






Lesson plan – Year 6 English

Unit 2, Lesson 5: To plan a biography

This lesson plan was developed by Ochre Education and English teacher Melissa Garstang-Leary. It outlines her approach to teaching a Year 6 English lesson on planning a biography.

-  [Watch the lesson video](#)
-  [Watch a video of Melissa talking about her teaching practices](#)
-  [View the English unit plan example](#)
-  [Download sample lesson plan template](#)
-  [View all other online lessons and supporting resources](#)

This lesson is part of a unit on [inspirational figures – biographical writing](#). Ochre Education and the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) have published 11 online lessons (and supporting resources) that make up this unit. This is the fifth lesson in the unit – you can watch the lesson video [here](#) and watch a video of Melissa talking about her practice [here](#).

This lesson plan is a supplementary resource for this work. It includes guidance on how the lesson was structured and sequenced within the unit and can be used while interacting with the Ochre resources. The plan also allows teachers to see an example of planning for one lesson within a sequence of lessons and reflect on their own teaching and effective practice. The lesson plan is annotated to explicitly show some of the decisions that are made during the planning process.

Another way to use this lesson plan is as a starting point for discussions with colleagues to build collective capacity for lesson and unit planning. Teachers can also use the lesson plan to reflect on their own planning for lessons and units and guide future planning. A blank lesson plan teachers can use and modify as a resource for their own planning can be accessed [here](#).

All the lessons from this unit can be accessed for free on either the [AERO](#) or [Ochre Education](#) websites.

Definitions

Learning objectives

Clear and easy to understand statements about what students are expected to be able to know, do and/or understand by the end of a period of instruction (not to be confused with the instructional tasks), and at what level this learning is to take place.

Success criteria

A clear statement about the measure that will be used to prove whether, and how well, a student has met the learning objectives by the end of a period of instruction. Success criteria are observable actions that a student can perform to demonstrate their understanding of the learning objectives. It is important that these elements are observable – avoid using phrases like ‘students will understand that...’ as we can’t observe understanding. Instead, the criteria could be ‘students will write, say, make or do something that indicates understanding’.

Tasks

Activities undertaken by students as part of the learning process. Carefully designed tasks can also assist students in mastering new knowledge or skills. Scaffolds and worked examples might be used to assist students with some tasks. Teachers can monitor their students’ ability to complete tasks as part of a formative assessment approach to help determine whether students have demonstrated the success criteria.

Subject English: Inspirational figures – biographical writing

Year level/Stage 6

Lesson background

This is the fifth lesson in the Inspirational figures – biographical writing unit. It builds on Year 6 students' understanding, knowledge and skills for composing informative text types. In particular, how to plan a biography.

This lesson background shows how the lesson is sequenced and positioned within the unit.

Learning objectives

To understand the role of planning in biographical writing and create a plan for the introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion.

Success criteria

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- understand the role of planning for biographical writing
- evaluate information to distinguish between essential and extra information
- develop topic sentences and concluding sentences for paragraphs
- identify supporting details for paragraphs
- create a plan for the introduction, body paragraphs and the conclusion of a biography.

The success criteria are a series of clear statements that will be used to prove whether, and how well, a student has met the learning objectives at the end of a period of instruction.

Misconceptions

Some students might have the following misconceptions:

- Believing the composing process is a linear process.
- Underestimating the importance of the planning stage when composing, specifically the benefit of investing time in creating a plan.
- Thinking the writing process involves copying chunks of factual information to create their own biography about a subject, without evaluation of sources and summarising of information.

Misconceptions are incorrect knowledges and understandings that students have prior to the lesson, or may obtain during the lesson. Outlining these during planning can help with monitoring student learning, and recognising when corrective feedback is needed.

* In this column, you will find prompting questions to guide your planning for each lesson stage.

** In this column you will find prompting questions to consider when monitoring learning at each stage of the lesson.

Lesson stage*	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning**
Review of previous learning		
<p>How will you ensure that students have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to progress their learning in this lesson?</p> <p>How will you activate prior knowledge/help students retrieve relevant learning from previous lessons?</p>	<p>Independent</p> <p>A quick <u>introductory quiz</u> gathers information on prior knowledge about biographical writing. The focus is on general knowledge relating to the purpose and subject matter included in biographies.***</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of keywords: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Topic Sentence b. Supporting detail c. Concluding sentence 2. Opening questions and ideas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Word level knowledge for spelling polysyllabic words, including syllables and unstressed vowels. b. Identifying incorrect spelling in sentences 	<p>How will you gather evidence that shows you where your students are at in their learning?</p>

*** Formative assessment allows teachers to monitor student learning and adapt teaching to meet the needs of the students. Formative assessment helps students to retrieve what they already know and can do in relation to a given topic. An introductory quiz provides some insight into the existing knowledge of students, including any misconceptions they may have. This information does not have to be gathered electronically.

