

# GREAT LIVES

## BIOGRAPHY WRITING SKILLS

STUDENTS READ AND WRITE A BIOGRAPHY ABOUT A FAMOUS PERSON.

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### Aim

To develop students' reading and writing skills working with the biography of a famous person.

### Materials

Worksheets 1, 2

### Language focus

Writing about the past vocabulary and sequencing adverbs. Healthy food.

### Instructions

1. Introduce the topic: 'Great Lives'. Explain to the students that they are going to read and write a biography about a famous person.
2. Brainstorm with the class, one or two famous people from history from the following areas:
  - Sport
  - Film
  - Politics
  - Art
3. Now tell them that you have got a person in mind (Neil Armstrong), and that they have 10 Yes/No questions to try to guess who this person is. One way to do this is to have a picture of the person, covered with 10 numbered pieces of paper. Every time students get a 'Yes' answer, you can take off one of the pieces of paper to reveal more and more of the picture.
4. Once the students have guessed this person or you have revealed his identity to them, ask them what information they already know about him and whether there are one or two other things they would like to know about him. Write their questions on the board.
5. You can follow the same procedure to introduce the second person – Frida Kahlo. You should now have several questions on the board for both people.

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6. Divide the students into A / B pairs, and ask them to read Text A (Neil Armstrong) or Text B (Frida Kahlo) on Worksheet 1. TIP: fold the paper in half to help the students focus on one text. The first time that they read, students should try to answer the questions on the board (ones brainstormed by the class). The second time they read, the students should complete the information on the table in Worksheet 2.
7. Once Student A has finished reading Text A and completed the answers in the table on Worksheet 2, he/she asks Student B questions about Text B to complete the other half of the table.
8. Once students have finished, elicit the answers as a class.

	Neil Armstrong	Frida Kahlo
Where was he/she born and where did he/she grow up?	He was born in Ohio and he grew up there.	She was born in Coyoacan, Mexico.
What do we know about his/her childhood?	He had a brother and a sister. He moved house several times.	She had 3 sisters. She began to study medicine in 1922.
When did he/she leave school and what did he/she do next?	He left school in 1947 and started his Aeronautical degree at Purdue University.	She had an accident and gave up medical school. She took up painting.
What other important life events did he/she have?	He got married and had 3 children.	She married Diego Rivera in 1929.
Why was he/she so famous?	He led the Apollo 11 1969 moon landing mission.	She was a famous painter and she was also married to one.
What kind of a person was he/she?	He was brave, successful and humble.	She was brave and creative.
How old was he/she when he/she died?	He was 82.	She was 47.

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9. Now ask students to think about a person from history that they would like to write a biography about. They can use one of the ideas from the class or think of their own. They make notes about the person in the 'My famous person' column on Worksheet 2.
10. When they have enough information about the famous person, they should write 120 – 150 words, using the past simple to narrate the person's life events.

#### Biography websites:

<http://www.biography.com/people>

[http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/like\\_me/findAMatch](http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/like_me/findAMatch)

#### 4000 years of women in science:

<http://www.astr.ua.edu/4000WS/summary.shtml>

#### Tips on 'how to write a biography':

<http://www.factmonster.com/homework/wsbiography.html>

#### Extension activity

When all of the students have finished their writing, put the biographies up around the class and ask the class to read 3 or 4 biographies to find out 3 or 4 key pieces of information about each person's life.

#### Pronunciation work

After the students have exchanged information about Frida Kahlo and Neil Armstrong, ask them to underline regular Past Simple verbs in the text and to classify them according to the pronunciation of the 'ed' ending.