

# Body Biography Directions

## What is a body biography?

A body biography is a combination of artwork and writing (quotes from the novel and your own explanations of those quotes). You will decorate your body biography according to the requirements listed below to demonstrate your understanding of the character. Please note: your body biography is not supposed to be a literal representation of your character. Instead, it should be more like a giant collage of written ideas, drawings, and symbols that work together to show me how well you understand your character, but I also want you to be CREATIVE!

## What is the purpose?

The purpose behind creating a body biography is to allow you to take a **DEEP** look at one character from the novel or story. **You will have to review significant events, choices that your character made, and changes that your character went through internally within the course of the novel or story.** You will have to take a serious look into what makes your character tick – what motivates your character, how your character feels about himself/herself at the beginning of the novel, and how those feelings may have changed by the end of the novel.

## How do we create a body biography?

For your chosen character, you and a partner or group will create a body biography- a visual (body template) and written portrait, illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the novel. You will then present your life-size visual presentation to the class. I will provide 6 feet x 3 feet strips of white paper, paperdoll templates, colored construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, markers, crayons and colored pencils. If you wish to use other materials, you will need to bring them from home. Make sure you display your character's name prominently on the body outline paper. You and a partner may use the paperdoll template or make a life-size body by following the directions below.

1. One of you will need to be the "body".
2. Have that person lie down on the paper.
3. Trace the **outline** of the person's body. Young ladies should trace other young ladies. Gentlemen should trace other gentlemen.
4. Then choose the best way to represent the following aspects of the character symbolically:

## What should a body biography contain?

1. **THE HEART**– Where should you place it to best represent what this character loves most? What should it look like and what shape, color, pictures, or symbols should be included in it? If the character's love changes, you should find a way to represent this visually. The heart is a good place for illustrating the important relationships in his/her life.
2. **THE BACKBONE** – Actors often discuss a character's "spine." This is the character's objective within the novel. What is the most important goal for your character? What drives his/her thoughts and actions? This is his/her spine. How can you illustrate it?
3. **THE FEET** – On what is the character standing? This should be a symbolic representation of the character's most fundamental beliefs about life. How can you represent this?
4. **THE HANDS** –What does the character hold in his or her hands? Items that are associated with the character either literally or figuratively should be included. How will you represent these items?
5. **QUOTATIONS** - Near the character's head, students place five direct quotations from the story that sum up the character and add to an understanding of the character. These quotes do not necessarily need to be spoken by the character but may be by the narrator or by another character.

6. **COLORS** – Colors are often symbolic. What color(s) do you associate with your character? Why? How can you effectively work these colors into your project?
7. **PRESENTATION** – Your group will have only a short time to prepare your body biography. Then, each group will present their Body Biography to the class. The presentations should explain the choices your group made and help the class understand the meaning of the symbols you have used. After your group makes its presentation, you will display your Body Biography by hanging it on the wall in the back of the classroom. This is a group grade, so practice your presentation.
8. **CLASS PARTICIPATION** – During each presentation, the rest of the class will respond to the biography and presentation by making suggestions and discussing alternative ways in which the character might have been represented.
9. **WRITTEN PORTRAIT** – This is an important part of the project, so make sure you read the directions. Pay careful attention to the examples. The written portrait should be on your drawing.
  - a. **Paragraph one** discusses the symbols you chose and an explanation why you selected these particular items.
  - b. **Paragraph two** discusses the quotes you selected and an explanation why you selected these quotations.
  - c. **Paragraph three** discusses the colors you chose and how they represent your character.

### **Body Biography: More About the Written Portrait**

**Paragraph 1 - Visual Symbols**— Even though you may have placed many symbols on the template, you only need to discuss three symbols in this paragraph that represent significant personality traits or important aspects of your character's life. For example, you might use a light bulb to show that your character has good ideas. Make sure that each symbol from the paragraph is placed on the drawing in a meaningful place. For example, you might draw one object close to the character's heart if it symbolizes something he/she loves or feels; around the head if it symbolizes what a character thinks; on the hands if it symbolizes his/her work; etc. The paragraph should identify the most important symbols; explain what each represents, where you placed it on the body template, and why you chose to place it there. Be sure to use a topic sentence and a closing sentence.

**Paragraph 2 – Quotations** - Choose at least five quotations from the novel which reveal personality traits of your character. These do not have to be what the character actually says, but could be part of the narration or what another character says about him/her. These quotations will also be placed on the body template in a significant place, like the symbols from Paragraph 1. In your paragraph, write the exact lines from the story, explain what each quotation reveals about the character's personality, and explain where you placed the quote on the drawing and why. Be sure to use a topic sentence and a closing sentence.

**Paragraph 3 - Symbolic Colors**- On the body template, you will add any other decorations you think apply to the character. The colors you choose for these decorations should be symbolic of the character's personality. Use the color symbolism chart to help you choose the best colors for your character. Use at least three colors. In your paragraph, describe the colors you used and how those colors apply to your character's personality. Be sure to use a topic sentence and a closing sentence.

**Note on Paragraphs:** You may choose to type your paragraphs. This should be done outside of class.