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
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Explicit teaching of new learning ('I do') – why do we plan?

<p>How will you communicate the learning objectives to students?</p> <p>How will you break down your content into sequential steps to avoid overloading your students' working memory?</p> <p>How will you model the learning to support student understanding?</p>	<p>Whole class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the learning objectives and success criteria to students. Reference back to them as they are encountered throughout the lesson. 2. Explicit explanation of the composing process. Review previous learning; for example, gathering, organising, summarising and recording research. Introduce steps for the remainder of the planning stage and reinforce keywords. Explain the importance of planning before writing. <p>Pairs/small groups:</p> <p>Discussion prompt: Why would someone choose to read a biography, in particular about Faith Bandler?*</p> <p>Whole class:</p> <p>Explicit explanation and modelling (using worked example) of how to identify the information to be included from the research notes in the plan.**</p> <p>Pairs:</p> <p>Students verbally summarise the life of Faith Bandler in two minutes and share with a peer.***</p>	<p>How will you help students retrieve information learned in previous lessons and units?</p> <p>How will you check for understanding and correct any errors or misconceptions before moving onto guided practice?</p>
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* Discussion prompts are a useful way to engage students in the learning process. They encourage students to communicate and share their learning with others. These discussions also provide me with an indication of where to start with my lesson, how to sequence my instruction and the depth of instruction required.

** The concept of thinking 'analytically' might be difficult for some students to grasp, especially if critical thinking has not be explicitly modelled, practiced and embedded in appropriate classroom tasks. Using a 'worked example', models all the steps required to complete a task, setting students up for success.

*** Completing the task verbally with a peer, provides another opportunity for practice prior to the independent task. Teachers can use this time to check for understanding before moving on to the set task. By keeping track of each student's progress, teachers can identify knowledge gaps or points for clarification as student move through their learning.

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
Independent practice ('You do') – features of a biography		
<p>How will students display that they have mastered the skills and content?</p> <p>How will you work with students to provide support and to gain insight into their learning?</p>	<p>Independent:*</p> <p>Students review their research notes to determine the most important facts to be included in their plan for their biographical writing of Faith Bandler. Check for understanding to monitor learning and engagement.**</p> <p>Whole class/small group:</p> <p>Students share their learning and the teacher provides feedback. Refer back to the learning objective and relevant success criteria to encourage students to reflect and track their own progress.</p>	<p>What formative assessment will you gather to provide feedback to your students?</p>

* Further practice of this task might be required (specifically guided practice). However, given the students are in Year 6, the concept of thinking analytically should be a practiced skill. Therefore, this 'worked example' is directly followed by independent practice. Students can always return to the explicit instruction (and the 'worked example') for additional guidance.

** When students feel valued and supported, they are more motivated to apply themselves to achieve their learning goals. During tasks, provide students with frequent opportunities to engage and respond to their learning. Provide specific feedback to recognise student engagement and effort.

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
Explicit teaching of new learning ('I do') – how to plan a biography		
<p>How will you communicate the learning objectives to students?</p> <p>How will you break down your content into sequential steps to avoid overloading your students working memory?</p> <p>How will you model the learning to support student understanding?</p>	<p>Whole class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explicit explanation of an introduction in the context of biographical writing. 2. Explicit explanation and modelling (worked example) of how to plan an introduction for biographical writing.* <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Model how to compose the topic sentence for the introduction. b. Model how to create dot-points for supporting detail in the introductory paragraph, including reference to research notes. c. Model how to compose a concluding sentence for the introduction. <p>Independent:</p> <p>Each modelled example is followed by an opportunity for practice and allows students to build their introduction step-by-step.**</p> <p>Whole class/small group:</p> <p>Students share their learning and the teacher provides feedback. Refer back to the learning objective and relevant success criteria to encourage students to reflect and track their own progress.</p>	<p>How will you check for understanding and correct any errors or misconceptions before allowing students to independently practice?</p>

* This section of the lesson is specifically designed to explicitly teach students each skill and an understanding of the planning process in order for them to show mastery. The tasks are sequenced into manageable chunks of learning. Each task builds upon previous tasks and illustrates the progression of the learning objective. Feedback is provided throughout each section to allow students to action guidance for improvement.

