# Writing stories about the past

## What to do

First read these three stories and – ask for help with any new words. Then discuss the questions with your class. Then, write your own story about the past.

# Text 1

## My First Job

My first job was back in about 1957, I think. I was around sixteen years old when I went to this job interview. I went with several other blokes – it was on a railway. Everyone was involved. There were New Australians and Aboriginal people.

It was in York, where I was a born, and because I was only sixteen years old all the friends that I went with got jobs and I was told that I was too young so they wouldn’t give me a job. But I knew that they were short of men so I went home and put on an old hat and an old pair of boots and put some black stuff on my face and went back again and got in line with my old man and they didn’t know me and this time they accepted me and that was my first job, working with the Railways.

By Saul Yarran in *Us Fellas*, Glass, C & Weller, A (Eds).

Reproduced in: *Stories about the Past – Some Recounts and Narratives for Beginning English Language Students*. Compiled by Sally Thompson, Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Education.

# Text 2

## The Price of Hamburgers.

Last week I had an old-fashioned hamburger, bought from a food-truck. It tasted fantastic. I went to a park with my daughter, and we bought burgers and had a picnic for dinner. The hamburger reminded me of hamburgers I ate when I was a kid. I grew up in the 1960s, in Portland on Victoria’s coast.

I told my daughter I used to go to the beach all day, either with my brother or alone. There were no parents around to watch over us. And we didn’t get a ride to the beach; we walked about five kilometres to get there. My mother used to give me 25 cents for the day. Fifteen cents was the price of a hamburger and I paid 10 cents for an ice-cream or a drink. That was my beach-side lunch. We had no hats, no sunscreen on our skinny white bodies – but we didn’t know how dangerous that was! The only rule of my childhood was to be home by 5 o’clock. Life is different now – and hamburgers cost a lot more.

By Pin Jenkins, 2014

## Text 3

**Possum**

When we were only little bits of kids we had this pet possum called Rex. The kids slept in one bed. This possum would come out at night and it got real savage. If you moved any part of your body the possum would grab it. No matter what part you moved – your head, arm, ankle or foot – it would grab it.

Extract from Walker and Coutts, *Me and You, The Life Story of Delia Walker,* ASP, 1989

Reproduced in: *Stories about the Past- Some Recounts and Narratives for Beginning English Language Students*. Compiled by Sally Thompson, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education

1. **Discuss with your class**:
* Agree or disagree: Good writing can be about small things we remember from long ago
* Agree or disagree: Any topic from our past can become a good story
* Agree or disagree: It’s not difficult to understand these stories, even if we don’t know every word
* Why would the children of these writers enjoy reading the stories?
1. **Now write**: which story did you enjoy most? Use ‘because’ in your answer so we understand why you liked it.

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1. **What’s wrong with this story**? Read it and then put a tick to show you understand the problems:

**A Long Time Ago**

Yesterday I worked a really long shift at OJ’s Juice Bar. I start at 7.30 AM, and usually finish at 11.30, and the other worker on the lunch shift phone in sick so I had to stay until 2 PM. I was really tired when I am finis. I have worked there for six months, now. The good news was my bos was very please., and said I’d be getting more shifts. She said take a free juice or shake home, but I say, “No Thanks!. I don’t want to see or drink juice any moe today.

Tick the problems:

* The name of the story doesn’t match the story: yesterday is **not** a long time ago.
* The story is about the past, but not every verb is in past tense: put a circle around verbs that should be in past tense, but are not.
* There are a couple of spelling mistakes: put a circle around any mistakes you can see.
* The writer uses ‘*and*’ where ‘*but*’ would make the story easier to understand: find the ‘and’.
* The writer makes some mistakes with punctuation: put a circle around any mistakes you can see.
* There is a sentence which might be true, but doesn’t make sense in this story. Circle the sentence.
* It’s impossible to understand anything of this story because of the mistakes.
1. **Now, plan your story** about the past. Think of a topic that sticks in your mind. It might be:
* food
* a pet you had
* your first job
* a difficult day
* your journey
* a story from your parent’s time
* your school days
* a frightening memory
* a song you loved when you were younger
* another topic \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
1. **Write the draft story** here:

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Look at the story again. Can you make it better? Look at it with your teacher, or volunteer tutor.

1. **Make any suggested changes** so it’s the best story about the past you can write. Give your teacher this page and the page with your final story. Ask her to make a photocopy of it and return the original so you can keep your work.

