

## WRITING LESSON

# Writing a Mini Saga

### What is a Mini Saga?

A mini saga is a piece of writing which has exactly fifty words, not including the title, which can have up to fifteen words. A mini saga has to tell a story and have a beginning, middle and end. It cannot just be a description of something.

The first mini sagas appeared in 1982 in the Sunday Telegraph, an English newspaper. The Sunday Telegraph announced the idea of the mini saga and held a competition for the best ones.

### Why use mini sagas?

Mini sagas provide an excellent vehicle for a short writing lesson. This is because:

- they are easy to read
- it is an easy task for the learner to understand
- to the learner, writing fifty words does not sound difficult (not at first!)
- they focus on accuracy (in the editing stage)
- like all creative writing, they have the potential to be very motivating

Here is a writing lesson plan based on mini sagas.

### Lesson Plan

**Level:** *Pre-intermediate (although the level can easily be adjusted)*

**Aim:** *Learners learn about mini sagas and read one, which they try to finish themselves. They then write their own mini saga. Students practice writing skills involved in process writing (brainstorming, draft-writing and editing)*

**Stage One:** Write on the board the word saga. Ask students if they know what a saga is. A saga is a story about a group of people over a long period of time. The film series Star Wars is a saga. Tell them that today they are going to write their own saga, but a special kind of saga, a mini-saga.

**Stage Two:** Tell them that before they write their own, they are going to read one. Pre-teach any difficult vocabulary (ie dock). There are different ways you could exploit this stage of the lesson, using the sample mini-saga in the appendix below.

- 1) Ask the students to read it once, turn it over and tell it to a partner in their own words.
- 2) Give them the mini saga without the title. Tell them to read it and write a title for it in less than 15 words. Compare titles.
- 3) Give them the mini saga and take out the last line. Ask them to finish the story with a short sentence. Compare sentences.

**Stage Three.** Tell the class that that story was a saga of a special kind. It was a mini saga. Explain the background of the mini saga (see above). Tell them that now they are going to write their own mini sagas in pairs. Give each pair a prompt to help them focus their writing. Ask them to brainstorm ideas on a piece of paper for their story.

Two kinds of prompt

- A picture or a painting is a great prompt to get students started. You can find pictures of paintings on the Internet at the following famous museum and art gallery websites. Just click on the link to Collections

[www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

[www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)

[www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)

- If you do not have access to the Internet, you could ask students to write their story based on an English proverb (the proverb could serve as a moral to the story, or the title). Here are some proverbs you could use (depending on the level of the class you may have to explain the proverbs):

*The early bird catches the worm.*

*Look before you leap.*

*A rolling stone gathers no moss.*

*Out of sight, out of mind.*

*Never say die.*

*Let sleeping dogs lie.*

*Better late than never.*

**Stage four:** Students in pairs write the first draft of a very short story based on their prompt (picture or proverb) and ideas. They don't need to worry about the number of words at this stage.

**Stage Five:** Ask students to swap stories with another pair. Their task now is to make corrections to the others' story. Tell them to look for spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes. Have a dictionary on hand to help them. Circulate and help pairs as needed.

**Stage Six:** The pairs return the corrected drafts to each other. Now the students should prepare the final draft. They must (1) rewrite the story with corrections and (2) make sure it is between 48 and 52 words exactly (if you think they are up to the challenge, tell them to adhere strictly to the rule of 50 words!) They must also give their mini saga a title.

**Stage Seven:** Put the mini sagas with their corresponding titles and prompts around the class. Direct students to read each others' mini sagas. You could have the class vote on which is the best one.

## **Appendix 1:**

Sample mini-saga:

### WAITING FOR FATE

The girl said she was going to come back.

The boy promised to wait.

He sat on the dock and waited.

One day while he was waiting he noticed another girl sitting and looking out to sea.

“Are you waiting too?” he asked.

“Not anymore,” she said.

They both smiled.