

California Writing Project

People We Admire: Writing Firsthand Biographies to Inquire and Inform

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Table of Contents

Overview.....	2
From Teacher to Teacher.....	2
Text Resources.....	2
Teaching Context.....	3
Text Type, Genre, Writing Prompt.....	3
Instructional Strategies.....	3
Standards.....	4
Common Core State Standards.....	4
<i>Writing Standards—Grade 7</i>	4
English Language Development Standards.....	6
<i>English Language Development Standards Grade 7</i>	6
Teaching Sequence.....	7
Lesson Objectives.....	7
Session One: Introduce or Review Point of View as an Element of Biographical Writing.....	7
Session Two: Developing an Understanding of Character Traits.....	9
Session Three: Develop a Vocabulary list of Character Traits to Center a Biographical Quick Write.....	11
Session Four: Preparing to Write the Firsthand Biography.....	11
Session Five: Feature Analysis of the Genre.....	11
Session Six: Drafting.....	12
Session Seven: Response and Feedback.....	12
Session Eight: Editing.....	12
Session Nine: Publishing and Going Public.....	12
Extension Resources.....	13
Instructional Resources.....	13
Learning From Student Work.....	14
<i>Student Sample</i>	14
<i>Annotation – Student Sample</i>	15
Appendix.....	16
<i>Autobiopoem Frame #1</i>	16
<i>Autobiopoem Frame #2</i>	17
<i>Understanding Character Traits Chart</i>	18
<i>Character Grid</i>	19
<i>Instructional Student Sample A</i>	20
<i>Instructional Student Sample A – With Annotation</i>	21
<i>Instructional Student Sample B</i>	22
<i>Instructional Student Sample B – With Annotation</i>	23
<i>Instructional Student Sample C</i>	24
<i>Writing Frame: Firsthand Biography Essay</i>	25

From Teacher to Teacher

By the time my students reach my seventh grade class, most of them regard writing a biographical sketch or firsthand biography as recycling their elementary school famous person paper and turning in a predictable, bland report. That is why I found this lesson to be one of the best ways of teaching comprehensive language arts skills while giving students a reason for writing a meaningful biographical essay. Not only did my students learn to successfully portray and characterize a person whom they admired—by using narrative writing techniques such as colorful descriptions, clear main idea, appropriate tone and pacing—but they had to gather data through interviewing, researching family histories, and interpreting verbal and written information. In the process, most gained a greater appreciation of their heritage and established a special relationship with the subject of their research.

While researching information on biographical writing, I found that this genre of writing goes by many different names: biography, firsthand biography, biographical narrative, biographical essay, biographical sketch, and oral history. For simplification purposes, I will use the terms biographical sketch, which I see as a shorter, more focused piece that can be done in less time, and firsthand biography, which contains more biographical information and events and requires more development.

The well-written firsthand biography has the following characteristics:

- Characterization – The writer presents the subject of the biography in a memorable way by using several strategies of characterization.
- Supporting incidents as evidence and examples – Incidents are specific events rather than generalized occurrences.
- Significance – The writer provides readers an understanding of the subject's importance to himself/herself.
- Tone – The writer establishes a tone that clearly and consistently reveals his/her attitude toward the subject.
- Organization – The writer integrates incidents, descriptions, and significance in a way that best conveys the informational intent of the essay and the writer.

My goal in developing this lesson was to teach my students to move from writing about themselves to writing about someone who is significant to them in ways that are compelling and memorable. I believed they were up to the challenge.

Text Resources

Books for students to use as genre models and resources: Those in bold are ones I pulled excerpts from for class reading and discussion.

Anaya, R. *Bless Me Ultima*. New York, NY: Warner Books, 1995.

Cisneros, S. *The House on Mango Street*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1984.

Curtis, C. P. *Bud, Not Buddy*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1999.

Draper, Sharon. *Tears of a Tiger*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1994.

Fisher, A. Q. with M. E. Rivas. *Finding Fish: A Memoir*. New York, NY: Morrow, 2001.

Garland, S. *Shadow of the Dragon*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1993.

Gillenkirk, J. and J. Motlow. *Bitter Melon: Stories from the Last Rural Chinese Town in America*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1997.

Houston, J. W. and J. D. Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar*. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Book Co., 1973.

Jimenez, F. *Breaking Through*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2001.

Jimenez, F. *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Moua, M. N. *Bamboo Among the Oaks: Contemporary Writing by Hmong Americans*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002.

Ryan, P. M. *Esperanza Rising*. New York, NY: Scholastic Books, 2000.

Say, A. *Grandfather's Journey*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

Soto, G. *Living Up the Street*. New York, NY: Dell Publishing, 1985.

Uchida, Y. *The Invisible Thread*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Beach Tree Books, 1991.

Villaseñor, V. *Rain of Gold*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1990.

Teaching Context

This lesson was developed for seventh grade students in a heterogeneously grouped classroom.

Instructional time at my urban middle school is on a traditional fifty-minute, seven-period day. If you are teaching on a block schedule, you may be able to go more in depth into the activities I used, conference more with students as they are writing, or provide more scaffolding

Text Type, Genre, Writing Prompt

▪ Text Type/Genre

Biographical sketch or firsthand biography that blends narrative and informational elements

▪ Writing Prompt

Writing Situation: All of us know older people we admire. We may admire a grandparent. We may admire someone who isn't family, but we care about them like we do a family member. Think of an older person you admire so much that you would like to use your writing to show why this person is important to you.

Directions for Writing: Select an older person you know well and admire. Describe and characterize this person, so your readers can see what you see in this person. Include incidents or conversations that show what the person is like and why you admire them. Your firsthand biography should help us understand how and why this person is important in your life.

Instructional Strategies

- Genre feature analysis of biographical writing
- Professional and student writing as mentor texts
- Modeling of interview techniques
- Peer review and response
- Writing conferences for revision and editing

Common Core State Standards

Writing Standards—Grade 7

Biographical Sketch and Firsthand Biography draw on the standards for writing narrative and for informative/explanatory texts. Strategies for writing both text types are important to writing biographies.