# Your final story:

**My name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## The name of my story:

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# Teacher notes: Answers and links to ACSF Indicators

## **Focus is**

Providing exemplary text to support learners to write a personal story. This format is most likely to be a re-working of activities you already do in class, re-aligned to fit with the ACSF. For this reason, a sample completed assessment is included, to show how a timeless topic can be used for verification or moderation purposes.

## Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF): Skill Level, Focus Area/ Performance Features

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Writing-Partial\* | 2.05  | Conveys intended meaning on familiar topics for a limited range of purposes and audiences | Range Audience and PurposeStructure and CohesionPlan draft, proof and review.  |
| Writing-partial\* | 2.06 | Produces familiar text types using simple vocabulary, grammatical structures and conventions | VocabularyGrammarPunctuationSpelling |
| Learning –partial | 2.02  | Applies a limited range of learning in structured and familiar contexts  | Using prior knowledge and scaffolding – uses familiar scaffolding provided by others to support learning processLearning with and from others – asks questions of a …mentor.  |

## Level of support

At level 2, support should be available ‘if requested’, so support your learners through the reading of texts and in their planning, drafting processes.

## Learners who may suit this activity

Learners returning to study who need scaffolding both to understand writing conventions and to feel inspired to write their stories

* Older learners in literacy classes, who may need some encouragement to write personal stories – especially of ‘family history’.

## **Anything to be aware of, with this activity?**

\*To demonstrate exit level 2.03, the learner must produce two text types, so **don’t** include two narratives for one ‘outcome’ in your learners’ portfolios. You’ll need to give the class another text type – use the sample activities on p. 82 of the ACSF for inspiration (for instance):

* Creates and responds to SMS texts using accepted presentation
* Writes a short description of an item for sale to be placed on a notice board
* Writes a brief message for a fellow worker
* Writes a brief text expressing an opinion, e.g. for a training provider’s learner suggestion box

**Covershee**t – Tick these items off to ensure your learner has demonstrated 2.05 and/or 2.06

Learner’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Program/Class: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Assessor’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**2.05 Conveys intended meaning on familiar topics for a limited range of purposes and audiences**

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| **SUPPORT**  | **CONTEXT** | **TEXT COMPLEXITY** | **TASK COMPLEXITY** |
| expert/mentor/teacher/tutor/assistance available to support as requested  | Familiar, predictable, limited range: all stories are from the learner’s personal history.  | Simple and familiar text, with clear purpose – writing personal history. Familiar vocabulary.  | Explicit task, limited number of familiar steps,Identifying texts, Interpreting appropriate wordsSimple sequencing to make text cohesive |
| **Focus area** | Performance features include: |
| **Range** | * Creates one text type (personal history)
* Focuses on topics relevant to personal needs and interests
* Writes at least one paragraph (prose text)
* Writes factual or personal information using notes of dot point lists
 |
| **Audience and purpose** | * Recognises that words and grammatical choices may vary to meet the requirements of the audience and purpose
* Makes some connections between own knowledge and experience and the ideas, events and information in written texts
 |
| **Structure and cohesion** | * Recognises that texts have a structure, e.g. beginning, middle and end
* Begins to sequence writing with some attention to organising principles of time and importance
 |
| **Register** | * Recognises some differences between the formal and informal registers of familiar written texts
 |
| **Plan, draft, proof, and review** | * Begins to plan writing, using strategies such as listing to organize information
* Begins to review writing, incorporating teacher/mentor comments into the drafting process.
 |

Other comments about how this indicator is demonstrated:

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**Covershee**t – tick these items off to ensure your learner has demonstrated 2.05 and/or 2.06

Learner’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Program/Class: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Assessor’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## 2.06 Produces familiar text types using simple vocabulary, grammatical structures and conventions

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SUPPORT**  | **CONTEXT** | **TEXT COMPLEXITY** | **TASK COMPLEXITY** |
| expert/mentor/teacher/tutor/assistance available to support as requested  | Familiar, predictable, limited range: all stories are from the learner’s personal history.  | Simple and familiar text, with clear purpose – writing personal history. Familiar vocabulary.  | Explicit task, limited number of familiar steps,Identifying texts, Interpreting appropriate wordsSimple sequencing to make text cohesive |
| **Focus area** | Performance features include: |
| **Vocabulary** | * Extends key vocabulary to include personal details of self, family and relevant others, most aspects of everyday life and other vocabulary of personal significance
 |
| **Grammar** | * Use action words and simple verb tenses in sentences of one or two clauses
* Uses adjectives, pronouns and prepositions to describe people, places things, and events
* Uses simple cohesive devices such as *and, but, then*
* Uses time/location markers such as *first, then, yesterday, in at*
 |
| **Punctuation** | * Uses basic punctuation, e.g. capital letters, full stops and commas
 |
| **Spelling** | * Attempts spelling by using familiar letter patterns, including phonic letter patterns, common stems, suffixes and pre-fixes
* Uses a spellchecker with support
* Refers to a dictionary to check spelling or vocabulary choices
* Shows some variation in spelling that does not interfere with overall meaning
 |
| **Legibility** | * Writes legible script
* Consistently uses support or lower case and print or cursive scripts.
 |
| Other comments about how this indicator is demonstrated:  |
|  |

