**Autobiography Project**

**English 8**

**Mrs. Celello**

Why an autobiography? Why a project at all?

The choice for an autobiography is based on many factors. One is that it allows students and parents to work on the project together. It’s a great time to relive those special memories – look through pictures, share some stories and laughs, and enjoy the time before the chaos of high school sets in.

Second, students don’t often take time to reflect on the positive events that have occurred during their lives. This gives them an opportunity to pull out pictures and awards that have been hiding in drawers and revel in their accomplishments – emphasizing their uniqueness.

Third, the writing of a personal narrative is a English/Language Arts writing standard for both the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations and the Common Core. Students are required to write personal narratives to develop real experiences and events using effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Finally, it is now more important than ever that people all over the world begin to recognize and appreciate those differences, personal and cultural, that make us who we are. As students share these differences, we hope to gain a better understanding of, not only who we are, but why we are, so we can celebrate those attributes that make each one of us special. To accomplish this goal, we will have a culminating activity where students can share their autobiographies with others.

Have fun with this project. Include pictures of Great Aunt Bertha, awards for being the fastest scooterboarder in the second grade, the note from your teacher telling your parents you “forgot your homework.” Include your favorite recipe, the first time you printed your name, the stick picture drawing of your family from kindergarten. The purpose is to tell who you so – just about anything goes.

This packet will help guide you through your autobiography. If you follow these guidelines step by step, you will have no difficulty completing the project. It actually works best if you work on small parts at a time. Please check the grading sheet at the end of the packet so you will know how this project will be graded.

I will have due dates for each of the chapters and a final due date for the project. You will be required to write rough drafts of each chapter, edit and revise, and type final drafts.

Remember – this is your life story. Let your personality come through!

Suggestion – Read the entire packet before beginning, so you can be on the lookout for bits and pieces. It is recommended you share this packet with an adult at home because you may need their help obtaining information. Chapters need to be at least 1 page in length, but the more detailed, the higher the grade. Remember that personal narratives are written like essays in paragraph format.

There are also pages containing cartoons and graphs. You are welcome to use these in any way. You may also use your own creations to tell me who you are.

Have fun!!!

**CHAPTER 1**

**What’s in a Name?**

Have you ever thought about your name? Really thought about it? Have you ever tried to think about what it means, or where it came from in the first place? Do you know who gave you your name, or whose name it might have been before it was given to you?

Names seem like such every day common things that we often don’t think much about the; but every name has a history. You may be able to find books on names and their meanings at home or the public library. The Internet is also an excellent resource for finding the meanings of names.

Using one of the resources above, find out about your name. Once you’ve found it, include all the information about it in this chapter of your autobiography. It will fit in with the guide questions for this chapter.

QUESTIONS FOR “What’s in a Name?”

1. Birth facts: time, where, date, name of hospital. A baby picture and/or copy of your birth announcement is fun to include here.

2. Were you named after anyone? Who?

3. Why did your parents name you what they did? Include your middle name, birth weight, height.

4. Include any interesting facts about your birth. For example, was there a blizzard, a special occasion, or even on the day you were born? (Check history books, the Internet, old newspapers in the library.)

5. What did you discover about the history of your name?

6. Do you have a nickname? How did you get it?

**I Am Poem**

Complete the following poem pattern using information about you.

I AM

1st Stanza (Don’t copy this line)

I am (two special characteristics you have)

I wonder (something you are actually curious about)

I like (something you like)

I dislike (something you don’t care for)

I would like (an actual desire)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

2nd Stanza (Don’t copy this line)

I pretend (something you actually pretend to do)

I feel (a feeling you occasionally have)

I promise (something you will do)

I worry (something that really bothers you)

I cry (something that makes you very sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

3rd Stanza (Don’t copy this line)

I understand (something you know is true)

I say (something you believe in)

I dream (something you actually dream about)

I try (something you really make an effort for)

I hope (something you actually hope for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

**My Birth**

**If you live with a birth parent, interview the person who can best answer these questions.**

1. Place of birth (city, hospital, etc.)

2. Time of birth (weather, historical events at this time)

3. Where were they when labor began?

4. How long was labor?

5. People present (family, medical persons, others)

6. Weight at birth

7. Any unusual happenings?

8. How did they pick your name?

9. What were the first six months like? First year?

10. Ask the questions you would like to know about your birth and early childhood, such as diseases, first steps, first words, etc.

