# Grade 7 Unit 11: Writing a Biography

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We will only live once and each day that passes can never happen exactly in another day in the future, nor can we go back to the past and live it again. Thus, we can all agree that memories are precious and must be treasured.

One way to do so is to have a written recount of how our life ran, what we achieved, and who were with us along our life journey.

In this unit, you will learn about biographies and writing a biography. You will also learn about personification and clauses that you may use in writing biographies or other types of literature.

Unit Objectives

In this unit, you should be able to:

- identify figures of speech that show comparison (personification);
- discover the conflicts presented in literary selections and the need to resolve those conflicts in nonviolent ways;
- use phrases, clauses, and sentences appropriately and meaningfully; and
- write a biography.
Lesson 1: Figures of Speech (Personification)

Sometimes we compare people with another person, object, or creature so we can clearly and vividly describe their unique features. We can also do the same when we describe creatures’ or objects’ movements but in a slightly different way. In this lesson, you will learn about another figure of speech used for comparison.

Warm-up!

In what way does each object/creature’s appearance or movement resemble a human being’s? Stretch your imagination and share your idea with your classmate.
Learn About It!

**Personification** can help give more colorful descriptions of non-human entities so that the readers can easily understand, sympathize with, or respond emotionally to non-human subjects. It also helps writers portray objects or ideas differently that the readers may find them appealing. Sometimes, they do not only entertain readers but they also imply deeper meanings.

**Example**

Below is the poem “*Daffodils*” written by William Wordsworth with **personifications** in boldface:

**Daffodils**
by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of **golden daffodils**;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
**Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.**

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
**Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.**

**The waves beside them danced**; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
in such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
what wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

As you noticed, the golden daffodils, and the waves even, were personified as though they are like people dancing—very lively and animated. Thus, the persona forgets about his/her sadness and instead finds joy in remembering them in his/her alone time. Through these colorful descriptions, readers easily imagine what kind of scene brought such happiness to the persona. The level of the persona’s happiness became even more concrete to the readers as his/her heart is also described as “dancing with the daffodils”. Ultimately, Wordsworth used personification mainly to bring forth his theme that people sometimes find peace and deep joy within when they become in touch with nature.

Let’s Check In!

Choose 3 things in nature that you can describe using personification just like how Wordsworth did in his poem. Share your creative ideas with your seatmate.
Check Your Understanding

Identify which lines from the poem below contain personification. Write the number of the line of your answer.

Two Sunflowers Move in the Yellow Room
by William Blake

1 “Ah, William, we’re weary of weather,”
2 said the sunflowers, shining with dew.
3 “Our traveling habits have tired us.
4 Can you give us a room with a view?”

5 They arranged themselves at the window
6 and counted the steps of the sun,
7 and they both took root in the carpet
8 where the topaz tortoises run.

Let’s Step Up!

Write a short poem of 6-8 lines about your favorite creature or object using at least 3 personifications.

Let’s Revisit The Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.
Lesson 2: Biography

Our life here on earth is short. Before you know it, so much time has passed us by. Thus, some people write or ask someone to write their own life story so that what they have done in their lives could be documented and remembered by people, and more important, could be a source of inspiration for some. In this lesson you will read about biography and how to write one.

Warm-up!

Bring to class a picture of a great person from your family or from history that you admire the most. What do you know about his/her life that made you admire this person? Share his/her life story with your seatmate.

Essential Question

Why is it important to document people’s important life events?
Learn About It!

A **biography** is about the life of a famous or infamous celebrity or historical figure, or just an ordinary being. He/she can either still be living or dead.

When writing a biography, the following details are usually included:

1. the **basic facts** about the person’s family, education, work, and other common information
2. the person’s **striking or unique characteristics**
3. the **person’s achievement(s)** and impact on other people’s lives or the society
4. the **conflicts or obstacles** the person faced and how he/she overcame it/them
5. the **person’s legacy** after his/her death (if the subject is dead already)
6. other people’s **perception** about his/her character or achievements

To start with your writing, you have to **select an interesting character as a subject** of your biography. Then, **research about this person in references** like encyclopedia, almanac, and other print or online sources.

If the person is someone you can easily contact, you can interview this person as well and get facts straight from him/her. Use the enumerated elements above to guide you on what kinds of details you should look for. Take notes during your data-gathering.

Afterwards, choose details to include in your biography that you think would be interesting or worth learning from. For a start, **organize the details in a chronological order** that is easy for the readers to follow. **Give specific details and descriptions**—much like painting a portrait of a person using colorful and specific words.

You may ask a classmate or a teacher to read your work and ask for feedback before you submit your work to your teacher.
Example

Below is a sample biography of a famous legendary woman in Native American history.

