
About the unit

The unit focuses on features of personal record writing. Pupils read a range of biographical and autobiographical texts and write a short biography.

Prior learning

In order to complete this unit successfully, pupils should be able to draw on their knowledge and experience of:

- working in groups;
- language conventions of different types of text;
- skimming and scanning;
- using features of formal written language
- cohesion in texts;
- spoken and written texts.

Expectations

Most pupils will: understand the differences between kinds of text that contain accounts of lives; select information from several sources, incorporating it effectively into their own biographical writing and making use of linking structures which make texts coherent. They will understand key differences between spoken and written texts.

Some pupils will not have progressed so far and will: select information from texts which influences their own writing. They will use some linking devices and show some understanding of the differences between spoken and written texts.

Some pupils will have progressed further and will: use information from texts with intelligent selectivity, and grasp subtler differences between spoken and written texts. Their own writing will be fluent, stylish and confident, using a range of linking structures.

Starters

- Use of pronouns
- Pronoun/verb agreement
- Dictionary race
- Word association
- Positive/negative
- Abstract/concrete
- Comparatives
- Critical terms

Stages

1. Biography and autobiography

An analysis of the features of information texts, including those which help text cohesion. Writing sections of their own autobiographies and biographies.

2. Orations and obituaries

Exploring differences between spoken and written English.

Researching, planning and writing orations and obituaries about the life of a person.

3. Gathering the evidence

Reviewing different types of text which give accounts of people's lives.

Writing the biography of a well-known person.

Resources

Rediscover Grammar, David Crystal

Internet and school library: examples of different types of historical and biographical text, for example: encyclopaedia extracts, newspaper articles, autobiographies/journals, obituaries

Sample page of textbook focusing on a 'great life', e.g. *from Religious Education or History*.

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

English
Year 7

Great lives objectives stage 1: Biography and autobiography

| Word | Sentence | Reading | Writing | Speaking and listening |
|------|----------|--|---|--------------------------|
| | | R2 Extracting information R3 Comparing presentation | Wr10 Organise texts Wr11 Present information | S&L10 Report main points |

Great lives objectives stage 2: Orations and obituaries

| Word | Sentence | Reading | Writing | Speaking and listening |
|------|--|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| | S5 Active or passive voice S11 Paragraph cohesion S16 Spoken & written | R13 Non-fiction style | Wr14 Description | S&L16 Collaborate on script |

Great lives objectives stage 3: Gathering the evidence

| Word | Sentence | Reading | Writing | Speaking and listening |
|---|---------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| W18 Terms of qualification & comparison | S12 Sequencing paragraphs | | Wr1 Drafting Wr10 Organise texts | |

Stage 1 Biography and autobiography: Lesson 1

Starter

- A revision exercise on pronoun use.
- Create lists with whole class of all the pronouns they know: first, second and third person, gender etc.
- Put pupils in groups or pairs to take turns to tell the story of something they did recently. They must not use any pronouns, and if they do so, the listeners note down each pronoun used. As a class then discuss why pronouns are useful.

Introduction

- Shared reading of short biographical and autobiographical texts. Teacher compares key features of the two texts at word, sentence and text level, e.g. *person, use of subordination, voice, vocabulary, cohesive devices, authorial viewpoint, text structure.*

Development

- In groups, differentiated if appropriate, pupils are given a range of short biographical and autobiographical texts which they classify and analyse using a group reading grid which requires identification of the key features discussed. (See KS3 Strategy support materials for an example of such a grid.)

Plenary

Review of similarities and differences at word, sentence and text level between biography and autobiography.

Homework

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

English
Year 7

Stage 1 Biography and autobiography: Lesson 2

Starter

- Give out a selection of cut up opening sentences from biographies and autobiographies to pairs or groups.
- In five minutes they must decide whether each sentence is from a biography or autobiography.
- Discuss how pupils came to their conclusions.

Introduction

- Teacher models writing the opening paragraph of biography and of an autobiography on OHT or board, incorporating key features referred to in previous lesson.
- Whilst doing this, the teacher comments on the features used in the writing to clarify for pupils the choices made in the writing process.

Development

- In pairs, pupils are provided with enough factual information on one or more significant figures, past and present, to enable them to write opening autobiographical or biographical paragraphs for the same person.
- One of the pair uses the information to write biographically and the other does so to write autobiographically. They then compare their writing, referring to key features.

Plenary

Discussion of features of biographical and autobiographical writing. Completion of a text analysis grid which identifies purpose, along with word, sentence and text level features.

Homework

Pupils write the opening paragraph of their own **autobiographies**.

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

English
Year 7

Stage 1 Biography and autobiography: Lesson 3

Starter

- Draw out a list of less well-known words from the texts the pupils will be using in the lesson. Have a dictionary race to discover and confirm the meanings.

Introduction

- Group pupils into 'expert' groups of three or four, and provide each group with a different brief biographical or autobiographical text. Each pupil fills in a text analysis grid to identify key features during the group discussion.

Development

- Pupils re-group so that each new group contains an 'expert' on each different text. Each pupil in turn reads their text to the others and points out the key features. Together the group produces a poster size matrix of key features of biography and autobiography at word, sentence and text level, with examples from the texts.

Plenary

Review of key features based on posters.

Homework

Pupils write the second paragraph of their own biographies, **not** their autobiographies.

