

Write a Life Starter Program

Don't get it right. Get it written!

THEME 5: WHY?

So far, you've completed a total of 12 exercises on 4 different themes.

You should have a list of answers and a short narrative about each theme.

Now you have a sketch of

- WHO? – the basic details about the person who's story you're recording
- WHAT? – Titles given and earned.
- WHERE? – Places of significance, geographically and otherwise.
- WHEN? – Times that mattered.

You should also have identified a set of points in each narrative that merit further exploration. This is where that exploration starts!

Those points need to be ranked in order of importance, no more than 3 layers deep.

And now you get to give what we all crave – attention, the opportunity to be listened to, a chance to tell our story to a receptive audience.

Exercise 1

Read back through each of the four narratives and take out the highest-ranking story points.

In the example below, you'll see all the points I had marked with *** in my first-person narrative.

I've always felt that my name is a bit old-fashioned and that it never fully belonged to me.
My father died when I was seven.
My family came from West Cork.
It's my name and I like it.
Other names I'm called by include Mom***, and Nanny
Being the eldest brought a lot of responsibility and pressure as I was growing up.
I didn't start 3 rd level education until I was in my 50's.
My lack of formal education always made me feel inferior.
Honesty and integrity are my core values.
If those values are challenged, I feel threatened but more determined to uphold them.
I have learned to create my own personal rules.

A life remembered lives forever *Eileen Bennett*

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my first memory of a place is our family home in Braemor Rd in Dublin
There are very happy memories associated with that house, but some very sad ones too.
Throughout my life I've moved around a lot
I also spent about 10 months working in Manchester.
I envisage ending my days sitting in a garden, soaking up the sun, listening to the sound of children playing.
Galway is my favourite place now because I love my work here and the pace of life suits me.
My favourite place to visit is Australia
My happy place is definitely Rosadale.
I'm reasonably happy at the moment.
There is plenty of room for improvement in all areas!
In 5 years I plan to have the freedom to be, do and have what I want, whenever I want!
When I'm daydreaming, my mind wanders to Rosadale.
Physically, I think I was at my best in my mid-20's
I have grown and matured and earned a lot of wisdom since then.
St Anne's was the first of 4 schools
I left school 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
as soon as it starts to feel like work, I need to move on.
The Virginian had everything I wanted in a man
I think I was about 13 when I had my first kiss in the Cove. It was memorably awful.
In 1987 I became a mother and in 2016 I became a grandmother.

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Exercise 2

- ✓ Take one story point at a time and ask 'Why?'
- ✓ Be gentle and mindful not to pry or dig deeper than is comfortable
- ✓ If the person you're asking doesn't want to answer, mark that point and move on. There may be an opportunity to come back to it later.
- ✓ Keep answers short – not an easy task – but 100-word answers MAX
- ✓ Make sure you mark further story points that arise.
- ✓ Sometimes, 'Tell me more' is more acceptable than 'Why?' and leads to a better result.
- ✓ Stick to the plan!
- ✓ Once you have your answers, the unique story will begin to take shape!

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

FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE

I've always felt that my name is a bit old-fashioned and that it never fully belonged to me. The only other people I knew with my name were adults. My parents called me after somebody else, so it didn't feel original enough

My father died when I was seven. He had a heart attack when was 47. His health wasn't good because he'd had a hard time in the war. My sister and I were in West Cork with family when he died so everything was over by the time we got back to Dublin. He was just not there anymore.

My family came from West Cork. There's a T-junction in the village. The Bennett's had a shop on one side of the road and the Urells had a pub on the other side. My father was born on the Bennett side. My mother was born in Wicklow but the Urells in Cork were first cousins.

Bennett is my name and I like it. The Bennetts were well-respected and my father always taught me that it was a name to be proud of

Other names I'm called by include Mom and Ireland Nanny. My son and daughter called me Eileen until they started school and everyone else's mother was called Mom – so I became Mom too. My eldest granddaughter named me Ireland Nanny to differentiate me from her other Nanny and it stuck!

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Being the eldest brought a lot of responsibility and pressure as I was growing up. After my father died my relationship with my mother changed and I became more of a partner than a child. I took my role as big sister very seriously. I was frequently told (by other adults, not by my mother) that it was my responsibility to set a good example and to make sure that none of my sisters did anything to upset our mother.