** For independent tasks it is important to supervise and interact with the students to monitor learning and provide further explanations as required. Students requiring further support can be assisted in small groups, pairing with peer mentors and differentiated instruction in the lesson.

Monitoring student learning enables teachers to make a judgement about if students can proceed to the next task or if re-teaching is required. The re-teaching of tasks will depend on how many students did not meet the learning objective. You may need to revise concepts (for instance, topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentence) if students are falling short of meeting expectations for the learning objective. Alternatively, if only a small proportion of students require assistance, you can work in a small group and re-model the process (address the gaps).

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
Guided practice ('We do') – how to plan a biography		
<p>What worked examples will you provide students?</p> <p>What scaffolds and instructional supports will you introduce, and how will students use these?</p> <p>How will students work together to progress their skills and understanding?</p>	<p>Whole class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explicit explanation of the body paragraphs in the context of biographical writing. 2. Explicit explanation and modelling/guided practice (worked example)* of how to plan a body paragraph. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Model how to compose the topic sentence for the first body paragraph. b. Model how to create dot-points for supporting detail in the first body paragraph, including reference to research notes. c. Model how to compose a concluding sentence for the first body paragraph. <p>Independent:</p> <p>Each modelled example is followed by an opportunity for practice and allows students to build their introduction step-by-step.</p>	<p>How will you check for understanding and correct any errors or misconceptions before allowing students to independently practice?</p>

* By using a 'worked example' for each section of the text structure, students are provided with a clear and concise visual representation of the expected end product. If students require additional support, the 'worked example' is a beneficial tool to scaffold and support learning.

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
Independent practice ('You do') – how to plan a biography		
<p>How will students display that they have mastered the skills and content?</p> <p>How will you work with students to provide support and to gain insight into their learning?</p>	<p>Independent: Students compose a plan for each of their body paragraphs.</p> <p>Whole class/small group: Students share their learning, and the teacher provides feedback.* Refer back to the learning objective and relevant success criteria to encourage students to reflect and track their own progress.</p>	<p>What formative assessment will you gather to provide feedback to your students?</p>

* The feedback you provide to each student should be actionable and help them to understand what they were expected to learn, identify what was learned well and describe what stills needs to be learning.

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
Guided practice ('We do') – how to plan a biography		
<p>What worked examples will you provide students?</p> <p>What scaffolds and instructional supports will you introduce, and how will students use these?</p> <p>How will students work together to progress their skills and understanding?</p>	<p>Whole class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explicit explanation of the conclusion in the context of biographical writing. 2. Explicit explanation and modelling/guided practice (worked example) of how to plan the conclusion. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Model how to compose the topic sentence for the conclusion. b. Model how to create dot-points for supporting detail in the conclusion, including reference to research notes. c. Model how to compose a concluding sentence for the conclusion. <p>Independent:</p> <p>Each modelled example is followed by an opportunity for practice and allows students to build their introduction step-by-step.</p> <p>Whole class/small group:</p> <p>Students share their learning and the teacher provides feedback.</p>	<p>How will you check for understanding and correct any errors or misconceptions before allowing students to independently practice?</p>

Lesson stage	Tasks What are the specific classroom or instructional activities that you and your students will use in each stage?	Monitoring student learning
Lesson summary		
<p>How will you show students how far they have come in the lesson?</p> <p>How will you review their learning?</p> <p>How will you help students reflect on, or summarise the most important parts of their learning?</p>	<p>Whole class: Review the learning objective. Students reflect on their learning by using the success criteria to self-assess how successful they were at demonstrating the understanding, knowledge and skills from the lesson.*</p> <p>Independent: Students complete the <u>exit quiz</u>.**</p>	<p>What evidence will you gather from your students to understand what you may need to review next lesson?</p>

* Students can use their completed plan to guide their reflection and check off each success criteria. Each student should be able to make a judgement based on their engagement with each task. For example, How confident do I feel about my plan for my biographical writing on the life of Faith Bandler?

** The exit quiz data can identify those students who have not met the learning objectives. To ensure all students achieve mastery learning, use small groups and differentiated instruction to re-teach as required. Additionally, formative assessment provides us with regular opportunities for reflection and refinement of our teaching practice. Consider, for instance, if there are patterns in what students are struggling to learn? You can make adjustments to instruction and then monitor student progress to determine the impact of the changes.