

AUTOBIOGRAPHY PROJECT

This is a year-long autobiography writing project where students tell the story of their life. Included are: parent letter, student introduction sheet, list of requirements, project checklist, and twelve chapters, each with guiding questions to help students complete this project.

Chapter titles include: A Little Bit About Me, Before I Was Born, You Make an Entrance...and You're Here to Stay!, The Early Years, Childhood Memories, School Days, School Days, Special Times in Your Life, Your Family, Everyday Life at Your Age, Thoughts on Friendship, Brag Page, and The Future.



AUTOBIOGRAPHY PROJECT

It is often remarked that "you write best about what you know". On what topic would you be considered the ultimate expert? How about...you? This nine weeks you will start working on a special and fun project—your autobiography—the story of your life!!

Why should you write your autobiography? There are several good reasons to do so. First, no matter how old we are, we are all searching for identity, purpose, and meaning in our lives. People who write about themselves learn about themselves. They discover answers to that age-old question—"Who am I?"

There is also a sense of satisfaction and pride involved in writing a book, which is exactly what you are doing—you are writing a book about your life. This will not be an easy task, but when you finish, you should feel—and will feel—very proud.

Finally, finishing an autobiography allows you the joy of giving a truly special, one-of-a-kind gift, if you so desire. You could give a copy of your autobiography to your parents or grandparents, or save it to give to your children one day.

Look through scrapbooks, baby books, photo albums, family mementos and other materials to find information for your autobiography. Along with your required writing, you can include photographs, illustrations, certificates, awards, report cards, photocopies of birth certificates—anything at all that will better illustrate your life and the times in which you live.

No one else can write the story you are about to write. Believe in yourself. After all, you are the expert on the topic you will be writing about—your life!

Have fun! You are about to embark on a fantastic journey!

INTRODUCTION

AUTOBIOGRAPHY PROJECT

Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

Students in my Language Arts classes will soon be starting work on their autobiographies. Students will be completing some of the activities over the next nine weeks, culminating in book form by the end of the year.

Parents and students alike are almost always delighted with the completed autobiographies. Students have a wonderful keepsake, and many families even make several copies of the autobiographies to give as gifts to grandparents or other special relatives.

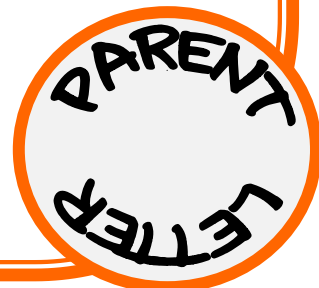
The autobiography assignments are not meant in any way to pry into the personal or private lives of a student or a student's family. Students are encouraged to write only about what they and their families feel is appropriate. The open-ended activities are designed for all students, including students living with their biological parents, with grandparents or other relatives, with adoptive families, with foster families or others. There are writing options for many situations.

Also, it is very important to realize that the questions are meant to be used as possible writing prompts, not requirements. Each activity includes a list of questions, and students certainly do not need to answer every question. In fact, if you—for any reason—do not want your child to complete the assignment, he or she may instead complete an alternative assignment. For example, the student might interview another adult to find out about his or her childhood, or research and write about the childhood of a historical figure.)

Hours of preparation have gone into this project to make it a positive one for students. One of the reasons I feel it will be successful is that it builds on what students are most familiar with—themselves. Students work on their writing skills as they write about something they know very well. Even if they become frustrated or tired of writing, the results at the end of the project are well worth their efforts.

I hope that writing an autobiography will be a positive and memorable experience for your child.

Sincerely,



AUTOBIOGRAPHY PROJECT

REQUIREMENTS

In order to make a good grade on this project, you will have to meet specific requirements. Each chapter will require a story—your story—written in paragraph form. Each chapter will be at least one page long, although some chapters will need to be longer. Some chapters will require extra work—a family tree, illustrations, pictures, etc. Each chapter will have a list of its requirements.

When your autobiography project is finished, it must be bound together like a book. You may use a three ring binder, a photo album, or a three-prong folder. You can also be creative and design your own! I need to be able to turn the pages and read this like a book.

Remember that this is a book. It is the story of your life. Don't just answer the questions one by one. Elaborate—make it interesting! You will look back on this in the future and be proud of what you did.

Good Luck! Have fun!



"A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME"

Requirements: One page story and Name Poster

Every story needs an introduction. Introduce your reader to YOU by using the questions below to help convey some basic information about yourself.