I didn't start 3rd level education until I was in my 50's. When I finished secondary school I needed to go to work to help support the family. Granny Urell had been willing to pay for me to go to college, but only if I did Teaching. I had no interest in being a teacher so my first act of rebellion was to refuse her offer.

My lack of formal education always made me feel inferior. As I got older, I felt the lack of a formal qualification held me back from applying for positions – but I have no regrets about the path I took. I always found a way to pursue whatever job I wanted – even if I have a habit of doing things backwards. Often, I would get a job, work my way into a senior position and then go and get the qualifications I should have had to be there.

Honesty and integrity are my core values. My father always told me that if I'm honest in my dealings with the world, I can't go wrong – especially when being honest is not the easy thing to do. **If those values are challenged, I feel threatened but more determined to uphold them.** Lack of honesty and integrity – especially when I see it in people in positions of trust or power – really offends me and I get quite puritanical about it.

I have learned to create my own personal rules. Because I missed out on a lot of direction during childhood, the rules I live by are ones I've created for myself – all based on being honest and true. I love the Shakespeare quote 'this above all, to thine own self be true for it must follow – as the night the day – thou canst not then be false to any man.' I also love the 'Golden Rule' which basically says treat people as you would like to be treated.

My first memory of a place is our family home in Braemor Rd in Dublin I don't remember a time before Braemor Road. I think I was around 2 when we moved in. I remember that the back garden was a mess. The grass was long, like a field. I remember when it was all dug up and we put grass seed on it and we weren't allowed to play on it for weeks. I remember helping to build the rockery and planting heathers between the stones.

There are very happy memories associated with that house, but some very sad ones too. Happy memories include playing with friends in the garden or on the street or in each other's houses. My tricycle, roller skates, cowboys and Indians, cap guns, going to the local shop. We lived in the house for just over 2 years after my father died and things were different for those years.

Throughout my life I've moved around a lot. I've never felt much attachment to place so moving didn't bother me too much. I lived in Braemor Road until just before my 9th birthday and in Bray until I was 21. After that, I never spent longer than 5 years anywhere, until we moved back to Galway in 1996. **I also spent about 10 months working in Manchester.** I left my 'permanent and pensionable' job in the bank at 22 because I was totally frustrated. I felt there was something I was supposed to be doing to help the world. I worked for my keep in a hostel for 'emotionally disturbed adolescent girls' in Manchester. That's when I first really saw the healing power of horses at work.

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I envisage ending my days sitting in a garden, soaking up the sun, listening to the sound of children playing. I have a sense that I'm going to live into my 90's and be active, involved and useful right to the end. I never want to have to be minded by anyone, or to be considered a burden. I can see myself gently falling asleep for the last time in a garden, in the sunshine, with the sound of children laughing and playing in the background.

Galway is my favourite place now because I love my work here and the pace of life suits me. I first came to Galway in 1968 when I was 13. I won a scholarship to spend 3 months learning Irish in Connemara. From the moment I got off the train, I knew I'd live here someday. It had a familiar and very comfortable energy. I came back in 1980 for a holiday and have been here since – with a few interruptions. I love my work with Horses Connect. It helps me stay grounded and feel useful.

My favourite place to visit is Australia. My son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren live near Melbourne and I visit as often as possible. I don't mind the long journey at all, especially if I can travel alone. My dream is to be able to travel first class and stay as long as I want!

My happy place is definitely Rosadale. Rosadale is the name of the property my Australian family live on. There's something beautiful about the energy of the place as soon as you drive through the gate. I would never ask to leave when I'm there.

I'm reasonably happy at the moment. I'm a glass half full person and always look for something good in every situation – thanks to Pollyanna's father! **There is plenty of room for improvement in all areas!** If I didn't feel like there was room for improvement there would be no point getting up every day.

In 5 years, I plan to have the freedom to be, do and have what I want, whenever I want! That boils down to health and wealth.

When I'm daydreaming, my mind wanders to Rosadale. It's a beautiful place, but not really in the physical sense. My soul is at peace there

Physically, I think I was at my best in my mid-20's. I was strong and fit and full ideas, with the energy to be creative. **have grown and matured and earned a lot of wisdom since then.** I'm still full of ideas and creativity and curiosity but I'm a bit slower to jump into projects. Most – if not all – my life lessons have been learned the hard way. I've never been great at taking instructions and have always wanted to try things out for myself. I touched a lot of wet paint and electric fences!

