

Unit guides: Unit 3 Autobiographical adventures

Writing objectives for first language English	Writing and Use of English objectives for second language English	
Use your knowledge of a variety of sentence lengths and sentence structures in your own writing. Use accurate punctuation, including commas, parenthetical commas, colons, semicolons, dashes and brackets.	Use the present continuous active and passive. Learn collocations and expressions. Use correct punctuation: commas, dashed and brackets.	
Cambridge lower secondary English resource links Cambridge Global English: Stage 8: Unit 3: Rivers and coasts Cambridge Checkpoint English: Stage 8: Unit 5: Other lives		Aim: To write an exciting real-life account
International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme links Language acquisition: Phase 3 Language and literature: MYP1		Key terminology: Autobiographical, perspective, aftermath

Warmer

- Display pictures of wild animals, e.g. a white shark, a bear, a lion, a crocodile, etc. Ask the class: What would you do if you bumped into one of these accidentally?
- Elicit ideas from learners and encourage them to justify their ideas.
- Ask: Have you or someone you know ever had an encounter with a wild animal? What happened?
- Show pictures of severe weather conditions, e.g. a storm, a tsunami, a hurricane, etc. Ask learners what might happen if they are caught in such a situation. Have they ever heard stories of people caught in extreme weather conditions?

Pre-reading

- Tell the class that many people are usually interested in stories of people who get caught in frightening life experiences. Ask: Why is this so? What makes these stories attractive?
- Focus on the big question: How can I develop an idea from real life into an exciting account?
- Elicit ideas, e.g. the protagonist is a real person, it may be the writer's own experience; they are usually written in the first person; they describe what happened before, during and after the event; the experience is frightening or dangerous; it may or may not have a happy ending.

Noticing

- Divide learners into groups and give them extracts from a few frightening life stories.

- Ask learners to read the extracts and identify some of the features they mentioned when answering the big question.
- Ask them to focus on the descriptions of the events, the vocabulary, and the causes and consequences of people's acts. Have the people got in trouble by accident or because they were irresponsible?

Effective autobiographical accounts

- Focus on the characteristics of a good autobiographical account and ask learners to compare these with their own ideas. Are there any they didn't think of? Can they add more?
- Ask learners to re-read the extracts you have shared with them and ask them if they think the extracts reflect the characteristics they have discussed.

How the text works

- Ask the class what makes a good autobiographical account. Encourage learners to recall the characteristics they discussed before reading the text.
- Focus on this section. Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups. They should re-read the text and highlight or underline the parts of the text where the writer used those techniques.
- Encourage them to discuss whether the writer used those techniques effectively.

Suggestions for further reading

‘Survival stories: When animals attack (and humans survive)’ – *Independent*

‘Tornado Survivor Stories’

‘Encounter with a tiger’

‘The Bamboo Train in Battambang: The Good and the Ugly’ – *That Backpacker*

Active learning

Post reading: reacting to the text

- a** After the class has read the story, discuss their reactions to it. Give learners a few questions and ask them to work on their own. They should reflect and think of the answers. After a few minutes, ask them to pair up with a partner to compare and contrast their answers. Finally, have an open-class discussion.

You may wish to use the following questions:

- What were you thinking as you read the story?
 - What impression do you get of Richard Branson after reading the text?
 - Think of two questions you would like to ask Branson.
- b** Ask learners to choose five words or phrases that they find particularly useful when writing an autobiographical text.
- c** Ask learners to work in groups and write an outline of how they think the story ends.

Differentiation strategies

- a** After learners have written the first draft of their story, ask less confident learners to re-read their text and identify main events, connected actions, climax and consequences. Then they can draw and arrange pictures as a storyboard to check if they follow the order they intended.
- b** Before they start planning their independent assignment, ask less confident learners to think of questions they would like to ask the protagonist of their story. These questions can help them get more ideas for their assignment. For example:
- What would you have done differently if you had the chance?

- Was the situation your fault or did you find yourself in this situation by accident?
 - Was there any way that you could have avoided this scary situation?
- c** Provide independent-learning opportunities for more confident learners. Supply supplementary reading materials and encourage them to read and compare different stories. They can make notes about style, vocabulary, language used and how the protagonists reacted in each case.

