
YOUR STORY

HOW TO WRITE A MINI SAGA

Type of module	Project work
Level	B2
Target group	16–19-year-old learners
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A kiadvány az Educatio Kht. kompetenciafejlesztő oktatási program kerettanterve alapján készült.

A kiadvány a Nemzeti Fejlesztési Terv Humán erőforrás-fejlesztési Operatív Program 3.1.1. központi program (Pedagógusok és oktatási szakértők felkészítése a kompetencia alapú képzés és oktatás feladataira) keretében készült, a sulinoVA oktatási programcsomag részeként létrejött tanulói információhordozó. A kiadvány sikeres használatához szükséges a teljes oktatási programcsomag ismerete és használata.

A teljes programcsomag elérhető: www.educatio.hu címen.

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Educatio Kht. 2008

1.2 HANDOUT – A STORY IN YOU

Remember the time when you...

■ Choose one of the following topics and prepare to tell a brief story to your partner(s).

- met someone famous
- met your partner for the first time
- got into a very embarrassing situation
- lost something important
- were unjustly treated
- had a memorable birthday
- had a memorable journey
- other _____

1.2 STORY-TELLING GRID – WHAT’S IN THE STORY?

	When did it happen?	Who are the main characters?	What is the setting?
Student 1: _____			
Student 2: _____			

	The beginning	A turning point/peak	The ending
Student 1: _____			
Student 1: _____			

1.3 USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR SHORTENING SENTENCES

Participles:

As/While he was watching TV, Joe found the key. ⇨ **Watching** TV, Joe found the key.

After he had bought the present, she felt happy. ⇨ **Having bought** the present, she felt happy.

Although she was sad, Mary did not show it. ⇨ **Although sad**, Mary did not show it.

Reduced relative clauses:

The woman who is reading a book is smiling. ⇨ **The woman reading** a book is smiling.

This is the page that/which I was looking for. ⇨ This is **the page I was looking for**.

The people who were invited all came. ⇨ **The people invited** all came.

Infinitives:

He asked if I wanted to see the picture.

I said I wanted to see it. ⇨ **I said I did**.

There is a lot that we have to do. ⇨ There is **a lot to do**.

Leaving out *that*:

They feel/ know that you are right. ⇨ They **feel/ know you are right**.

Inversion:

'I don't want to go.' 'I don't want to either.' ⇨ **'Neither do I.'**

'They really liked the play.' 'We liked it, too.' ⇨ **'So did we.'**

■ Shorten the following sentences using the structures above.

1 The only person who is clever enough for this is Mike.

2 They asked if I knew where the station was. I said I knew where it was.

3 'I didn't know what to say.' 'I didn't know it either.'

4 After she had waited for two hours, she felt that it was enough.

5 While I was travelling on the bus, I saw a tiger.

6 The number that I dialled was wrong.

7 Although we were tired, we decided to go.

2.1 SLIPS – PAIRING ACTIVITY

EVEN THOUGH	ALTHOUGH
IN SPIRE OF	DESPITE
AS WELL	TOO/ALSO
LOOK UP TO	RESPECT
GET TO KNOW	LEARN
AFTER THAT	THEN
GIVE IT A TRY	ATTEMPT
WITHIN A STONE'S THROW	NEARBY
AT LAST	FINALLY
A LOT OF	SEVERAL

2.2 LISTENING EXERCISES

■ 1 Try to decide if the following statements are true or false about mini sagas.

a) Sagas originally came from Ancient Greece.

TRUE FALSE

b) A mini saga is a short story of maximum 50 words.

TRUE FALSE

c) The title is not included in the 50-word limit.

TRUE FALSE

d) The mini saga in its present form was developed in the USA.

TRUE FALSE

e) Contracted words and numbers count as one word.

TRUE FALSE

■ 2 Now listen to the text about mini sagas and check your answers.

■ 3 Listen again and take notes of how to write a mini saga.

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Step 4: _____

2.2 RECORDING OF THE LISTENING TASK (SCRIPT)

Mini sagas – what are they?

The name is really a joke. Originally, sagas were long stories of dramatic events over many generations told by Norse and Icelandic peoples. They were probably started to provide entertainment around the fire during the long winter nights.

A mini saga is a very short piece of writing which has exactly fifty words (not 49 and not 51). Luckily, this doesn't include the title, which can have up to fifteen words. Another rule is that contracted words and numbers count as one word. A mini saga has to tell a story with a beginning, middle and an end: it cannot just be a description of something.

How did it all begin?

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

How to write a mini saga?