1. Tell about your name—first, middle and last. Do you know anything about your surname and/or its history? What does your name mean; for example, Claire means clear and bright. Why did your parents choose this name? What would your name have been if you were born of the opposite sex? Are you named after a special person? If so, why? Do you have any nicknames? Why? Do you like or dislike your name or nickname? Why or why not? If you could change your name, what would you change it to and why? Is there a famous person who shares your name?
2. On what day were you born? Is there anyone else you know that is born on this day? What sign of the Zodiac were you born under? What are the characteristics of the people born under this sign? Do you think these characteristics describe you? Why or why not?

NAME POSTER

- Print your first name in BIG BUBBLE LETTERS on a white sheet of paper. You should fill in the entire sheet with the letters of your name.
- Fill in each bubble letter of your name with information about yourself. Topics could include family, friends, pets, favorites, hobbies, goals, foods, sports, etc.
- Get creative! You can fill your letters with drawings, small personal photos, magazine/newspaper clippings that embody who you are, what you like, or a personal characteristic.
- Make sure your final copy is neat and something you would be proud to have published in your autobiography book.

"BEFORE I WAS BORN"

Requirements: One page story and Family Tree

Who you are today depends a lot upon the people who have lived before you. Perhaps you inherited your curly brown hair from your grandmother or you learned to play chess from your stepfather, who learned it from his father.

Your family may be made up of parents, brothers and sisters, stepparents, foster parents, guardians, or some combination of all of the above. You may be born into a family, adopted into a family or become part of a family in a different way. No matter what form they take, families have a big effect on all our lives.

Tell about the people who came before you in your family. Who were they? Where did they come from? How did they live?

Use the following questions to help you with your family research. Talk to family members, visit a cemetery, or go on the Internet. Take your time—the past helped lead to you!

1. How did your family wind up in this country? Did your ancestors emigrate from another country? If so, why and how did they come to America?
2. Tell as much as you can about your grandparents and great-grandparents. Which ones are still living? What are they like?
3. Do you know about any "characters" in your family's past? Almost every family has its clowns, saints, black sheep and eccentrics who are either loved or hated. Do you know any stories?
4. Are there any special family history stories that you have heard over and over? For instance, your grandfather met your grandmother in the first grade and said that he was going to marry her. Tell a special story about your family.
5. Are there any characteristics or personality traits that run through your family? Perhaps all the men in your family are good at baseball, or all of your mother's relatives are very artistic. Explain what family traits run in your family.
6. Does your family have any items from previous generations? Perhaps you have an old desk, a quilt, or a piece of jewelry. What about a favorite toy? What stories do you know about these items? If possible, include a picture of the family item.
7. Are there any other interesting facts we should know about your family? Are there any famous, prominent or interesting people we should know about? Is there something about your family of which you are particularly proud? Write about it!

Remember that these questions are just a guide. You do not have to answer each and every one of them. Use them to help you tell your story!

"YOU MAKE AN ENTRANCE...AND YOU'RE HERE TO STAY!"

Requirements: Two page story

When you were born, a unique individual joined the human race. You probably don't remember much about your birth through the age of three, if you remember anything at all. You will need to talk to relatives and friends who knew you then. You will need to consult photo albums, scrapbooks and your baby book, if you have one.

Choose from the following questions to help you write the story of your birth through the first three years of your life.

1. When and where were you born? Do you know anything about your birth—time, doctor, family members present? Is there a funny story about your birth? How did your parents announce your birth?
2. If you were adopted, tell about your first meeting with your parents. Did they pick you up at the hospital or perhaps meet the plane bringing you to this country? What else do you know about your adoption?
3. How did people react when you were born? Are you an only child—maybe the first grandchild or great-grandchild? If you have older brothers or sisters, how did they feel about your arrival?
4. Tell about some of your "firsts". Where did you live when you were born—"your first home"? What was your first food—besides milk? What was your first word—who heard you say it? What other "firsts" can you write about?
5. Now write about some of your "favorites" as a baby and toddler. Did you have a special stuffed animal, toy or blanket? What were your favorite things to do—such as games, songs, family activities? Who did you like better—Barney or Big Bird? Did you like another cartoon character instead? What are some other favorites you remember?
6. Almost everyone has a funny or interesting story about themselves as a baby or toddler. What's yours?

Some people are unable to find out about and/or write about their early years. If you are one of these individuals, imagine what your early years might have been like, or how you wish they had been. Then use the questions above to help you create a fictional background for yourself. Be sure to let me know it's fiction!

"The Early Years"

Requirements: One page story

What was your life like when you were a preschooler? Write about the first years of your life. Choose from the questions below to help you write.