St Anne's was the first of 4 schools. I started in St Anne's in Milltown because we were living in Dublin. When we moved to Wicklow in 1964 I started in St Patrick's in Bray, but moved to St Brigid's in Kilcoole in September 1965. From there I went to Secondary School in St David's in Greystones. They were all Catholic schools and there were a lot of nuns, but the numbers dwindled as I went through school.

I left school at 17 after my Leaving Cert. I wanted to study veterinary or journalism but wasn't allowed. They wanted me to be a teacher but I didn't like children, so I went to work. It was important at that time for me to work because my mother needed financial help with my four younger sisters.

I went back to education in my 50's to satisfy my hunger for knowledge. I really loved learning and had a deep hunger for knowledge so I always felt that I'd missed out by not going to college. In my 50's, I had been working as an unqualified riding instructor for many years when a new training course for

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equestrian coaches became available. I applied, was accepted and remembered how much I loved learning new things. Then my brother-in-law encouraged me to apply for a Master in Writing as a mature student. I was accepted and earned a 1.1

So far, my highest level of Education is a Masters in Writing from NUI, Galway in 2012. After the Masters finished I knew I had to keep learning. I was lucky in that courses appeared to help me along the path. I passed every course with high marks and am now qualified in Therapeutic Horse-riding Coaching, Equine-assisted Learning Facilitation, Disability Awareness, Personal Development, Training Trainers, Leadership Skills, Managing People, WRAP, Mindfulness and First Aid – and more! I'm just finished a Level 9 post-grad in Mental Health Promotion

I work really hard to anything I'm interested in and give 200% - until it starts to feel routine (like work). As soon as a project starts to feel that it's not a challenge anymore, I need to find a new project

The Virginian had everything I wanted in a man. He was kind. He helped people. He fought for the underdog. He was a good cowboy, even though he wore a black hat, and he had a horse.

I think I was about 13 when I had my first kiss in the Cove. It was memorably awful. The Cove was the outdoor swimming pool in Bray where we spent every summer as children. My mother would pack us a picnic and I would take my four younger sisters there for the whole day. The less said about that first kiss the better

I got married in 1986 and my son was born in 87. In 1989 my daughter was born. My son's first daughter came along in 2016, and his second in 2018.. They call me Ireland Nanny.

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If you're writing somebody else's story, it will look something like this.

To keep things simple, we'll again assume that you're telling my story based on the answers given in the First-Person Narrative.

THIRD-PERSON NARRATIVE

Eileen has always felt that her name is a bit old-fashioned and that it never fully belonged to her.

The only other people she knew with her name were adults. Her parents called her after somebody else so it didn't feel original enough

Her father died when she was seven. He had a heart attack when he was 47. His health wasn't good because he'd had a hard time in the war. Eileen and her sister were in West Cork with family when he died so everything was over by the time they got back to Dublin. He was just not there anymore.

Eileen's family came from West Cork. There's a T-junction in the village. The Bennett's had a shop on one side of the road and the Urells had a pub on the other side. Her father was born on the Bennett side. Her mother was born in Wicklow but the Urells in Cork were first cousins.

Bennett is her name and she likes it. The Bennetts were well-respected, and her father always taught her that it was a name to be proud of. **Other names she's called by include Mom and Ireland Nanny.** Her son and daughter called her Eileen until they started school and everyone else's mother was called Mom – so she became Mom too. Her eldest granddaughter named her Ireland Nanny to differentiate her from her other Nanny and it stuck!

Being the eldest brought a lot of responsibility and pressure as she was growing up. After her father died, Eileen's relationship with her mother changed and she became more of a partner than a child. She took her role as big sister very seriously. She was frequently told (by other adults, not by her mother) that it was her responsibility to set a good example and to make sure that none of her sisters did anything to upset their mother.

Eileen didn't start 3rd level education until she was in her 50's. When she finished secondary school she needed to go to work to help support the family. Granny Urell had been willing to pay for her to go to college, but only if she did Teaching. She had no interest in being a teacher so her first act of rebellion was to refuse her offer.

As Eileen got older, she felt the lack of a formal qualification held her back from applying for positions – but she has no regrets about the path she took. She always found a way to pursue whatever job she wanted – even if she has a habit of doing things backwards. Often, Eileen would get a job, work her way into a senior position and then go and get the qualifications she should have had to be there.

