

Teacher Package

English as a Second Language Exemplar Task Beginning Communication in English, ESL Level 1 – Open

Teacher Package

Title: A Composition About a New Canadian

Time requirement: 350–385 minutes

Description of the Task*

Students were asked to conduct a brief interview with an immigrant to Canada, asking at least ten questions. They were then to write a short, structured, chronologically organized composition describing this person’s life and explaining why his or her story is important to them. (The term “composition” is used in the expectations for the Writing strand of the course, and denotes a group of sentences about a topic.)

Final Product

The final product is a short, structured, chronologically organized composition.

Assessment and Evaluation

During the pre-task, students will write a sample composition. You will assess it and provide feedback before the final composition is completed.

A task-specific rubric** will be used to assess the sample composition and the final product.

* This task has been adapted from Unit 3, Activity 6: “Great Canadians”, Beginning Communication in English, ESL Level 1, Open (Public).

Expectations Addressed in the Task

Students will:

1. write in a variety of forms, with teacher guidance;
2. use some simple sentence patterns and key conventions of standard Canadian English to write about classroom topics and activities;
3. write short, structured compositions of personal relevance;
4. write simple assertive, interrogative, and imperative sentences;
5. use simple verb tenses, plurals, pronouns, count nouns, adjectives, and basic prepositions, with teacher guidance;
6. use capitals at the beginning of sentences and for frequently occurring proper nouns (e.g., names, countries, months);
7. use periods and questions marks at the end of sentences, and apostrophes in commonly used contractions;
8. spell frequently used words from classroom and personal word lists.

Teacher Instructions

Prior Knowledge and Skills Required

Before attempting the task, students should have had experience with the following:

- asking simple questions in English in the present and past tenses
- using regular and irregular verb forms in the simple past tense
- writing simple plurals and pronouns

** The rubric is reproduced on page 15 of this document.

- using connecting words to enhance chronological order (e.g., *next*, *after*, *then*)
- using subject–verb agreement
- writing brief, structured compositions (introduction, body, conclusion), using models provided by the teacher
- making short, point-form notes of answers to simple questions

Accommodations

Accommodations that are normally provided in the regular classroom for students with special needs should be provided in the administration of this performance task.

You may wish to review the relevant course profile for specific suggestions for accommodations appropriate for students in special education programs.

Materials and Resources Required

The following material and resources should be available in the classroom:

- pictures of great Canadians from newspapers and magazines
- sufficient copies of Adrienne Clarkson’s biographical notes and picture (Appendix 1)
- sufficient copies of biographical notes of great Canadians to be used by students to practise writing interview questions and a composition (sample biographical notes for Donovan Bailey and Roberta Bondar are included in the Teacher Package, in Appendices 2 and 3, respectively)
- posted charts of the teacher-modelled composition (Appendix 4) and the list of interview questions generated in the pre-task
- sufficient copies of the list of possible interview questions (Appendix 5)
- sufficient copies of the task-specific rubric and the Student Checklist for Writing a Composition (Appendix 6)

Rubric

Introduce the task-specific rubric to the students at least one day prior to the administration of the task. Review the rubric with the students and ensure that each student understands the criteria and the descriptions for achievement at each level.

Allow ample class time for a thorough reading and discussion of the assessment criteria outlined in the rubric.

Some students may perform below level 1. It will be important to note the characteristics of their work in relation to the criteria in the assessment rubric and to provide feedback to help them improve.

Task Instructions

Steps in the Pre-Task Process

Part 1 (70 minutes)

1. Ask students to name a person important to them from their home country or their past experience. Discuss and record the qualities they admire, which could include:
 - helping other people
 - inventing new things
 - creativity
 - bravery
 - outstanding achievements.
2. Show the students a selection of two to five pictures, obtained from magazines, newspapers, the Internet, and so on, of well-known Canadians from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, such as Susan Aglukark, Lincoln Alexander, Margaret Atwood, Donovan Bailey, Roberta Bondar, Kim Campbell, Jim Carrey, Wayne Gretzky, Rick Hansen, Rohinton Mistry, Oscar Peterson, John Polanyi, Jeanne Sauvé, or David Suzuki.

3. Help students identify these Canadians (by having them match the person's picture with his or her name) and describe their achievements. In addition, prepare a cloze exercise for students to review subject–verb agreement.

Part 2 (70 minutes)

1. Show the class a picture of Adrienne Clarkson (see Appendix 1) and begin a brief discussion about her and her role as Governor General of Canada.
2. Distribute the point-form notes about Clarkson's life (see Appendix 1), and ensure that the students understand the information.
3. Ask students to identify the questions that lead to the information found in the notes (e.g., *Where were you born? When did you come to Canada? Where did you go to school?*). Record these questions on a chart and later copy them onto a handout to distribute to students. A list of sample interview questions, which can be distributed to students, is provided in Appendix 5.
4. Using a think-aloud process (that is, verbalizing the thinking process involved in writing), model the writing of a composition about Adrienne Clarkson based on the information generated from the point-form notes. Model the creation of a composition organized in chronological order from the beginning of her life until the present. (A sample composition is included in Appendix 4.)
5. Post the sample in the classroom for reference. Show the connection between the content of the notes and the content of the composition. Elaborate on the importance of this link, as well as on the chronological development of the composition. Direct students' attention to the last sentence and point out how the writer makes a personal comment on Adrienne Clarkson's life story.

