






Lesson plan – Year 6 English

Unit 2, Lesson 6: To write a biography (Part 1)

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 writing 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 sixth 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 sixth 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, identifying the features of a biography.

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

Learning objectives

To understand the role of drafting in biographical writing and create a partial draft biography.

Success criteria

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

- understand the role of drafting for biographical writing
- develop supporting sentences to complete draft paragraphs
- create a partial draft biography, including an introduction and two body paragraphs.

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:

- First drafts must be high-quality and error free writing.
- Composing a draft requires little preparation and can be easily written from memory without reference to planning documents, such as note-taking from research or a plan.

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 activities that you and your students will use in each stage? | Monitoring student learning** |
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| 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. Writing checklist b. Paragraphs 2. Opening questions and ideas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Importance of planning to the drafting process. b. Structural features of biographical writing, including introduction, body, conclusion, topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentence. | <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 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') – review features of a biography*

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| <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 learning objectives and success criteria to students, with references back to them as they are encountered throughout the lesson. 2. Review key features of a biography to draw on prior knowledge and support students in the drafting process. 3. Discussion prompt:** In biographical writing, what language features do we need to consider? 4. Revise language features and introduce/model the concept of a word bank, so key vocabulary can be readily accessed throughout the drafting process. | <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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* The lesson links prior learning and emphasises why it is important to learn in relation to biographical writing. Students are provided with a further opportunity for practice to use what they have already learned in previous lessons. When students are provided with deliberate and purposeful opportunities to practice, they are more likely to retain knowledge and skills.

** 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.

| Lesson stage | Tasks What are the specific classroom activities that you and your students will use in each stage? | Monitoring student learning |
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| Guided practice ('We do') – features of 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>Small groups:</p> <p>Students create a word bank of key vocabulary to use throughout the drafting process.*</p> <p>Whole class:</p> <p>Students communicate their learning to help create a shared word wall and the teacher provides feedback and reinforcement throughout the co-construction.</p> | <p>How will you check for understanding and correct any errors or misconceptions before allowing students to independently practice?</p> |

* This activity can be completed as a whole class, small group, pair or independent activity. The aim is to continue to build knowledge for the writing process using rich content knowledge, knowledge of linguistics and vocabulary. The word wall is context specific and would include both lexical and structural words to be utilised in biographical writing. The word wall is co-constructed with students and provides constant access to context specific vocabulary and it can also be used to support differentiated instruction.

| Lesson stage | Tasks What are the specific classroom 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') – how to write a biography (about Faith Bandler)

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| <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 the composing process. Review previous learning, such as planning. Introduce steps for the drafting stage, including reviewing the plan, referring to research notes, writing paragraphs and considering sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Reinforce the concept of 'first edit'. 2. Introduce the <u>biography writing checklist</u> and its purpose as a self-reflection/assessment tool*. Students are guided to unpack the writing checklist with the support of the teacher. Provide the opportunity for questions and clarification. 3. Explicit explanation and modelling (worked example) of how to write an introduction for biographical writing using the plan as a scaffold.** <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Model how to create supporting sentences based on the dot-point details in the plan.*** b. Model how to combine the details (topic sentence and concluding sentence) from their plan with the newly constructed supporting details into a completed introductory paragraph. | |
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* It is important that students are guided by feedback throughout the entire learning process. By providing students with set criteria, such as a writing checklist or rubric, tailored to the task, they clearly understand what is expected. These resources support students to become better at self-assessment and allows them to track and monitor their individual progress.

** This section of the lesson is designed to explicitly teach students each skill and provide an understanding of the drafting process. The tasks are sequenced into manageable chunks of learning. Each task builds upon previous learning and illustrates the progression of the learning objective. Feedback is provided throughout each section to guide students to help them improve.

*** For this unit, sentence level instruction has not been provided. It might be beneficial to include some form of formative assessment to determine the skill level of the students, specifically concerning complex sentences and the use of connectives.

| Lesson stage | Tasks | Monitoring student learning |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| <p>(Continued)</p> <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>What are the specific classroom activities that you and your students will use in each stage?</p> <p>Independent:</p> <p>Each modelled example is followed by an opportunity for practice and allows students to compose their introductory paragraph.****</p> <p>Whole class/small groups:</p> <p>Students reflect on the composing process using the biography writing checklist before sharing 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> | |

**** By monitoring student learning the teacher can assess whether 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 might need to revise concepts (paragraph structure, constructing supporting sentences) 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 provide additional explicit instruction and guided practice).

| Lesson stage | Tasks What are the specific classroom activities that you and your students will use in each stage? | Monitoring student learning |
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Guided practice ('We do') – how to write a biography (about Faith Bandler)

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| <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 and modelling/guided practice (worked example) of how to write the first paragraph (Faith’s Family Background/Childhood) for biographical writing using the plan as a scaffold.* 2. Model how to create supporting sentences based on the dot-point details in the plan. 3. Model how to combine the details (topic sentence and concluding sentence) from their plan with the newly constructed supporting details into a completed body paragraph. <p>Independent task:</p> <p>Each modelled example is followed by an opportunity for practice and allows students to compose their body paragraph.</p> <p>Whole class/small group:</p> <p>Students reflect on the composing process using the biography writing checklist before sharing 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> |
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* As students move through the drafting stage and gain confidence with their learning, you can gradually remove scaffolding. The gradual release of responsibility will differ depending on the profile of the class. You must be confident that the explicit instruction provided is adequate for students to demonstrate mastery learning. In this lesson, students are provided with multiple opportunities for guided practice, following modelling by the teacher, to ensure students are confident and competent at drafting paragraphs prior to independent practice.

** Students should be able to take action on the feedback provided by the teacher. The feedback should help students to understand what they were expected to learn, identify what was learned well and what still needs to be learnt.

| Lesson stage | Tasks What are the specific classroom activities that you and your students will use in each stage? | Monitoring student learning |
|---|--|--|
| Guided practice ('We do') – how to write a biography (about Faith Bandler) | | |
| <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 and modelling/guided practice (worked example) of how to write the second paragraph (Faith's Education) for biographical writing using the plan as a scaffold.* 2. Model how to create supporting sentences based on the dot-point details in the plan. 3. Model how to combine the details (topic sentence and concluding sentence) from their plan with the newly constructed supporting details into a completed body paragraph. <p>Independent task:</p> <p>Each modelled example is followed by an opportunity for practice and allows students to compose their body paragraph.</p> <p>Whole class/small group:</p> <p>Students reflect on the composing process using the biography writing checklist before sharing 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> |

* For the purpose of this unit, the concept 'How to write a paragraph' is divided into two separate lessons to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. The sequencing of tasks will depend on the individual class profile and pace of learning. For example, you might only focus on two teaching cycles of the drafting process in one lesson in order to prevent cognitive overload. Alternatively, you might make the judgment to advance learning and remove scaffolding and progress to independent practice sooner.

| Lesson stage | Tasks What are the specific classroom 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 worksheet (three completed paragraphs) 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 drafting paragraphs 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 teachers with regular opportunities for reflection and refinement of their teaching practice. Consider, for instance, if there are patterns in what students are struggling to learn? Teachers can make adjustments to instruction and then monitor student progress to determine the impact of the changes.