity, vulnerability, and potential that lies within each one of us, including those we view as ‘thugs’ or ‘criminals.’ Shaka’s story illustrates that if we muster the courage to love those who do not yet love themselves, a new world is possible.”

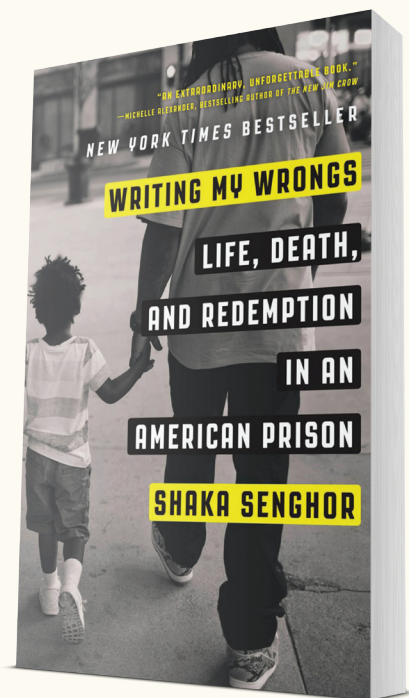
—MICHELLE ALEXANDER, professor of law, Ohio State University and
bestselling author of *The New Jim Crow*

“Essential reading for anyone who believes in the deeply spiritual and transformational power of redemption. Our nation must confront this concept to reach our own promise as a country. No matter who you are or where you’ve come from, this book holds strong, inspiring lessons and shows that the difficult pathway to redemption can bear abundant fruit for many. In the end we are all, no matter our path, more powerful agents of service than we realize.”

—U.S. Senator CORY BOOKER

“If you’ve wondered what makes it possible for good people to do terrible things, and what a man can endure to reach redemption, then you must read this book. Senghor’s story is told with brutal self-assessment and tender attention to what makes profound change—in a person and also in our communities—not only possible but imperative. In this unforgettable memoir, Shaka takes us from the streets of Detroit into solitary confinement in prison and, against all odds, home safely and successfully to a family and community that needs him.”

—PIPER KERMAN, bestselling author of *Orange Is the New Black*



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