Text Types and Purposes

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
 - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- c. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3.)
5. With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 7 on page 30.)
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
 - a. Apply *grade 7 Reading standards* to literature (e.g., “Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history”).
 - b. Apply *grade 7 Reading standards* to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims”).

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

English Language Development Standards

English Language Development Standards Grade 7

Collaborative: Bridging

1. Exchanging of information/ideas
2. Interacting via written English
3. Adapting language choices

Interpretive: Bridging

5. Listen Actively
6. Reading/viewing closely a) and b)

Productive: Bridging

10. Writing
11. Justifying/arguing
12. Selecting language resources

Structuring Cohesive Texts: Bridging

1. Text structure
2. Cohesion

Connecting and Condensing Ideas: Bridging

6. Connecting ideas

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- gather biographical information from interviews and other print and visual sources
- develop a clear controlling idea or claim that is most often centered on the significance of the subject
- compose an attention-grabbing introduction
- organize and arrange events, examples, and details in a logical order
- use colorful, specific descriptions to create a clear picture and characterization of the subject
- adopt a point of view from which to describe biographical information, events, and the subject
- close with a satisfying ending that reflects on the information presented about the subject.

Session One: Introduce or Review Point of View as an Element of Biographical Writing

1. Point of view is an important consideration for biography writers. I am including below a summary I wrote for my students of an article from Scholastic's *Writing* magazine that helps illustrate how much power the writers have in depicting their subject based on the point of view they select. I draw on this information to help my students understand three points of view that biographers use.

How To Write (And Read) A Biography

A summary of points made in an article from *Writing* that written for students by Catherine Gourley. *Writing*, Volume 20, No. 5, February 1998 pgs. 4-8

Biographies are written for different audiences and for different purposes. Audience and purpose shape each biography—its research, theme, tone, style, and even its organization. The way the subject is portrayed is determined by the writer's purpose when writing the biography. Biographies may inform, persuade, entertain or influence opinion.

Three types of biographies are:

Objective: The writing is based on researched facts.

Judgmental: The writing may be based on facts, but the facts may be taken out of context and slanted to fit a predetermined message.

Literary: The writing might be based on facts but may take on a narrative quality through the use of story-telling devices.

To understand the differences of these three types of biographies, think of the significant events in the person's life as cards in a deck of playing cards. The way the cards are ordered and presented will determine the kind of biography that one writes or reads.

The Objective Biography: The History of a Life

All the cards are used according to suit, from lowest to highest, equivalent to the facts in the person's life arranged in chronological order. This biography is not influenced by emotion or personal opinion. The objective biography sticks to the facts. All information, including dialogue, is researched and documented through primary sources. The heart of this writing is the subject's life events and achievements. Objective biographies are also called scholarly biographies because of the use of footnotes or end-of-chapter notes. It also includes a bibliography. There are no surprise cards pulled from the sleeve. The author's purpose is: This is what happened, and this is how I know it happened.

The Judgmental Biography: A Writer's Opinion

To write the judgmental biography, spread all the cards, but only pick and choose those that help achieve the intended purpose or preconceived message. The result may be a misleading or even an inaccurate story of a life. As judgment is an opinion or personal point of view, the story may be slanted to be either good or bad depending upon the author's intent. Judgmental biographies are biased. Some passages might be based on rumors or fictionalized. Footnotes and bibliography may be short, lack detail, or absent. Cards may be pulled from up the sleeve. The author's purpose is: This may be what happened. Does it inspire or shock you? Good, for that is what I intended.

The Literary Biography: A Story from a Life

Only certain cards are picked for use depending upon the effect that the writer wishes to create. All cards are studied but only those that help tell a story are used. No cards are pulled from up the sleeve. Nothing is invented or imagined. All events, people, places, even dialogue can be proven to have occurred. This creates an interpretation of a life. It can be an analysis or an explanation. The writer may use characterization, conflict, symbolism, imagery, foreshadowing, and flashback or other elements of literature. Events don't have to go in chronological order. The story may be based on a theme. Anecdotes are an important part of the research. Anecdotes are found in letters, diaries, oral histories, and even in newspaper accounts of events. The emphasis is on interpreting the character. Using storytelling devices is the heart of the literary biography. The author's purpose is: This is what happened, and this is why I think it is significant. When readers and writers of biographies understand the point of view of the biography, they can make better decisions about their subjects and the facts used to portray them.

2. I put this information to work in the first writing activity of this lesson. Just as many teachers do, as an opening writing activity for the school year, I ask my students to write an autobiopoem. After we share them, we post them on the classroom walls.
3. As we move into writing biographies, I use their autobiopoems to work on biographical point of view. After we read the summary on biographical writing, I use the autobiopoem I wrote about myself to show them how to turn it into three short biographical sketches about me that illustrate each point of view.
4. I then pair students and have them exchange and discuss their autobiopoems. Using information from their conversation and the autobiopoem itself, students write three biographical sketches of their partner using the objective, judgmental, and literary points of view. When they share the writing in groups of 4-5, students can hear how different the same information sounds when the point of view shifts.

AUTOBIOPOEM FRAME (#1)

An autobiopoem is a descriptive poem written by the poet about him/herself. A biopoem is a poem written about another person by the poet. The **boldface words** offer suggestions for starting each line. Additional words or lines may be added to help your thoughts flow or to provide more details. Use at least 13-15 lines to create a colorful, descriptive picture of the subject. Details and specific examples make the poem more interesting and informative (EX.: Who enjoys *classical music*, *hip hop dancing*, *shopping at garage sales*. *Don't repeat the same ideas or words*. Experiment with format—remember, this is a poem so don't write it in paragraph form.

