

## UNIT 2 Facing Challenges Nonfiction Connection



# BIOGRAPHY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

WITH  
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# SPEAK YOUR MIND

Why are BIOGRAPHIES, AUTOBIOGRAPHIES and MEMOIRS so popular and widely read?

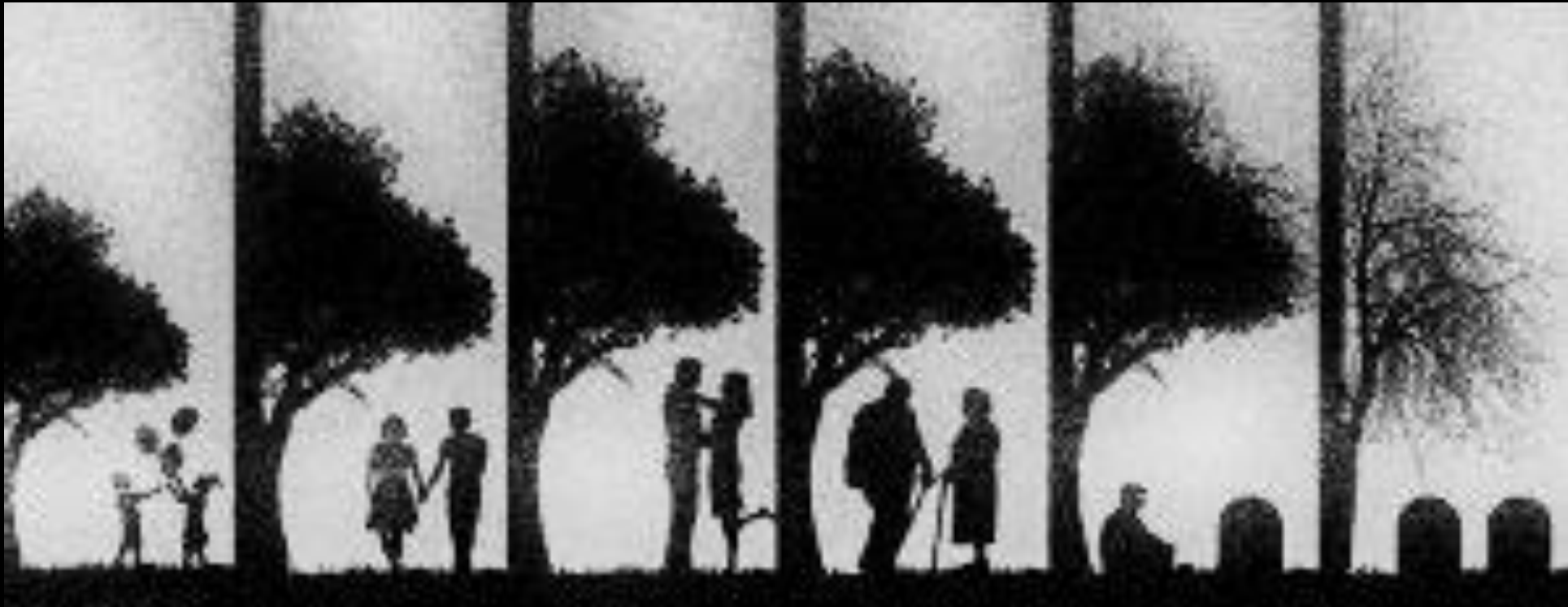


A best-selling author reflects fondly on his favorite teacher. A young woman gives her account about nearly drowning in the frigid waters, A child with severe brain damage grows up to become an exceptional musician.

Reading about other people's lives can be fascinating. Perhaps, that is why BIOGRAPHIES, AUTOBIOGRAPHIES and MEMOIRS are such popular forms of prose.



The three primary formats of a memory book, used to tell a life story, are a biography, an autobiography, and a memoir. In this unit you'll sample all three. Distinguishing between the three can feel a bit confusing since they all share several similarities. But there are some distinct differences.



# BIOGRAPHY

A biography is an account of a person's life, written by someone else.

Features include:

- Must cover a person's entire life
- Most important facts and events of someone's life are presented
- Contains anecdotes, memories, trips and cherished moments
- Is about another person other than the writer
- They can be either authorized or un authorized





Examples of famous biographies include:

- *His Excellency: George Washington* by Joseph J. Ellis
- *Einstein: The Life and Times* by Ronald William Clark
- *Princess Diana – A Biography of The Princess of Wales* by Drew L. Crichton

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

An autobiography is an account of a person's life, written by that person.

Features include:

- It's about your own life – Usually presented in chronological order
- What life means to you – Your feelings, both past and present (subjective)
- What your outlook on the future is – Usually based on an important event
- Written by same person that it is about





Examples of famous autobiographies include:

- *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller
- *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *Losing My Virginity* by Richard Branson



# MEMOIR

A memoir is an account that focuses on a period in a person's life. Memoirs are often based on an individual's memories of, and reactions to, historical events. Features include:

- Autobiographical in nature
- Captures certain highlights or meaningful moments in one's past
- Contemplation of the meaning of that event at the time of the writing of the memoir
- Much more emotional and connects the writer to someone or something that had an impact on their life





Examples of famous memoirs include:

- *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
- *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* by Ulysses S. Grant

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY vs. BIOGRAPHY vs. MEMOIR COMPARISON CHART

| Biography   | Autobiography  | Memoir   |
|---|--|--|
| An account of a person's life   | An account of one's own life   | A personal account of a specific time or experience                      |
| Written in the third person   | Written in the first person  | Written in the first person  |
| Objective   | Subjective   | Subjective   |
| Presents information collected from the subject, their acquaintances, or from other sources | Presents facts as they were experienced by the person                                  | Presents facts as they were experienced by the person                    |
| Written to inform and establish a context   | Written to inform and explain the motivation and thoughts behind actions and decisions | Written to reflect on and explore the emotion of an experience           |
| Has restricted access to the subject's thoughts and feelings                                | Offers access to personal thoughts and feelings  | Offers access to personal thoughts, feelings, reactions, and reflections |
| Can be written anytime  | Usually written later in life  | Can be written anytime   |

# ASSESSMENT

1. What are three major difference between a memoir and an autobiography?
2. Which of the following statements about memoirs is not true?
  - a. A person who writes a memoir is called a memoirist.
  - b. Rock stars and celebrities are known for writing memoirs.
  - c. A memoir can be about drug addiction or personal grief.
  - d. Memoirs are assumed to be factual.
3. Which are the two types of biographies?
4. If you decided to write a memoir at this moment in your life, what would it be about? Why?
5. Which form tends to cover in detail a specific aspect of an author's life, while the others are more general?



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