Honesty and integrity are her core values. Her father always told me that if she's honest in her dealings with the world, she can't go wrong – especially when being honest is not the easy thing to do. **If those values are challenged, she feels threatened but more determined to uphold them.** Lack of honesty and integrity – especially when she sees it in people in positions of trust or power – really offends her and she gets quite puritanical about it.

She has learned to create her own personal rules. Because Eileen missed out on a lot of direction during childhood, the rules she lives by are ones she has created for herself – all based on being honest

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Her first memory of a place is her family home in Braemor Rd in Dublin. Eileen doesn't remember a time before Braemor Road. She thinks she was around 2 when they moved in. She remembers that the back garden was a mess. The grass was long, like a field. She remembers when it was all dug up and they put grass seed on it and weren't allowed to play on it for weeks. She remembers helping to build the rockery and planting heathers between the stones. **There are very happy memories associated with that house, but some very sad ones too.** Happy memories include playing with friends in the garden or on the street or in each other's houses. Her tricycle, roller skates, Cowboys and Indians, cap guns, going to the local shop.

Eileen and her family lived in the house for just over 2 years after her father died and things were different for those years.

Throughout her life she has moved around a lot. Eileen has never felt much attachment to place so moving didn't bother her too much. She lived in Braemor Road until just before her 9th birthday and in Bray until she was 21. After that, she never spent longer than 5 years anywhere, until she moved back to Galway in 1996.

Eileen also spent about 10 months working in Manchester. She left her 'permanent and pensionable' job in the bank at 22 because she was totally frustrated. She felt there was something she was supposed to be doing to help the world. She worked for her keep in a hostel for 'emotionally disturbed adolescent girls' in Manchester. That's when she first really saw the healing power of horses at work.

Eileen has a sense that she is going to live into her 90's and be active, involved and useful right to the end. She never wants to have to be minded by anyone, or to be considered a burden. She can see herself gently falling asleep for the last time in a garden, in the sunshine, with the sound of children laughing and playing in the background.

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Eileen is reasonably happy at the moment. She's a glass half full person and always look for something good in every situation – thanks to Pollyanna's father! **There is plenty of room for**

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She was 17 when she left St David's after her Leaving Cert. She wanted to study veterinary or journalism but wasn't allowed. They wanted her to be a teacher but Eileen didn't like children, so she went to work. It was important at that time for her to work because her mother needed financial help with her four younger sisters.

Eileen really loved learning and had a deep hunger for knowledge. She always felt that she'd missed out by not going to college. In her 50's, she had been working as an unqualified riding instructor for many years when a new training course for equestrian coaches became available. She applied, was accepted and remembered how much she loved learning new things.

Then her brother-in-law encouraged Eileen to apply for a Master in Writing as a mature student. She was accepted and earned a 1.1.

After the Master's finished, Eileen knew she had to keep learning. She was lucky in that courses appeared to help her along the path. She passed every course with high marks and is now qualified in Therapeutic Horse-riding Coaching, Equine-assisted Learning Facilitation, Disability Awareness, Personal Development, Training Trainers, Leadership Skills, Managing People, WRAP, Mindfulness and First Aid – and more!. Eileen has just finished a Level 9 post-grad in Mental Health Promotion

Eileen works really hard at anything she's interested in and gives 200% - until it starts to feel routine (like work). As soon as a project starts to feel that it's not a challenge anymore, she needs to find a new project

The Virginian had everything Eileen wanted in a man. He was kind. He helped people. He fought for the underdog. He was a good cowboy, even though he wore a black hat, and he had a horse.

Eileen was about 13 when she had my first kiss in the Cove. It was memorably awful. The Cove was the outdoor swimming pool in Bray where she and her sisters spent every summer as children. Their mother would pack a picnic and Eileen would take her four younger sisters there for the whole day. The less said about that first kiss the better

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Eileen got married in 1986 and her son was born in 87. In 1989 her daughter was born. Her son's first daughter came along in 2016, and his second in 2018. Her grandchildren call her Ireland Nanny.

Exercise 3

You now have the bones of a story. You can go back and explore the 2nd and 3rd layers of story points if you feel they're relevant. If not, they will keep, and you can return to them later if you need more information.