TITLE (Be creative)

- **First name** only
- Four descriptive traits
- **Son/Daughter of** _____
- **Brother/Sister of** _____
- ***Grandson/Granddaughter or niece/nephew of** _____
- ***Trainer, master, owner of (pet)**_____
- **Lover of** (3+ food, people, places, hobbies, etc)
- **Who finds happiness in** (3+activities, places, people, ideas)
- **Who would like to see** (3+ people, places, things)
- **Who likes to wear** (3+ styles, colors, brands, items)
- **Who needs** (3+ items, ideas, emotions, activities)
- **Who fears** (3+ things, people, places, ideas)
- **Who is annoyed by** (3+ people, tasks, emotions, ideas)
- **Who is good at** (3+ skills, hobbies, sports, subjects)
- **Who would like to be** (skills, appearance, occupation)
- **Resident of** (city, state, street, country — any, all)
- **Last name** only *Optional

(AUTO)/BIO POEM WRITING FRAME (#2)

- First name
- Born (Month, day, year)
- At (hospital, town, state)
- Son/Daughter of ____ (Father's first and last names and mother's maiden name)
- Sister/Brother of _____ (Names of siblings)
- Grandson/granddaughter of ____ and ____ (Include first and last names)
- (Niece/Nephew/Cousin of ____ (If too many, just say, "Many aunts and uncles/cousins)
- **Who came to the USA from _____ in the year _____ at the age of _____
- Who attended schools at (name schools and town/states)
- And enjoyed as favorite school subjects _____
- His/her most interesting school memory was _____
(If formal education wasn't possible: who learned his/her "life experiences" from ____)
- As a teen, his/her favorite activity was _____
- Dressed in _____ (name styles, favorite colors, brand names)
- Enjoyed _____ music/ and dancing the ____ (name music/.dance types, favorite artists)
- Who dreamed of doing/going/ or being a _____
- His/her first job was _____ which paid _____
- But worked mainly as (name jobs, places of employment)
- And is/was involved in church/community activities such as _____
- Who married _____ (first and last name) at the age of _____
- Had ____ children who are named _____
- And ____ grandchildren named _____
- Who enjoys _____ during free time (hobbies, activities)
- Who was most influenced by _____ (person and/or event)
- And is most proud of achieving _____
- Plans for the future include _____
- And gives this advice to young people, " _____ "
- Last name

** If applicable

Directions: Use this format to fill in the information.

Use the words at the beginning of the line to help introduce the information: re-arrange, add or delete words to make it flow.

Session Two: Developing an Understanding of Character Traits

1. My students have considerable experience in reading about characters in literature and identifying traits that distinguish those characters. For biography writing, however, they need to create the characterization for the subject of their biography, something they need to learn. To help them understand what writers do, we work on developing a writer's understanding of character traits.

2. We begin by working with two handouts that give students an overview of characterization, which we will apply to our reading and discussion of a firsthand biography written by an eighth grader, "Mrs. Brinkowski." (See Appendix for "Mrs. Brinkowski.")

The Understanding Character Traits chart (See appendix for Understanding Character Traits, the blank and filled-in versions) describes the many characterization choices students can make as writers, and the Character Grid gives them a way to chart how another writer has created a characterization. After reading the student essay, "Mrs. Brinkowski," students pull out phrases from the essay and write them in squares on the Character Grid. Students will note right away that not all the squares have entries, which gives us the perfect opportunity to talk about why the author made the choices he or she did.

Character Grid for Mrs. Brinkowski

Directions: Use this grid to fill in what you know about your subject. Then use it during and after interviewing the subject to fill in this character grid. Use the character grid to help write your drafts.

<p style="text-align: center;">Speech/Voice</p> <p>-doesn't growl/pleasant</p> <p>-greet people/parents</p> <p>-listens to students/doesn't interrupt/never makes students feel stupid when she talks to them</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Attire</p> <p>-zany dresser/one day bright orange mini dress, lime green stockings, purple beads</p> <p>-Madonna Wanna-Be who couldn't</p> <p>-dresses like she reached into her closet, pulled out some things and put them on, even if they didn't match</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Features</p> <p>-warm, friendly, caring</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Facial Expressions/Gestures</p> <p>-pleasant smile and a twinkle in her chestnut brown eyes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Posture/Build</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Childhood/Youth</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Education/Training/Jobs</p> <p>-counseling clerk</p> <p>-good at her job</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Family/Peers</p> <p>-most people think of her as just another office person</p> <p>- not just another person to students</p> <p>- to student very unusual and special</p> <p>-principal can't afford to love her</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Beliefs/Conflict</p> <p>-respects students</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Goals/Likes/Dislikes</p> <p>-likes music that students like</p> <p>- likes students/keep a scrapbook of students from all the years she has worked at the school</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Background</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hobbies/Talents/Interests</p> <p>-music like the Beastie Boys</p>

3. We read the essay a second time to find examples of direct and indirect characterization.
4. We read two more essays written by middle school writers and repeat the characterization activity. Reading these three strong essays gives my students the opportunity to understand characterization and the range of strategies they have to choose from for their own writing. I will use all three essays again later in the lesson. (See *Appendix* for “A Special Person” and “Miss Sadie”)

Session Three: Develop a Vocabulary list of Character Traits to Center a Biographical Quick Write

1. To help students develop a list of words to make their writing more precise and descriptive, I ask students to select one or two older people whom they admire. Then they tell in a few words what characteristic they admire in that person. If they give nonspecific words such as “nice” or “good,” I prod them to explain what they mean and other students or I contribute more precise words such as generous, helpful, comforting. Students copy the words in their notebooks while a recorder posts them on chart paper for ongoing reference.
2. When the list is richly developed, I assign students to write a biographical Quick Write on “An Older Person I Admire.” I encourage them to focus on a character trait that stands out. This will help them develop a central thesis or controlling idea for the writing. I encourage them to use words from the vocabulary list and to think about personal anecdotes or conversations to illustrate the trait they have selected.
3. Students share their writing in small groups and help each other to think of ways to strengthen the characterization. They also discuss if the subject of their Quick Write sounds like a significant subject for a firsthand biography essay.

Session Four: Preparing to Write the Firsthand Biography

1. Students name the subject for their biography project. We strategize how to inform their subject about the project and invite that person to be their biographical partner.
2. Students use Autobiopoem Writing frames 1 and 2 to complete as much of a poem about their subject as possible based on existing knowledge of that person. With a partner, they look at the blank spaces and develop the interview questions they would use to get that information from their subject. They discuss what else they would like to know from their significant person and create questions.
3. As a whole class, student share their questions and recorders help to chart them. Students individually review their questions and add ones they like from the chart. We practice interviewing procedures, and I model being the subject for them.
4. Students have a week to conduct their interviews. Most students interviewed their subject twice and used a combination of their notebook and video or audiotaping.