The limitation of fifty words means that the mini saga writer needs to think very imaginatively about just what words are really necessary to tell the story. Here is one way that you could write a mini saga.

- 1 Start by thinking of a story that you have written or would like to write, or think of a well-known story, or something that you have read or heard. Get a good idea as this is the most important start you can make. Brainstorm ideas based on situations. Perhaps you can work out a story idea from real-life situations that can be shaped into a simple structure.
- 2 Write your first version. At this point don't worry about the fifty word limit, but concentrate on getting the narrative right. Then look at the words and phrases you can 'tighten up' so that every word counts. Use the best words you can to tell the story quickly.
- 3 Shorten your story. Take out any words that are not absolutely necessary. How many words are there?
- 4 Now shorten your story again. How many words are there now? Finally, you may need to change words or sentences to make exactly 50 words. It is very exciting!
(355 words)

2.3 MINI SAGAS

1 Perhaps there's something to be said for the three R's after all

by Nicolas Hodgson

At school he had been no good at maths but outstanding at writing and reading. But who needs arithmetic? He entered the competition with enthusiasm and produced a dazzling, witty, profound and paradoxical story. He was inspired. It was an absolute masterpiece. The judges sighed. Another one with 51 words.

2 Like Mother, Like Son

by Pauline Cartledge

1955

Dear Mummy,

I hate this boarding school. Food awful, prefects bully me. Please, take me home.

Love, David

Dear David,

Nonsense! Chin up.

Mother

1997

Dear David,

I hate this Home. Food awful, nurses treat me like a child. Fetch me immediately.

Mother

Dear Mother,

Nonsense! Chin up.

David

3 Targets

by Gaynor Darbishire

Every night he pretended to shoot himself in front of her. He enjoyed her pleas and screams of terror as the blanks went off. Time for change, she decided wearily, swapping live bullets for the blanks. Time for change, he decided jauntily; tonight I will pretend to shoot the baby.

4 Biography of a Family Man

by I. Martin

Panic. Birth. Yearning. Coddled. Toddled. Smacked. Panic. School. Dread. Love. Naughty. Trouble. Smacked. Panic. Music. Hair. Kiss. Orgasm. Car. Picnic. Mistake. Tears. Guilty. Money. Work. Wed. Baby? Boy. Dies. Secret. Smacked. Panic. Drinking. Darker. Stouter. Baby? Girl. Lives. Smacked. Secret. Darker. Panic. Cancer. Hospital. Home. Toddled. Coddled. Yearning. Death. Panic.

2.3 MINI SAGAS (CONT.)

5 The Death Touch

by Dawn Hunt

When a daughter went away to college, she reluctantly left her plants and her goldfish in her mother's care. Once the daughter telephoned and her mother confessed that the plants and the goldfish had died. There was a prolonged silence. Finally, in a small voice, the daughter asked, 'How's Dad?'

6 The Inner Man

by Christine M. Banks

Their marriage was a perfect union of trust and understanding. They shared everything – except his desk drawer, which, through the years remained locked. One day, curiosity overcame her. Prised open, there was – nothing. 'But why?' she asked, confused and ashamed. 'I needed a space of my own,' he replied sadly.

7 Men who live in Mud Houses

by Jonathan Hall

How the tribe laughed when the anthropologist couldn't recognize his own camel among their herd, even reminding him of it as they waved goodbye. And when he returned, how the tribe greeted him and delighted in telling him the story of the white man who couldn't recognize his own camel...

8 The Pursuit of Youth

by Suzi Robinson

The blonde and her young student lover lived together in his bed-sitter. She regarded the mirror and worried. With fear in her heart, she shopped every lunch-hour, until their room was stacked with lipsticks, shoes and dresses. One evening, opening the wardrobe, she failed to see his suit was gone.

2.3 MINI SAGA EVALUATION FORM

Mini saga	The first word that comes to mind	Rating	Comments
1		1 2 3 4 5	
2		1 2 3 4 5	
3		1 2 3 4 5	
4		1 2 3 4 5	
5		1 2 3 4 5	
6		1 2 3 4 5	
7		1 2 3 4 5	
8		1 2 3 4 5	

Our favourite mini saga is number _____ because _____

3.2 MINI SAGA WRITING EVALUATION FORM

Mini saga	The first word that comes to mind	Comments
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		

We would include these five mini sagas:

because _____

3.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

- Think about the last three lessons and the mini-sagas you have read and written.

Finish the sentences so that they are true about YOU.

1 In this project, I learnt... _____

2 I still need to work on... _____

3 I liked... _____

4 I didn't like... _____