Your next task is to apply 'Why?' to the naturally occurring questions in the narrative. The example below is from the third-person version of my story, with some of the 2nd and 3rd layers added. Look at your own work and find the parts that need more information, clarification or examples. Then get the information, clarification or examples, always remembering to be gentle, kind and sensitive as you explore a person's private life.

Most importantly, DO NOT EDIT! If you start the editing process in the middle of the writing process neither one will be done properly.

At this stage, your story has a shape, but it doesn't yet have a logical order and that is perfectly fine for now. The time for editing, copying, pasting and organising comes after you have finished gathering ALL the information, including any necessary research.

Always remember, 'don't get it right. Get it written!'

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EXAMPLES OF NATURALLY ARISING QUESTIONS

Eileen was born on January 12th, 1955. It was a Wednesday in the middle of the Baby Boomer era. **What was the Baby Boomer era? Why was it called that? What was the world like then?**

Eileen has always felt that her name is a bit old-fashioned and that it never fully belonged to her. The only other people she knew with her name were adults. Her parents called her after somebody else so it didn't feel original enough. **What's so important to her about feeling original?**

Her father died when she was seven. He had a heart attack when he was 47. His health wasn't good because he'd had a hard time in the war. **What war? What was he doing there? How did it damage his health?**

Eileen and her sister were in West Cork with family when he died so everything was over by the time they got back to Dublin. **Why was she in West Cork with her sister? Where was the rest of the family?** He was just not there anymore. **What was that like? How did it affect you?**

Eileen's family came from West Cork. There's a T-junction in the village. **What's the name of the village? What was it like?** The Bennett's had a shop on one side of the road and the Urells had a pub on the other side. Her father was born on the Bennett side. Her mother was born in Wicklow but the Urells in Cork were first cousins. **Urell is an unusual name.t Where did they came from? How did her parents meet?**

Bennett is her name and she likes it. The Bennetts were well-respected and her father always taught me that it was a name to be proud of. **How did the Bennetts earn their respect?** Other names she's called by include Mom and Ireland Nanny.

Her son and daughter called her Eileen until they started school and everyone else's mother was called Mom – so she became Mom too. **Why were her children calling her by her first name?** Her eldest granddaughter named her Ireland Nanny to differentiate her from her other Nanny and it stuck! **What did she want her grandchildren to call her?**

Being the eldest brought a lot of responsibility and pressure as she was growing up. **What kind of pressure and responsibility?** After her father died, Eileen's relationship with her mother changed and she became more of a partner than a child. **In what way?** She took her role as big sister very seriously. She was frequently told (by other adults, not by her mother) that it was her responsibility to set a good example and to make sure that none of her sisters did anything to upset their mother. **How did she manage that?**

Eileen's first paid job was babysitting, when she was 12 and she's been working ever since, so that's 53 years. **What other jobs has she had?**

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. **What happened next? When was her first serious relationship? How long did it last? Why did it end?**

She started Junior Infants in St Anne's, Milltown when she was 4.1/2. This was the first of 4 schools **Why did she move school? Where did she move to? What was that like?** she attended before she left formal education at 17. **Why did she leave formal education at 17? What did she do next?**

Eileen didn't start 3rd level education until she was in her 50's. When she finished secondary school, she needed to go to work to help support the family. **Why did she need to contribute?** Granny Urell had been

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willing to pay for her to go to college, but only if she did Teaching. She had no interest in being a teacher so her first act of rebellion was to refuse her offer. **How was that decision received? What did she do after school if she didn't go to college?**

As Eileen got older, she felt the lack of a formal qualification held her back from applying for positions – but she has no regrets about the path she took. **What positions? Why does she not have regrets?** She always found a way to pursue whatever job she wanted – even if she has a habit of doing things backwards. **What kind of jobs did she have?** Often, Eileen would get a job, work her way into a senior position and then go and get the qualifications she should have had to be there. **Like what?**

Honesty and integrity are her core values. **How have those values supported her?** Her father always told me that if she's honest in her dealings with the world, she can't go wrong – especially when being honest is not the easy thing to do. **When was being honest not the easy thing to do?** If those values are challenged, she feels threatened but more determined to uphold them. **What challenges them?** Lack of honesty and integrity – especially when she sees it in people in positions of trust or power – really offends her and she gets quite puritanical about it. **In what way?**

