

Writing a milestone story

21st Century Skills

Collaboration: making decisions

Key Competences

✎ Learning to learn, 9 Linguistic communication, 9 Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

Useful language from the units

1A adjectives to describe feelings, modifying adverbs, 1B past simple (affirmative), 1D past simple (negative and interrogative), 1E adjective endings, 1G narrating events, 1H describing an event, 2B past continuous, 2D contrast: past simple and past continuous, 3E negative adjective prefixes

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE TASK Read the task.

Then look at the photos. What were their milestone stories? Answer questions 1–3. Then compare your ideas with a partner. Read the task again. What do you have to do?

TASK

A milestone story is an account of a memorable experience you went through which had an effect on your life. Write a milestone story from your life, giving details of the experience and what effect it had on you.

- 1 What do you think their challenge was? How were they feeling when these photos were taken?
- 2 What was the effect on each person? Match speech bubbles a–d with photos 1–4.
- 3 What other challenges and experiences do young people often go through in their lives? What effects can these milestones have?

1



a

When you go through something like that, it can break you or make you stronger. I learned how to pick myself up after a great disappointment and try again.

2



3



b

I learned that I can do things on my own and face my worries by planning what to do if the worst thing happens.

c

I didn't think I was good enough to perform, so I practised until I knew I was. Now I've done it once, I know I can do it again.

d

I learned that finishing a physical challenge isn't just about fitness. It's about your mind as well.

4



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STEP 2: ANALYSE Read the milestone story and answer the questions.

- 1 Which photo matches this story?
- 2 In one sentence, summarise what the writer's challenge was.
- 3 What feelings did the writer have?
- 4 What did the writer learn from the experience?
- 5 Can you understand the writer's feelings? Why? / Why not?

STEP 3: PREPARE Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Work out the structure of the story in Step 2 for yourselves. Match the paragraphs with their function.
 - a background information _____
 - b introduction _____
 - c the conclusion and the point of the story _____
 - d the challenge _____
 - e the problem(s) and how the writer dealt with it / them (2 paragraphs) _____, _____
- 2 Did you enjoy reading this story? Why? / Why not? What would you do to improve it?
- 3 Imagine the writer wants to get feedback from you about what you liked and didn't like. What will you say to them?

KEY PHRASES

I liked ... because ... I didn't really like ... because ... I found it ... that ...
I think you should ... I don't think you should ...

STEP 4: CREATE Work in pairs. Tell each other a milestone story from your own life. Use the key phrases below.**KEY PHRASES**

That sounds great / terrible / annoying / terrifying!
How boring / funny / frustrating / exciting / upsetting!
What a cool thing to do! You're joking / kidding!
That sounds like a nightmare! Oh no! What a disaster / shame!
Really? What a relief!

Choose the most interesting or dramatic story. Write this story together. Organise it into paragraphs using the structure in Step 2. Remember to:

- include adjectives to describe your feelings.
- use past tenses accurately.

STEP 5: PRESENT AND DECIDE Read your story to another pair. Ask and answer questions about each other's stories. Who learned the most in their milestone story?

Then tell the class about your milestone stories and what you thought of them. Which milestone stories inspired you? Why?

STEP 6: SELF-EVALUATION Copy the statements into your notebook and score yourself from 1–4.

- a I can understand a milestone story – the challenge, the action and the effect on the writer.
- b I can plan and write a story about a memorable challenge or experience.
- c I can explain how a memorable experience affected me.
- d I can give feedback to others in an appropriate way.

4 very well

3 well

2 needs practice

1 not very well

1 There are two reasons why this is a milestone story for me. Firstly, I was doing something for the first time. Secondly, this experience helped me learn something important about myself.

2 At high school, we all had pen pals so we could practise our English. Mine was a girl called Candace from Los Angeles. We chatted on Skype as well as emailing each other, and we became good friends. That's when I decided to visit her.

3 When I was getting ready for the trip, I started getting anxious. It was my first long-distance trip on my own, and my first time on a plane. What if the plane had to make an emergency landing? What if my bags got lost? What if Candace didn't meet me at the airport? What if I was attacked in Los Angeles?