Part 3 (90 minutes)

1. Give students two additional pictures of other famous Canadians, and provide their biographical information in point-form notes. Biographical notes on Donovan Bailey and Roberta Bondar are included in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, respectively. For more information, consult the following websites:
 - <http://donovanbailey.com/bio.htm>
 - <http://www.senecac.on.ca/bondar/bondar.html>
2. Have students form pairs, with each partner receiving one of the pictures with its corresponding biographical notes. The first student uses the interview questions generated in Part 2 to interview the other student, who is playing the role of the famous Canadian in his or her picture and using the biographical notes to supply the answers. The interviewing student should take short, point-form notes of the answers. Then the other student assumes the role of the interviewer.
3. Each student then uses his or her point-form notes to write a composition about the individual interviewed in the role-play, following the model composition in Part 2 (see the sample in Appendix 4). Stress the importance of chronological order and personal relevance.
4. Collect the compositions and provide an opportunity to do another interview for students who need more practice.
5. Provide opportunities for the students to conference with you.

Exemplar Task

Part 1 (60 minutes)

1. Distribute copies of the Student Instructions for the Exemplar Task and of the Student Checklist for Writing a Composition (Appendix 6).
2. Lead a class discussion about the various meanings of the word “great”. Someone can be great, because of their personal qualities and achievements, without necessarily being famous. People who come to Canada and make a life for themselves here are demonstrating their own brand of “greatness”, and this is important to recognize and celebrate.
3. Clarify for the students that the interview is to be done outside of class time. Students will use the list of at least ten interview questions generated during the pre-task activities. The interview may be conducted in the first language and notes may be taken in the first language if it will assist students. However, to meet the requirements of the task, each student must hand in a set of notes in English. The notes will not be assessed. Distribute and review the task-specific rubric and make certain that each student understands it.

Part 2 (60 minutes)

1. As noted in Part 2 of the Student Instructions for the Exemplar Task, students use the notes from the interview to write their own compositions in class, in English.

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE EXEMPLAR TASK

Interview an immigrant to Canada and write about him or her

Part 1 *(This part of the assignment will be done outside of class.)*

Think of an immigrant to Canada you know. Think about what you would like to know about this person’s life. The person you choose could be a teacher, a student, a school staff member, a friend, a family member, or a person from your community.

Use the interview questions listed in class to interview the person you choose. Take notes about the person’s life.

Part 2 *(60 minutes)* *(This part of the assignment will be done in class.)*

Use the information in your notes to write a composition about the person. Use the model compositions done in class to help you write your own composition.

Remember to use the Student Checklist for Writing a Composition and the Rubric for a Composition About a New Canadian to help you do your best work.

Complete the Student Checklist for Writing a Composition.

Give your composition and your notes to your teacher.

Appendix 1

Adrienne Clarkson – Biographical Notes

- born in 1939
- born in Hong Kong
- came to Canada as a refugee during World War II
- came to Canada in 1942
- grew up in Ottawa
- finished high school in Ottawa
- graduated from University of Toronto
- worked for the CBC for 30 years as a journalist and broadcaster
- became governor general in 1999 (the governor general represents the Queen in Canada)
- first immigrant to Canada to become governor general
- bilingual in French and English



Photo by Andrew MacNaughton, 1999

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson,
Governor General of Canada

Photo courtesy of the Secretary to the Governor General

Appendix 2

Donovan Bailey – Biographical Notes

- born in 1967
- born in Manchester, Jamaica
- came to Canada at age 13
- went to Queen Elizabeth High School in Oakville, Ontario
- graduated from Sheridan College in Oakville with a diploma in business administration
- has one daughter, Adrienna
- is a full-time athlete
- won two gold medals in running at the 1996 Olympic Games
- at the 1996 Olympics, Donovan ran 100 metres in 9.84 seconds – a world record
- lives in Oakville, Ontario

Appendix 3

Roberta Bondar – Biographical Notes

- born in 1945
- born in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
- wanted to be an astronaut when she was a child
- was always interested in science and space
- got a Ph.D. in neurobiology from the University of Toronto in 1974
- graduated as a medical doctor from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1977
- began training as an astronaut in 1984
- travelled in space on the shuttle *Discovery* in 1992
- was in space for eight days
- was the first Canadian woman to travel in space
- received many awards including the NASA Space Medal
- favourite colour is blue and favourite planet is Earth

Appendix 4

Body of the Model Composition – Adrienne Clarkson

Adrienne Clarkson was born in Hong Kong in 1939. She came to Canada in 1942. She was a refugee during World War II. Ms. Clarkson grew up in Ottawa. She finished high school there. Then she graduated from the University of Toronto. After that, she got a job with the CBC. She worked for the CBC for 30 years as a journalist and broadcaster. Ms. Clarkson became the Governor General of Canada in 1999. The governor general represents the Queen of England in Canada. Ms. Clarkson is the first immigrant to Canada to become the governor general. She speaks both English and French. Ms. Clarkson's life shows me that immigrants can do everything in Canada.

Appendix 5

Sample Interview Questions

- When were you born?
- Where were you born?
- When did you come to Canada?
- Why did you come to Canada?
- Where did you go to school?
- What did you study?
- Where did you grow up?
- What is your job?
- What do you do now?
- How many languages do you speak?
- What is your biggest achievement?
- What are you proud of?
- What do you want to do in the future?

Appendix 6

Student Checklist for Writing a Composition

- I used the information from my interview questions in my composition.
- I followed chronological order in my composition.
- I included in the composition some reasons why I think this person's life story is important to me personally or how it has influenced me.

I checked my composition for:

- capital letters on names and at the beginning of every sentence
- a period at the end of every sentence
- correct spelling
- correct past tense verb forms

Student's Name _____

Date _____