1. What was your earliest memory? Describe it. Why do you think you remember it?
2. Describe yourself as a preschooler, between the ages of about three to five. What did you look like? What was your general nature—sunny, shy, serious, quiet, ornery, etc.?
3. What did you enjoy doing? Were there certain games you liked to play? What did you do for fun? Where did you go for fun?
4. Before you started grade school, where did you stay? Did you stay at home or a relative or baby-sitter's house? Did you go to preschool or day care? How did you feel about whatever arrangement you had?
5. If you went to preschool or day care, which one did you attend? Who was your favorite playmate? Who was your favorite teacher? Tell me a funny or interesting story about preschool.
6. Ask your parents (or others who remember you) to tell you about any one or all of the following:
 - something cute you did as a toddler
 - a time when you embarrassed someone
 - a time when someone was frightened for you
 - a time when someone was proud of you
 - a time when someone was irritated or annoyed with you
 - a time when you surprised someone

"CHILDHOOD MEMORIES"

Requirements: One page story

After age five, our memories become more detailed. What was life like for you after age five? To help you start remembering, look at school pictures, family snapshots and/or scrapbooks.

1. What do you remember with real pleasure from your childhood? Tell about a good time growing up.
2. What was upsetting during your childhood years, for example, a divorce, a car accident, a death in the family, or a move? Tell about a bad time growing up.
3. Tell about a mischievous thing you did when you were younger.
4. What did you want to be when you grew up? Do you still feel that way?
5. Were you ever really sick? What was wrong? Did you have to go to the hospital? Did you ever have any broken bones or operations?
6. Did you have a favorite secret place? What about an imaginary friend? Describe your "secrets" and how you felt about them.
7. What scared you when you were younger? Did you believe in ghosts, boogymen or monsters under the bed? Explain.
8. What were your favorites—favorite TV show, clothes, toy, book, movies, etc.? Describe them. Are any of them still your favorites today?
9. Is there anything you could swear happened—but your parents swear didn't happen?
10. What sort of things did you believe in when you were younger that you don't believe in now? For example, did you believe that little people lived inside your TV, or that trees flapping their hands caused wind?

"SCHOOL DAYS, SCHOOL DAYS"

Requirements: One page story and School Chart

What was your elementary school experience? Did you stay at one school all six years or did you attend several? Write about your time spent in school, both in the classroom and out. After you write your story, make a chart that gives specific details about each grade.

1. Describe the school or schools you have attended. What was each one like? If you attended more than one, which one was your favorite and why?
2. Did you ride the bus, walk to school, or get a ride with someone? What memories do you have of getting to school and/or going home?
3. You have had many teachers over the years. Who was your favorite (or favorites) and why? Who was your least favorite and why?
4. What do you remember about lunch at school? Did you pack your lunch or eat lunch in the cafeteria? What was your favorite meal? What was your least favorite meal?
5. What were your favorite school activities? What were your favorite extra-curricular classes? Did you enjoy music, art, and PE? Were you on the student council? What about after-school activities?
6. Were you involved in organized sports, either through school or other organizations? What did you like about sports? What did you dislike about them? What was your favorite sport? Did you have a favorite coach?
7. Did you take lessons of any kind—music, art, dance, karate, etc.? How did you feel about the lessons? How long did you take the lessons? Are you still taking them?
8. Were you active in any clubs—4-H, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, church groups? Why did you join? What did you do?
9. How did you spend your free time after school and on weekends? What did you do for fun? What games did you play? Did you have any hobbies? What were they?

SCHOOL CHART

Design a chart or graphic organizer that will present the following information in a clear and organized manner.

Present the following information for each year of school you have attended, kindergarten through sixth grade.

- grade number
- school or schools attended in that grade
- teacher or teachers you had that year
- favorite subject or subjects
- least favorite subject or subjects
- favorite time of day
- friend or friends you had that year
- one thing that stands out in your mind about that particular grade

At the end of the chart or graphic organizer, write a short summary that gives an overall impression of your school experience so far. What has been your favorite grade so far? Who has been your favorite teacher of all? What has been your most favorite subject? Have your friends changed or stayed the same?



'SPECIAL TIMES IN YOUR LIFE'

Requirements: One page story

Every childhood includes special times, whether they are holidays, family celebrations or other occasions. Write about the special times in your life, both past and present. Choose from the questions below to help you write your story.

1. What was the best gift you ever received when you were young? What was the best gift you ever gave? Was there ever a gift that you really, really wanted but you never received? Why do you think you didn't receive it?
2. What are some of your family traditions? For example, do you always cut your own Christmas tree, go to Grandma's for Thanksgiving, camp or go to the beach on Memorial or Labor Day, or attend different community festivals each year? Which tradition is your favorite? Why? Which tradition is your least favorite? Why?
3. What birthday do you remember best? Why?
4. Does your family take vacations together? If so, where have you gone? How did you get there? What was the most fun? What was the least fun?
5. What do you like to do on holidays or special occasions, like the Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.?
6. Have you ever been in a wedding? Whose was it? What did you do? What did you wear? Why were you chosen to be in this wedding?
7. What "firsts" do you remember in your life so far—first airplane ride, first time you rode a bike, first girlfriend or boyfriend, first time you went to the movies? Describe these firsts.

