

# Imaginative Writing: autobiography

Teacher Lesson Plan 005

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This lesson plan does not assume previous experience of the game. Teachers may show VC from *Checkpoint KIDS* of the game, use YouTube clips, or play the game.

The lesson is designed to engage children with a learning opportunity based on computer gaming and is not intended as a substitute for teaching the National Curriculum.

English Assessment Objectives are provided as a means of justifying the lesson in a school environment.

All lesson timings are approximate.

*Checkpoint KIDS* welcomes students' work for submission, but only if the relevant permission slips are completed.

Issue: **8 – December 2020**

Theme: **Storytelling**

Game: **The First Tree or Assemble with Care**

Focus: **Imaginative Writing: autobiography**

### Lesson Objective:

By the end of this learning episode you will:

- understand how to write an autobiography
- understand the criteria
  - narrative writing techniques:
    - figurative language
    - narrative voice
  - structure
    - Freytag's Pyramid
    - introducing tension
- understand the content
  - memory (What is fact and what is fiction?)
  - feelings and emotions

### Assessment Objectives:

A02 - analysing text for writers' use of language and structure to achieve effects

A05 - adapting for purpose/audience and organising ideas

A06 - sentence structures adapted to purpose with accurate spelling and punctuation

### Literacy Objectives:

- SPaG
- figurative language

**Duration:** 2 x 45 minutes

## Introduction

- storytelling is as old as the hills - literally. The earliest narratives are likely to have been creation myths. Take a look at this creation myth from the Dreamtime in Australia
  - <https://www.kullillaart.com.au/dreamtime-stories/The-Rainbow-Serpent>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76bizcNc1RM>
- or these stories about the trickster Coyote from America
  - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Coyote-mythology>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRIZUvtBBww>
- storytelling has always been used to try and make sense of the world
- ask the students what they think stories are for. Include children's picture books as well as poetry, novels and plays. Possible topics for discussion:
  - learn how to read
  - entertainment - humour, horror, science fiction
  - learn about culture
  - morality - the benefits of 'right' decisions; the consequences of 'wrong' decisions
- take a look at this short video from The School of Life which answers the question, 'What is Literature for?'
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RCFLobfqcw>
- human beings have always enjoyed stories about real life. We enjoy talking about what we've experienced ourselves, or hearing about other people's adventures. With the advent of smart phones and the internet we don't have to wait until we get home to share our holiday pictures, or wait for a postcard, we can experience it as it's happening.
- however, there are times when we want to combine the benefits of Literature with our own real stories. We edit our stories. We enhance our stories. We craft our stories in ways that make them more interesting and more entertaining and one of the genres we use is autobiography

## Lesson 1

### Starter

- introduce the word 'autobiography'
  - auto - self
  - bio - life
  - graphy - writing
- how many words do the students know that begin with the prefix 'auto'?
  - automobile                      self-moving
  - autopilot                        self-piloting
  - automatic                        self-operating
  - automaton                        self-operating machine
  - autonomy                         self-ruling
- repeat for 'bio'
  - biosphere                        life-atmosphere
  - biographer                        life-writer
  - biodegradable                    life-decomposable
- repeat for 'graph'(y)
  - autograph                        self-writing
  - photograph                        light-writing
  - phonograph                        sound-writing
  - geography                         land-writing
- have the students read any autobiographies?
  - Roald Dahl - *Boy*
  - Gerald Durrell - *My Family and Other Animals*
  - Jaqueline Wilson - *Jacky Daydream*
  - Dylan Thomas - *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*
  - Laurie Lee - *Cider with Rosie*
  - Raina Telgemeier - *Smile*

## Activity 1

- read the following extract from Benjamin Franklin's autobiography 1771 (all spellings have been left in their original form) TLP005WS1

At ten years old I was taken home to assist my father in his business, which was that of a tallow-chandler and sope-boiler; a business he was not bred to, but had assumed on his arrival in New England, and on finding his dying trade would not maintain his family, being in little request. Accordingly, I was employed in cutting wick for the candles, filling the dipping mold and the molds for cast candles, attending the shop, going of errands, etc.

I disliked the trade, and had a strong inclination for the sea, but my father declared against it; however, living near the water, I was much in and about it, learnt early to swim well, and to manage boats; and when in a boat or canoe with other boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially in any case of difficulty; and upon other occasions I was generally a leader among the boys, and sometimes led them into scrapes, of which I will mention one instance, as it shows an early projecting public spirit, tho' not then justly conducted.