Pocahontas
[Born 1594. Died 1617.]
by Dr. Hugh Murray

On a signal from their leader, they, the natives of Virginia, laid down their bows and arrows, and led Captain Smith [of the Expedition, 1607] under strict guard to their capital. He was there exhibited to the women and children, and a wild war-dance was performed round him in fantastic measures, and with frightful yells and contortions. He was then shut up in a long house, and supplied at every meal with as much bread and venison as would have dined twenty men; but receiving no other sign of kindness, he began to dread that they were fattening him in order to eat him.

At last he was led to Pamunkey, the residence of Powhatan, the king. It was here his doom was sealed. The chief received him in pomp\(^1\), wrapped in a spacious robe of raccoon skins, with all the tails hanging down. Behind appeared two long lines of men and women, with faces painted red, heads decked with white down, and necks quite encircled with chains of beads.

A lady of rank presented water to wash his hands and a bunch of feathers to dry them. A long deliberation was then held, and the result proved fatal. Two large stones were placed before Powhatan, and, by the united efforts of the attendants, Smith was dragged to the spot, his head laid on one of them, and the mighty club was raised, a few blows of which were to terminate\(^2\) his life.

In this last extremity, when every hope seemed past, a very unexpected
interposition took place. Pocahontas, the youthful and favorite daughter of this savage chief, was seized with those tender emotions which form the ornament of her sex. Advancing to her father, she in the most earnest terms supplicated mercy for the stranger; and though all her entreaties were lost on that savage heart, her zeal only redoubled. She ran to Smith, took his head in her arms, laid her own upon it, and declared that the first death-blow must fall upon her. The barbarian's breast was at length softened, and the life of the Englishman was spared.

Smith was afterwards liberated and sent to Jamestown, where he was installed as president. As Powhatan's favor was to be courted, there had been sent handsome presents, with materials to crown him with splendor, in the European style. With only four companions he courageously repaired to the residence of the monarch, inviting him to come and be crowned at Jamestown.

The party were extremely well received, though once they heard in the adjoining wood outcries so hideous as made them flee to their arms; but Pocahontas assured them they had nothing to fear.

Subsequently, Smith was repeatedly in danger; and again, on one occasion, was saved by a second interposition of Pocahontas, who, at the risk of her father's displeasure, ran through the woods on a dark night to give him warning. But the kindness of this princess was ill repaid by the English, to whom she was so much attached; for Argall, an enterprising naval commander, afterwards contrived, through an Indian who had become his sworn friend, to inveigle on board his vessel the fair Pocahontas.

Regardless of her tears and entreaties he conveyed her to Jamestown, where she was well treated; but in a negotiation for her ransom, exorbitant terms were demanded, which her father indignantly rejected, and the breach seemed only widened. Happily, the chains of the princess's captivity were lightened by others of a more pleasing nature.

Mr John Rolfe, a respectable young man, was smitten with her dignified demeanor, and found no difficulty in gaining her affections. They were afterwards married, and she was converted and baptized under the name of Rebecca, to which the English prefixed the title of Lady, and her subsequent conduct is said to have adorned her profession.

Soon after, in company with her husband, she visited England; and Captain Smith wrote a letter to his majesty, recounting her good deeds, declaring that she had a great spirit though a low stature, and beseeching for her a reception corresponding to her rank and merits.

She was accordingly introduced at court, and into the circles of fashion, where, as a
novelty, she was for some time the leading object, and is said to have deported herself with suitable grace and dignity.

Purchas mentions his meeting with her at the table of his patron, Dr King, Bishop of London, where she was entertained with "festival and pomp." The king took an absurd apprehension that Rolfe, on the ground of his wife's birth, might advance a claim to the crown of Virginia. This idea being at length driven out of his mind, he appointed him secretary and recorder-general of the colony.

The princess, early in 1617, went to embark at Gravesend, but Providence had not destined that she would revisit her native shore. She was there seized with an illness which carried her off in a few days, and her last hours are said to have extremely edified the spectators, being full of Christian resignation and hope.

She had left a son in the colony, whose offspring, carefully traced, is now numerous; and this descent is the boast of many Virginian families.

