

Life writing

LINKS TO:

Stage 3 Module 9

Learning Object 3: *What kind of volunteer are you?*

Exercise 1

Sample answers:

- 1.1 What are the main ideas in the text? Summarise, in English, the main ideas in each paragraph.**

Paragraph 1

Lisa's parents were both volunteers. Lisa's father came from a long line of volunteers.

Paragraph 2

Lisa's father went out to fight a bushfire and never returned.

Paragraph 3

Lisa's mother supported survivors of the bushfire by making food and tea, and spending time with them.

Paragraph 4

Lisa feels her mother was courageous and generous.

Paragraph 5

Lisa has worked in a wide range of different volunteering organisations and positions.

Paragraph 6

Lisa is currently working as a volunteer in Indonesia.

Paragraph 7

Sometimes volunteer work is hard, but it is important.

Paragraph 8

Volunteering has been very rewarding for Lisa, and she sees it as a way to honour her parents.

- 1.2 Were there particular words or phrases that you found difficult to understand? What strategies did you use to understand these words or phrases, or to understand the text as a whole despite not being sure what some words meant?**

There are several strategies that I use to understand words or phrases that I don't know. First, I look at the context to see if I can understand the word preceding or following that difficult word or phrase. For example, this passage has a lot of the *me-...-kan* words such as *memadamkan*, *menghanguskan*, *membagikan*, *membersihkan*, *menjelaskan* and so on. The word *memadamkan*, which appears twice in paragraph two, is preceded with the word *untuk* in one instance and *mencoba* in the second one. In both instances, it is followed by the word *api*, which I know means 'fire'. I know *untuk* means 'to' or 'for' and *mencoba* is 'to try'. So, I can deduce from the context that the father is trying to do something to the fire, most likely extinguish it. To make sure, I can look the word up in the dictionary, but before I do that I need to work out what the base word for *memadamkan* is. I know the word has a *me-* prefix and a *-kan* suffix, so the base word should be *madam*, *padam* or *badam*. When I looked these three words up in the dictionary, I found the word *padam*, which means 'to extinguish', so my guess was correct that *memadamkan* means 'to extinguish'.

- 1.3 Why does Lisa say that volunteering is in her blood?**

She says this because both of her parents were volunteers and because her father told her he came from a long line of volunteers.

- 1.4 What happened to Lisa's father during the bushfire she describes?**

Lisa's father died while he was trying to save a family's home from the bushfire.

1.5 What sorts of volunteer work has Lisa done?

Lisa has done volunteer work in soup kitchens and by doing gardening. She is currently doing volunteer work in Indonesia.

1.6 What does Lisa describe as the rewarding aspects of being a volunteer?

Lisa describes a range of intrinsic and practical rewards associated with being a volunteer, including knowing she is working to make the world a better place, having a sense of purpose, making new friends, learning new skills, appreciating and understanding a diverse array of people and lifestyles, and honouring her parents.

Exercise 2

2.1 What aspects of her life does Lisa not mention in the column? Why does she not mention these aspects of her life?

The article focuses on Lisa's work as a volunteer and some aspects of her family history; it does not include many details about other aspects of her life. For example, she does not mention her living situation, her education or how she earns her income. She doesn't talk about her close friends, although she does say that volunteering has helped her make new friends.

Because she speaks about her mother in the past tense, I think you can infer that she has passed away, but Lisa does not write about this.

Lisa does not mention how old she is or where she lived in Australia.

Lisa only glances over the less palatable aspects of volunteer work. She mentions that 'sometimes it is hard work'. She also tells the story of her father's death while working as a volunteer, but what I took away from this was a strong sense that he was a hero, rather than a tragic figure.

2.2 After reading the article, did you feel as though you should seek out opportunities to volunteer? What techniques does Lisa use to persuade readers that they should volunteer?

After reading the article, I felt a great deal of admiration for Lisa and her parents, and did feel that doing volunteer work would be a worthwhile thing to pursue.

I think that most of the 'silences' in Lisa's piece are a result of the tight focus she maintains on her theme. However, I think that her focus on the positive aspects of volunteering is one way in which she persuades the reader about the value it can add to their lives.

I think that the stories about Lisa's father in the bushfire, and her mother's actions after his passing, are powerful and moving stories about two people who placed other people's needs above their own. They exemplify the heroism of self-sacrifice and, for me, demonstrate that they were good people. I think that most people want to be good, and that this is an effective but subtle way of persuading people that volunteering is a good thing to do.