She has learned to create her own personal rules. **What are her rules?** Because Eileen missed out on a lot of direction during childhood, the rules she lives by are ones she has created for herself – all based on being honest and true. She loves the Shakespeare quote 'this above all, to thine own self be true for it must follow – as the night the day – thou canst not then be false to any man.' She also loves the 'Golden Rule' which basically says treat people as you would like to be treated. **How would she like to be treated?**

Her first memory of a place is her family home in Braemor Rd in Dublin. Eileen doesn't remember a time before Braemor Road. **Where did she live before Braemor Rd?** She thinks she was around 2 when they moved in. She remembers that the back garden was a mess. The grass was long, like a field. She remembers when it was all dug up and they put grass seed on it and weren't allowed to play on it for weeks. She remembers helping to build the rockery and planting heathers between the stones. **Who else was there then?** There are very happy memories associated with that house, but some very sad ones too. **What are the sad memories?** Happy memories include playing with friends in the garden or on the street or in each other's houses. Her tricycle, roller skates, Cowboys and Indians, cap guns, going to the local shop. **Who did she play with? What kind of games did they play? What was her favourite game?**

Eileen and her family lived in the house for just over 2 years after her father died and things were different for those years. **How were they different?**

Throughout her life she has moved around a lot. **Why did she move a lot? Where did the moves take her?** Eileen has never felt much attachment to place so moving didn't bother her too much. **Why is she not attached to places?** She lived in Braemor Road until just before her 9th birthday and in Bray until she was 21. After that, she never spent longer than 5 years anywhere, until she moved back to Galway in 1996. **What brought her back to Galway? When was she there before? Why did she leave?**

Eileen also spent about 10 months working in Manchester. **How did she end up in Manchester?** She left her 'permanent and pensionable' job in the bank at 22 because she was totally frustrated. **What was her job in the bank/ How did her family feel about her resignation?** She felt there was something she was supposed to be doing to help the world. **What made her feel like that? What did she want to do?** She worked for her keep in a hostel for 'emotionally disturbed adolescent girls' in Manchester. **What did the**

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work involve? Who else lived there? Why did she leave? That's when she first really saw the healing power of horses at work. How did that happen? What is the healing power of horses?

Eileen has a sense that she is going to live into her 90's and be active, involved and useful right to the end. Where does that sense come from? She never wants to have to be minded by anyone, or to be considered a burden. Why not? How does she define being a burden? She can see herself gently falling asleep for the last time in a garden, in the sunshine, with the sound of children laughing and playing in the background. Why is that appealing?

Galway is her favourite place now because she loves her work here and the pace of life suits her. What's suits her about the pace of life? Eileen first came to Galway in 1968 when she was 13. She won a scholarship to spend 3 months learning Irish in Connemara. From the moment she got off the train, she knew she would live there someday. It had a familiar and very comfortable energy. What was her 3 months in Connemara like? She came back to Galway in 1980 for a holiday and has been here since – with a few interruptions. What brought her to Galway for a holiday? What did she do when she stayed on after her holiday? What has she been doing since? What and when were the interruptions? She loves her work with Horses Connect. It helps her to stay grounded and feel useful. What is Horses Connect? How did she get there? What is her work? How does it help her feel grounded and useful?

Her favourite place to visit is Australia. Eileen's son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren live near Melbourne and she visits as often as possible. She doesn't mind the long journey at all, especially if she can travel alone. Why does she prefer to travel alone? Her dream is to be able to travel first class and stay as long as she wants! How long would she like to stay?

Her happy place is definitely Rosadale - the property her Australian family live on. She feels that there's something beautiful about the energy of the place as soon as you drive through the gate. She would never ask to leave when she's there. What is it about Rosadale that makes her happy? What does she mean by 'energy'?

Eileen is reasonably happy at the moment. What would it take for her to be more happy? She's a glass half full person and always look for something good in every situation – thanks to Pollyanna's father! What did Pollyanna's father do? There is plenty of room for improvement in all areas! What would that look like? If Eileen didn't feel like there was room for improvement there would be no point getting up every day. What keeps her motivated?

In 5 years, she plans to have the freedom to be, do and have what she wants, whenever she wants! That boils down to health and wealth How does she plan to achieve that? What does freedom mean?

