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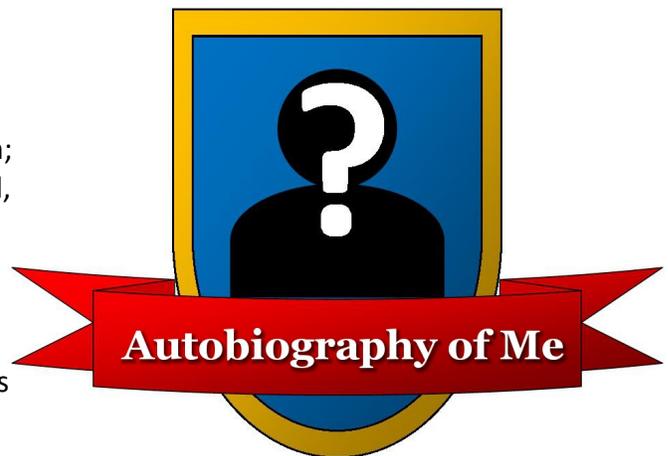
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## **Autobiography of Me**

*by Dale Lidicker*

Based on "The Book of Me," by Darrell Billington;  
adapted by Jennifer Thompson and Tracy Stegall,  
Boulder Valley Schools, Colorado.

You may also be interested in [\*The Epitome of Grace: A Journey of Student and Teacher\*](#), by Dale Lidicker and Kristina Halstead, Wheels Press Books.



## Procedures for Each Chapter

### **Day One**

Begin with a quick write that lasts 5 to 7 minutes. Some of the quick writes may serve as a rough draft for the chapter topics. Others will steer the students in the right direction with respect to relating to the topic. Briefly discuss the chapter topic and brainstorm ideas. Start drafting.

### **Day Two**

You can reserve this day for a mini-lesson that relates to their chapter topic. Many of the chapters could follow a 5 paragraph essay format. For instance, the chapter on “Fears” could have 3 items that one is fearful of in the introductory paragraph. Each of these items could be expanded upon in the ensuing body paragraphs and neatly wrapped up with a conclusion paragraph.

Or, you could teach the students how to use a “hook” in order to capture the reader. For example, a start to the “Fears” chapter could look like this:

*Wholly engrossed in the video game that I was playing, I barely noticed a crawling sensation on my head. I reached up and touched a huge, bulbous body and the crawling sensation that I had felt before increased at an alarming rate.*

*“Spider!” I screamed at the top of my lungs as I frantically tried to brush the creepy arachnid off my head.*

*I felt a warm, wet river of pee flow down my legs – yes, I wet my pants – adding to the total embarrassment of the situation as my friends looked on. They thought this was hilarious. As you can plainly see, one of my fears is spiders.*

Quite an opener. I’ll bet that it got your attention. Of course, you can use other examples of hooks depending on your student audience.

As you can see, this second variation harkens to a personal narrative that does not necessarily follow the formulaic writing method that is inherent in a 5 paragraph essay. Ultimately, the writing structures that you use for each of the chapters are largely up to you.

### Day Three

This day is reserved for revising and editing. There are numerous techniques that a teacher could use for this step. Peer revision is pretty effective provided the students are shown how to do so. The goal is to have the students ready to produce a final draft. The final draft will probably be a homework assignment unless you decide that the students need another day in class to finish it.

### Day Four

The final drafts are due. Have students read and share their work. Part of having an effective writing class is being able to share what has been written. Do not force the issue, but it is important that you establish an atmosphere in your classroom that it is alright to share one's work. Writing is personal and can leave people feeling vulnerable. It is important to set a nonjudgmental tone in your classroom. Feedback framed with the idea of assisting peers to become better writers is desirable; not the constructive criticism that cuts a writing piece to shreds. Remember, we want to encourage writers to learn through mistakes without being laid bare.

## Chapter Descriptions

Here is a description of each chapter of Autobiography of Me:

- **Who Are You? or Who Am I?** – Use the accompanying prewriting diagram ([see page 8](#)) to get the students started. Allow 30 seconds to a minute for each of the three sections. Write down words or phrases as descriptions for each section. Follow this with a quick write.
- **Rules for Life** – This is your own personal code of conduct. These are the whispers of your conscience that guides you through life. Be honest.
- **Fears** – Whether your fears are outside of yourself or reside in the dark recesses of your Being, express what you are truly afraid of by showing us with your writing.
- **I Wonder** – What do you wonder about? What puzzles you?
- **Struggles** – What challenges you? What things are extremely difficult for you to accomplish?
- **Recipe for a Friend** – These are qualities that I look for in a friend written in the format of a recipe. Use food recipes as a guide. Point out that there is a list of ingredients followed by directions on how to combine the ingredients. Brainstorm the verbs used for cooking terms and put them up on a board as a groups. Terms

could include bake, boil, whip, sprinkle, spice, fold, etc. Also cover the measurements used in cooking and baking. Brainstorm qualities in a friend such as loyal, loving, humorous, etc. and put these up on the board as well. Now you are ready to list the ingredients for a friendship. How students put them together for the finished epicurean delight is up to them.