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

Stage 2 Orations and obituaries: Lesson 4

Starter

- Teacher reads aloud or shows brief text extracts of different types.
- Pupils use SPOKEN/WRITTEN response cards to identify whether they think the text is written or spoken, and give reasons.

Introduction

- Shared reading of transcripts of speeches by or about significant figures.
- Through discussion the teacher draws out text features at word, sentence and text level as in Stage 1, and adds focus on the characteristics of spoken as opposed to written texts (e.g. *sentence structure, use of passive, use of first or third person*).
- The teacher highlights starting sentences with non-finite verbs. Possible texts include obituaries, Martin Luther King's speech, Earl Spencer's speech, Mark Antony's funeral oration over Caesar.

Development

- In groups, pupils are given snippets of orations and obituaries. Their task is to categorise them using word/sentence level features.
- Groups are given written obituaries in which extracts from spoken texts are embedded. They have to identify inserted text.

Plenary

The class completes a poster-size analysis grid of the distinctive features of oral and written texts.

Homework

Listen to talk outside school, e.g. *someone talking about their life in a T.V. interview*. They should note down anything that they hear which would not appear in a written text.

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

English
Year 7

Stage 2 Orations and obituaries: Lesson 5

Starter

- Comparatives: trios of pupils are given a card with a base word, and have two minutes to agree, write down and display comparatives.

Introduction

- Teacher models writing the last paragraph of an obituary for a well-known figure (suggested by pupils) AND the script for the ending of a funeral oration for the same person.
- During the writing (on OHT or board) the teacher talks through the choices a writer makes in relation to the key features which distinguish oral from written texts, e.g. *tense, person, comparatives, use of non-finite verbs, active/passive voice*.

Development

- Pupils are provided with factual information about a range of significant figures - historical, artistic, political, spiritual - with appropriate balance of male/female, black/white, old/young.
- Working in pairs, each pupil chooses a different figure and writes the last paragraph of their obituary.
- They then exchange paragraphs and write the script for the ending of a funeral oration for their partner's chosen figure.

Plenary

Review of the choices we make at word, sentence and text level when writing or speaking.

Homework

Find an example of an obituary from a newspaper at home or in the school library.

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

English
Year 7

Stage 2 Orations and obituaries: Lesson 6

Starter

- First in pairs, and then as a class, find as many synonyms as possible for **said**.

Introduction

- Pupils are grouped, and each group given the obituary of a different person.
- The task of each of these 'expert' groups is to discuss the changes needed to transform that written obituary into a spoken oration, and draft a script.

Development

- New groups are formed consisting of a representative of each of the 'expert' groups.
- Each pupil presents the oration for his or her deceased person and the group decides which oration has the greatest impact.

Plenary

The most successful orators explain the changes they made in order to give effective orations.

Homework

Unit: Great lives

Duration: 9 lessons

English
Year 7

Stage 3 Gathering the evidence: Lesson 7

Starter

- Groups are given 'celebrities' from different fields of life.
 - Each group makes a spidergraph of typical words associated with such people.
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Introduction

- Teacher elicits through class discussion and exemplars the range of texts that contain accounts of lives, e.g. *biography*, *autobiography*, *obituaries*, *encyclopaedia entries*, *newspaper articles*, *textbooks*, etc, drawing attention to the purpose, audience and features of the texts.

Development

- In groups, pupils are given an example of a text containing an account of a life. Their task is to note its features and to judge its effectiveness in relation to audience and purpose.
 - They summarise their views on a poster-size sheet.
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Plenary

Class review the range of texts containing accounts of lives by displaying and commenting on the completed sheets.

Homework

Stage 3 Gathering the evidence: Lesson 8

Starter

- Taking the list of words created in the previous lesson, categorise them into positive/negative and abstract/concrete groups and then arrange them in order of intensity.

Introduction

- Teacher models how to use a photograph of an unknown person to plan a biography in eight paragraphs.
- Devise a caption summarising the significance of the moment shown in the photograph in the person's life.
- Decide on the content of the eight paragraphs including introduction and conclusion. Sequence the paragraphs and place the photograph in the sequence.

Development

- Provide pupils with a varied selection of photographs of people, preferably unknown, of varied ages and backgrounds.
- Pupils select one photograph that interests them, devise a caption for the photograph and eight paragraph headings for the biography of the person. They sequence the paragraphs to match their intentions.

Plenary

Discussion of some of the biography plans, reminding pupils of criteria for successful biography, and stressing the significance of first and last paragraphs.

Homework

Pupils write the biography of their chosen person, paying particular attention to the first and last paragraphs.

Stage 3 Gathering the evidence: Lesson 9

Starter

- Card game in which pupils are given key terms for critical evaluation, and (on separate cards) the meanings of those terms. They must match terms with meanings and produce a sentence incorporating each term.

Introduction

- Teacher talks through the criteria devised earlier for successful biography, drawing attention to features to which pupils will need to attend when revising their biographies, e.g. *sequencing of paragraphs, paragraph link, topic sentences*.
- Teacher models the process of revising a draft text, using his/ her own writing or that of a volunteer pupil, past or present.

Development

- In pairs, pupils read each other's biographies and evaluate them against the agreed criteria.
- Each pupil makes notes on comments, suggestions for improvement.
- They then revise their writing in the light of these discussions and complete the biography.

Plenary

Discussion about the strengths and areas for improvement of several of the completed biographies presented to the class.

Homework

Pupils review their biographies, using the agreed criteria and terminology, to identify three strengths in their writing and three areas for development.