4 I wanted to be excited, but I was making myself scared, so I decided to face up to my worries and make a plan of what to do in each case. This simple action really helped me to calm down.

5 When I arrived in LA, Candace and her lovely family were there to welcome me. The only problem was that the airline couldn't find my bag! But thanks to my planning, I wasn't upset. I had enough things in my hand luggage, and my bag was found the next day. I had an amazing trip which I will remember forever.

6 I learned that although I'm a nervous person, I can deal with a lot of my fears by myself. If you're anxious like me, you could try it too. Make plans for what you'll do if your worries become true. They probably won't, but you'll feel calmer anyway.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

- **21st Century Skills:** Collaboration: making decisions
- **Key competences:** 🧠 Learning to learn, 🗣️ Linguistic communication, 💡 Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- **Useful language from the units:** 1A adjectives to describe feelings, modifying adverbs, 1B past simple (affirmative), 1D past simple (negative and interrogative), 1E adjective endings, 1G narrating events, 1H describing an event, 2B past continuous, 2D contrast: past simple and past continuous, 3E negative adjective prefixes

WARM-UP EXERCISE

Ask students to write down 1–3 of their earliest memories and how they felt. Then put students into small groups to compare their memories.

STEP 1 UNDERSTAND THE TASK

- Ask students to read the task.
- Then focus their attention on the photos. Ask them to read the instruction and answer the questions individually.
- In pairs, students compare their answers. Check the answers as a class. You could write their suggestions of adjectives to describe feelings on the board. Keep them there for the rest of the lesson as these might help with their own discussions and writing later.
- You could go through the difficult words and phrases from the speech bubbles, eliciting meanings, translations and/or examples from the students, e.g. *go through something like that, pick myself up, disappointment, do things on my own, face my worries*.
- Ask students to read the task again and discuss what they need to do.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1 Picture 1: hearing bad news, failing a test, Picture 2: a physical challenge or competition, Picture 3: playing or performing in front of other people, taking a music exam, Picture 4: travelling alone, going somewhere new

2 a 1 b 4 c 3 d 2

In each photo, the teenager learned something about his or her ability to deal with a challenge.

In the task, students need to choose an important event from their lives and explain how it affected them.

STEP 2 ANALYSE

- Students read an example milestone story and analyse the content. Give them plenty of time to read the story and find the answers to the questions. With a weaker group, check the meaning of *summarise* in question 2 before they begin. Then put the students in pairs to share their answers.
- Go through any unknown vocabulary as necessary.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- 1 photo 4
- 2 She travelled alone to Los Angeles to visit her pen pal, Candace, which was her first long-distance trip on her own.
- 3 She was anxious, scared and worried, but she wanted to be excited.
- 4 She learned that she can deal with her fears by herself and that if she makes a plan for what to do if her worries became true, this will help her to calm down.
- 5 Students' own answers.

STEP 3 PREPARE

- Students focus on the structure and organisation of the milestone story and then think critically about the criteria they use to judge a piece of writing like this.
- Focus students' attention on question 1. Put them into pairs to work out the structure of the story. Check the answers as a class.
- Students read questions 2 and 3, which help them to establish criteria for judging the story and focus on the language they can use to give feedback to others. Put them into pairs or small groups to discuss what they liked and didn't like about the story, the improvements they would make and what they would say to the writer. Encourage them to use the key phrases. Monitor and help students as necessary.
- As a whole class, elicit their ideas. You could use the prompts below to guide discussion, plus other criteria they think of:
 - Is the story interesting? How does it make you feel?
 - Is this challenge a good choice for a milestone story?
 - Is it helpful to you as the reader?
 - Is it well structured and easy to follow?
 - Is it written in good, accurate English?
- This criteria can then be used by students to give specific feedback to each other in Step 5. You could write them on the board for reference later.
- With regard to giving feedback (question 3), set some rules which they can follow:
 - *Be kind* – how would you like someone to speak to you?
 - *Be specific* – talk about specific parts of the writing rather than making a general comment and give reasons for what you say.
 - *Be constructive* – offer a useful suggestion for improvement
- They can look at the sentences they wrote to answer question 3 and decide whether they follow the rules. They may need to rewrite them to make them kinder, more specific and more constructive.

