

LightUnit 6

Biography

Section 1

- Lesson 1: Introduction; “Menno Simons”; The Biographer’s Interpretation
- Lesson 2: “Grace Abounding,” Part 1: “Preconversion Experiences”
- Lesson 3: “Grace Abounding,” Part 2: “Postconversion Experiences”
- Lesson 4: “Grace Abounding,” Part 3: “Preaching Experiences”
- Lesson 5: “Grace Abounding,” Part 4: “Prison Experience”
- Lesson 6: Quiz 1

Section 2

- Lesson 7: “True . . . Till Death,” Part 1: “From Childhood to Manhood”
- Lesson 8: “True . . . Till Death,” Part 2: “Kratz Answers the Call”
- Lesson 9: “True . . . Till Death,” Part 3: “Calm in the Face of Terror”
- Lesson 10: “True . . . Till Death,” Part 4: “To Serve and to Suffer”
- Lesson 11: Quiz 2

Section 3

- Lesson 12: “William Carey,” Part 1: “Moulton and the Missionary Call”
- Lesson 13: “William Carey,” Part 2: “The Formation of the Baptist Missionary Society”
- Lesson 14: “William Carey,” Part 3: “Converts, Trials, and Progress”
- Lesson 15: Self Check
- Lesson 16: Review for the LightUnit Test
 - Biography Score Sheet
 - Glossary

LightUnit Introduction

This LightUnit differs from others in that one-third of the LightUnit grade will be a biography written by students. (This is reflected in the LightUnit score box on page 37.)

For the biography, students will choose a person they admire who is still living. The LightUnit will guide them through the steps of calling that person for permission, interviewing them, and contacting secondary sources.

Most students will initially balk at the idea of interviewing someone, particularly over the phone. However, in the end, they will usually find it to have been a worthwhile and memorable experience. If they are able to visit the person instead of calling, that is fine. Do not let them get out of calling, though, if they need to. It is the very students who do not want to talk on the phone who will be most helped by this assignment. Students groan and complain up until the time they actually interview the biographee. Then several of them will come to school with a sheepish smile, telling you something really interesting that they never knew about their grandmother, great aunt, or old friend.

You may want to tell your student that he needs to choose someone older than a certain age. Certainly the older the person is, the more chance there will be of a colorful life story.

Keep close tabs of students to make sure they are meeting their deadlines and staying on top of things. Make sure you look at the scoring sheet so you know how you will be grading them.

Make sure students have these supplies: envelopes and stamps, note cards (twenty or thirty per student), report covers.

The Unit Page Illustration. You may want to discuss the unit page picture with students. The optical instrument for this unit is eyeglasses, through which many of us see others more clearly. This unit provides glimpses of the lives of several exemplary Christians.

Foundational to the Christian's life and to each of those mentioned in this unit is the Word of God, shown here beneath a diary. The diary represents the events of a man's life. The hands, quill, and inkwell represent man's daily fashioning and recording of those events on the pages of time where others may read them and fashion their lives by them.

The background of this picture suggests the command of Christ, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The men whose biographies appear in this unit actively obeyed this commandment of Christ. Each labored in a part of the hemisphere shown.

Lesson 1

Nos. 19, 20. *Writing a Biography—Subject and Focus.* Choose your subject.

19. Write the name of your biographee. _____

Choose your focus.

20. Look at the titles for the biographies in the rest of this Unit, and jot down a possible title for yours.

Make sure students understand that a good biography is not just a record of someone's life, but a vibrant, purposeful story bringing to light some point. A good biographer feels his biography. He wants to inspire others to see the same things that he has seen in the life of the person he is writing about.

Students do not work on their biography today. However, they do need to choose their biographee and determine their focus and write a possible title. Students must have a focus in their biographies. Do not allow them to ramble on about dates and facts, although some of those are needed, of course.

Students don't need to stick with the title they choose today, but they should not change the person they are writing about, since they will need to contact them in the next lesson.

Lesson 2

No. 26. *Writing a Biography—Research.* Now that you have chosen a subject and a focus for the biography, you need to begin gathering information. Begin by calling or meeting the person and asking for permission to interview them. Tell them that you will send them a list of questions to get them thinking, and then follow up with an interview by phone or in person. Be sure to get their address, e-mail address, or fax number if you cannot hand the questions to them.

Write the time that you talked to your subject, and circle the way you talked to them.

26. Time: _____ Method: telephone in person

Today, students need to contact their biographees. The purpose of this conversation is two-fold: to ask for permission to write about them, and to get their address, e-mail address, or fax number to send them a list of

LightUnit 6 – Lessons 3, 4

questions to be used with the interview. The student should tell the person that they will send the questions immediately, and then call them after they have received the questions to arrange an interview.

Make sure students do this assignment right away—if not at school, then at home tonight. Also make sure that they either e-mail or fax the questions tonight or bring an envelope and stamp to mail them tomorrow. If the questions do not get out, the entire biography will be stalled. Make sure they tell the biographee they do not need to write answers to the questions. The questions are only to get them thinking; if they are better prepared, the interview will go faster and be more productive.

Encourage students to add their own questions to the list.

Lesson 3

Nos. 17, 18. *Writing a Biography—Purpose.* Now that you have contacted your main source for your biography, it's time to give him a list of questions to prepare for your interview. As you make your list, remember you need to have one main purpose in writing the biography—to tell your readers why you admire and respect this person. Is it because he is a faithful friend to everyone? Is it because he was a good steward of his possessions and made wise choices? Whatever it is, look especially for information that will support that purpose. Include questions that will lead your subject to give the information you need. For example, if you are showing that your subject was faithful to God despite hardships, you will want to ask questions about his times of testing. Of course, you will need to ask other basic questions as well. Be sure to ask about failures and faults; everyone has those too, and often that is what shapes our lives as much as anything.