Session Five: Feature Analysis of the Genre

We read “Mrs. Brinkowski,” “Miss Sadie,” and “My Special Person,” but this time we mark up all the essays. (See *appendix* for all three student-written pieces.) We look for how each student writer focused the reader on the significance of the subject, what each chose to include to develop the characterization, (incidents, traits, dialogue, remembered feelings), and how each ordered these elements. My students need to know that there is no organizational formula for firsthand biography. There are features of the genre, and they have choices for how to organize those features depending on what they want to say about their significant person.

Session Six: Drafting

1. Using all the information they have gathered through interviews, Quick Writes, and biopoems, students write their first draft, focusing on the character trait(s) and significance they have chosen to emphasize. To check this, I have students verbalize the traits to a partner, and then I quickly check with each student.
2. For my beginning English learners or struggling writers, I use the Writing Frame: Firsthand Biography that follows as a scaffold for the initial draft. (See Appendix for Writing Frame.) Some of my better writers liked using the frame as a way to structure their information. This helps avoid the “I don’t know how to start” excuse. A drawback to using the frame is the lack of personal voice and the formulaic nature of the writing that results. So after completing the frame, students need to be taught how to take the “framed” writing and translate or turn it into their own written response. Moving the writing from the framed formula should be addressed prior to the student completing a first draft and then again in the revision stages.

Session Seven: Response and Feedback

1. Students share drafts with classmates in small groups. By reading other papers, my students gather ideas for ways to improve their own papers. I usually direct the first round by starting with positives such as highlighting “golden lines,” anecdotes that illustrate a specific trait or experience, or memorable beginnings and/or endings. Responders ask questions about areas that are unclear or underdeveloped and note suggestions.
2. Students write a revision and get more response from peers, adults, or teacher. For my response, I like to conference with the student in person, but I often email my response.

Session Eight: Editing

1. We take the all time that is needed for editing and proofread correctness in construction, formatting, and presentation because these essays will be shared with the subject.
Note: *I require my students to write their essays and other papers with computer or digital support. Not only does it look more professional, it makes revising and editing much easier. Then in response groups, students help one another check for errors and point out ways to make the paper presentable and error-free.*
2. This accompanies any whole class or small group lessons I have taught to address specific grammatical errors I have noticed across the class set of papers or to address a grammatical feature specific to the writing of strong biographical narratives—for example, correct use and punctuation of dialogue or use of cumulative sentences to describe people or events.

Session Nine: Publishing and Going Public

1. After my students have written their final draft, they add any enhancements such as photos, poetry, posters, and artwork.
2. They write a thank you note to their significant person and invite them to an afternoon celebration and public reading where they will be honored guests.

Instructional Resources

Ledoux, D. *Turning Memories into Memoirs. A Handbook for Writing Life Stories*. Lisbon Falls, ME: Soleil Press, 1993.

Wolfman, I. *Do People Grow on Family Trees? Genealogy for Kids and Other Beginners*. New York, NY: Workman Publishing, 1991.

Student Sample

Good Bye To Freedom

As my grandmother, Sumi Yokoyama, boarded the train with her husband Henry, she said good-bye to all her freedom. Little did she know that she would soon be imprisoned in one of the dreadful internment camps for two years. Sumi was one of the many Japanese American citizens who suffered a great injustice during World War II. She had led a truly fascinating life so I would like to tell her story.

On Christmas Eve in 1917, Asakichi and Mitsu Sanui, beaming with pride, announced the birth of their first child, my grandma Sumi. Dr. George Hawkins delivered Sumi in her parent's farmhouse in Reedley, California.

Mitsu and Asakichi had a total of five children. Sumi was the oldest of her four brothers and sister, Michiko, Kiyoshi, Kaname, and Hisashi. As Sumi grew older, she was burdened with most of the responsibilities. She not only cooked but she helped take care of her younger brothers and sisters, cleaned the house, and helped harvest her family's fruit and vegetable farm.

Everyday the Sanuis ate the fresh fruits and vegetables that they grew on their farm with rice and meat or fish for dinner. On special occasions they baked a pie or cake for dessert. Since she rarely ate candy or drank soda, she disliked it. One day Sumi decided to buy a bottle of soda with part of her weekly allowance. "When I tasted my first Coke, I thought it tasted like medicine!" she remarked and laughed. "It tasted so terrible that I spit it out and threw the bottle away!" To this day she still doesn't care for soda.

As a child she never ate candy either. "Once a week I had ice cream and it only cost five cents a cone," she admitted. "Back then everything was much cheaper than it is today. You could buy a bottle of milk or soda for five cents, a loaf of bread for ten cents, a piece of gum for a penny and a candy bar for a nickel or less. For ten cents you could buy a hot dog and for a quarter you could buy a huge crab. A whole bucket of fish only cost twenty-five cents and you could buy a pair of shoes for two dollars. I guess it shows how far you could stretch a dollar back then."

At age five she attended Yuba City Elementary School. She also attended Marysville Japanese School for eight years. Later she graduated from Yuba City Union High School and Yuba County Junior College.

When she was a child she enjoyed watching and playing basketball and baseball. Other activities included hockey and playing tennis. My grandma also took an interest in swimming lessons and Japanese dancing called odori.

Sumi obtained her first job in the hospital as a nurse's aid. Unfortunately she never fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a nurse. At that time it was difficult for minorities to enroll in the nursing program because of discrimination. There was much prejudice.

In May of 1941, Mr. and Mrs. Ito and Mr. and Mrs. Kotani introduced Sumi to my grandpa, Henry Yokoyama. Six months later, on October 19, 1941, my grandma married my grandpa. They had a huge wedding and were married at the Sebastopol Buddhist Church in Sebastopol. They had their reception at a delightful Italian restaurant. For their honeymoon they traveled to Southern California for a romantic getaway.