Learning to learn

Before learners start their independent assignment, help them plan ahead and think of strategies they can use for handling the task, e.g. generating a plan for the parts of the text, sequencing main ideas, drafting the characters, choosing suitable vocabulary to make their story more exciting. They can make notes or use storyboards.

Tell them that it is a good idea to devote some time to anticipating potential problems (e.g. lack of ideas, vocabulary) and thinking how to solve them, e.g. reading texts of a similar genre, revising past units to refresh vocabulary they have learnt, looking up information on the internet.

Use of English – additional activities

When learners have finished the lesson, you may ask them to complete the Use of English additional activity for this unit.

Publishing learners’ writing ideas

Video stories festival

You can turn this into a project. When learners have finished writing their stories, ask them to work in groups and help each other to create a short film. They can use their telephones or a camera. When all groups have finished making their short film, you can organise a video festival and show the videos to other classes or to families during an open day. The audience can then vote for the best film story.

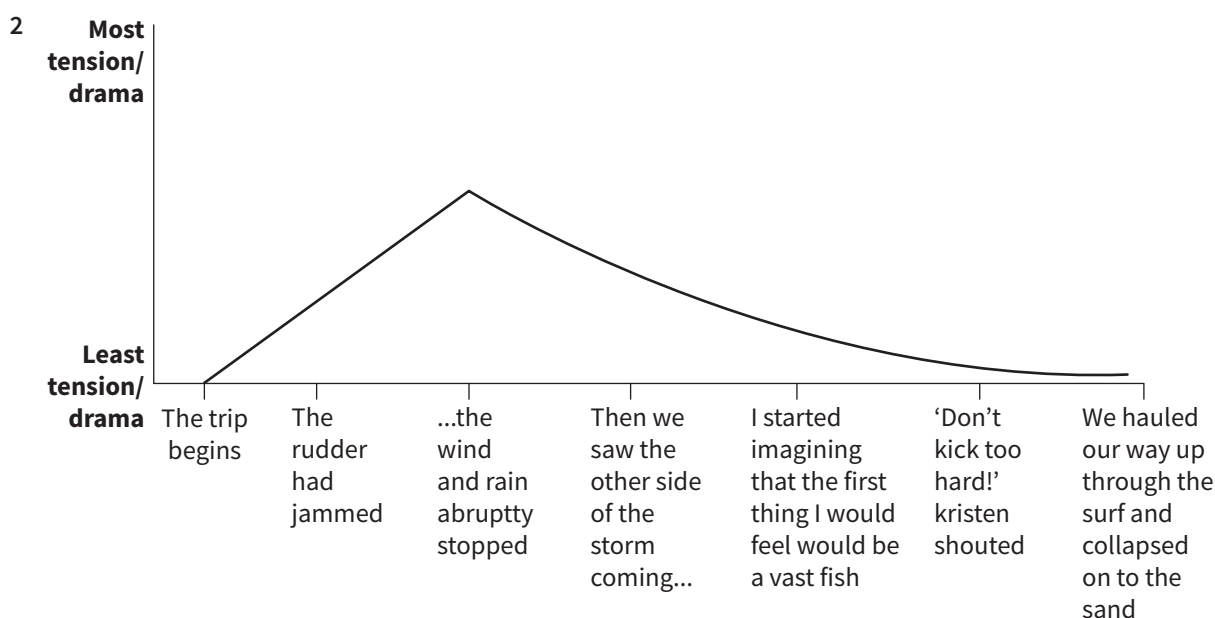
Answer key

Reading

- 1 a The event had a profound effect on Branson due to the dangerous nature of what happened and the emotions he felt.
- b Branson and his wife decided that their only chance of survival was to swim for safety rather than remain on the boat.

Text analysis

- 1 The account is like a thriller in that the main 'characters' are in real danger and we want to know as readers what happened. The events are also very unusual – almost too incredible to be real.



There is no absolutely right answer, but the graph should show a steady rise but then drop (i.e. peaks and troughs) when the wind and rain drops as this is, literally, the calm before the storm.

