

## **Making Sense**

By: Claire Hong

**Education level:** Elementary, junior high and/or high school

**Genre:** Poetry, Fiction, Nonfiction, Hybrid

**Time frame:** 30-60 minutes

**Objective:** Students can reflect on and reinterpret a memory, event, or narrative through the focus of one sense. This may allow them to document and understand their own lives in a lighthearted, focused way. In doing so, students may reclaim their own narrative or understanding of self.

**Prior knowledge and skills:** None.

**Required materials:** Paper, pen/pencil, device to write.

**Literary model:** Bernadette Mayer's "Very Strong February"

### **Sequence of activities:**

- 1) Read Bernadette Mayer's "Very Strong February" twice as a class. **(5 minutes)**  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49727/very-strong-february>
- 2) Ask students what they notice about the poem. How does Mayer tell a story? What is a common theme that repeats throughout? Discuss the use of color and have students list all the colors they notice. How does color change the story of this storm? **(5 minutes)**
- 3) Use one of the five senses to write about something that has stood out to you in your life. **(20+ minutes, self-paced)**

Consider what mood or tone you want to convey. How will the sensory descriptions help you achieve this? What will readers decades from now learn about your life and what it was like? What do you want to hide from readers? Do you want to include place names, dates, months, weekdays, times of day, things people said, emotions, ideas, realizations, or anything else to tell your story?

If you already have an idea, go for it. If not, here are some options:

- Write an epic (big) story like the story of your entire life or your family story. This could even include moments before you were born that you heard about.
- Write about a specific memory or event that you keep thinking about.
- Write a story that takes readers through a typical day in your life. Try to capture your day vividly and in full detail.

Note: Allow students to share what they might write about with one another or as a class.