Prewriting for Bio-Poem: Thinking About Myself

Myself (Adjectives that describe me)

My Strengths

My Weaknesses

Whom or What Do I Love?

What Makes Me Sad?

What Makes Me Angry?

What Do I Need?

What Do I Give?

What Do I Fear?

What or Whom Would I Like to See?
Bio-Poems

Line 1 Your first name only.
Line 2 Four traits that describe you.
Line 3 Sibling of…. (or son/daughter of)
Line 4 Lover of….(3 people or ideas)
Line 5 Who feels…. (3 items)
Line 6 Who needs…. (3 items)
Line 7 Who gives…. (3 items)
Line 8 Who fears…. (3 items)
Line 9 Who would like to see (3 items)
Line 10 Resident of (your city); (your road name)
Line 11 Your last name only.

Examples of Auto-Biographical Poems Written by Teachers:

Robert
Honest, happy, content and established,
Brother of Lawrence, James and Elaine,
Lover of the freshness of spring, the laughter of Paula and the beauty of fresh green growth,
Who feels joy when traveling, loneliness in the dark, and happiness in a warm school room,
Who needs sunshine, rain and privacy,
Who gives friendship, encouragement and smiles,
Who fears pain, hunger and the end of a good book,
Who would like to see contentment for man and animal, laughter in people’ s lives and more appreciation for good literature,
Resident of Lake Oswego;
Pilkington Street,
Hamm.

Martha
Strong, serene, shy, sometimes silly,
Friend of big furry dogs, confused students, and John,
Lover of lemons, float trips in fall, and the smell of woodsmoke in January,
Who feels stirred by new ideas, actualized by love, and calmed by the still core of a Quaker meeting,
Who needs a new book, a quart of cottage cheese, and so many hours a week to herself,
Who fears her wild imagination, her big appetite, and the habit of losing her keys,
Who would like to see no more sentence fragments, zucchini casseroles, or cigarette stubs.
Resident of “inner-city” Columbia; South Williams Street,
Patton

Arthelia
Patient, cheerful, old, studious,
Daughter of Charles and Lula Lysinger,
Lover of trees, blue skies, piano music,
Who feels annoyed at apathy, fat, lazy at times,
Who needs exercise, crossword puzzles, reading time,
Who gives a listening ear, time to clubs, presents to the Presbyterian Children’s Home,
Who fears the future of the U.S.A., water bugs, poor health,
Who would like to see a better school system, herself winning a big sweepstakes, less injustice in the workplace,
Resident of Grandview, Missouri; Parker Avenue,
Pritchard
Biographical Poem about an Author

The following can be used as the basis of a sketch of a character in a work of fiction, or as a biographical sketch of an author or the subject of a non-fiction work.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE MODEL</th>
<th>THE FRAME</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLANNERY O'CONNOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>Name of the person or character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…the peacocks cry all night long: help me, help me.</td>
<td><em>Quotation from the person/character</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Four miles from Milledgeville on a farm</td>
<td><strong>Place</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Over five hundred acres</td>
<td>What he/she did there</td>
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<td>She raised chickens (and peacocks).</td>
<td>Something central to the person’s reputation</td>
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<td>She talked of grotesques,</td>
<td>(A writer’s subject matter; a person’s or character’s concerns.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern style—of freaks who felt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The call to preach,</td>
<td>Something about the person’s style</td>
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<tr>
<td>Of praying violent men with something</td>
<td>or manner; his/her</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the blood driving them</td>
<td>idiosyncrasies, habits, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onward but inward….</td>
<td>If possible, paraphrase a key phrase</td>
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<td>She held their attention</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>With strong Georgia phrases</td>
<td>Something physical that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing pictures of a people</td>
<td>symbolizes the person/character,</td>
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<td>In a land all of their own, shifting</td>
<td>or represents him/her.</td>
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<td>Suddenly from darkness to hard sunlight,</td>
<td>A setting or event which adds</td>
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<td>Caught in the giant hands of fate and the will of God.</td>
<td>mood or feeling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>But the violent bear it away.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A good man is hard to find.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The crutches lean against the wall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unnoticed and forgotten.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the shade of the trees</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The peacocks strut.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>But at night in the mellow darkness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>They cry…</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All night long…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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--Sam Ragan
from *The Tree in the Far Pasture*, John Blair Publishers

Auxiliary Learning:
1. Biographical facts about Flannery O’Connor; traits of her work
2. Power of images.
Prewriting: Bio-Poem About a Historical Person, or an Author

Line 1: First name

Line 2: Person’s Title/Claim to Fame

Line 3: Four words that describe the person

Line 4: Lover of…(three themes, things or ideas)

Line 5: Who believed (believes)...(one or more ideas)

Line 6: Who wanted (wants)...(three things)

Line 7: Who used (uses)...(three methods or things)

Line 8: Who gave (gives)...(three things, or titles of works)

Line 9: Who said (says)...(give a quote)

Line 10: Last name
Historical Bio Poem Formats

Use the following format to write a poem about a historical figure. You may give more or fewer details than the format demands. Also, the details you provide may be single words or short phrases. Be as accurate and complete in your description as possible. FEEL FREE TO WRITE NEW/APPROPRIATE STEMS.

