

# English: Obituaries

## Introduction

Writing obituaries involves communicating in a different style, whether for a website or a quality newspaper. The activity incorporates Citizenship because it asks students to consider the contribution made to society by a range of individuals and evaluate their significance.

Students are free to select an individual, who might be a national figure or someone who has made a contribution to the local community.

The activity is aimed at GCSE students.

It explores 'the opportunities for individuals and voluntary groups to bring about social change locally, nationally, in Europe and internationally'.

# English: Obituaries

## Lesson 1

### Starter

Scan and project two or three current obituaries from newspapers and/or select some from the BBC website. A search on 'obituaries' and the year will produce some recent ones. Select people who have made a contribution to society.

Whole class offers ideas about the purpose of an obituary and these are recorded.

### Development

Select one obituary for analysis, preferably of someone known to the students. Class works in groups on one of the following aspects of the obituary.

1. The contributions to society of the deceased
2. The writer's objective
3. The tone of the article
4. If BBC obituaries used, comment on differences between these and newspaper versions.

Share phrases and ask class to comment on them. This would ideally be conducted on an interactive whiteboard as students could highlight the obituary both on the main board and on tablets.

Proceed to examine the structure of an obituary e.g.

1. A brief summary of how the person died and the highlights of his/her life.
2. His /her life in detail-each aspect should be in a separate paragraph.
3. A final paragraph outlining the main dates in subject's life – usually in bold – with details of whom he has pre-deceased.

### Plenary

Discuss people who have made a contribution to society. Suggestions might be contemporary or historical. How have they contributed?

### Homework

Students select a living or historical person who has made a significant contribution to society. The choice might be drawn from topical events. Nelson Mandela, William Wilberforce, the prime minister, Bob Geldorf ... . It could also be someone who has contributed to the local community. They research the life of the individual and prepare to write an obituary.

This can be done in an ICT equipped room in the following lesson if access from home is difficult.

## **Lesson 2**

### **Starter**

Recap on phrases used in obituaries. Discuss suitability and language style-colloquial or standard/formal English

### **Development**

Students imagine that they are writing an obituary for a newspaper or website and have a fixed deadline of 30 or 45 minutes, depending on the ability of the students. They also produce a bulleted list of the contribution the individual has made to society.

### **Plenary**

Class discussion to produce a list of features of people who contribute to society, which they merit most and why.