2 cups loyalty

1 cup humor

2 tbs. understanding

etc.

- **Selfish Things** – What are you selfish about? These can be personal possessions or things relating to concepts such as friendships, time with others, time spent alone, etc.
- **Where to Live** – Begin by listing all of the places you have visited...If you had a choice to live anywhere in the world, where would that be? If you are satisfied where you are, explain why.
- **Who to Meet** – Who do you truly admire? This person can be living or dead. It could be a historical figure or someone you personally knew, such as an ancestor, or a person that you personally know. Why is this individual important to you?
- **Letter to the Future** – Review a friendly letter format. After all, this is a letter to you. Start with the idea of, “In 10 to 20 years I want to be...” This is an exercise in reality, not fantasy.
- **Favorite Object** – What is your favorite object? Maybe it is a signed baseball from a favorite baseball player, a stuffed animal, a letter from an ancestor, a coin, a pet rock... Who knows? Why is it important to you? What is the story behind it?
- **Note from a Friend** – You need to send a note home explaining what this is about. Have a friend write a note about your best qualities; your worst qualities...
- **Note from a parent** – Once again, a note home about this is important. What can the parent(s) or another adult say about you that others would want to know?

This takes care of the writing instructions for “Autobiography of Me.” All that is left is for the students to do is to create a cover. Images from the Internet, photos, or drawings could be used to create the cover. Perhaps, the a student wants to

create a collage. That's fine. Let the students be creative with their cover.

Then, it is on to putting the book together. Depending on how polished the final product will be is largely up to you and the students. The chapters can be a finalized product, possibly with embedded images in the text, that are Word Documents or PDF's with card stock covers. Brass fasteners could be used to hold everything together. Plastic spiral binding could be used after hole punching is done. Most schools have an easy to use binding machine to accomplish this task. The covers could be laminated.

If expense is not a consideration or the students choose to have a more professional look, their books could be sent out to be bound. In this case, searching your area or the Internet for inexpensive book binding could be an option.

## **Parallel Writing with Your Students**

I recommend writing this autobiography with your students. The sharing and modeling aspects of you coming along for the literary ride will help your students dive into the project with abandon. This is one of the most straightforward ways to co-write with your students. True, it is a parallel effort and lacks the splicing of individual authors' work together, but it is the least intensive of co-authoring efforts. The beauty of this method will be the teacher modeling and sharing of work. Teachers creating their own autobiographies and sharing them with students will deepen rapport. You will be learning while writing together.

## **Splicing it Together**

Hopefully, you will have time to take your students on a further journey. Your "Autobiography of Me" books are done. It is time to use their individual writing to create new writing pieces.

- Pair up your students. You are one of the pairs. If there are an odd number of people, you may have to have one group of three. Make sure that you give some thought to the pairing of the students. They will need to work well together.
- Explain to the students that they will be co-authoring a story together based on their work from "Autobiography of Me."
- Select "Who Am I?" as your first chapter. Explain to the students that they will be using this chapter as a basis to develop their characters. They have already done fantastic work and some soul searching when they wrote

this chapter. They need to realize that they can use what they wrote in “Who Am I?” to develop characters with some depth based on their own human characteristics. Here are a couple examples.

#### **Student One**

*I am an honest person. As a matter of fact, I absolutely refuse to lie even if I know there will be serious consequences. I'd prefer to take the consequences. It seems that truth will rise to the surface anyway and bite you in the butt eventually. I also pride myself on being a giver rather than a taker. I believe that when you give, you are also giving to yourself. I also view myself as being mellow and laid-back. I have come to the conclusion that worrying is pointless.*

#### **Student Two**

*I am a risk-taker. I love to push myself to the limit. Whenever I participate in sports, I want to do the absolute best that I can. It is important to me to win. I also consider myself to be loyal to my friends. I will back them whenever possible if they run into conflicts with other people. I consider myself independent and a free thinker. This means that I like doing exactly what I want to do.*

