

Biography Research Project

Assignment: You will write a 2-3 page biography based on sound research skills. You must use a minimum of four sources; two must be books/e-books. The other two (or more!) may derive from the Web as long as the sources are reputable.

Remember that the goal of the project is not merely to list the achievements or tragedies in the life of the figure. Instead, research with an eye toward answering the research question and interpreting the material. It is the goal of the writer to make the reader care about the figure in meaningful ways.

STEP 1

Questioning: A great biography is driven by great questions. Boring questions produce boring answers. Boring answers put readers to sleep. Simple lists of facts are a bit like dry cereal . . .no milk . . . no fruit . . .no taste!

Use this step to establish important factual evidence about the figure. Identify 4-5 of the questions below that you will research.

- In what ways was the life remarkable?
- In what ways was the life despicable?
- In what ways was the life admirable?
- What human qualities were most influential in shaping the way this person lived and influenced his or her times?
- Which quality or trait proved most troubling and difficult?
- Which quality or trait was most beneficial?
- Did this person make any major mistakes or bad decisions? If so, what were they and how would you have chosen and acted differently if you were in their shoes?
- What are the two or three most important lessons you or any other young person might learn from the way this person lived?
- Some people say you can judge the quality of a person's life by the enemies they make. Do you think this is true of your person's life? Explain why or why not.
- An older person or mentor is often very important in shaping the lives of gifted people by providing guidance and encouragement. To what extent was this true of your person? Explain.

- Many people act out of a "code" or a set of beliefs which dictate choices. It may be religion or politics or a personal philosophy. To what extent did your person act by a code or act independently of any set of beliefs? Were there times when the code was challenged and impossible to follow?
- What do you think it means to be a hero? Was your person a "hero?" Why? Why not? How is a hero different from a celebrity?

STEP 2

Research: Now that you have determined the questions you will explore, it is time to consult several different sources in order to gather and develop answers. To do a careful, thorough job, you will want to consult all of the following: a book, an Encyclopedia, and the Internet.

Once you have collected many good pieces of information about your person, the next step is to combine those pieces in such a way as to cast light upon your questions.

Include this information on at least 10 note cards. Remember that two of your sources must be books/e-books, try to use one primary source. You will be graded on productive use of time, visible progress, appropriate questioning, initiative, and respectful use of library materials.

(20pts.) Due date: Thursday, February 25th.

STEP 3

Telling the Story: Your job is to take the insights you created in the previous section, and blend them together into a series of well crafted paragraphs which tell a story.

A good story offers drama, excitement, human interest, passion and suspense. Tell this person's story so your audience will be at the edge of their seats wanting to learn more.

Outline: An outline is a "road map" of your paper. Outline your paper using some of the topics you came across during your research. As well as, some of the basic elements of a biography listed below. Write out completely both the introduction (to begin the outline) and conclusion (to end the outline). Use proper indenting format leaving space between each section.

(30pts.) Due Date: Wednesday, March 3rd.

Basic Elements of a Biography

The biography basic are fairly obvious, but as with all facts, they should be checked and rechecked for accuracy. These include:

- Date of Birth
- Place of Birth
- Family details
- Achievements
- Educational institutions
- Hobbies and interests
- Major events that occurred during the subjects life (whether or not they actually impacted on the subject - they set the 'scene')
- Obstacles overcome
- Challenges
- Successes
- Legacy

The biography will be evaluated on performance in these key areas:

- Use of appropriate resources
- Use of evidence to support chosen questions
- The 6 Traits of Writing
- Organization and appropriate topic sentences
- Correct use of English grammar and spelling

Final paper must be typed, double-spaced, and in 12-font Times New Roman. Please include an illustrated cover page with an original title that helps inform the reader about the direction your biography will take. George Washington is not an acceptable title for a biography of George Washington. Instead, you can say George Washington, Our First President and Leader in our Fight for Freedom.

Final paper due on Tuesday, March 16th, beginning of class____(100 pts.)

Total points for assignment: 150 pts

Name _____

Biography Outline

I. Introduction

Attention Grabber/Hook:

Background/introduce topic:

Thesis:

II. Body

A. Topic Sentence:

1. Example/evidence

2. Example/evidence

3. Example/evidence

B. Topic Sentence:

1. Example/evidence

2. Example/evidence

3. Example/evidence

C. Topic Sentence:

1. Example/evidence

2. Example/evidence

3. Example/evidence

III. Conclusion

A. Restate/rephrase thesis (Summary statement)

Review/summarize evidence