The following year in 1942, the war broke out and all the Japanese in California were imprisoned in internment camps in 1942. The government accused them of being spies for Japan. This historical event had the most impact on my grandmother's life. It practically turned her upside-down. She never imagined anything this horrendous could happen, especially in America. At that time my grandma and grandpa were living on a farm in Sonoma County. On short notice they had to sell most of their belongings because they could only take what they could carry to the camps. They had to sell their farm equipment valued at \$100,000 for a meager amount. Some packed only their bare essentials such as sheets, bedding, mosquito nets and clothing. She had no idea of where they were going and questioned whether she would ever see her little farmhouse again. She knew that from then on her life would be different.

First Sumi and Henry were sent to an Assembly Center in Merced, California where they had to live for six months. There they shared a tiny, little room with Mr. and Mrs. Nakano. The floor was dirt, and they slept on small mattresses stuffed with straw. They ate bland army food that consisted mostly of potatoes and casseroles. Fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and fish were seldom served.

Just as they were just getting used to their new life styles at the assembly center in Merced, they were separated from many of their friends again. Sumi was informed that they would be leaving for camp on a train to Colorado as soon as possible, but the birth of her first child, Kimi, delayed the trip. A month after everybody had left, Sumi, Henry and Kimi left for Amachi, Colorado. It took three days and nights to get there by train. The train lights were kept on during the

entire trip and the curtains were pulled shut because the government wanted to keep everything a secret. Sumi shared an upper bunk with her daughter Kimi. The journey caused her great deal of discomfort.

When they arrived in Colorado they found that it was much larger than the one in Merced. There were 348 barracks. Barracks were long houses divided into five rooms. Each family lived in one room. A total of 7,620 Japanese American men, women, and children were interned in the Amache camp. A barbed wire fence surrounded the camp. Soldiers in guard towers prevented anyone from escaping. My grandma felt like a prisoner. She thought it was unfair the U.S. Government to put all the Japanese American citizens into camps when they had done nothing wrong.

This time the Yokoyama's had a room all to themselves but that didn't mean they had any privacy. The barracks had paper-thin walls and brick flooring. In their room they had two cots, a table and a coal stove. Everyday they had to shower in the community shower place. The government gave everybody an allowance in which they could pay for their clothing. Sumi ordered her clothes through Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogs.

Everyone had to work. My grandma worked as a waitress in the mess hall daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. She set the tables, poured beverages and served the meals. The government compensated Sumi with only sixteen dollars a month. Although it was a tremendous amount of work, she says it wasn't all that bad.

In 1944 the war ended and everyone was released out of camp. Right after my grandparents got out, they had another child and named her Nancy. Then they moved back to Sacramento and started a Mobil Gas Station. In 1948 they had their third child, my father, Ken.

Sumi still lives in Sacramento with her husband. "In the future I plan to travel to Washington and Oregon," she stated. My grandma always tries to look out for my best interest. She tells me that I should study hard so I can get in to a good job.

By interviewing my grandmother I learned the hardships she endured at camp and the great injustice she suffered. The formal apology and check from the U.S. Government in 1989 is not enough to repay the Japanese Americans for all their painful memories, but it has helped the healing process to begin. My grandmother says, "It's a shame that many Japanese Americans interned in camp were no longer living to see this happen." I'm glad I had the opportunity to interview my grandma and to share her life story.

Annotation – Student Sample

This firsthand biography is the final draft of several written by Stacey, a seventh grade student. She collected data on her character grid and from notes taken during her interviews. Her initial draft was informative but needed more examples to illustrate her points. She turned in a well-written paper, and she and her family members were pleased with it. Stacey's grandmother passed away recently, and she read her piece as a tribute to her at the memorial service.

To assess my students' writing, I drew on the CAP Grade Eight Writing Guide for Firsthand Biography that you can link to here (add link). They knew that the student essays we used as mentor texts had all been scored at the Exceptional Achievement level. They knew that "Miss Sadie" had been written as a timed-writing, but that "Mrs. Brinkowski" and "My Special Person" were writing assignments that had gone through prewriting, drafting, revision, and final draft stages. They used these essays as a benchmark for their progress.

In writing conferences the students and I pulled phrases from the Writing Guide that described what they had accomplished in their piece. We also pulled phrases to name what they should work on next.

In my conference with Stacey, we discussed how well she juxtaposed the incidents and routines of her grandmother's very American upbringing— school, sports, ice cream—with the conditions and routines of her internment experience when she, along with over 100,000 other Japanese Americans was considered suspect as American citizens. Her skillful comparison of these two periods in her grandmother's life speaks to the truth of her introductory statements—"goodbye to all her freedom" and " a great injustice." We understand the depth of that when we read that internment "turned her upside down" and "My grandma felt like a prisoner" and that reparations "helped the healing process begin." The tone and characterization are consistent throughout.

Though she uses chronology to organize the essay, the essay is informational, not story. By using key events from her grandmother's life, Stacey informs us about historical events. By informing us about historical events, she helps us see the strength and resilience of her grandmother and the lessons she learned from her.

Autobiopoem Frame #1

People We Admire: Writing Firsthand Biographies**AUTOBIOPOEM FRAME (#1)**

An autobiopoem is a descriptive poem written by the poet about him/herself. A biopoem is a poem written about another person by the poet. The **boldface words** offer suggestions for starting each line. Additional words or lines may be added to help your thoughts flow or to provide more details. Use at least 13-15 lines to create a colorful, descriptive picture of the subject. Details and specific examples make the poem more interesting and informative (EX.: Who enjoys *classical* music, *hip hop* dancing, *shopping at garage sales*. **Don't repeat the same ideas or words.** Experiment with format—remember, this is a poem so don't write it in paragraph form.