Follow the directions.

17. In a sentence, write the purpose of your biography.

18. Make your list of questions on other paper.

Fax or mail the list to your biographee as you promised you would. Make sure he knows that he doesn't need to write answers now. He should think about the questions and be prepared to answer them verbally when you talk to him.

Make sure the questions go out today, especially if they are going by regular mail.

Today, students will also write the purpose of their biography. They may find it difficult to think of the most outstanding quality of someone they know well. However, if they were asked to describe this person to someone, they could surely summarize him or her in a few sentences.

Students may need to modify their purpose statement as they get more information, but they should know enough about the person to write one today.

Lesson 4

No. 21. *Writing a Biography—Secondary Sources.* Write the names of two possible secondary sources.

Go over the purpose statement with each student. Some may be too general: "To show how Grandpa was a great grandpa" could use some improvement. On the other hand, some may be too specific. "To show how Grandma was a skilled apple pie maker" is clearly not a broad enough base for a biography.

Students should have at least two secondary sources to call for more information about the biographee. Secondary sources are valuable, especially since they will be more free to talk about the biographee's strong points than that person himself. The secondary source should not be a close relative of the primary source.

Within the next few days, students need to make four phone calls or visits: Call the biographee; see if he got the questions and set up an interview. Call both secondary sources. Call the primary source at the scheduled time for the main interview. Because of different time frames and variables such as where the weekend falls, the LightUnit does not tell them exactly when to make these calls. Make sure they have made all the calls and are ready to begin their rough drafts in Lesson 9. Take points off the final score if a student is late.

Lesson 5

Writing a Biography—Note Taking.

This lesson gives more detailed guidance on taking notes and interviewing. Make sure you have 3 × 5 note cards for students who need them. They need twenty or thirty note cards for the interview with their primary source, and one or two for the secondary sources. Make sure they are working on their interviews.

Lesson 7

Writing a Biography—Interviewing. It's time to finish up your initial research. If you have not talked to both of your secondary sources, you should do that now, following the guidelines in Lesson 6.

Lesson 8

Writing a Biography. You need to be ready to start writing your rough draft in the next lesson. Make sure all your research is completed.

Lesson 9

Writing a Biography—the Introduction. Students are given directions to write a good opening to their biography today. They will have three days to write rough drafts. Remind them that they will likely have information they will not use. Also remind them that, in writing, quality is more important than quantity.

Lesson 10

No. 31. *Writing a Biography.* Do this exercise.

31. Take a yellow highlighter to the first paragraph and highlight all of the being verbs—*am, is, are, was, were, be, being, and been.* Do the same to the second paragraph.

Organizing the note cards into a logical order will be hard for some and fun for others. Some students you may need to stand beside and support and give ideas.

Lesson 12

Writing a Biography—the Conclusion. Students should be concluding their biography today so they can begin revising and editing tomorrow. Make sure they understand that the introduction and the ending, plus unity between the two, will determine a significant part of their score.

Lesson 13

Writing a Biography—Editing. Encourage students to get feedback from someone else on changes they could make. You could even go over it with them and make suggestions if you have the time. If they have not been typing up to this time, they should begin typing their final draft. If they do not normally have computer access, see if something can be arranged so they can.

Lesson 14

Writing a Biography—Finishing Up. Students should continue to work on their final copy. If they have pictures from the biographee, they may need help with scanning or copying them. Tell them what you want included on their title pages.

Go over the finished biography after the student has handed it in. Likely there will be a few mistakes, something missing, etc. Mark these so they can be changed before the final copy is mailed to the biographee. However, you should take the score from this copy.

After you grade the biography, students should make any corrections and print a new copy for the biographee. Remind them to include in the package any pictures, etc., they need to return.

Use the score sheet on LightUnit page 37 to score the biography:

Biography Score Sheet

Possible Points	Interviews, Primary and Secondary
10 _____	Done on time; appropriate secondary sources (no close relatives)
10 _____	Good notes taken, one card for each question
	Purpose Statement
10 _____	Carefully written to express the goal of the biography
	Main Body
10 _____	Introduction—creative and points toward the purpose statement
10 _____	Main body—carefully chosen points presented with creativity and warmth; essential parts of life included
10 _____	Ending—creative; ties back to the purpose statement and the opening paragraph(s)
	Others
10 _____	Grammar, spelling, active-voice verbs, proper sentence structure
10 _____	Title page—artistic and balanced, includes all pertinent information
10 _____	Credit page, thanks each source for their time
10 _____	Done on time; second copy sent to subject, including any pictures to return
100 _____	TOTAL POINTS

Lesson 15: Self Check

Students may study for the self check open-book, and then come to you for permission to take it closed-book. Initial the Teacher Check circle at the beginning of the self check when they are ready to take it. If a student scores less than 80%, he needs to restudy the material more before taking the LightUnit Test.

Lesson 16: Review for the LightUnit Test

The LightUnit gives these instruction to students:

To prepare for the LightUnit Test:

- Make sure you know the meanings of the vocabulary words you studied in this LightUnit.
- Make sure you understand the literary techniques introduced in this LightUnit.
- Review the *Writing a Biography* sections.
- Review the *Looking Back* sections.
- Review the self check.



Tell your teacher when you are ready to take the LightUnit Test.