

# Body Biography Directions

## (100 Point Project)

### What is a body biography?

A body biography is a combination of artwork and writing (quotes from the novel and your own explanations of those quotes). You will decorate your body biography according to the requirements listed below to demonstrate your understanding of this character. Please note: your body biography is not suppose to be a literal representation of your character. Instead, it should be more like a giant collage of written ideas, drawings, and symbols that work together to show us how well you understand your character, but we also want you to be CREATIVE!

### What is the purpose?

The purpose behind creating a body biography is to allow you to take a **DEEP** look at one character from the story. **You will have to review significant events, choices that your character made, and changes that your character went through internally within the course of the novel.** You will have to take a serious look into what makes your character tick – what motivates your character, how your character feels about himself/herself at the beginning of the novel, and how those feelings may have changed by the end of the novel.

### How do we create a body biography?

#### Small group Instructions (For individuals you will get a standard sized piece of paper)

For your chosen character, you and a partner will create a body biography- a visual (body template) and written portrait, illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the novel. You will then present your life-size visual presentation to the class and you will also evaluate the work of other groups. I will provide 6 feet x 3 feet strips of white paper, colored construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, markers, crayons and colored pencils. If you wish to use other materials, you will need to bring them from home. Make sure you display your character's name prominently on the body outline paper.

1. One of you will need to be the "body".
2. Have that person lie down on the paper.
3. Trace the **outline** of the person's body (body template).
4. Then choose the best way to represent the following aspects of the character symbolically:



1. **THE HEART**– (5 points) Where should you place it to best represent what this character loves most? What should it look like and what shape, color, pictures, or symbols should be included in it? If the character’s love changes, you should find a way to represent this visually. The heart is a good place for illustrating the important relationships in his/her life.
2. **THE BACKBONE** – (5 points) Actors often discuss a character’s “spine.” This is the character’s objective within the novel. What is the most important goal for your character? What drives his/her thoughts and actions? This is his/her spine. How can you illustrate it? Example: Montresor’s (*The Cask of Amontillado* by Edgar Allan Poe) spine might look like a chain since he is obviously chained to his past crime of murder through his haunting conscience.
3. **THE FEET** – (5 points) On what is the character standing? This should be a symbolic representation of the character’s most fundamental beliefs about life. Remember the Montresor Coat of Arms? (a golden foot crushing a serpent with the serpent’s fangs imbedded in the foot – “*Nemo me impune lacessit*”(348) – (No one injures me with impunity).
4. **THE HANDS** – (5 points) What does the character hold in his or her hands? Items that are associated with the character either literally or figuratively should be included. Example: Fortunato might hold a bottle of wine in his hands, since he regarded himself as a great wine connoisseur. Montresor might hold a trowel since he uses this tool to wall up Fortunato with bricks and mortar. This tool could also symbolize the organization (the Free Masons) who obviously did not invite him into their membership.
5. **QUOTATIONS** - (15 points) Near the character’s head, students should place three direct quotations from the story that sum up the character and add to an understanding of the character. These quotes do not necessarily need to be spoken by the character. Possibly, another character says them in regard to your character.
6. **COLORS** – (5 points) Colors are often symbolic. What color(s) do you associate with your character? Why? How can you effectively work these colors into your project? (see the attached color chart)
7. **PRESENTATION** – (20 points) Your group will have three days to prepare your body biography. Then, each group will present their Body Biography to the class. The presentations should explain the choices your group made and help the class understand the meaning of the symbols you have used. After your group makes its presentation, you will display your Body Biography by hanging it on the wall in the back of the classroom. This is a group grade, so practice your presentation.
8. **CLASS PARTICIPATION** – During each presentation, the rest of the class will respond to the biography and presentation by making suggestions and discussing alternative ways in which the character might have been represented.
9. **WRITTEN PORTRAIT** – (30 points) This is an important part of the project, so make sure you read the directions. Pay careful attention to the examples. (see rubric for details)
  - a. **Paragraph one** discusses the symbols you chose and an explanation why you selected these particular items.

- b. **Paragraph two** discusses the quotes you selected and an explanation why you selected these quotations.
- c. **Paragraph three** discusses the colors you chose and how they represent your character.