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1. pomp--ceremony and splendid display, usually in a public event
2. terminate--end
3. interposition--the act of interfering between two parties
4. supplicated--to beg humbly
5. entreaties--humble request
6. enterprising--resourceful or creative
7. inveigle--deceiving someone to attract his/her attention using trick or flattery
8. exorbitant--unreasonably high
9. indignantly--displaying anger or annoyance about something that is unfair
10. deported--behaved in a certain way

Answer the following comprehension questions:
1. How was Pocahontas described in this biography as a woman?
2. What events from their life illustrate these qualities?
3. What makes Pocahontas special or interesting as a character?
4. What events shaped or changed her life?
5. How did she overcome obstacles in her life?
6. How did she make a difference on other people's lives, even on the country, America, during its early beginnings?
7. How was Pocahontas portrayed differently in this biography compared to the stories you read or films you watched about her life?
Check Your Understanding

Fill in the blanks to complete the following information about a biography.
1. A biography is usually organized and written following a _______________ order.
2. If the subject of a biography is already dead, his/her ____________ to his/her people after his/her death can also be included.
3. A biography must describe the ____________ characteristics of the subject.
4. In writing a biography, one must choose a/n ______________ character to write about.
5. In describing a person in a biography, one must use ____________ words to help the readers imagine the kind of person s/he is.

Let’s Step Up!

Look for a sample biography in your library that you find interesting. Discuss with your seatmate the characteristics of the biography you found.

Let’s Revisit The Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.
Lesson 3: Clauses

In writing a biography, we cannot just fill it with simple, choppy sentences. At some points, we have to use more complex structures of sentences so that the text would not be boring to read. This requires us to understand what clauses are first. In this lesson, you will learn about the types of clauses which you can use in writing a biography.

Warm-up!

1. Write 5 descriptions for the admirable person you focused on in Lesson 2 in the spaces below.
   - ______________________________________
   - ______________________________________
   - ______________________________________
   - ______________________________________
   - ______________________________________

2. Next, encircle which of the 5 descriptions are complete in thought and underline the ones that are not.
Learn About It!

A clause is a group of words that has both a subject and a verb. A clause with both a subject and a verb that is complete in thought is called an **independent clause**. On the other hand, a clause with a subject and a verb, but can’t stand on its own in meaning is called a **dependent clause**.

Under dependent clauses, there are two more kinds of clauses: adjectival and adverbial clauses. An **adjectival clause** describes a noun or a pronoun and it usually starts with the relative pronouns *who, which, or that*.

The second type, the **adverbial clause**, modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb and it usually answers the questions *where, when, how, why, to what extent, or under what condition*.

Take a look at the following sentences from Pocahontas’ biography:

*In this last extremity*

This is only a phrase because it does not have a clear subject nor a verb.

*when every hope seemed past*

This is a dependent clause because it has a subject (“every hope”) and a verb (“seemed”) but it does not have a complete meaning; the relative pronoun “when” makes it wanting for further details to complete its thought. This clause is an example of an adverbial clause since it answers the question “When?”. 

**Vocabulary**

- **clause** - a group of words that has both a subject and a verb
- **independent clause** - a clause with both a subject and a verb and is complete in thought
- **dependent clause** - a clause with a subject and a verb but cannot stand on its own
- **adjectival clause** - describes a noun or a pronoun
- **adverbial clause** - modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb
a very unexpected interposition took place

This is an example of an independent clause as the subject is clear ("a very unexpected interposition") and the verb is also present ("took place"); it can also stand alone—that is, when you remove (1) and (2), its meaning can still be understood.

Below are underlined examples of adjectival clause from the same biography, together with the nouns they modify in the sentence put in boldface:

_Pocahontas, who, at the risk of her father's displeasure, ran through the woods on a dark night to give him warning. But the kindness of this princess was ill repaid by the English, to whom she was so much attached; for Argall, an enterprising naval commander, afterwards contrived, through an Indian who had become his sworn friend, to inveigle on board his vessel the fair Pocahontas._

Let's Check In!

Go back to Pocahontas’ biography you read in Lesson 2 and
- encircle 2 independent clauses
- underline 2 dependent clauses
- put an asterisk beside an adjectival clause
- put a check beside an adverbial clause.
Check Your Understanding

Identify the concept that is being described in each number.

1. It is a group of words that has both a subject and a verb.
2. It is a clause with both a subject and a verb that is complete in thought.
3. It is a clause with a subject and a verb, but can’t stand on its own in meaning.
4. It is a kind of dependent clause that describes a noun or a pronoun and it usually starts with the relative pronouns "who," "which," or "that."
5. It is a kind of dependent clause that modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb and it usually answers the questions "where," "when," "how," "why," "to what extent," or "under what condition."

Write I if the underlined clause is independent, while D if it is dependent. Write your answer on the space before the number.

THE LANDING OF POCAHONTAS IN ENGLAND

After this, the colony prospered. ______ (1) Pocahontas became contented with her life in the town. And in time a son was born to her. Later, Rolfe, with his wife and child, sailed to visit England. ______ (2) Pocahontas marveled much at the extent of the great sea, and the many ships upon its waves.

_______ (3) When they arrived at Plymouth, the governor of the town came down to bid the Indian Princess welcome to England.

