

## **Transactional Writing:**

### **Obituaries**

An obituary is a text about a person, who has recently died.

The purpose of an obituary is to commemorate and inform others of someone's death. It is a notice of the passing on of someone known by the target audience. Over and above "formally" announcing the death, it also gives the funeral arrangements.

An obituary gives basic facts of the deceased person's life:

#### **Text structure**

- The following elements must be included:
  - Surname first, in bold, then the name (first or second, whichever the deceased was better known as). If the deceased was married and you want to mention the maiden name, then you can add it in brackets as follows: (née Honeyball). The nickname may be added as well.
  - Date of death
  - Where the person was living at the time of death
  - Date of birth
  - Birthplace
  - Biographical information (schooling, hobbies, work information)
  - What made the deceased special
  - Key survivors (spouse, children OR parents, siblings if the deceased is still young)
  - Time, date and place of funeral
- Some of the following may be included where needed:
  - Cause of death
  - Memorial tribute information
  - Where mourners can send a donation in the deceased's name in stead of flowers

#### **Language features**

- Formal in style.
- May use euphemisms (e.g. *passed away* instead of *died*)
- Usually concise and to the point.
- Makes use of language conventions (e.g. *in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to*)
- Some obituaries add a personal note in the form of a loving poem. This can be a bit sentimental and does not impart much necessary information.

**Basic obituary template:**

Heading: Name and surname of deceased
Year of birth and year of death
Name and surname of deceased..., age..., passed away on...(date) at...(place). Cause of death....
Born in...(town/city), he/she was the son/daughter of...(parents). He/she attended... (school)/graduated at...(university/college). He/she was employed at... (place of work) and worked as... (job title).
He/she (name) was a member of (church/organisations/groups/committees/RCL).
He/she enjoyed... (hobbies/activities, etc.)
Pay tribute (depending on what is asked in question paper)
He/she is survived by wife/husband, children, grandchildren, etc. (Be very careful to determine this. If it is a child, then it will be parents and siblings. If a grandmother/ grandfather, then there must be grandchildren).
The funeral service will be held on...(date) at...(time) at...(place and address).
He/she (name) will be remembered for his or her...(personal traits/ things)

**Steps when writing an obituary:**

**Step 1:**

By choosing this text in an exam you choose the type and topic.

**Step 2:**

Note the key words that will help you and brainstorm ideas for the content of your answer.

**Step 3:**

Write a draft using the ideas from the plan. Edit the draft by correcting any grammar, punctuation, spelling and format errors.

**Step 4:** Write the final text.

**Activity:**

A famous South African celebrity passed away recently. As a member of his/her fan club you have been asked to write an obituary for an entertainment magazine. You must also pay tribute to him/her.

The body of your response should be between 120-150 words long.

Complete the following checklist after writing your response.

Features	Details of the feature	Yes	No	Don't know
Text type	I understand the features of an obituary.			
Topic	I understand the topic I have chosen.			
<b>Content, planning and format</b>				
Planning	I can show evidence of planning.			
Content	Each point in my plan is relevant to the topic. I will use these points in my text.			
Purpose / audience	I understand the purpose of an obituary. I understand the audience for my obituary			
Format	My obituary is correctly laid out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I have written a main heading.</li><li>• I have left a line open between each paragraph.</li></ul>			
<b>Language, style and editing</b>				
Choice of words / diction	I have chosen my words carefully to make my obituary interesting. My ideas link to the topic.			
Language	I have checked and corrected my grammar, spelling and punctuation.			