

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Biography

~ Autobiography ~

Unit 1 of 4

"Thank you for the uplifting of falling humanity,
and giving us wisdoms and insight to remain focused on our abilities
and qualities within us to achieve."
~ Tim ~

An autobiography is a document a person writes about himself or herself. Throughout the world, people find enjoyment and inspiration reading about the accomplishments, trials, and tribulations of other people. Some types and examples of autobiography are listed below:

- a) **Journals** - very vivid, written at the time the events occurred.
Example: *My Three Years With Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945*, who served under General Eisenhower during WWII (Appendix 1).
- b) **Memoirs** - usually deal with public not personal life.
Example: *The Complete Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, general in the Civil War and later President of the United States (Appendix 2)
- c) **Full Autobiography** - presents a reasonably fair picture of one's ancestry and account of the writer's childhood to present.
Example: *The Autobiography of Mark Twain by Mark Twain*, American humorist and author (Appendix 3)
- d) **Reminiscences** - a person records a series of personal anecdotes.
Example: *Hallelujah! The Welcome Table* by Maya Angelou, poet, author, professor, dancer, Civil Rights Activists (Appendix 4)
- e) **Personal History** - the writer offers a history of his life in a scholarly style.
Example: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* by Ben Franklin, author, statesman, inventor (Appendix 5)

1. Which of the five types of autobiographies would be the most challenging in your opinion and why?

It helps to look at examples of these types of autobiographies so you can see which ones pique your interest the most, or have stylistic elements that you might want to include in your autobiography.

2. Looking at the examples in the Appendices, which one captures your interest the most? Why do you think that is?

3. If you could choose anyone, whose autobiography would you most want to read and why?

4. How would you keep a reader interested in your autobiography?

Now it's your turn to do some writing on your own life!

5. Pick two different types from the five above, and write a paragraph about yourself for each one.

6. Which one was harder to write and why?

7. Which one was more effective in making the experience come to life? Why?

Autobiographies aren't just for the rich and famous. We have stored up memories, stories, and images that could captivate a reader's interest. For example, your life in a big city might be very interesting to a person living in a rural community and vice versa.

8. So, let's hear about one of your experiences as a child in a city or suburb or whatever. Describe the place and write about the experience.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

**Appendices
Biography: Unit 1 of 4**

Appendix 1: Journals

My Three Years With Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945

Advance op (near Portsmouth) D-Day, Tuesday, June 6, 1944

"The landings have gone better than expected. Every outfit is ashore, but we have just had a report that Gee, Major General Gerow, with his V Corps, can't get off one of its beaches because of hostile mortar and artillery fire. This is Omaha Beach. They called the air for some bombing; air came back and said pin-point the places, and there the matter rests at the moment, Ike, however, wondering what the 21st Army Group is doing about it. That is really the only bad news of the day."

Appendix 2: Memoirs

Memoirs - Ulysses S. Grant, General of the Civil War

"Up to that time it had been the policy of our army, certainly of that portion commanded by me, to protect the property of citizens whose territory was invaded, without regard to sentiments, whether Union or Secession. After this, I regarded it as humane to both sides to protect the persons of those found at their homes, but to consume everything that could be used to support or supply armies...., I continued this policy to the close of the war."

Appendix 3: Full Autobiography

The Autobiography of Mark Twain, edited by Charles Neider

"In 'Huckleberry Finn' I have drawn Tom Blankenship exactly as he was. He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he has as good a heart as any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent-boy-or-man in the community, and by consequence he was tranquilly and continuously happy and was envied by all the rest of us."

Appendix 4: Reminiscences

Hallelujah! The Welcome Table: A Lifetime of Memories -- Maya Angelou

"Miss Williams said, 'You will talk in my classroom. Yes, you will.' I didn't know what to do. Bailey (her brother) and the other children were trying to persuade her to allow me to write on the blackboard. (Maya didn't speak after she was raped by her mother's boyfriend.) I did not resist after she took the chalk out of my hand. 'I know you can talk. And I will not stand for your stillness in my classroom.' I watched her as she made herself angry. 'You will not be treated differently just because your people own a store.' Her hand came up unexpectedly, and she slapped me, and I ran out of the room."

Appendix 5: Personal History

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, edited by Gordon S. Haught

"Dear Son:

You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of any relations when you were with me in England and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know the circumstances of my life, and expecting the enjoyment of a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you. Hereby, too, I shall indulge the inclination so natural in old men, to be talking of themselves and their own past actions."

(Franklin was estranged from his son for a long time because of political differences and wrote this autobiography for him. By describing his journey through life, Franklin hoped that they would be reconciled. It worked.)

Note: It is an interesting coincidence that the ancestors of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington came from the same county in England.