Writing a Life Story: Biography Masterclass

Learning objective: To understand the features of a biography and apply them by structuring a chronological account of a person's life.

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of non-fiction writing to provide detailed responses. Remember to use formal, third-person language.

A biography is a detailed account of a person's life written by someone else. It moves beyond just a list of dates to capture the essence of a person's character, their struggles, and their impact on the world. To write an effective biography, an author must research facts, interview witnesses, and weave these elements into a compelling narrative that remains strictly factual.

Word bank: chronological · anecdote · chronicle · perspective · legacy · achievements · objective · biographical

1. Explain why it is important for a biographer to write in the third person rather than the first person. Give an example of a sentence that uses the third person. (2 marks)

2. Max the monkey is writing a biography about an explorer. Why must he present the events in chronological order? What might happen to the reader's understanding if he does not? (2 marks)

3. List three specific types of information you would need to research to write a comprehensive biography about a historical figure. (3 marks)

4. What is an 'anecdote' in the context of a biography, and why does including one make a biography more engaging for the reader? (2 marks)

5. If you were writing a biography about Ellie the elephant’s life, what kind of 'legacy' or final impact might you describe in the concluding paragraph? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a timeline graphic organiser that shows the five key stages of a person's life: Early Years, Education, Major Challenges, Notable Achievements, and Legacy.

Extension challenge: Choose a famous historical figure (such as Florence Nightingale or Alan Turing) and write a short, one-paragraph introduction to their biography. Ensure you include a 'hook' to grab the reader's attention.