

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Biography

~ Autobiography ~

Unit 2 of 4

1. Certain objects can bring out vivid memories of your past and present: picture postcards, photos, diaries, a song, a car, a tree, a piece of clothing, souvenirs, and maps. *Example: under the title, "The Dress" -- a girl could write about her prom or wedding dress.* Choose three of the above and write about them in connection with your life.

2. Writers use sense memories to disclose their stories and emotions of the past: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Choose one sense and provide a detail about a memory of yours.

3. Create a question or a statement that can help a writer recall his/her memories.

4. Write a personal account based on memories of:

- * a delicious meal
- * a smooth surface
- * a crackling noise
- * a sweet smell

5. You can get ideas for an anecdote from thinking of seasons: fall, winter, spring, and summer. Choose one season and write about an occasion connected with that season.

6. Another technique is to write an imaginary interview with yourself. *Example: Question -- What was an important decision you made in your youth? Answer -- The time I decided to enter the Navy right after school.* So try to make up questions and then answer them using the question and answer format.

7. Still another way to write about your life is to react to such emotions as embarrassment, betrayal, joy, disappointment, fear, etc. Choose one and write about the time this feeling occurred.

8. Whenever we write about a person, place, or thing it is best to give details, because our lives are a series of details. Below is a list of nouns. Select three, and in a sentence or two, describe in detail what or who they are.

- * uncle
- * basement
- * cup
- * girlfriend
- * movie theater
- * lamp
- * neighbor
- * street
- * fence

Example: He barely spoke, but his bear hugs, his soft laugh, and the twinkle in his bright blue eyes made it clear to me that he loved me. Dear Uncle Cliff, I'll never, ever forget you."

9. Besides events or scenes or people in your life, there are other means of describing yourself: by the clothes you wear, the music you listen to, the art you like, the books you read, the hair style you wear. Choose any two of the above and show how they express your personality of character.

10. "No one can tell the whole truth about himself." -- W. Somerset Maugham from *Summing Up*. Comment on this statement by the famous English author.

11. Sometimes we embellish our dull histories to impress others or make them more interesting to others. What do you think?

12. If your life story was made into a movie what actor/actress (dead or alive) would you choose to play the role of YOU?

13. To write a complete autobiography we need to explain our ancestry. Who were your ancestors? Where did they come from? What did they accomplish? How did they relate to others? Why did they do what they did? We don't often know the answers. Can you answer these questions or similar ones about your family? Explain why or why not.

14. Ernest Hemingway once wrote: "The world breaks everyone and afterward, many are strong at the broken places." Was there a time in your life when you discovered you became stronger because of a hardship?

15. Here are excerpts from an anonymous poem entitled "Who Am I?"

*Don't be fooled by me
Don't be fooled by the face I wear
For I wear a thousand masks,
Masks that I'm afraid to take off,
And none of them are me...*

*Who am I, you may wonder. I am someone you
Know very well, for I am every man or woman you meet.*

Do you agree or disagree with this poem? Explain.

16. Write a free verse poem (as many lines as you like) about yourself. Use "I".

Look over what you wrote, and you will find that you have started a story about yourself. With some additional information and some arranging, you may have a mini-autobiography. It's worthwhile keeping.

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