11. What sources of information about yourself are available to you, for example, baby books, family records, albums, photos, traditional stories?

**If you are adopted or not living with a birth parent, interview the person who can best answer these questions.**

1. What do you know about your birth?

a. Where was it?

b. Time (What was happening in the world at that time?)

c. Weight, length, etc.

2. What was it like the first time they saw you? How long had they known you were coming to live with them?

3. Ask about the day you came to live with them.

4. What were your first six months together like?

5. What can they tell you about your name?

6. What do they know about your early life (your first words, childhood illnesses, etc.)?

7. What sources of information are available (for example, baby books, records, photographs)?

**CHAPTER 2**

**Family and Home**

1. Describe each member of your family so people will know what they are like – looks, personality, occupation, age.

2. Where do you fit – oldest, middle, youngest, only?

3. Any famous relatives?

4. What is your family’s ethnic background? Do you observe any traditions from other countries?

5. Do you have any pets? If so, what kind, name, how long you’ve had them?

6. Describe the house or apartment you live in now. Where else have you lived – other cities, other houses?

7. How old were you when you moved?

8. What do you remember about other places?

9. Are there any places that are special to you, such as a relative’s home or grandparents’ place?

10. Include anything else about your family or your background. (Hobbies, family projects, vacations, a special time, etc.)

Photographs (or copies) will come in handy in this chapter. Don’t forget to include your grandparents’ pictures, too. They will love it. You could also draw a picture of your house. It is good to have some original artwork in your book.

11. **(Extra Credit)** Include your family tree.

**CHAPTER 3**

**Early Life (ages 1-6)**

This is a difficult section since most of you will not remember many things about this time of your life. **You have the choice to write this portion of the autobiography or to have a family member write a letter to you describing these events.**

What you write here requires the help of parents, older brothers and sisters (if you have any), or other relatives. Ask questions about the things you did during this time of your life. Many families have stories about the things children did when they were young.

\*\*Hint – Make sure to ask questions when your parents have the time to answer your questions. While they are doing work around the house is not a good time. Times when you are sitting at the dinner table as a family, or during some free time, are much better to ask questions. Look for the best time for your family.

Here are a few suggestions or things you might want to include:

* your birthday, first word, first pet the very first thing you remember happening, your first toys
* started to walk
* when you began school (What was your kindergarten teacher’s name?)
* the first book you read by yourself
* the year you learned to ride a bike, ice skate, play a musical instrument, swim or whistle
* a train, plane, or car ride somewhere special
* the time you broke your arm or had an accident and how it happened
* the year your voice changes or you grew really fast
* when you met your best friend
* the first movie, baseball game, concert, or play you attended
* when your first tooth fell out
* first vacation
* first trip to a special place like the zoo, circus, or state fair
* your first day of school

**CHAPTER 4**

**Elementary School**

I this chapter, describe what life was like in your elementary years. You can decide if this will include 5th and 6th grade or if you want to save those grades in your chapter of middle school. Things to consider:

* your first day of school. Did you know anybody?
* your first school friend -- Was it difficult to make friends?
* your first teacher/teachers -- Describe him or her.
* a typical day in elementary school
* how life/school changed as you got older
* expectations

**CHAPTER 5**

**Middle School**

In this chapter, describe what life was like in middle school. Things to consider:

* Were you nervous?
* Was school harder?
* What were your teachers like?
* Were you involved in extra-curricular activities?
* What were you most interested in?
* Challenges
* Friendships
* 1st dance

**CHAPTER 6**

**Description of You as You Are Now**

What do you like? Describe in detail. What is your personality (shy, outgoing, competitive, sensitive, etc.)? What are your faults? What are your interests, hobbies, habits (good or bad)? Do you belong to any clubs or organizations? Have you won any awards? How have you changed in the last year? What makes you YOU?

