Unit 2

Writing - Biographical writing (place, people) - Process descriptions (general/specific) - Definitions - Recommendations – Instructions

Activity 1 - Biographical writing

A biographical sketch is the facts of a person's life presented in the form of a story. Biographical writing cannot be done off hand. It needs some time and research.

- The first step in biographical writing is deciding on the person who can be written about. Usually the subject of a biographical sketch is chosen based on prominence, contribution to a particular field, extraordinary or unusual deeds or achievements, potential to inspire and so on.

- After the choice of subject has been made, you should develop a series of questions like
  - When was the person born?
  - Where was he/she born?
  - Where did he/she grow up?
  - Which school did he/she attend?
  - Who were the members of his/her family?
  - How was his/her childhood?
  - ...

- The next step is to identify sources of information. These could consist of
  - Family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours
  - Books, newspaper reports, articles about the person
  - Files, papers maintained by the person or about the person
  - Interviews with the person or his/her associates
  - Websites, films, documentaries about the person or his/her work

- From these and any other sources you can collect the answers to all the questions that you have developed about the person and make extensive notes.

- Once you think you have collected all the necessary information, you can start writing the biographical sketch. You can follow chronological order in your biographical sketch. Although this is the most common way in which biographical sketches are organised, you could also start with the most significant event, incident in the person's life and move backward in time to look for motivation, inspiration in the person's past.
Exercise 1

Identify the famous personalities using the clues given and complete the crossword. Clue: All the personalities have contributed to research in science and technology.

Across
1. Disease cannot dim the spirit of this sharp eyed raptor in participial form. (7)
2. One who found the colour of mythical namesake effectively in the celestial sphere. (5)
3. Great man relatively speaking. (8)
4. Famed elsewhere in colour coded field. (2, 5)
5. Not a day far off from now he somehow plated his personality. (7)
6. Enacted a cosmic saga not just on paper but on TV as well. (5)
7. Not old, heavy therefore falls to the ground. (6)
8. Sounds like he bored into the tiniest particle. (4)
9. Influential in the dairy maybe close to the church. (7)
10. Moonwalker has no weak limbs. (9)
11. Portals to tiny, soft company? Not so tiny after all. (5)
12. He gives edifying light. Is he the luminous star? Sounds like it finally. (6)
13. Far sighted retractor. Looked at the centre and then religiously looked away. (7)
14. Ego cured within is twice as noble. (5)

The first one (1 Across) has been done for you. "Raptor" is the name given to a species of predatory birds like hawks, falcons etc. "Sharp eyed" refers to the trait of the hawk which has given rise to the idiomatic phrase "hawk-eyed". "In participial form" refers to the "-ing" suffix added to verbs to give the present participle. Put together, this gives "Hawking" who is a famous scientist, paralysed by a motor neuron disease.

Try solving the other clues using similar strategies.
Exercise 2

Try collecting information about one of the following personalities using the questions given:

Mahatma Gandhi        N.R. Narayanamurthy        Vikram Sarabhai
Jawaharlal Nehru       Sir C.V. Raman             Srinivas Ramanujan
Sarojini Naidu         Homi Jehangir Bhabha      Satyendra Nath Bose
Indira Gandhi          Subrahmanyam              Kiran Mazumdar
APJ Abdul Kalam        Chandrasekhar             Any other famous person
B.R Ambedkar           M. Visvesvarayya           

- When was the person born?
- Where was he/she born?
- Where did he/she grow up?
- Which school did he/she attend?
- Who were the members of his/her family?
- How was his/her childhood?
- What has he/she achieved?

Exercise 3
Write a biographical sketch using information you have collected.

______________________________________ was born in ______________ in the year ______________________
______________________________________. _____________________________________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________