TITLE (Be creative)

- **First name** only
- Four descriptive traits
- **Son/Daughter of** _____
- **Brother/Sister of** _____
- ***Grandson/Granddaughter or niece/nephew of** _____
- ***Trainer, master, owner of** (pet) _____
- **Lover of** (3+ food, people, places, hobbies, etc)
- **Who finds happiness in** (3+ activities, places, people, ideas)
- **Who would like to see** (3+ people, places, things)
- **Who likes to wear** (3+ styles, colors, brands, items)
- **Who needs** (3+ items, ideas, emotions, activities)
- **Who fears** (3+ things, people, places, ideas)
- **Who is annoyed by** (3+ people, tasks, emotions, ideas)
- **Who is good at** (3+ skills, hobbies, sports, subjects)
- **Who would like to be** (skills, appearance, occupation)
- **Resident of** (city, state, street, country—any, all)
- **Last name** only

*Optional

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People We Admire: Writing Firsthand Biographies

(AUTO)/BIO POEM WRITING FRAME (#2)

- First name
- Born (Month, day, year)
- At (hospital, town, state)
- Son/Daughter of ____ (Father's first and last names and mother's maiden name)
- Sister/Brother of _____ (Names of siblings)
- Grandson/granddaughter of ____ and ____ (Include first and last names)
- (Niece/Nephew/Cousin of ____ (If too many, just say, "Many aunts and uncles/cousins))
- **Who came to the USA from _____ in the year _____ at the age of _____
- Who attended schools at (name schools and town/states)
- And enjoyed as favorite school subjects _____
- His/her most interesting school memory was _____
(If formal education wasn't possible: who learned his/her "life experiences" from ____)
- As a teen, his/her favorite activity was _____
- Dressed in _____ (name styles, favorite colors, brand names)
- Enjoyed _____ music/ and dancing the ____ (name music/.dance types, favorite artists)
- Who dreamed of doing/going/ or being a _____
- His/her first job was _____ which paid _____
- But worked mainly as (name jobs, places of employment)
- And is/was involved in church/community activities such as _____
- Who married _____ (first and last name) at the age of _____
- Had ____ children who are named _____
- And ____ grandchildren named _____
- Who enjoys _____ during free time (hobbies, activities)
- Who was most influenced by _____ (person and/or event)
- And is most proud of achieving _____
- Plans for the future include _____
- And gives this advice to young people, " _____"
- Last name

** If applicable

Directions: Use this format to fill in the information.
Use the words at the beginning of the line to help introduce the information: re-arrange, add or delete words to make it flow.

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Understanding Character Traits Chart

People We Admire: Writing Firsthand Biographies

Understanding Character Traits and the Character Grid

Types of Characters

A character is a person or animal that takes part in the action of a literary work or production such as a play or movie. The main character is the protagonist and is the focus of the work. There are major and minor characters. The person or source of the conflict is called the antagonist.

Characterization

- Characterization is the process of showing what a character is really like.
- Direct characterization is when the author simply tells what the character is like—e.g., Danny is scared and lonely.
- Indirect characterization results when the writer shows what the character is like by describing what the character says or does, how the character looks, or what other characters say or think about him or her.

Elements of Character

The characteristics that make a character unique and interesting are shown through the elements of character.

Elements of character may be divided into categories:

1. Physical Traits
 - a. Appearance—hair, coloration, height, weight, features-scars, freckles, glasses, age, dress
 - b. Background (setting) where he/she grew up; location—town, house, room, neighborhood; era—time, season, year; socio-economic—status, education occupation; hobbies, skills, interests, talents
2. Mannerisms and Character Traits
 - a. Personality—emotional or rational; shy or outgoing; talented, graceful or clumsy; awkward; happy or sad; carefree or serious; caring, sensitive or cold; leader or follower; honest or dishonest; enthusiastic, optimistic or pessimistic; hardworking or lazy; dominant or recessive, etc.
 - b. Motivation—likes and dislikes; wishes, goals, dreams, needs
 - c. Relationships—how is he/she related to others; how does he/she interact with others; friendships, rivalries
 - d. Conflict—Is the character involved in some struggle; internal (within character’s mind) or external (struggle with some outside force); is conflict resolved? How?
 - e. Change—Does character change during course of work? Does he/she learn or grow? Is character static (unchanging) or dynamic (changing)?
 - f. Speech—talkative or quiet; clear, deliberate enunciation; mumbles; loud or soft voice; gruff or gentle; forthright or evasive

Writing about a Character

- Gather information through reading, observation, or interviewing
- Make an outline, chart, or Character Grid using the Elements of Character
- Freewrite describing the character to someone who knows nothing about him/her. Include details, dialogue, and what others say and think about the character as well as the character’s own thoughts and actions.
- Choose one or two aspects of character on which to focus. Write a topic sentence about this aspect of character. Support your statements with examples and evidence. The opening should grab the reader’s attention.

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Character Grid

Character Grid

Directions: Use this grid to fill in what you know about your subject. Then use it during and after interviewing the subject to fill in this character grid. Use the character grid to help write your drafts.

Speech/Voice	Attire	Features
Facial Expressions/Gestures	Posture/Build	Childhood/Youth
Education/Training/Jobs	Family/Peers	Beliefs/Conflict
Goals/Likes/Dislikes	Background	Hobbies/Talents/Interests

Instructional Student Sample A

Mrs. Brinkowski

Mrs. Brinkowski, counseling clerk. To most adults at my school, she is nothing more than her job description. She answers the telephones, types, files, and supervises the office practice students. She greets parents when they come in to register their kids and screens students who come in to see the counselors. Most people think of her as just another office person at the school. But Mrs. Brinkowski is not just another person to me or the other students. To us, she is a very unusual and special person. She is warm, friendly, caring, a little crazy and most of all understanding.

Mrs. Brinkowski is in her 40's, but she doesn't act 40. For example, she is a zany dresser. One day she wore a bright orange mini dress, lime green stockings and purple beads like those flappers wore in the 1920's. Another day she showed up in leather pants, high heels, gigantic hooped earrings and a big lace bow right on top of her head. She looks like a Madonna Wanna-Be who couldn't be. She really dresses like she reached in her closet, pulled out some things and put them on, even if they didn't match. She doesn't care that people think she looks weird. She always says that's their problem. The principal gave up talking to her because she is so good at her job. He couldn't afford to lose her.

Mrs. Brinkowski doesn't let her age affect her taste in music either. She likes the Beastie Boys and other groups that we like. She can tell you all the latest hits, most of the lyrics and where all the concerts are. She says just because she's 40 doesn't mean she's dead.

