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| **WRITING WORKSHOP: Analyzing NonFiction** |

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| http://my.hrw.com/images/points/1.gif | Earlier in this collection, you read a newspaper article, an excerpt from a book, and several letters, all about the writer Edgar Allan Poe. As you can see in these nonfiction resources, few things interest people more than other peoples’ lives. We listen to friends’ life stories, scan magazine articles about the lives of celebrities, and read **biographies**—nonfiction narratives that tell the life stories of famous and not-so-famous people. In this workshop you will **analyze a biography** about Charles Dickens.  Web resources:  <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/bioov.html>  From this overview, must read all 3 articles on Dickens:  Basic Materials  A Brief Biography  A Biographical Sketch of Charles Dickens from the 1860 *Harper’s Weekly*  William Winter's reminiscences of Dickens   * You will use the Analysis Log document on afnorthliterature.weebly.com for taking notes on Dickens’ life in relation to events, character, and setting, citing the web source, and the biography’s conclusion about these elements. * You will save your notes in your student folder and print out two copies (one for your use and one for teacher review) * You will then write your expository essay using the following format and save it to your goggle drive so that you can work on it at home. * You will revise your essay according to the rubric and email both the first and the final draft to your goggle account for final work.   Paper Structure:  Introduction   * Provide background information about the biography’s subject * Introduce the biography’s titles and authors * State your thesis   Body   * Support your thesis statement with information about the elements of biography: character, events, and setting and the novel itself * Support your discussion of each element with relevant evidence * Elaborate on the evidence   Conclusion   * Summarize your ideas about the elements of biography * Restate your thesis in different words   THE PROCESS:  Prewriting  Analyze Character, Events, and Setting  **A Closer look**  Biographers combine details about character, events, and setting—the **elements of biography**—to give readers a greater understanding of their subjects. When you analyze a biography, you look at how the writer uses these elements to express his or her unique perspective, or point of view, about the person. Use the two-column **analysis log,** in which you record the details you find as you read the biography. In your log, you may **quote** the writer’s *exact* words. You may also **paraphrase** *all* of the writer’s ideas in your own words, or **summarize** only the writer’s *most important* ideas in your own words.  The details you find about the character of the biography’s subject, the events in his or her life, and the setting in which that person lived will point you to what the writer is saying about him or her.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **•** | **Character** A biographer should give you a clear idea of the person’s **character—**what he or she is or was like as a person. In your log, take notes about what the person did, thought, felt, and said and about what others said about him or her. | | | **•** | **Events** The **events** in a biography are the real-life incidents that affected the person. In your analysis log, list four to six of the most important events in the person’s life. For example, look for births and deaths of people important to him or her, marriages and divorces, and successes or failures. | | | **•** | **Setting** The events in the person’s life take place in the context of a specific time and place—the **setting** of the biography. Write down in your log any details that relate to the living conditions of the average person of that time and place, the conditions in which the subject of the biography lived, and the historical events of the time. |  | |

Write and Support a Thesis Statement

**The Big Idea**  Once you’ve analyzed the biography, try to determine how the conclusions fit together to form a main idea about the person. Ask yourself, “What is the biographer’s point of view on this person?” Then, write a **thesis statement,** one or two sentences in which you identify the biographer’s main idea about the subject of the biography. Here’s the thesis statement from the analysis of the Poe biography.

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| |  | | --- | | In Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance, biographer Kenneth Silverman portrays Poe as a victim of circumstances. | |

**Backing It Up**   Support for your thesis statement will come in the form of **evidence** and **elaboration.**

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| **•** | **Evidence:** Gather evidence to back up your thesis by looking over your analysis log. For each of the elements of biography, select the details—the quotations, summaries, and paraphrases—that best support your thesis. Make sure the information you choose relates directly to the thesis. For each quotation, provide **parenthetical** **citations**—the author’s name (within parentheses) to indicate where you found that detail. As we are using web resources, you will only need to cite the author’s last name and not a page number. | |
| **•** | **Elaboration:** Make the connections for your readers. Help them understand your analysis by explaining how the evidence supports your thesis statement. You can elaborate on individual pieces of evidence or on groups of evidence. |  |

Organize Your Analysis

**Get It Together**   Next, organize your analysis in a logical order. One good logical order is **order of importance,** in which you present your ideas from most important to least important, or vice versa. Decide which element includes the strongest evidence for supporting your thesis statement, and plan to discuss that element either first or last in your analysis. Discuss the strongest element first if you think it’s something that will really grab your audience’s attention and create a strong first impression. Discuss this element last if it’s something that you’d most like your audience to remember and think about after reading your essay.

**Writer’s Model**

**Review the writer’s model in order for you to develop your own expository essay on Charles Dickens (handout and afnorthliterature.weebly.com)**

Revising

Evaluate and Revise Content, Organization, and Style

**Read It Again**  To make sure your writing is the best it can be, read through your paper at least twice. The first time, use the guidelines below to evaluate the content and organization of your analysis. Then, in your second reading, use the guidelines on the next page to evaluate the style of your analysis.

**First Reading:** **Content and Organization**  To make sure your analysis is clear and easy to follow, use the content and organization guidelines below. Begin by asking the questions in the left-hand column. To help you answer those questions, follow the tips in the middle column. If your essay needs revision, use the revision techniques detailed in the right-hand column.

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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Rubric: Analyzing Nonfiction | | | | **Evaluation Questions** | **Tips** | **Revision Techniques** | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1.** | Does the introduction contain the title and author of the biography and a clear thesis statement? | | **Underline** the title and author of the biography. **Double underline** the thesis statement. | If needed, **add** a thesis statement or **add** the biography’s author and title to the introduction. | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **2.** | Does the essay include information about all the elements of biography—character, events, and setting? Does the evidence support the discussion of each element? | | **Bracket** each element.  **Put a check mark** by each piece of evidence—quotation, paraphrase, and summary. | **Add** information about each element. **Replace** or **delete** any evidence that does not support the discussion of the element. | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **3.** | Is evidence clearly explained through elaboration? | | **Draw an arrow** from each piece of evidence—quote, paraphrase, and summary—to its elaboration. | **Elaborate** by explaining what the evidence means or why it is important. | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **4.** | Is the organizational pattern of the analysis easy to follow? | | **Look back** at the elements, which you have already bracketed. If they are not organized in a logical order, revise. | **Rearrange** body paragraphs into a logical order, such as order of importance. | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **5.** | Does the conclusion summarize the elements of biography and restate the thesis? | | **Underline** the summary of the elements of biography. **Double underline** the restatement of the thesis. | If needed, **add** sentences that summarize the elements and that restate the thesis of the analysis. | |