With her, as attendant, went Uttamatomakkin, a shrewd old chief, who, in his war feathers and Indian robes, attracted much attention. He had been sent by Powhatan to count the English, ______ (4) that he might learn their strength. And he was to cut a notch in a stick for every man he saw. He worked hard and fast, but a whole bundle of sticks was notched before
he got even to London, _____ (5) where, with a disgusted grunt, he gave up the task. "Too many," he said.

Write **ADJ** if the underlined clause is an adjectival clause, **ADV** if it is adverbial, and **N** for neither. Write your answer on the space before the number.

**THE LANDING OF POCAHONTAS IN ENGLAND**

After this, the colony prospered. _____ (1) Pocahontas became contented with her life in the town. And in time a son was born to her. Later, Rolfe, with his wife and child, sailed to visit England. Pocahontas marveled much at the extent of the great sea, and the many ships upon its waves.

_______ (2) When they arrived at Plymouth, the governor of the town came down to bid the Indian Princess welcome to England. With her, as attendant, went Uttamatomakkin, a shrewd old chief, _______ (3) who, in his war feathers and Indian robes, attracted much attention. He had been sent by Powhatan to count the English, _______ (4) that he might learn their strength. And he was to cut a notch in a stick for every man he saw. He worked hard and fast, but a whole bundle of sticks was notched before he got even to London, _____ (5) where, with a disgusted grunt, he gave up the task. "Too many," he said.

**Let’s Step Up!**

Go back to your answers in Let’s Check In. Transform your dependent clauses into independent clauses and add adjectival or adverbial clauses to enhance your sentences. Share your revised work with your seatmate.

**Let’s Revisit The Essentials!**

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.
Performance Task

Writing a Biography

Goal:
• Your task is to write a biography about an important person in your community.

Role:
• You are a contributor in your barangay's newsletter.

Audience:
• You will write for the people in your barangay and other readers of the newsletter.

Situation:
• Out of your admiration for a significant person in your barangay, you would like to write about his/her life in your barangay newsletter so more people could be inspired by his/her story.

Product/Performance and Purpose:

1. Interview a person who has made an impact in your community. You may use the guide from the biography in forming questions for the interview. You may also do research work about the person's contributions and achievements.

2. Write the biography of the person based on the interview and research you conducted.

3. Underline 10 clauses from your biography. Afterwards, identify whether it is an (IN) independent clause, (DADJ) a dependent clause and adjectival, and (DADV) a dependent clause and adverbial.

4. Include a photo of the person you featured in the biography. Print your work on short bond paper.

Standards & Criteria for Success:
• Your work will be judged based on the following rubric:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Beginning (0-12 points)</th>
<th>Developing (13-16 points)</th>
<th>Accomplished (17-20 points)</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>More than 2 details/elements are missing.</td>
<td>One to two details/elements are missing.</td>
<td>All necessary details/elements are present.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>There is confusing transition from one life event to another.</td>
<td>There is a somewhat smooth transition from one life event to another.</td>
<td>There is a flawless transition from one life event to another.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language (spelling, mechanics,</td>
<td>More than 3 errors were found</td>
<td>One to three language error/s were found</td>
<td>No language error was found</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>grammar and usage)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task-specific</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>Biography includes 1 unique and interesting characteristic of the person.</td>
<td>Biography includes 2 unique and interesting characteristics of the person.</td>
<td>Biography includes 3 unique and interesting characteristics of the person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivid and Specific Descriptions</td>
<td>Biography contains one vivid and specific description of the person.</td>
<td>Biography contains at least 2 vivid and specific descriptions of the person.</td>
<td>Biography contains at least 3 vivid and specific descriptions of the person.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Self-Check: How Well Did I Learn?

Do a self-check on how well you learned the lessons in this unit. Place a checkmark in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>I think I need more practice and assistance</th>
<th>I am familiar and can perform well with minimal assistance</th>
<th>I am confident that I can perform this on my own</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can identify personification in sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can identify the conflict(s) in a biography.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can use clauses appropriately and meaningfully.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can write a biography with a clear conflict and with complete elements.</td>
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</table>
Wrap Up

- **Personification** is a figure of speech that compares a thing, animal, or an idea with a person by giving it a human characteristic or behavior.

- A **biography** depicts the life of a popular or ordinary person. Most biographies also include the conflicts or problems that the subject faced and how he/she faced these. When writing a biography, chronological order of events is usually done and only the crucial and interesting details of one’s life are included.

- **Clauses** have a subject and verb but not all of them have complete thought. Those that are complete are called independent clauses, while those that are not are called dependent clauses. Dependent clauses can act as an adjective (adjectival clause) if it describes a noun or a pronoun, or an adverb (adverbial clause) if it modifies a verb, adjective, or another verb.

Bibliography


**Recommended Links for This Unit:**