There was a salt-marsh that bounded part of the mill-pond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharff there fit for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone, I assembled a number of my play-fellows, and working with them diligently like so many emmets, sometimes two or three to a stone, we brought them all away and built our little wharff. The next morning the workmen were surprised at missing the stones, which were found in our wharff. Inquiry was made after the removers; we were discovered and complained of; several of us were corrected by our fathers; and though I pleaded the usefulness of the work, mine convinced me that nothing was useful which was not honest.

(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/148/148-h/148-h.htm>)

Glossary: *tallow-chandler* - candle seller, *sope-boiler* - soap maker; *wick* - the string in a candle, *quagmire* - bog, *wharff*[f] - area of hard standing, *emmets* - ants

- although the episode is interesting
  - swimming, boating, fishing, building a wharf
  - the admission of wrongdoing by a Founding Father of the USA
  - the suggestion of corporal punishment 'corrected by our fathers'
- it does little to entertain and uses only one example of figurative language
  - 'working with them diligently like so many emmets' - simile
- however, it does satisfy the rules of Literature because it allows the reader to learn from the episode without having to experience it
  - we don't have to steal or be 'corrected'
  - we can consider how serious the crime was and what we might have done in that situation
- we learn about morality
- however, it is not written in a way that would entertain younger readers

- one writer who can engage with younger readers is Roald Dahl. He describes several episodes of wrongdoing in his autobiography, *Boy*. It would be useful to read *The Great Mouse Plot* at this point.
- listen to Roald Dahl's widow talking about *The Great Mouse Plot*
  - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-wales-37318773> 2 mins
- read this extract carefully TLP005WS1

My four friends and I had come across a loose floor-board at the back of the classroom, and when we prised it up with the blade of a pocket-knife, we discovered a big hollow space underneath. This, we decided, would be our secret hiding space for sweets and other small treasures such as conkers and monkey nuts and birds' eggs. Every afternoon, when the last lesson was over, the five of us would wait until the classroom had emptied, then we would lift up the floor-board and examine our secret hoard, perhaps adding to it or taking something away.

One day, when we lifted it up, we found a dead mouse lying among our treasures. It was an exciting discovery. Thwaites took it out by its tail and waved it in front of our faces. "What shall we do with it?" he cried.

"It stinks!" someone shouted. "Throw it out of the window quick!"

"Hold on a tick," I said. "Don't throw it away."

Thwaites hesitated. They all looked at me.

When writing about oneself, one must strive to be truthful. Truth is more important than modesty. I must tell you, therefore, that it was I and I alone who had the idea for the great and daring Mouse Plot. We all have our moments of brilliance and glory, and this was mine.

"Why don't we," I said, "slip it into one of Mrs Pratchett's jars of sweets? Then when she puts her dirty hand in to grab a handful, she'll grab a stinky mouse instead."

The other four stared at me in wonder. Then, as the sheer genius of the plot began to sink in, they all started grinning. They slapped me on the back. They cheered me and danced around the classroom. "We'll do it today!" they cried. "We'll do it on the way home! *You* had the idea," they said to me, "so *you* can be the one to put the mouse in the jar."

- the following analysis of the two texts can be shared with students, or they can analyse the texts themselves. You will need to re-phrase the observations as questions
  - Franklin tends to 'tell' rather than 'show'
    - 'I was generally a leader among the boys, and sometimes led them into scrapes'
  - Dahl 'shows'
    - "'Hold on a tick," I said. "Don't throw it away."'
    - "'Why don't we," I said'...
    - "'We'll do it on the way home! You had the idea," they said to me, "so you can be the one to put the mouse in the jar."'
  - Franklin lacks descriptive detail
    - 'we brought them all away and built our little wharff'
  - Dahl uses a lot of detail
    - 'and when we prised it up with the blade of a pocket-knife, we discovered a big hollow space underneath'

- Franklin does not involve other characters
  - 'I assembled a number of my play-fellows'
- Dahl introduces other characters
  - 'Thwaites took it out by its tail'
- Franklin doesn't use direct speech
  - 'My proposal was to build a wharff'
- Dahl uses direct speech
  - "It stinks!" someone shouted. "Throw it out of the window quick!"
  
- the *Boy* extract can be analysed further because Dahl has used figurative language techniques to engage and entertain the reader. Discuss the effect on the reader of the following
  - sibilance - *prised, discovered, space, secret, sweets, small treasures etc*
  - trio - *conkers and monkey nuts and birds' eggs*
  - pronouns - *we, I, they, you*
    - Dahl begins the episode using 'we' to establish that they are all in it together, but by the end he is only referring to himself 'I'. Finally, the others are a separate group 'they' and he is referred to as 'you'
  - italics - *you*
  