- 3 Allow any relevant points that could go on the graph.
- 4 a The waves 'breaking over the stern' and the boat being 'smashed up'.
- b Kristen 'shaking uncontrollably' and 'one of the tourists' being 'sick'.
- c The waves 'towering above us' and the 'black line' approaching.
- d 'Almost immediately the current swept us past the boat and up the coast'.
- e Branson explains how they 'hauled our way up through the surf' and 'collapsed on to the sand'.
- 5 a To get a rescue party to try to save the fishing boat.
- b They had to 'fight' their way through the swamps; when they arrived, the writer states that they were 'half-naked, trembling with shock and exhaustion, and with our feet bleeding'.
- c They go back out to sea in the car ferry to try to rescue the others on the fishing boat. They are helped by the captain of the car ferry.
- 6 a i Storms have a central core around which the winds circulate so being 'in the eye' means being in the centre of it, and also directly in its focus.
- ii 'Eerie' means very strange – out of the ordinary.
- iii Growing or inflating in size.
- iv Blurred or unclear.
- b iii.
- 7 a Because they are planning to jump into the water in the middle of a storm and boats are usually considered stronger than human bodies.
- b They don't think the boat will survive the storm and will sink or be smashed to pieces.

- c** She leads the way because she is a good swimmer. She also gives Richard good advice – ‘don’t kick too hard’. She is brave, but also thoughtful and wants to help the people left on the boat.
- d** There is no set answer for this, but it suggests that it makes human life seem very precious and brings you closer to your loved ones.
- 8 a** Learners’ own answers.
- b** Given the severity of the storm, the facts that the car ferry cannot go out and a second storm has come suggest that the boat and people on it drowned. In fact, the story reveals that the boat was never found.
- c** Learners’ own answers.
- d** The narrator explains his thoughts and motives; learners may feel that they would like to have known more about the aftermath but there is a lot of detail about the weather, the effects on the boat and the dramatic swim; the part where it describes how they ‘clung’ to each other suggests it had a profound and unforgettable impact.

Use of English

Grammar

- 1 a** Passive
- b** Active
- c** Passive
- 2 a** The waves
- c** The current
- 3 a** was being pounded
- b** were walking
- c** were being pulled
- d** were being rattled
- e** were being painted

- 4 a** were sitting
- b** was being battered
- c** was
- d** being hit
- e** was being shaken
- f** was looking
- g** was being pulled

Vocabulary

- 5 a** ii
- b** iv
- c** viii
- d** vi
- e** i
- f** iii
- g** v
- h** vii
- 6 a** bright sunlight
- b** head home
- c** lost sight of
- d** soaked through
- e** on the lookout for
- f** freezing cold

Punctuation

- 7 a** The captain of the boat (his name was Pedro) told us everything would be fine.
- b** The waves – now about two metres tall – were crashing into the wall of the port.
- c** The mountains, which were covered in dark clouds, were still a long way away.
- d** In the video of the storm, five cars (all red) were floating down the street.
- e** The boy – still holding his teddy bear – was helped off the boat and given a blanket.

Independent Writing answers

Write an extract from your autobiography of 250–300 words. Choose **one** of these three possibilities.

Sample answer

An animal attack

I went out hunting for deer with Steve. We decided to separate. I told Steve to find me if he heard the sound of a gunshot and I set off on my own.

After a couple of hours, I shot a deer and waited for Steve to come and help me but he never came. It was getting dark so I decided to carry the dead animal back. A huge bear charged out of the bush. I only had my hunting knife to defend myself. It was very big. I prayed.

Lord please help me. I need help. I thought.

I stabbed the bear in its throat. The bear bit my arm and shook its head violently. I thought my arm was gone. The bear cut my ear in two. The bear attacked me again and again. I was seriously injured but I cut the neck and head with my knife until it was dead.

I lay down for a long time. I woke up I ate some snow and decided to get out of there. I went towards the beach.

That was the toughest afternoon of my life. I thought I might die. My son and two of my hunting partners came and took me to the nearest village.

Examiner comment

Content is relevant to the task and the reader is informed of the most important facts, which are organised chronologically. Grammatical forms are used with control and flexibility. There are a few instances of basic linking words and a limited number of phrasal verbs.

However, the text does not have the required length, which gives the text the appearance of a summary rather than a full-fledged autobiographical text. Sentences are mostly short and simple, which affects the rhythm and doesn't create suspense.

Grade: 3

Model answer

It was a very cold day in November when I went out hunting for deer with Steve. At one point we decided to separate. I told Steve to find me if he heard the sound of a gunshot and ¹I set off ²on my own.

