

Write a Life Starter Program

Don't get it right. Get it written!

THEME 4: WHEN?

This Theme explores the important dates and times in the life you're recording. As always, we're looking only for basic information.

Avoid the ever-growing temptation to ask for more! There will be plenty of opportunities to fill in the gaps once you have laid the foundation of the story.

Exercise 1

When were you born?	
What was the world like at that time?	
How old were you when you started school?	
Where did you start school?	
How many schools did you attend before you left?	
How old were you when you left school?	
If you ever went back, what made you do that?	
What's your highest level of education?	
When did you start work?	
What was your first job?	
How many years have you been working?	
If you had more than one job, what was your favourite?	
What did you like most about that job?	
If you had more than one job, what made you change?	
When did you first fall in love?	
When and where was your first kiss?	
How was it?	
When did you first experience heartbreak?	
When did you become a mother/father/aunt/uncle/godparent?	

A life remembered lives forever *Eileen Bennett*

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Exercise 2

- ✓ **Once you've recorded those basic details, you need to start to put them into sentences.**
- ✓ **You don't need anything other than the most basic information at this stage.**
- ✓ **Resist the temptation to dig deeper or add embellishments!**

If you are writing your own story, it will look something like this.

FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE

I was born on January 12th 1955. It was a Wednesday in the middle of the Baby Boomer ** era. Nothing hugely significant happened in the world on that day.

When I was 4 ½ I started Junior Infants in St Anne's, Milltown. This was the first of 4 schools*** I attended before I left at 17. ***

I went back to education in my 50's *** to satisfy my hunger for knowledge. So far, ***my highest level of Education is a Masters in Writing from NUI, Galway in 2012.

My first paid job was babysitting, when I was 12 and I've been working ever since, so that's 53 years.

I love my current job because it has elements of all my favourite things - horses, teaching, learning, helping. *** I've changed jobs very often. I love the challenge of setting up something new and will give it 120%. But, as soon as it starts to feel like work, I need to move on. ***

My first love was The Virginian, when I was about 12. He had everything I wanted in a man - ***especially a horse.

I think I was about 13 when I had my first kiss in the Cove. It was memorably awful. ***

In my late teens I had a crush on a guy and I thought he liked me too, but then he asked my sister to the debs. I was heartbroken at the time. **

I first became an aunt in 1980 and a godparent in 1985. In 1987 I became a mother and in 2016 I became a grandmother. ***

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If you were telling my story based on the answers given in the First-Person Narrative, it would look like this.

THIRD-PERSON NARRATIVE

Eileen was born on January 12th, 1955. It was a Wednesday in the middle of the Baby Boomer ****** era. Nothing hugely significant happened in the world on that day.

When she was 4 ½ Eileen started Junior Infants in St Anne's, Milltown. This was the first of 4 schools ******* she attended before she left at 17. *******

She went back to education in her 50's ******* to satisfy her hunger for knowledge. So far, *******her highest level of Education is a Masters in Writing from NUI, Galway in 2012.

Eileen's first paid job was babysitting, when she was 12 and she's been working ever since, so that's 53 years.

She loves my current job because it has elements of all her favourite things - horses, teaching, learning, helping. ******* Eileen has changed jobs very often. She loves the challenge of setting up something new and will give it 120%. But, as soon as it starts to feel like work, she needs to move on. *******

Her first love was The Virginian, when she was about 12. He had everything she wanted in a man - ******* especially a horse.

Eileen thinks she was about 13 when she had my first kiss in the Cove. It was memorably awful. *******

In her late teens she had a crush on a guy and thought he liked her too, but then he asked her sister to the debs. She was heartbroken at the time. ******

She first became an aunt in 1980 and a godparent in 1985. In 1987 Eileen became a mother and in 2016 she became a grandmother. *******

Exercise 3 Mark and rank significant story points

If you haven't been signposting the significant life moments as you go through the exercises, you need to go back and do that now. The next phase of the process will ask about those moments.

Rank them in order of importance any way you like, but do not have any more than three levels. In the examples above, I've used ******* for the first level of story points – those that are most significant. The second layer – those that seem important, but not vital – are marked with ****** and the story points that are interesting, but not essential to the story, are marked *****.

It's all been groundwork up to now, but this process is about to get interesting!

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