# Sample answers, sample coversheets:

1. **Discuss these items with your class**:

Answers will vary. If the learners discuss the interest that children may show of a story about their parents’ past lives, you can make a note of this on the coversheet pages – or include a copy of the worksheet – in relation to 2.03 Audience and Purpose (makes some connections between own knowledge and the ideas, events and information).

1. **Now write**: which story did you enjoy most? Use ‘because’ in your answer so we understand why you liked it.

Answers will vary. You can make notes of the discussion, or include written answer with the coversheet, if it gives information about 2.03 Audience and Purpose (makes some connections between own knowledge and the ideas, events and information).

Sample answer:

I like the story about the possum because when I was a kid each night we ended up all together in one bed, so it reminded me of my time as a kid in a big family.

1. **What’s wrong with this story**? Read it and then put a tick to show you understand the problems:

**A Long Time Ago:**

Yesterday I worked a really long shift at OJ’s Juice Bar. I start at 7.30 AM, and usually finish at 11.30, and the other worker on the lunch shift phone in sick so I had to stay until 2. I was really tired when I am finis. I have worked there for six months, now. The good news was my bos was very pleased., and said I’d be getting more shifts. She said take a free juice or shake home, but I say, “No Thanks!. I don’t want to see or drink juice any moe today.

Tick the problems:

* The name of the story doesn’t match the story: yesterday is **not** a long time ago.
* The story is about the past, but not every verb is past tense: put a circle around verbs that should be in the past tense, but are not. sample incorrect uses of tenses: *phone, say*
* There are a couple of spelling mistakes sample errors: *finis (finish)/bos (boss)/moe (more)*
* The writer uses ‘*and*’ where ‘*but*’ would make the story easier to understand. The connecting clause of the second sentence needs ‘but’: *I start at 7.30 AM and usually finish at 11.30* ***but*** *the other worker on the lunch shift….*
* The writer makes some mistakes with punctuation: *sample errors: no closing quotation marks at the end of her remarks to the boss; superfluous full stop next to the comma in the middle of sentence 5.*
* There is a sentence which might be true, but doesn’t make sense in this story. *Sentence 4 isn’t really relevant to the story about yesterday.*
* It’s impossible to understand anything of this story because of the mistakes. **NB to teachers: this is the important part of the discussion*. The story is fully possible to understand, despite the technical errors,* so encourage your learners to be bold and write their story.**

SAMPLE DRAFT

**The Price of Hamburgers**

Last week told my daughter about my memory of old hamburgersI went to a park with my daughter, and we bought burgers and had a picnic for dinner. The hamburger reminded me of hamburgers I ate when I was a kid. I grew up in the 1960’s, in Portland on Victorias coast.

I told my daughter I use to go to the beach, all day, either with my brother or alone. There were no parents, no adults to watch over us. And we didn’t get a ride to the beach, we walked about five kilometres to get there. My mother used to give me 25 sents for the day. Fifteen cents was the price of a hamburger and I paid 10 cents for an ice-cream or a drink. That was my beach-side lunch. We had no hats no sunscreen on our skinny white bodies but we didn’t know how dangerous that was!!!! The only rule of my childhood was to be home by 5 o’clock. Life is different now – and hamburgers cosd a lot more.

After proofing and reviewing with a mentor:

**The Price of Hamburgers**

Last week I had an old-fashioned hamburger, bought from a food-truck. It tasted fantastic. I went to a park with my daughter, and we bought burgers and had a picnic for dinner. The hamburger reminded me of hamburgers I ate when I was a kid. I grew up in the 1960’s, in Portland on Victoria’s coast.