- discuss the difference between the two extracts
  - Franklin has described the episode in a more simplistic and factual way. This is perhaps because he is using it as a way of showing how he was taught a moral lesson. However, he is also celebrating his early leadership skills. His lack of detail is realistic given that he wrote it 56 years after the event and for an adult audience
  - Dahl has added a lot of detail and carefully structured the writing for dramatic effect. It is unlikely that he remembered the episode in this level of detail, but he has captured the enthusiasm of the boys and entertained the reader
  
- if desired, students could re-write Franklin's episode in the style of Dahl
- explain to students that they will be writing an extract from their own autobiography in the style of Dahl

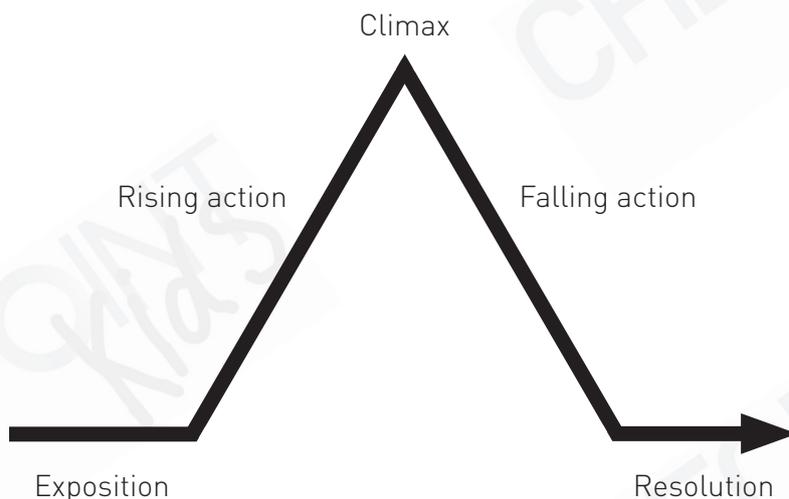
## Lesson 2

### Starter:

- students work in pairs to tell a story using the 'unfortunately...fortunately...' format
  - unfortunately I fell out of a plane
  - fortunately I had a parachute
  - unfortunately it didn't open
  - fortunately I was over the sea etc

### Activity 1

- students can appreciate that all stories have a beginning, middle and end. This can be developed into a common plot structure using Freytag's Pyramid



- plot structure
  - exposition - characters, setting: time, date, weather, location
  - rising action - a conflict (problem) has occurred and is developing
  - climax - the conflict reaches its peak
  - falling action - the aftermath
  - resolution - the conclusion - can lead to the next rising action - think endings of TV soap episodes
- ask the students to focus on a clear memory they have of something that happened to them. It must include an object of some kind. The object does not have to be central to the episode, but it must be relevant. Think about whether it could be used for the title, or included as an illustration, and make sense. Later in life it should be able to trigger the memory
- show the trailer for The First Tree
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85CPlv3kz6c>
- the first few minutes show the fox digging up objects from the narrator's past which trigger memories



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mXhAXiyXLs>

- this toy train reminds the narrator that his father used to carve him toys from Alaskan Weeping Cedar. He loved the train more than anything and he wanted to grow up to be a lumberjack, like his father.

or

- show the trailer for Assemble with Care
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04i8usL2lF0>
- the game explores how mending objects can mend lives



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAXe6uy\\_aZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAXe6uy_aZA)

- this camera belongs to Helena who is visiting her sister Carmen. The text suggests that Helena doesn't 'see' things clearly and needs help

- the episode the students write about does not have to be funny, or a major life-changing event, but it should be true
- students plot out their episode using Freytag's Pyramid TLP005WS2
- once they have the bare bones of an episode they can plan in more detail and think about
  - where to include figurative language techniques
  - narrative voice
  - how to develop tension
- use work sheet TLP005WS3 and TLP005 Glossary
- students can then begin drafting their story
- students complete a self-assessment grid

Statement	✓ or X	Focus
I have written a draft autobiography about one episode.		
I have included an object that is central to the episode, or can be used to trigger it in later life.		
I have written five paragraphs following Freytag's Pyramid.		
I have included a range of figurative techniques.		
I have written in the first person.		
I have checked my use of verb tenses.		
I have included direct/indirect speech.		
I have included some of the five senses.		
I have tried to introduce tension.		
SPaG check		
I understand this work so far.	😊 😐 😞	
I would like help with _____ _____ _____		

- students share and discuss their autobiographies. Possible interaction
  - *I like your description of... because...*
  - *I included the... because...*
  - *Could you describe the... in more detail*
  - *Have you thought about including...*
  - *I liked it when you... that was...*

- following advice, students can then produce a final copy of their autobiography
- consider illustrations
  - which aspect could be illustrated?
  - how will the illustration enhance the work?
- an extract of the autobiography which was planned using TLP005WS3 is provided TLP005WS3a
- final self-assessment of this Learning Pack activity
- submit students' work to Checkpoint KIDS together with the relevant permission slips