## Body Biography

### Part I - Writing

**Paragraph 1 - Visual Symbols**— Even though you may have placed several symbols on the template, you only need to discuss three symbols in this paragraph that represent significant personality traits or important aspects of your character's life. For example, you might use a light bulb to show that your character has good ideas. Make sure that each symbol from the paragraph is placed on the drawing in a meaningful place. For example, you might draw one object close to the character's heart if it symbolizes something he/she loves or feels; around the head if it symbolizes what a character thinks; on the hands if it symbolizes his/her work; etc. The paragraph should identify the most important symbols; explain what each represents, where you placed it on the body template, and why you chose to place it there. Be sure to use a topic sentence and a closing sentence.

**Paragraph 2 – Quotations** - Choose at least three quotations from the novel which reveal personality traits of your character. These do not have to be what the character actually says, but could be part of the narration or what another character says about him/her. These quotations will also be placed on the body template in a significant place, like the symbols from Paragraph 1. In your paragraph, write the exact lines from the novel, explain what each quotation reveals about the character's personality, and explain where you placed the quote on the drawing and why. Be sure to use a topic sentence and a closing sentence.

**Paragraph 3 - Symbolic Colors**- On the body template, you will add any other decorations you think apply to the character. The colors you choose for these decorations should be symbolic of the character's personality. Use the color symbolism chart to help you choose the best colors for your character. Use at least three colors. In your paragraph, describe the colors you used and how those colors apply to your character's personality. Be sure to use a topic sentence and a closing sentence.

Note: I have included an example from the short story *An Open Window* by Saki. The example is a discussion of the character, Vera.

### **Body Biography Example - Vera from *The Open Window* by Saki.**

**Paragraph 1:** We chose a light bulb, a clock, and a heart for Vera's symbols. The light bulb represents her creative imagination. In "The Open Window," Vera makes up two very detailed and elaborate tales about Mr. Sappleton and the two brothers' disappearance. She also makes up a story about Mr. Nuttle's fear of dogs due to his entrapment in a hollow grave. We placed the light bulb next to her head because these ideas originate in her brain. We chose the clock because Vera is able to make up these wild lies at a moment's notice. In no time, she can concoct a believable story, because "Romance at short notice was her specialty" (565). The clock is located by her head because her brain works quickly to think of these lies, and the lies spew forth quickly from her mouth without hesitation. Finally, we chose to draw a large heart around most of her body because Vera is self-centered. In general, she cares only about herself and doesn't mind hurting others.

**Paragraph 2:** Three quotations from “The Open Window” describe Vera’s personality perfectly. She is “a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen” (562). This quote is an example of direct characterization that reveals important information about her. We know that she does not care about other people’s feelings. We put the quote next to her heart because she loves herself and is cold-hearted to others. “Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?”(562) is an additional quotation that gives insight into Vera’s personality. She is inquisitive and quickly gathers information from people to use in her tales. She asks Mr. Nuttle about his knowledge of the family so that she can form her story. Since he doesn’t know anything about them, she can tell the tale of the tragedy. This quotation is located around her head because she asks the question to formulate her story. The final quotation, “Romance at short notice was her specialty” (565) is the key to the whole story. This piece of information lets the reader know that Vera made up both stories because she enjoys lying. We put the quotation around her head because she made up these stories in her head. All three of these quotations help the reader understand the self-centered, lying girl that Vera really is.

**Paragraph 3:** We used several colors to symbolize Vera’s personality. Yellow is the dominate color of her dress because it symbolizes imagination, dishonesty, betrayal, and deceit. Vera definitely has imagination to come up with so many creative stories. She displays dishonesty, betrayal, and deceit when she tells Mr. Nuttle the tale of tragedy. The dress is trimmed in orange, which symbolizes a demand for attention. Vera is described as “self-possessed,” (562) so she obviously tells the stories to draw focus to herself. The large heart is red for love because Vera loves herself. Her hair is black, which means evilness. Her eyes are blue to symbolize the coldness she shows to other by lying to them. Each color on the template reveals various aspects of Vera’s self-centered personality.

**Format directions:** Type your paragraphs in Times New Roman, 12 font, one inch margins top, bottom and sides. Label each paragraph like the examples. Each paragraph should be single-spaced, but double-space between paragraphs.