Writing a Biography

A biography is a story of someone’s life written by someone other than that person. Choose someone that is no longer living who interests you or that you admire, research that person, and write their biography. The biography should be at least two typed pages long. The process is broken down for you in the steps below. Pace yourself by accomplishing these tasks over a series of days.

**Task 1: Identify Your Topic.**
Complete Pre-writing Exercise: What do you already know? What do you want to find out?

When doing your research, consider the following questions, which most biographies usually answer:

- Where was this person born? In what year?
- Where did this person grow up?
- What did this person do for a living?
- Why did you choose this person?
- How has this person made an impact on others' lives?

**Task 2: Visit the library.**
Identify sources that seem likely to provide you with the information you are seeking. Make a list of at least 3 sources.

**Task 3: Do your research.** Take notes on information and sources.

**Task 4: Review your notes.**
Sort the information you have collected into categories. Consider your categories and create an outline for your biography. Compare your outline to the prompt questions above. Have you collected all the information that you need to answer all of the questions? If not, conduct additional research to fill in the gaps. Update your outline as necessary.

**Task 5: Write your first draft.**
Your first draft will help you to get your facts in order in your biography where they belong. Don’t worry if your first draft reads too much like a list of facts. In the next task you will take the facts and shape them into a story.

**Task 6: Write your second draft.**
This time, instead of just writing down the facts from your notes, think about how the information would be relayed if you were writing fiction. Think of the subject of your biography as if he or she were a character in a made-up story. For Example:

**FIRST DRAFT:** Ben Franklin got his start as a writer by secretly writing articles for his brother James’ paper.

**SECOND DRAFT:** Ben really wanted to write for his brother’s paper, but his brother wouldn’t let him. But Ben was determined. He began writing letters at night, many of them about how poorly women were treated. He would sign them “Silence Dogood” and slip them underneath the door of the newspaper office at night. The mysterious “Silence Dogood” was soon famous.

**Task 7: Edit your second draft to produce your final draft.** Be sure to check for spelling and punctuation.

**Task 8: Compile a bibliography from your sources.**
Write or type your bibliography. Draw or find an image of the subject of your biography and use the image to create a cover for your work. Place your bibliography at the back of your biography pages and secure all of the pages inside your cover. You’re done! Share your work!