ANSWERS


1 a 2 b 1 c 6 d 3 e 4,5

2–3 Students' own answers.

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- As an optional extra activity, write these sentences on the board.
 - 1 I particularly like your conclusion because it helps the reader to understand the point of the story easily.
 - 2 If you separate the action into two paragraphs, I think it will look better because just one paragraph is too long.
 - 3 I like this story because it's really interesting and funny too.
 - Ask students to discuss which rules the sentences are examples of: a) being kind, b) being specific, c) being constructive. Some sentences may be examples of more than one.
- ANSWERS**
1 a and b 2 b and c 3 a
- Students should think about what the student learned in their milestone story and how effectively that was communicated. Students should also think about who learned the most in their milestone story.
 - After each pair has read their story, the group should give their feedback. When both stories have been heard in each group, students tell the class about the milestone stories in their group. Remember that not all students will have heard all stories, so they should begin with a brief summary and then give their feedback.
 - You could ask the class whether the feedback they received followed the rules they looked at earlier: *be kind, be specific, be constructive*.
 - As a class, students discuss which milestone stories inspired them and why.

STEP 4 CREATE

- Give students plenty of time to think of a milestone story from their own lives and prepare to talk about it. Monitor carefully and intervene if students need your help with specific vocabulary for their stories. They can write a few basic notes, but emphasise that it's thinking time, not writing time.
 - Focus their attention on the key phrases for responding to their partner. Put students into pairs to tell each other their stories.
 - When students have finished, ask them to choose one of the stories to write down together. Remind them to think about the structure of the story in Step 2 and to follow both the bullet points.
 - Give a time limit for this piece of writing and monitor carefully. Encourage fast finishers to add detail about how they felt and what they learned if they haven't already included this. All students should check their accuracy.
-  Ask students to type up their stories on school or home computers in order to upload them to the school VLE or school website. In this way their milestone stories can encourage other students in the school. You could make it a competition which other classes could vote on, with a prize to be won: The most inspiring milestone story. If students don't feel comfortable with including their name, they could write 'anonymous' or invent a pen name.

STEP 5 PRESENT AND DECIDE

- Divide the class into groups of two pairs. Ask pairs to read their stories to the others in their groups. Tell them that at the end they will need to ask questions about the other pair's milestone story and then give feedback on it.
- Those listening should make notes to help them remember the stories if necessary, and make notes of what they enjoyed about the milestone story.
- As an optional extra activity, you could tell the students that they need to think of a question to ask the storytellers at the end (and make sure the questions are asked).




STEP 6 SELF-EVALUATION

- Ask students to copy statements a–d. Then they decide individually how well they can do each thing. Point out that number 4 is very positive and number 1 is the least positive.
- You can also use the key competences evaluation rubric to evaluate how well students have done in the key competences associated with this project.
- You could then conduct a class discussion on what the students found easy and difficult about doing the project, and what they might do differently if they did the project again.

1 Pre-Intermediate 21st Century Skills Project Writing a milestone story

Key Competences Evaluation Rubric

Student's name: Class:

KEY COMPETENCE		4 EXCELLENT	3 GOOD	2 ADEQUATE	1 NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
	Learning to learn In steps 1 and 2, the student demonstrates reflection and analysis when speculating on the milestone stories. In step 5, the student is able to make an evaluation judgement on the milestone stories. In step 6, the student is able to reflect on their work and make a fair evaluation of their own performance in the project and can identify their learning needs.				
	 Linguistic communication The student has no difficulty understanding the task in step 1 and the milestone story in step 2, and so is able to answer the questions correctly. In step 3, the student is able to give positive and negative feedback on the story using the key phrases for reacting to a story in an appropriate way.				
	 Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship In step 3, the student offers opinions and uses problem-solving skills to work out the structure of the story. In the creation of the milestone story in step 4, the student uses creative thinking and organisational skills to complete the task. In step 5, the student interacts well and expresses well-argued opinions.				