

Lesson plan

1. Presentation of writing task

The teacher should begin the lesson by presenting students with the writing task that they will complete at the close of the lesson. The activities that follow are designed to prepare students to complete the task successfully. The writing task for this lesson is...

Write an obituary of someone you know well for a community newsletter.

In planning your response, you should consider:

- the key features of the genre
- the relationship with the reader
- lexical and grammatical choices.

Aim to write about 300 words.

1A. Identifying purpose, audience and form (warm-up discussion)

What are some distinguishing features of a newsletter?*

Who will your audience be for this task – who is likely to read a community newsletter?

What will your purpose be for this task? What will you want your audience to know after reading the obituary that they did not know before?

* e.g. headings, columns, photos, captions, page numbers, etc.

2. Analysing exemplar texts

2A. Understanding form (reordering/drag-and-drop-activity)

Ask students to rearrange the following sections from an obituary that appeared in the New York Times so that they appear in the correct order.

The text in the digital resource will be randomised each time the activity is used. The print facility will print a correct version of the text that could be cut up and used as a group activity.

Paul Walker, an actor best known for his role in the “Fast and the Furious” movies about street racing, died on Saturday in Valencia, Calif., when the Porsche he was riding in crashed in a single-car accident and burst into flames. He was 40.

Athletic with blond hair and blue eyes, Mr. Walker often played the action star or the romantic interest. He starred in six of the seven “Fast and Furious” movies, often alongside the action star Vin Diesel, with the latest installment still being filmed and scheduled for release next year. The movies were popular and lucrative — the most recent one, “Fast and Furious 6,” grossed \$788 million worldwide this year.

His death was confirmed by his publicist, Ame Van Iden. Paul William Walker IV was born in Glendale, Calif., on Sept. 12, 1973. He started acting at a young age and had a few prominent parts in the late 1990s, playing supporting roles in the films “Pleasantville,” “Varsity Blues,” and “She’s All That,” and starring in “The Skulls.”

But his big break came in 2001 with “The Fast and the Furious,” in which he played an undercover Los Angeles police officer investigating street racing. The \$30 million film brought in \$207 million. Sequels followed and continued to attract audiences with over-the-top car chases, but he had trouble finding major success outside the franchise.

Mr. Walker stayed out of the tabloids and away from the Hollywood party scene. He didn’t want to live in Hollywood, his publicist said, and settled instead in Santa Barbara.

Recently, he had made a priority of spending more time with his 15-year-old daughter, Meadow, friends said. She had lived in Hawaii with her mother, Rebecca Soteros, for most of her life, but was now living with Mr. Walker.

In addition to his daughter, Mr. Walker is survived by his father, Paul Walker III; his mother Cheryl Walker; two brothers, Cody and Caleb; and a sister, Ashley.

2A. Understanding form (free-response labelling activity)

Ask students to consider how they would label each section of the text. The pen tool can be used to write labels in the space provided next to each section, or students working at individual computers could type in the labels and print.

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2B. Conventions of obituary writing (matching activity)

Below is an extract taken from the BBC's obituary of Sir Patrick Moore. The extract includes a few characteristic elements of an obituary, which have been highlighted. Match each label (on the right/ at the bottom) with the appropriate text selection.

British astronomer and broadcaster Sir Patrick Moore has died, aged 89.

He "passed away peacefully at 12:25 this afternoon" at his home in Selsey, West Sussex, friends and colleagues said in a statement.

Sir Patrick presented the BBC programme *The Sky At Night* for over 50 years, making him the longest-running host of the same television show ever.

He wrote dozens of books on astronomy and his research was used by the US and the Russians in their space programmes.

Described by one of his close friends as "fearlessly eccentric", Sir Patrick was notable for his habit of wearing a monocle on screen and his idiosyncratic style.

Sir Patrick presented the first edition of *The Sky at Night* on 24 April 1957. He last appeared in an episode broadcast on Monday.

A statement by his friends and staff said: "After a short spell in hospital last week, it was determined that no further treatment would benefit him, and it was his wish to spend his last days in his own home, Farthings, where he today passed on, in the company of close friends and carers and his cat Ptolemy."

Euphemism
referring to death

Identification
of a notable
accomplishment

Mention of
a distinctive
characteristic /
physical appearance

Quotation
describing the
deceased from
someone who knew
him well

2C1. Appropriate register and syntax for an obituary (free-response writing activity):

Students to craft sentences that incorporate the information provided.

Below are a few facts about Sir Patrick Moore. Craft this information into sentences that are suitable for the biographic section of an obituary (feel free to include more than one fact per sentence).

- had heart problems
- educated at home due to medical problems
- became an avid reader
- offered a place at Cambridge
- decided not to attend Cambridge after war began
- lied about his age to join the RAF
- was a navigator with Bomber Command
- rose to the rank of Flight Lieutenant
- his fiancée drove an ambulance during the war; it was hit by a bomb that killed her
- he was never married

Your sentences

2C2. Comparison and evaluation

Below is an extract from the obituary for Sir Patrick Moore. Compare the sentences you wrote with those highlighted in the passage:

- The author presents the facts in four sentences. How many sentences did you use?
- What words did you add or include that the author did not? What words did the author include that you did not?
- Compare the beginnings of your sentences with those of the author. How similar are they? Which structures are most effective?
- Find the present participles in the author's second sentence. What is the effect of constructing the sentence with present participles in this way?
- Which of the author's sentences do you find the most effective? Why?

Patrick Alfred Caldwell-Moore was born at Pinner, Middlesex on 4 Mar 1923.

Heart problems meant he spent much of his childhood being educated at home and he became an avid reader. His mother gave him a copy of GF Chambers' book, The Story of the Solar System, and this sparked his lifelong passion for astronomy.

When war came he turned down a place at Cambridge and lied about his age to join the RAF, serving as a navigator with Bomber Command and rising to the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

But the war brought him a personal tragedy after his fiancée, Lorna, was killed when an ambulance she was driving was hit by a bomb. He never married.

3. Planning

** It may be helpful at this point to remind students of the writing task:*

Write an obituary of someone you know well for a community newsletter.

In planning an obituary, you should consider:

- the key features of the genre
- the relationship with the reader
- lexical and grammatical choices.

Aim to write about 300 words.

** This would be a good time for teachers to distribute printed copies of the exemplar texts if they wish to do so.*

3A. Circumstances

To identify what you should include in the opening of your obituary, answer the following questions about the death:

Who?

When?

Where?

How?

3B. Portrait

After providing objective details about the death, you should provide a brief written portrait or sketch describing the deceased. List details and quotes from loved ones that you can include to answer the question 'Who was s/he?'

3C. Biography

Next you should include a brief biography of the deceased. Make a list of life events and notable achievements that you will include in the biographical section.

3D. Legacy

You should conclude your obituary by mentioning the deceased's legacy. Identify whom or what they are leaving behind.

4. Writing

Now write your obituary!

As you do, strive to:

- vary your sentence structure
- maintain an appropriate register and tone
- use correct punctuation for dates, quotes, etc.

** At this point the digital, teacher-led portion of the lesson will conclude and students will begin independent work.*