Title

Line 1: First name
Line 2: Person’s Title
Line 3: Four words that describe the person
Line 4: Lover of…(three things or ideas)
Line 5: Who believed (believes)…(one or more ideas)
Line 6: Who wanted (wants)…(three things)
Line 7: Who used (uses)...(three methods or things)
Line 8: Who gave (gives)...(three things)
Line 9: Who said (says)...(give a quote)
Line 10: Last name ______

Line 1: Name: ________________________
Line 2: Title _______________________
Line 3: Lineage (nationality, parents of..., son/daughter of...)
Line 4: Descriptive words ____________, ____________, ____________, and ____________
Line 5: Lover of ____________, ____________, and ____________
Line 6: Who believed/believes _______________________________________
Line 7: Who wanted/wants ____________, ____________, and ____________
Line 8: Who used/uses ____________, ____________, and ____________
Line 9: Who gave/gives ____________, ____________, and ____________
Line 10: Who said/says ___________________________________________
Line 11: Resident of... ___________________________________________
Line 12: Last name: ____________________________________________
Examples from the Content Areas:

Thomas
Founding Father of the United States and author of the *Declaration of Independence*
Intelligent, talented, inventive, brave
Son of Peter and Jane
Lover of his country, books, and God.
Who feels strongly about his government, hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man, and great love for music.
Who fears our country going to war with France, giving his men the wrong decision, and too much formality in the White House.
Who would like to see peace with other countries, federal jobs based on ability, and expansion of the United States.
Resident of Albemarle County, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.
Jefferson

Inquisitor
Cynical, bold, all knowing, and fearless,
Friend of no one, peer of few,
Lover of self, wisdom, and unconquerable knowledge,
Who feels neither pity nor compassion nor the love of God,
Who needs no man, save for himself,
Who fears the kiss that warms his heart and the coming tide which will not retreat,
Who radiates cold shafts of broken glass, and who fits all mankind with collar and chain,
Who would like to see the deceivers burned and Christ to be humbled before him.
Resident of ages past.
The Grand Inquirer

Middle School Students’ Examples About NC African American Writers

Hinton
Writer.
Intelligent, understanding,
Lover of art and literature.
Who believed literature was important.
Who wanted people to see how sympathy was used.
Who used his understanding to teach others.
Who gave his talent and knowledge to the public.
Who said, “Literature is of great importance.”
Brown

Winifred
Novelist.
Englishwoman, intelligent, writer, and brave North Carolinian.
Lover of novels, Raleigh, and writing.
Who believed in recording family happenings.
Who wanted to be famous, to be a good novelist, and to be a spokesperson for North Carolina
Who used North Carolina families and their anecdotes.
Who gave us “Matilda Berkely,” family anecdotes, and perfect writing.
Gales
Bio Poem for a Character in Literature

Perhaps you are familiar with the Bio Poem as an intriguing technique that performs two roles simultaneously: first, it forces writers to analyze themselves, and too, it reveals much to readers (about the author) which could take weeks to discover simply by observation. Teachers can use the Bio Poem to help students get to know one another at the beginning of a school year, and they can also expand the Bio Poem assignment to include artwork. For example, students could post their poems next to sketches of their silhouettes on the walls of their classroom.

Another way to modify the Bio Poem exercise is to have students write poems about characters they have studied in a novel or observed in a film. Consider the following format as one way your students could write Literary Character Bio Poems:

Title

Line 1: First name of character
Line 2: Four adjectives that describe the character
Line 3: Character in ______________’s story (author’s name)
Line 4: Lover of…(three things, people, or ideas)
Line 5: Who feels…(three listings)
Line 6: Who fears…(three listings)
Line 7: Who would like to see…(three listings)
Line 8: Major or minor character in “_______________” (name of literary work)
Line 9: Last name of character

Charlie
    Struggler, fighter, winner, proud
    Character in Daniel Keyes’ story
    Lover of the thought of being normal, Algernon, his work
    Who feels sad when he finds out about his “friends,”
    Happy to beat Algernon, confused over the inkblots.
    Who fears senility, death, failing
    Who would like to see himself normal, the world happy, Algernon alive
    Major character in Flowers for Algernon
    Gordon

Doctor
    Eccentric, curious, singular, old,
    Friend of Medbourne, Killigrew, Wycherly, Gasscoigne,
    Lover of Sylvia, magic, a rose,
    Who feels isolated, alone, old,
    Who needs friendship, experimentation, love,
    Who gives medicine, free champagne, second chances,
    Who fears his own youth,
    Who would like to see results, happiness, common sense,
    Resident of Massachusetts,
    Heidegger.
    (based on Hawthorne’s “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”)