- Explain to the students from these two examples that we have the germ seed of character traits. Many of the other chapters they have written about such as “Fears,” “Selfish Things,” and “Rules for Life” can also be used as raw material for their characters’ traits. Stress the fact that the “Autobiography of Me” that they have worked so hard on expresses *their* character traits and that they can use these traits as if *they* are the characters in their co-written narratives. Point out to the students that they can remain true to themselves with their characters in the story or they can embellish the traits to their liking. They may need some artistic license.
- Give the students some time to read each other’s “Who Am I?” chapters. Allow them some time to discuss some of the important traits that each of them have. Remind them that they are going to create interesting characters for their co-written narratives based on their own character traits.
- Now that we have character traits and hopefully some captivating characters, explain to the students that they are going to map out a story line. Discuss the idea that the interactions of characters drive the plot in a narrative. Explain that they will have to be actively engaged in recording their sequence of events on a graphic organizer. I typically use a story arc like the one on [page 9](#). Once the students have cooperatively finished

their story maps, it is time to draft. Remind the student to *show* rather than *tell* in their drafting. Using dialogue is a great technique to use to move the plot along. Stress that characters talking to one another are a way of showing the reader what is happening in a story. Internal dialogue is a way for the reader to capture what a character might be thinking. Let the students know that a balance of dialogue and narration is a desirable way to keep a reader hooked. The students should be doing a lot of talking to one another during this process. They should share responsibilities of writing down their thoughts. Emphasize that this is drafting. They need to empty their heads.

- On to revision. One of the most effective revision techniques that I have used is called “Exploding the Moment.” [After the End](#) by Barry Lane goes into great detail about revision strategies. This YouTube video does a great job describing how to do it. The students will get a kick out of it.
- Also, make sure the students are reading their work out loud. Writing sounds so different once a story is told out loud. Many mistakes will be caught. Exclamations of, “That doesn’t sound right,” will abound.
- The next step is editing. Make sure they have attended to their conventions.
- The last step is publishing. It can be as simple as Word Documents or taking it to the limit with making a book as they did in “Autobiography of Me.”

I’ve included a rubric ([see page 10](#)) that students can use for self-evaluation and that you can use to grade the students’ projects chapter by chapter. It is based on the Six Traits of Writing.

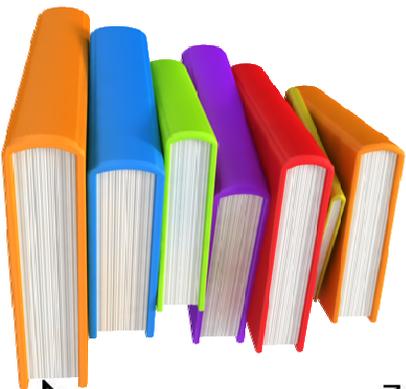
## Autobiography of Me: Prewriting Diagram

**Directions:** Write down words or phrases in each ring as indicated.

What do people who really don't know  
you think of you? First impressions.

What do close friends and family  
think of you? Personal qualities.

