

Writing an Autobiography

By [Sandra Blair](#)



Overview

It's natural and novel for students to want to write about their interests, their family, and their goals. The genre of autobiographical writing builds on the existing interest that middle school students already have in themselves and their lives while helping them develop and understand the craft of writing.

Objective

Students will:

- Learn about the process of writing; brainstorm ideas, write draft, revise, edit, finalize draft, and share work
- Be able to write effectively and with detail about their personal history (family, friends, neighborhood), growth, and goals over time
- Read and critique published autobiographies to help understand effective writing techniques used
- Read and respectfully critique the work of their peers
- Complete final product as a published piece

Materials

- [Timelines](#) (PDF)
- Selection of autobiographies for reference
- Pencil or pen
- Notebook paper
- Supplies for scrapbooks (PDF)
- [Birth Certificate](#) (PDF)
- [About My Family](#) (PDF)
- [About My Friends](#) (PDF)
- [The Folks in my Neighborhood](#) (PDF)
- [Imagining Future Scenarios](#) (PDF)
- [Things I Like to Do](#) (PDF)
- [Want Ads for the Future](#) (PDF)

Set Up and Prepare

Explain the meaning and purpose of writing an autobiography.
Review autobiographies that would be of interest to your students.
Discuss what devices authors use to make the stories compelling.
Provide worksheets for students to use to help them generate ideas and support their writing.
Review the writing process.

Directions

Part One: Learning From Our Pasts

Step 1: Tell students they will be writing about their personal family history and important events in their lives that have shaped who they are today. Discuss that a family is composed of people living together and functioning as a unit.

Step 2: Give them a copies of the [Birth Certificate](#) and [About My Family](#) worksheet and ask them complete them to the best of their knowledge. They can take the worksheets home to ask family members for help completing any missing information.

Part Two: Who I Am Today

Step 3: Discuss with students that family is important to shaping character, but individuals can also be influenced by people who aren't related to them. Ask students to complete the [About My Friends](#) and [The Folks in my Neighborhood](#) worksheets.

Step 4: Using the [About My Family](#) worksheet and other related worksheets as reference, students will write and describe their neighborhoods and significant relationships with family, friends, teachers, or community members as a way to write about and define how these people have impacted and influenced who they are today.

Part Three: Preparing for the Future

Step 5: Explain that a scenario is an account or synopsis of a projected course of action or events. Ask students to make projections for the future and write about various stages of their lives (e.g. 10, 20, or 50 years from now) by completing the [Imagining Future Scenarios](#), [Things I Like to Do](#), and [Want Ads for the Future](#) worksheets.

Part Four: The Final Product

Step 6: Students will use the three written parts to complete the final draft of their autobiography. This piece will be peer reviewed and teacher reviewed before publishing. The timeline and scrapbook pieces can be used to support their writing.

Lesson Extensions

Have students use the worksheets as guides to complete a visual timeline about important events their lives. They can choose "firsts" events to use on their timelines, such as my first birthday, Christmas, first day of school, first haircut, visit to the dentist, first night away from home, etc. Students can also use the worksheets to make autobiographical scrapbooks.

Home Connection

Students are encouraged to talk to their parents and family members about their writing. They can discuss

important events in their childhoods such as, the day they were born, learning to walk and talk, funny things they use to do, etc. After students complete their information gathering, they can work on their autobiographical timelines and scrapbooks.

Assignments

Brainstorm a list of possible writing ideas and topics to provide focus for writing stories with more details.
Use worksheets and ten-minute sessions of directed writing for students having difficulty beginning their writing
Write first draft
Revise first drafts through peer conferences
Edit revised work through teacher conferences
Share final drafts

Evaluation

Did students understand and follow the writing process?
Did students enjoy thinking about their personal lives, families, and goals for the future?
Did writing an autobiography change their thinking about their future goals?

Reproducibles

[Birth Certificate](#)

[Family](#)

[Friends](#)

[The Folks in My Neighborhood](#)

[Scenario](#)

[Day Dreams](#)

[Want Ads](#)

[Rules for Living](#)

[Things I Like to Do](#)

[Timeline Graphic Organizer](#)

Assess Students

Ask students to find a partner to read and respectfully critique their writing using the following criteria:

Is this story in good order? Are the events in sequence?
How are the paragraphs? Are all the ideas about one subject or event grouped together?
Does this story have a good beginning, middle, and end? Which parts, if any, need more information?
Are there any parts of this story that could be left out? Why?
Does this story have well-structured sentences? Which need more work?
Are there grammar mistakes?
Are there spelling mistakes?
Does this writing make you feel any particular way? Why?
What parts of this story are you able to visualize?
What did you like best about this story?

Related Resources

[Books for Teaching Successful Autobiography Writing](#)
By [Elizabeth Ramos](#)

Teacher created book

list includes tips for
classroom use.

[Read more >](#)

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Published

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