Since she thinks and acts young, Mrs. Brinkowski is able to relate well to us students. She treats us with respect. Whenever a student is sent to the counseling office, she doesn't growl at you and ask, "Why are YOU here?" as though the person is some low life scum. She always has a pleasant smile and a twinkle in her chestnut brown eyes when she greets students. Even students in on referrals get respect. Now I get sent out a lot on referrals and every time I go in she's just as pleasant as if I was the principal. She never makes me feel stupid for being in the office again. She just takes my referral, asks me to tell my side of what happened and listens intently. She doesn't interrupt. She just listens. When I'm done, she tells me what she thinks. One time when she pointed out that I really was in the wrong, I didn't get mad because I knew she cared about me.

Students go to her with their problems. She can be trusted. She makes every problem seem important. If it is important enough to bother you, it is important enough for her to listen to. Parents don't do that. They say things like, "What's so big about that?," or they just nod and say, "Um hmm, " but you know they are not listening to you.

Mrs. Brinkowski has a scrapbook of students who have long since left the school. Some even have kids of their own and she has those pictures too. You can see her at her desk lovingly turning the pages as she reminisces about this one or that one.

Mrs. Brinkowski is indeed a rare person. I'm glad she works at our school. There would be fewer teen drug and alcohol problems if there were more Mrs. Brinkowski is in the world.

Instructional Student Sample A – With Annotation

Mrs. Brinkowski

Mrs. Brinkowski, counseling clerk. To most adults at my school, she is nothing more than her job description. She answers the telephones, types, files, and supervises the office practice students. She greets parents when they come in to register their kids and screens students who come in to see the counselors. Most people think of her as just another office person at the school. But Mrs. Brinkowski is not just another person to me or the other students. To us, she is a very unusual and special person. She is warm, friendly, caring, a little crazy and most of all understanding.

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Mrs. Brinkowski has a scrapbook of students who have long since left the school. Some even have kids of their own and she has those pictures too. You can see her at her desk lovingly turning the pages as she reminisces about this one or that one.

Mrs. Brinkowski is indeed a rare person. I'm glad she works at our school. There would be fewer teen drug and alcohol problems if there were more Mrs. Brinkowski is in the world.

Annotation – Instructional Student Sample A

The significance of this person is both implicit and explicit in the essay. The writer uses several strategies for characterization, including visual imagery ("bright orange mini dress, lime green stockings"); contrast to other people ("she's not like the other office staff"); and assertions about her character ("warm, friendly, caring, a little crazy and most of all understanding"). The essay is focused and well organized and ends with a strong assertion about the subject.

Instructional Student Sample B

A Special Person

"Now don't you go crying over that spilled milk, baby. All God's children make mistakes. That's why He put erasers on pencils." Once again I heard that familiar refrain from the old woman as she spoke it to one of the toddlers in her day care group. Carefully and gently, she wiped away the child's tears, poured the child another cup of milk, and went about her task of preparing lunch for her charges. I watched her as she plopped back down on the kitchen chair causing it to slam up against the wall. You see, she is on the obese side. Pulling a paper towel from the rack, she slowly wiped the sweat that trickled down her forehead. Then she lifted the metal bowl from the kitchen table, cradled it between her thighs, and began to snap the green beans for the lunch meal.

Occasionally she would stop and with a great deal of effort, reach down and pull up her nylon stockings which had slid down her legs and bagged around the ankles, only to have to repeat the procedure again in a few minutes. "They don't make stuff the way they used to," she muttered. I had to chuckle. Those stockings had to be at least five years old. She held them in place with rubberbands, and they had so many runs in them they made a freeway up her legs. This old woman never threw anything out until it was totally useless and even then she would try to find something else to do with it. She would always tell me that we must always make the best use of God's gifts.

I'm sure you are wondering who this unusual person is. She is my grandmother, Eartharene Jackson. I live with her because my own mother abandoned me when I was a child. She took me in as a baby and has been raising me since then. In fact she is raising some of everybody's kids. She takes in runaways, abused children and babysits kids too. She loves children, especially babies. She is like an Earth mother to everybody. She gives life to people who need hope. She says all God's children need love. Maybe her parents knew something when they named her Eartharene

My grandmother didn't always take in children. She used to be a nurse in a hospital.

When my grandfather died years ago, my grandmother had to find a way to make extra money because she had nine children of her own to look after so she started babysitting for other mothers. They would tell their friends how good she was, and more kids would come. She could never say no to anyone. Once one of my girlfriends got pregnant and her boyfriend left her. She came to my grandmother for help. My grandmother did not judge her or get on her case for being so stupid. She let her stay with us until she could figure out what she was going to do about the baby. My friend had the baby and now my grandmother keeps the baby so my friend can finish school. That's the kind of person my grandmother is.

Everyone loves my grandmother because she is warm, sympathetic and understanding. She is never too busy to stop and lend an ear or give advice. If she can't help, she calls on God to help the person. She reads the Bible everyday and is deeply religious. She even talks aloud to God. From what I can see, she must be on good terms with him. She says at seventy years old she needs Him on her side because she's going to see Him soon.

My grandmother is one very special lady. I hope that I can be at least half the person she is.

Instructional Student Sample B – With Annotation

A Special Person [annotated parenthetically in bold]

"Now don't you go crying over that spilled milk, baby. All God's children make mistakes. That's why He put erasers on pencils." Once again I heard that familiar refrain from the old woman as she spoke it to one of the toddlers in her day care group. Carefully and gently, she wiped away the child's tears, poured the child another cup of milk, and went about her task of preparing lunch for her charges. I watched her as she plopped back down on the kitchen chair causing it to slam up against the wall. You see, she is on the obese side. Pulling a paper towel from the rack, she slowly wiped the sweat that trickled down her forehead. Then she lifted the metal bowl from the kitchen table, cradled it between her thighs, and began to snap the green beans for the lunch meal.

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[Engaging beginning. Uses an incident to introduce subject; dialogue within the incident. Narrative action -- gestures, movements.]