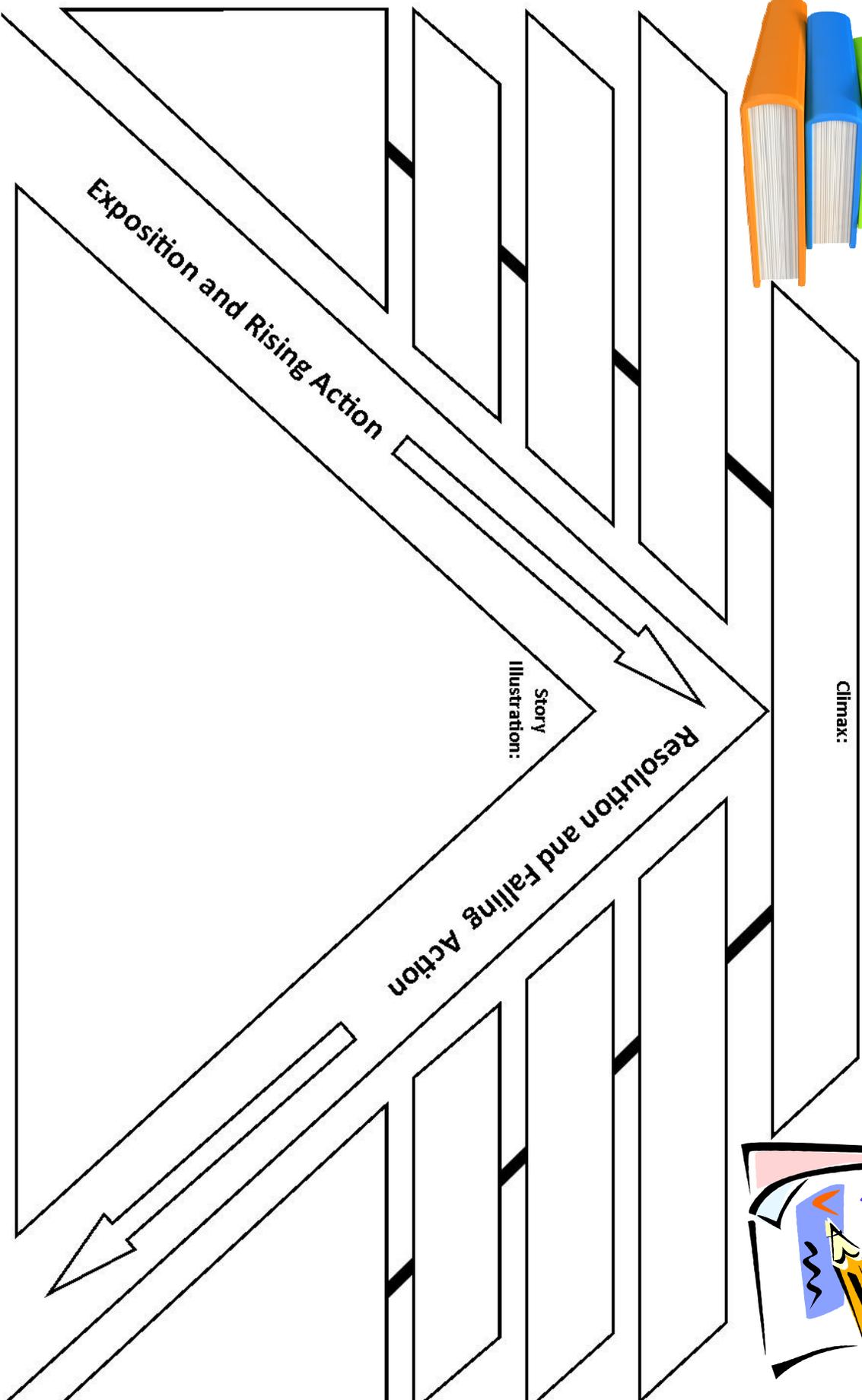
What do you think of  
you? Internal character  
traits, morals, etc.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period \_\_\_\_\_

## Autobiography of Me: Plot Diagram

**Directions:** Begin with details about the exposition in the lower left corner, then work clockwise to relate the events of the plot. An illustration of your story goes in the central triangle.



## Autobiography of Me: Rubric

	5	3	1
SELF-REFLECTION AND THOUGHT	I deeply thought about this chapter as I was composing it. This is evidenced by my writing about things that are important to me. I took risks by sharing these parts of myself.	I thought about myself a small amount as I composed this chapter. I wrote about some things that are important to me, but I didn't take many risks. I only shared a little bit about myself.	I hardly gave any thought to what I was writing about. I really didn't include things that were important to me. I just wrote stuff to fill the page. I didn't really share things that were important to me.
IDEAS	My writing is full of the kinds of details that keep the readers' attention and shows what is really important about my topic.	The reader usually knows what I mean. Some parts will be better when I tell you more about myself.	When someone else reads my paper, it will be hard for them to understand what I mean or what I am all about.
VOICE	My paper has lots of personality and has my unique voice. It sounds like me!	What I truly think and feel only shows up once in a while. Other times, I am trying to hard to impress the reader instead of just telling them about myself.	I'm not comfortable sharing what I truly think and feel yet. As a result, my writing hardly has any voice.
CONVENTIONS	There are few errors. It is ready to publish.	There are a number of errors that I need to clean up before publishing.	It would take a first read to decode the paper and a second reading to grasp what I am trying to say.
PRESENTATION	I have created a great final draft. It is typed, or at least is written in black or blue ink. I am proud of the appearance of my final draft.	I have an acceptable final draft. It is in black or blue ink; maybe typed. I feel so-so about the appearance of my final draft.	I have created an unacceptable final draft. It is in pencil and is not neat at all. I am embarrassed about my final draft.
BOOK COVER	My book cover rocks! It has my name on it and the images that I have used or created are a good fit for the Autobiography of Me that I have written.	My book cover is mediocre. I could have put more effort into it. It has my name on it, but I could have used more quality images.	My book cover does not even have my name on it. It is not appealing at all. I could have included quality images, but I did not. It looks half-done at best.