## Extension Activities

- students may find it easier to include figurative techniques if they 'see' their autobiography as a fiction. Writing about themselves in the 3rd person might help
  - *I was walking to town with my friend when...*
  - *Taylor was walking with her friend when...*
- try writing in the 3rd person to establish the plot structure and detail, then convert back to 1st person
- students who enjoy describing the setting of their episode could benefit from a close study of Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee. First Light contains a description of Laurie being placed in some tall grass and being rescued by his sisters. This is a good example of fictionalising autobiography as there is no way that Laurie could have articulated this response aged 3.
- using the following extract, draw the image it presents and label its use of figurative techniques

I was set down from the carrier's cart at the age of three; and there with a sense of bewilderment and terror my life in the village began.

The June grass, amongst which I stood, was taller than I was, and I wept. I had never been so close to grass before. It towered above me and all around me, each blade tattooed with tiger-skins of sunlight. It was knife-edged, dark, and a wicked green, thick as a forest and alive with grasshoppers that chirped and chattered and leapt through the air like monkeys.

I was lost and didn't know where to move. A tropic heat oozed up from the ground, rank with sharp odours of roots and nettles. Snow-clouds of elder-blossom banked in the sky, showering upon me the fumes and flakes of their sweet and giddy suffocation. High overhead ran frenzied larks, screaming, as though the sky were tearing apart.

<http://cheltenhamfestivals-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/assets/File/6070.pdf>

- similarly, students who enjoy describing key characters could benefit from further close study of Roald Dahl's *Boy*
  - using the following extract, draw the image of Mrs Pratchett it presents and label its use of figurative techniques

Her name was Mrs Pratchett. She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry. She never smiled. She never welcomed us when we went in, and the only times she spoke were when she said things like, 'I'm watchin' you so keep your thievin' fingers off them chocolates!' Or 'I don't want you in 'ere just to look around! Either you forks out or you gets out!'

But by far the most loathsome thing about Mrs Pratchett was the filth that clung around her. Her apron was grey and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk. It was her hands, however, that disturbed us the most. They were disgusting. They were black with dirt and grime. They looked as though they had been putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long. And do not forget please that it was these very hands and fingers that she plunged into the sweet-jars when we asked for a pennyworth of Treacle Toffee or Wine Gums or Nut Clusters or whatever. There were precious few health laws in those days, and nobody, least of all Mrs Pratchett, ever thought of using a small shovel for getting out the sweets as they do today. The mere sight of her grimy right hand with its black fingernails digging an ounce of Chocolate Fudge out of the jars would have caused a starving tramp to go running from the shop. But not us. Sweets were our life-blood. We would have put up with far worse than that to get them. So we simply stood and watched in sullen silence while this disgusting old woman stirred around inside the jars with her foul fingers.

[https://www.roalddahl.com/docs/BoyLessonPlans\\_1522154447.pdf](https://www.roalddahl.com/docs/BoyLessonPlans_1522154447.pdf)

- there are some great lesson plans on the Roald Dahl website which support the study of autobiography
  - [https://www.roalddahl.com/docs/BoyLessonPlans\\_1522154447.pdf](https://www.roalddahl.com/docs/BoyLessonPlans_1522154447.pdf)

## Lesson 2

### Activity 1

Statement	✓ or ✗	Focus
I have written a draft autobiography about one episode.		
I have included an object that is central to the episode, or can be used to trigger it in later life.		
I have written five paragraphs following Freytag's Pyramid.		
I have included a range of figurative techniques.		
I have written in the first person.		
I have checked my use of verb tenses.		
I have included direct/indirect speech.		
I have included some of the five senses.		
I have tried to introduce tension.		
SPaG check		
I understand this work so far.	  	
I would like help with _____		
_____		
_____		

Final self-assessment for TLP005

Writing an Autobiography		
Title: _____		
Name: _____	Date: _____	Class: _____
Statement	✓ or ✗	Focus
I have written an autobiography about one episode.		
I have included an object that is central to the episode, or can be used to trigger it in later life.		
I have written five paragraphs following Freytag's Pyramid.		
I have included a range of figurative techniques.		
I have written in the first person.		
I have checked my use of verb tenses.		
I have included direct/indirect speech.		
I have included some of the five senses.		
I have tried to introduce tension.		
SPaG check.		
I have understood the work we have been doing.	  	
I have really enjoyed this work because _____ _____ _____		
In future I would like help with _____ _____ _____		

### Word Bank

autobiography, atmosphere, character, conflict, create, description, language, memory, mood, narrative, plot, protagonist, reflection, resolution, setting, story, symbolism, technique