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WRITING EPITAPHS

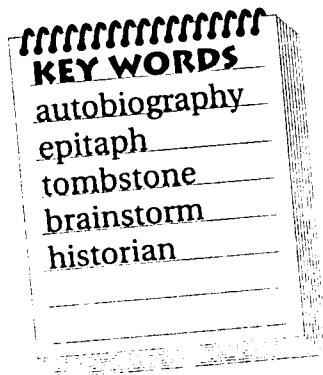
WHAT THIS EPISODE IS ABOUT

In this episode, students will learn that epitaphs are actually short biographies about someone's life. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to

-  define the term *epitaph*
-  describe examples of epitaphs
-  apply the writing process to writing an epitaph
-  develop organized writing through focused, well-developed ideas

VIDEO SUMMARY

Through his journal, Kyle narrates the writing club's field trip to Mt. Olivet, a local cemetery. Writing-club sponsor Ms. Scott tells the students that an epitaph can tell us much about a person's life and philosophy.



The students conduct a scavenger hunt to gather information from tombstones about the lives of people buried in the cemetery.

Later, Ms. Scott asks the students to write their own epitaphs and to design their own tombstones. Kyle writes an epitaph that describes the life he hopes to lead in the future.

After researching famous epitaphs on the Internet, the students display their own epitaphs and tombstone drawings in the classroom.

BEFORE VIEWING THE VIDEO

Ask students to compare an autobiography and an epitaph. Discuss which of their characteristics they would like other people to remember after their death.



Tell students to watch the video to see how the writing process is used to write an epitaph.



WHILE VIEWING THE VIDEO

1. After the writing club finishes its scavenger hunt, PAUSE the video and ask students to brainstorm ideas for types of facts they would want to include in an epitaph.
2. After the students in the writing club complete their Internet search of famous epitaphs, PAUSE the video and ask them to write a rough draft of an epitaph.
3. After Kyle and his two friends complete the tour of the cemetery with a local historian, PAUSE the video.
4. Have students work in groups of three to offer constructive comments about one another's writing. Then have them revise their epitaphs.

AFTER VIEWING THE VIDEO

After revisions are made, you may wish to have students share their epitaphs with the class. Students may do this in oral presentations or in the kind of "Tombstone Expo" demonstrated in the video.

Next, summarize the lesson by asking students to

-  define *epitaph* and *autobiography*
-  list the steps in the process of writing an epitaph

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Have students read autobiographies of famous people. These may include historical figures, authors, scientists, athletes, or artists.

Ask students to write short summaries of the autobiographies to share with the class.

2. Encourage students to research the epitaphs of famous people on the Internet. Tell them to choose one person and then to read that person's biography or autobiography. Have students compare the accuracy of the epitaph with the information they read.

They could also write papers comparing the biography or autobiography with the epitaph.



INTERNET RESOURCES

A Browser's Collection of Epitaphs

<http://www.alsirat.com/silence/epitaphs/index.html>

Eulogies and Epitaphs

<http://www.katsden.com/death/eulogy.html>

Benjamin Franklin's Epitaphs

<http://home.cwnet.com/exchange/epitaph.html>

Shakespeare's Epitaphs

<http://members.aol.com/liadona2/epitaphs.html>