When Eileen is daydreaming, her mind wanders to Rosadale. It's a beautiful place, but not really in the physical sense. Her soul is at peace there. What is she doing in Rosadale when she's daydreaming? Who else is there?

Physically, Eileen thinks she was at her best in her mid-20's. Where was she and what was she doing? She was strong and fit and full ideas, with the energy to be creative. How did she use her strength, fitness and energy to be creative? She has grown and matured and earned a lot of wisdom since then. Where did the wisdom come from? What was her greatest lesson? Eileen is still full of ideas and creativity and curiosity but she's a bit slower to jump into projects. Why is she slower? Most – if not all – of her life lessons have been learned the hard way. What has been the greatest lesson and how was it learned? She's never been

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great at taking instructions and has always wanted to try things out for herself. **How did that impact on her life?** Eileen has touched a lot of wet paint and electric fences! **How has that influenced her life?**

Eileen started in St Anne's in Milltown because she was living in Dublin. When she moved to Wicklow in December 1964 **Why did they move to Wicklow? What part?** she started in St Patrick's in Bray, but moved to St Brigid's in Kilcoole in September 1965. **Why did she move schools so quickly?** From there, Eileen went to Secondary School in St David's in Greystones. They were all Catholic schools and there were a lot of nuns, but the numbers dwindled as she went through school. **What memories does she have of school days?**

She was 17 when she left St David's after her Leaving Cert. She wanted to study veterinary or journalism but wasn't allowed. **Why was she attracted to those areas of study? Why was she not allowed to pursue them?** They wanted her to be a teacher, but Eileen didn't like children, so she went to work. **Who were 'they' and why did they have such power? Why did she dislike children?** It was important at that time for her to work because her mother needed financial help with her four younger sisters. **How was her mother supporting the family?**

Eileen really loved learning and had a deep hunger for knowledge. **How did that show up in her life?** She always felt that she'd missed out by not going to college. **How did that feeling affect her?** In her 50's, she had been working as an unqualified riding instructor for many years when a new training course for equestrian coaches became available. **Where was she working? How did she get the job? What was it like?** She applied, was accepted and remembered how much she loved learning new things. **What did she love about learning new things?**

Then her brother-in-law encouraged Eileen to apply for a Master in Writing as a mature student. She was accepted and earned a 1.1. **How was college life? What challenges came with starting university as a mature student?**

After the Master's finished, Eileen knew she had to keep learning. **Why did she love learning?** She was lucky in that courses appeared to help her along the path. She passed every course with high marks and is now qualified in Therapeutic Horse-riding Coaching, Equine-assisted Learning Facilitation, Disability Awareness, Personal Development, Training Trainers, Leadership Skills, Managing People, WRAP, Mindfulness and First Aid – and more!. Eileen has just finished a Level 9 post-grad in Mental Health Promotion. **How have these qualifications helped her? When will she finish studying?**

Eileen works really hard to anything she's interested in and gives 200% - until it starts to feel routine (like work). As soon as a project starts to feel that it's not a challenge anymore, she needs to find a new project. **What projects has she been involved in and left? What prompted her to leave?**

The Virginian had everything Eileen wanted in a man. **When did she first see The Virginian?** He was kind. He helped people. He fought for the underdog. He was a good cowboy, even though he wore a black hat, and he had a horse. **Why were those qualities important?**

Eileen was about 13 when she had her first kiss in the Cove. It was memorably awful. The Cove was the outdoor swimming pool in Bray where she and her sister spent every summer as children. **How far was the Cove from your house? What went on in the Cove? Who else was there?** Their mother would pack a picnic and Eileen would take her four younger sisters there for the whole day. **What did you do all day?** The less said about that first kiss the better. **Why? Who else was involved? What happened next?**

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Eileen got married in 1986. Did she have other relationships before then? Who with? What happened? How and where did she meet her husband? Where did he work? Where did they live? What attracted her to him? and her son was born in 87. What was it like becoming a mother for the first time? How did life change?

In 1989 her daughter was born. What was it like having two very young children? Did they get on with each other as they grew up? Were there any serious accidents or illnesses? Where are they now?

Her son's first daughter came along in 2016, and his second in 2018. Her grandchildren call her Ireland Nanny. What was it like becoming a grandmother? How often does she see her grandchildren? How does being a grandparent differ from being a parent?

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