I told my daughter I used to go to the beach, all day, either with my brother or alone. There were no parents, no adults to watch over us. And we didn’t get a ride to the beach, we walked about five kilometres to get there. My mother used to give me 25 cents for the day. Fifteen cents was the price of a hamburger and I paid 10 cents for an ice-cream or a drink. That was my beach-side lunch. We had no hats, no sunscreen on our skinny white bodies – but we didn’t know how dangerous that was! The only rule of my childhood was to be home by 5 o’clock. Life is different now – and hamburgers cost a lot more.

SAMPLE **COMPLETED** COVERSHEET, 2.05

Learner’s name: Pin Jenkins

Program/class:CGEA Class

Teacher/assessor’s name: Lindee

Date: 26/9/14

## 2.05 Conveys intended meaning on familiar topics for a limited range of purposes and audiences

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SUPPORT**  | **CONTEXT** | **TEXT COMPLEXITY** | **TASK COMPLEXITY** |
| expert/mentor/teacher/tutor/assistance available to support as requested  | Familiar, predictable, limited range: all stories are from the learner’s personal history.  | Simple and familiar text, with clear purpose – writing personal history. Familiar vocabulary.  | Explicit task, limited number of familiar steps,Identifying texts, Interpreting appropriate wordsSimple sequencing to make text cohesive |
| **Focus area** | Performance features include: |
| **Range** | * Creates **one** text type (personal history)
* Focuses on topics relevant to personal needs and interests – story from her childhood
* Writes at least one paragraph (prose text)
* Writes factual or personal information using notes of dot point lists n/a
 |
| **Audience and purpose** | * Recognises that words and grammatical choices may vary to meet the requirements of the audience and purpose – re-wrote the first sentence of her text, to focus it in the past, after discussion.
* Makes some connections between own knowledge and experience and the ideas, events and information in written texts note answer about sharing beds, in response to Q. 3
 |
| **Structure and cohesion** | * Recognises that texts have a structure, e.g. beginning, middle and end
* Begins to sequence writing with some attention to organising principles of time and importance
 |
| **Register** | * Recognises some differences between the formal and informal registers of familiar written texts - tone is appropriate to ‘story-telling’
 |
| **Plan, draft, proof, and review** | * Begins to plan writing, using strategies such as listing to organise information-note changes made after review and proofing
* Begins to review writing, incorporating teacher/mentor comments into the drafting process.
 |

Other comments about how this indicator is demonstrated:

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| This is the first sample: another text type is demonstrated with the SMS and Twitter-verse messagesActivity.  |

**Covershee**t – tick these items off to ensure your learner has demonstrated 2.05 and/or 2.06

SAMPLE **COMPLETED** COVERSHEET, 2.05

Learner’s Name: Pin Jenkins

Program/Class: CGEA Class

Teacher/Assessor’s Name: Lindee

Date: 26/9/14

## 2.06 Produces familiar text types using simple vocabulary, grammatical structures and conventions

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SUPPORT**  | **CONTEXT** | **TEXT COMPLEXITY** | **TASK COMPLEXITY** |
| expert/mentor/teacher/tutor/assistance available to support as requested  | Familiar, predictable, limited range : all stories are from the learner’s personal history.  | Simple and familiar text, with clear purpose – writing personal history. Familiar vocabulary.  | Explicit task, limited number of familiar steps,Identifying texts, Interpreting appropriate wordsSimple sequencing to make text cohesive |
| **Focus area** | Performance features include: |
| **Range** | * Extends key vocabulary to include personal details of self, family and relevant others, most aspects of everyday life and other vocabulary of personal significance note that key vocabulary with spelling errors are noted and improved in proofing phase – e.g. ‘cost’.
 |
| **Grammar** | * Use action words and simple verb tenses in sentences of one or two clauses
* Uses adjectives, pronouns and prepositions to describe people, places things, and events
* Uses simple cohesive devices such as *and, but, then*
* Uses time/location markers such as *first, then, yesterday, in at*
 |
| **Punctuation** | * Uses basic punctuation, e.g. capital letters, full stops and commas

 note reduction of exclamation marks after review; added apostrophe |
| **Spelling** | * Attempts spelling by using familiar letter patterns, including phonic letter patterns, common stems, suffixes and pre-fixes
* Uses a spellchecker with support
* Refers to a dictionary to check spelling or vocabulary choices - checked spelling on phone, after review
* Shows some variation in spelling that does not interfere with overall meaning
 |
| **Legibility** | * Writes legible script - see below
* Consistently uses support or lower case and print or cursive scripts.
 |
| Other comments about how this indicator is demonstrated: Discussion about legibility during review led to Pin deciding to type her final version.  |