After a couple of hours, I shot a deer and waited for Steve to come and help me but he never came. It was getting dark so I decided to carry the dead animal back. I was three steps away from my rifle when a huge bear charged out of the bush. ³I only had my hunting knife to defend myself. It was massive. I prayed.

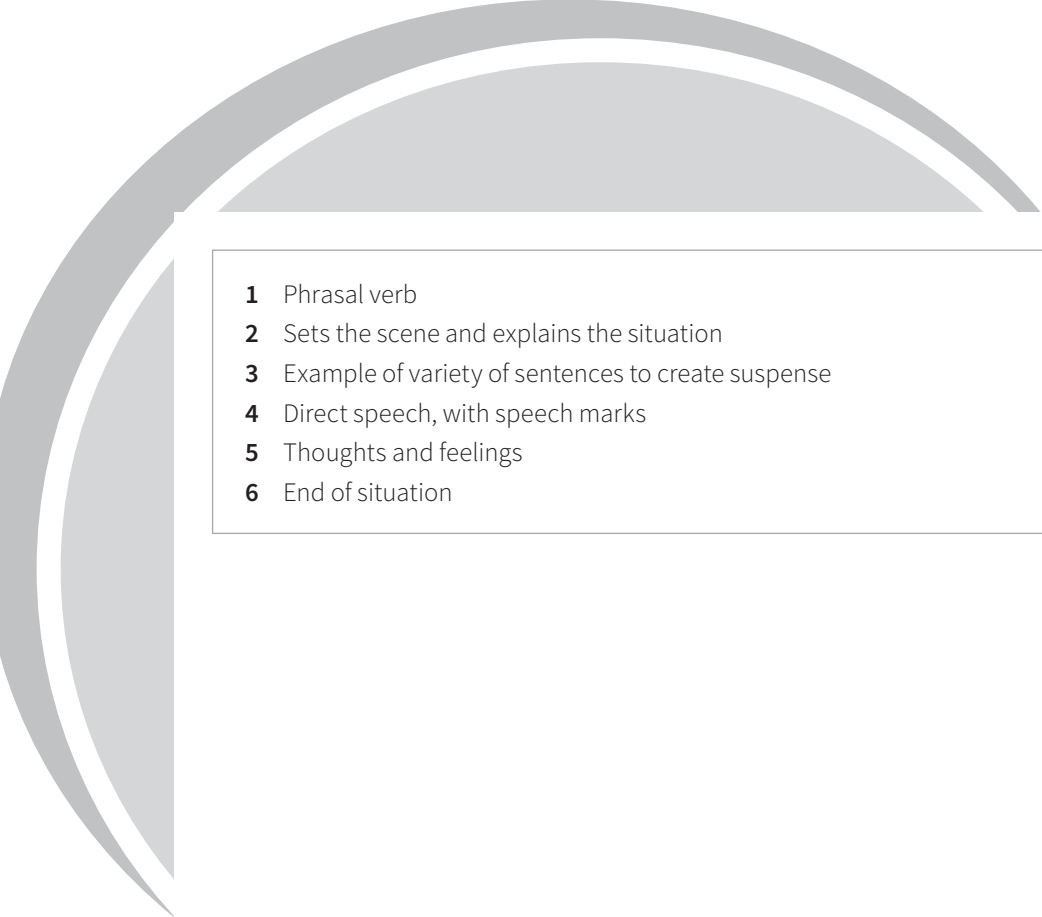
⁴'Lord please help me. I need help', I thought.

The bear came up upon me and I could only stab it in its throat. The bear bit my arm and shook its head violently.

⁵I didn't want to look at my arm. I thought it was gone. Then I saw that paw coming. It got me across the face and cut my ear in two. The bear kept coming at me again and again. I was seriously injured but I managed to stab it in the neck and head with my knife until it was dead.

I lay down for I don't know how long next to the bear. I woke up shivering pretty badly. I ate some snow and decided to get out of there. I managed to wrap up my injuries and went towards the beach, which was about two miles away.

That was the toughest afternoon of my life. I lay down two or three times thinking I might die. I was dizzy but I oriented myself and I was right on track. ⁶My son and two of my hunting partners came and took me to the nearest village.

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- 1 Phrasal verb
 - 2 Sets the scene and explains the situation
 - 3 Example of variety of sentences to create suspense
 - 4 Direct speech, with speech marks
 - 5 Thoughts and feelings
 - 6 End of situation