**CHAPTER 7**

**Feelings**

What are some things you feel strongly about? What is important to you? Explain. In this section you might also include your religious beliefs or convictions.

You may want to use a pattern poem such as:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

You may also write your own poetry if you’d like since poetry is often based on feelings. Include a collection about things that are important to you and how you feel about them.

**CHAPTER 8**

**Future Plans**

Discuss your hopes for the future – education, career, accomplishments, possessions you hope to have, family plans, where you hope to live, what you would like to be doing in 10 years, travel plans, etc. Include anything else you are planning for the future – dreams, wishes, ambitions…

**Finishing Touches**

When you get the autobiography completed, you are ready for the final steps. Provide a table of contents that gives the chapter and the title of the chapter. If you have questions, see me and I will show you some examples. You may also want to design a dedication page (an example is included). This will also be placed toward the front of your book. You may want to dedicate this project to someone who has been special to you over the years. THIS IS OPTIONAL.

You should find some kind of album in which to organize all your information. Feel free to include any additional information that you feel is important in telling who you are. If you have favorite sayings or quotes, or cartoons, please include them.

**Have fun rediscovering what makes you so special!!!**

**Grading**

Grading on this project will take into consideration:

* how closely the directions are followed in the format and organization of the book.
* Correct punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammar, etc.
* Clever and effective use of pictures, illustrations, and other pages to make work seem like a book
* Neatness of project (pictures are formatted and neatly arranged)
* Thorough responses for required information – your explanations should be at least 1 page in length.

**Recommendations for Writing Your Autobiography**

* This packet must be read by parents or adults at home before you begin.
* It is important to remember that this book will be read by others. Although you may include your personal feelings, be careful not to hurt anyone’s feelings by what you write
* Any questions that you or your family feel are too personal, or are too uncomfortable to include, may be left out of your autobiography.
* You **must** write a rough draft for each entry. You will need to turn those in to me, so I can preview them before you revise. Also, have another adult proofread your final draft before you save it. This will help to assure correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. before your chapter is published.
* This project will count as a significant grade for the 4th quarter. Please complete it to the BEST of your ability.
* Computers must be used.
* If you have one-of-a-kind pictures, you may want to consider making copies instead of using the originals. This will protect your family pictures.
* Include any awards, certificates, etc. you may have received.
* Number the pages as you work on them. This will help you stay organized, making pages easy to find.
* Include dates and places; these are also part of your family’s history.
* Put in details. Describe things and places with so much detail that you can almost “see them before your eyes.”
* Write how you felt when you describe the events.
* Write like you talk. Remember – you are telling a story.
* If you write like you talk, you will automatically take care of sentences and punctuation. Wherever you would pause in talking, put a comma in your writing. When you finish a thought, put in a period. When you start a new sentences, don’t forget to start with a capital letter.
* You may want to find a neat scrapbook or journal-type notebook in which to put all of the information. If you are really savvy, you could also complete the assignment as an iBook.

The autobiography assignment is a significant writing assignment for the 2nd semester. I will let you know the final deadline for the entire project at a later date (probably mid-May), but the students should start working on this project immediately. There will be due dates for specific chapters throughout the semester, and students are required to turn in rough drafts for each chapter. Any student that gets the project done early may turn it in and receive extra credit.

Some class time will be given; however, most of the writing will take place out of school. Begin collecting pictures, awards, etc. that your student can use in his/her book. These will be shared during Recognition Day and then students will take them home. If you have any questions, feel free to call or email me.

Please sign and return this slip. This is a requirement because I want to ensure that all parents/guardians are fully aware of the assignment today. ☺

Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian’s Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_