I'm sure you are wondering who this unusual person is. She is my grandmother, Eartharene Jackson. I live with her because my own mother abandoned me when I was a child. She took me in as a baby and has been raising me since then. In fact she is raising some of everybody's kids. She takes in runaways, abused children and babysits kids too. She loves children, especially babies. She is like an Earth mother to everybody. She gives life to people who need hope. She says all God's children need love. Maybe her parents knew something when they named her Eartharene

[History of relationship with subject; comparison to Earth Mother]

My grandmother didn't always take in children. She used to be a nurse in a hospital. When my grandfather died years ago, my grandmother had to find a way to make extra money because she had nine children of her own to look after so she started babysitting for other mothers. They would tell their friends how good she was, and more kids would come. She could never say no to anyone. Once one of my girlfriends got pregnant and her boyfriend left her. She came to my grandmother for help. My grandmother did not judge her or get on her case for being so stupid. She let her stay with us until she could figure out what she was going to do about the baby. My friend had the baby and now my grandmother keeps the baby so my friend can finish school. That's the kind of person my grandmother is.

[Uses incident to illustrate the assertion that she could never say no]

Everyone loves my grandmother because she is warm, sympathetic and understanding. She is never too busy to stop and lend an ear or give advice. If she can't help, she calls on God to help the person. She reads the Bible everyday and is deeply religious. She even talks aloud to God. From what I can see, she must be on good terms with him. She says at seventy years old she needs Him on her side because she's going to see Him soon.

[Generalizations about the subject; outlines routines]

My grandmother is one very special lady. I hope that I can be at least half the person she is.

[Ends satisfactorily with reflection about the subject]

Instructional Student Sample C

In Firsthand Biography, writers present a special person to readers who do not know the person. They present the person through details of appearance and manner, description of working or living environment, and habits or typical activities. They may compare the person to other people or narrate specific incidents involving the person. As a type of autobiographical writing, Firsthand Biography informs readers about the writer as well as about another person — writers reveal the personal quality of their relationship with the subject of the essay.

Miss Sadie

Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her. The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body. Her summer dresses stained from cooking in her sweet smelling kitchen. I see her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip. Most of all, I hear that voice. So full of character and wisdom.

I used to bring Miss Johnson cookies every summer day of 1988. I miss the days where I would sit in that shabby old porch and listen to her stories. "Melissa!" She would holler. "That 'chou doin' here? Come see me and my poor self, have ya?"

She once told me of her grandmother who escaped slavery, back when white men could only do anything, she would say. Her grandma ran for miles without food or water. It wasn't too long before her master came looking for her and took her home to whip her. I thought of how Blacks are treated today. I sighed. She would sing in her soulful, blaring voice, old negro hymns passed down from her mother and grandmother. I would sit there in amazement.

Once, Jimmy Taylor came walking by us yelling, "Melissa! Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, anyways?"

Before I could retaliate, Miss Johnson said to me, "Now you musn't. We must feel sorry for that terrible child. His mother must have done gone and not taught him no manners!" She actually wanted me to bow my head and pray for him. (Even though I went to his house and punched him out the next day.)

My friends would tease me for spending the whole summer with Sadie Johnson, "The cuckoo of Connecticut," they called her. But I'm so very glad I did. She taught me then, to not care what other people thought. I learned that I could be friends with someone generations apart from my own.

My visits became less frequent when school started. I had others things to think about. Boys, clothes, grades. You know, real important stuff.

One day I was thinking, I haven't seen Miss Sadie in a while. So after school I trotted up to her house amidst the twirling, autumn leaves.

I rang her bell. The door cracked open and the woman adjusted her glasses. "May I help you?"

"Miss Sadie, it's me, Melissa."

"I - I," She stuttered. "I don't remember," she said and shut the door. I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, "Please leave!" in a cared, confused voice.

I went home bewildered and my mother told me to stop bothering Miss Sadie. I said I wasn't bothering her. Mama said, "Miss Johnson has a disease. Alzheimer's disease. It makes her forget things... people, family even. And so, I don't want you over there anymore, you hear?"

Then, I didn't realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.

That Christmas I went to bring Miss Johnson cookies. She wasn't there. I learned from a family member that she was in the hospital and that she'd die very soon. As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.

"Well, you make sure she gets these cookies," I said, my voice cracking and tears welling in my eyes.

Today, I've learned to love old people for their innocence, for their knowledge. I've learned to always treat people with kindness, no matter how cruel they may seem. But mainly I've learned, that you must cherish the time spent with a person. And memories are very valuable. Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. I'm glad that I can still see her.

Writing Frame: Firsthand Biography Essay

Writing Frame: Firsthand Biography Essay

(Initial draft) Title: _____
(Make a creative title that relates to your topic.)

When I think of people who have been significant in my life, _____ (name),
my _____ (relationship) comes to mind first. The trait that I admire most in him/her
is _____ (give a "character trait" EX: Resourceful, hardworking, unselfish).

An example that illustrates this characteristic is _____

_____ (anecdote or explanation). (Continue on back of paper if necessary.)

_____ (name) was born on _____, at _____
to _____ (name parents). He/she was the _____ (place in birth order) in the
family that included _____ sisters named _____ and _____ brothers
named _____. A family experience that he/she had that illustrates
the trait of _____ is _____

_____ (give anecdote).

**When _____ (name/relationship) turned _____ years old, he/she began his formal education at
_____ School in _____ (town/state). His/her favorite subjects were _____.
He/she graduated from high school _____ in _____ (year) and went to college at _____.
His/her main jobs in life were _____.

**Getting a formal education was not possible for _____ because _____.

**Although getting an education was important to him/her, going to school on a regular basis was interrupted by
_____. (explain).

(** Choose the one that best applies.)

Some activities that _____ enjoyed as a teenager were _____. A (person/event) that had
a big impact on his/her life was _____ (explain).

He/she married _____ on _____ (date). They had children who they named
_____. Their grandchildren are _____.

Advice that he/she gives is _____.

I admire _____ and hope to follow his/her by example _____
_____ (what you will do).

Note: patterned after Kate Kinsella, SFSU, Significant Color Writing Frame
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