"YOUR FAMILY"

Requirements: Two page story

All families are different, but they have one thing in common: They have a big effect on our lives. Describe your family, and write about life in your family. Use the questions below to help you decide what to write. (If you live part of the time with one parent and part of the time with another, you may choose to write about either or both family situations.)

1. Who do you live with? Who are the people in your family? How do you think your family is like most families? How do you think it is different?
2. Who is your mother? What does she look like? Describe her personality and your relationship with her. What does she do for a living? What are her hobbies? What do you remember most about her from when you were small? What have you learned from her so far?
3. Who is your father? What does he look like? Describe his personality and your relationship with him. What does he do for a living? What are his hobbies? What do you remember most about him from when you were small? What have you learned from him so far?
4. Who are your brothers and sisters? Tell their names and ages, and describe each of them. What are they like? What do you like to do with them? To whom do you feel the closest, and why?
5. Does anyone outside your immediate family live with you? If so, why?
6. Who is your favorite relative outside your immediate family, and why?
7. If you have stepparents, describe them. How have you adjusted to having them in your life?
8. Do you have stepbrothers or stepsisters? Half sisters or half brothers? How have you adjusted to having them in your life?

Now for a little information about life in your family:

1. What is life like in your family? What makes you a family? How do you all manage to get along, or do you get along?
2. How would you describe your family's personality? For example, is it noisy, active, quiet, calm, strict, friendly, loving, formal, informal, etc.?
3. What makes your family special? Do you have special words, sayings or jokes? What are your family's rules? What are your family traditions? What do you like most about your family?
4. What values are important to your family? Honesty, spending time with one another, going to church together, etc.? How does your family show that these values are important to them?
5. Tell some family stories. Did you ever share an adventure? What funny things have happened to you? What frightening things have happened to your family? Do you share a hobby, sport, or other activity?
6. Are animals or pets a part of your family? If so, explain.
 7. Do you spend a lot of time with your extended family—grandparents, aunts, uncle, etc.? What are some things you do together?
 8. How does your family get all its chores done? Does everyone have different responsibilities? What do you have to do?

"eVeryDAY LIfe AT YOUR AGE"

Requirements: Two page story

Young people today live lives very different from young people of the past or young people of the future. Describe what it is like to be the person you are right now, at the age you are right now. Describe everyday life in your world. Write about who you are today. Use the questions below to help guide you as you write.

1. What do you look like? Describe yourself.
2. How are you like other people your age? How are you different?
3. What is the most unusual thing about you?
4. Who or what influences you the most at this point in your life? Why?
5. What makes you happy?
6. What disturbs you?
7. What do you value?
8. Describe what is "in" with you and your friends. What music do you like? What dances, TV shows, movies, videos, and etc. do you enjoy?
9. What is definitely not "in" with you and your friends?
10. Describe the fashions that you and your friends wear. Describe the hairstyles that are popular.
11. Describe a typical school day for you. What happens? What do you enjoy? What do you dislike? Is school important to you? Why or why not?
12. What are the conflicts, stresses, or hassles in your life? Describe a typical weekday evening, a typical Saturday and a typical Sunday.
13. What activities are you involved in, other than school? Do you belong to clubs or other organizations? Do you have a part-time job? Do you enjoy any hobbies? Are you active in church groups? Do you participate in sports?
14. Describe young people of the opposite sex, in your point of view. What are they like? What do you like about them? What do you dislike about them?
15. Do you go on dates? If so, where do you usually go? Do you remember any date especially well? Why?

"THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP"

Requirements: One page story

According to Robert Louis Stevenson, "A friend is a present you give yourself." No matter what our age, our friends are very precious. Write about friendships that have been important to you, either now or in the past. Use the questions below to help you as you write.

1. Of all the people you have known, who have been your closest friends? Tell a bit about each of these special people. When were you friends preschool, kindergarten, fifth grade, now? What did you do together? What kinds of support did you give each other? Can you tell a favorite story about each friend?
2. What is most important to you in a friendship? Explain.
3. Have you ever gone on an adventure with a friend? What happened?
4. Have you ever been deeply hurt by a friend or someone you thought was a friend? How did you handle it?
5. Who has been your best friend in your family? Why?
6. Did you ever have a friend move away? How did you handle it? Were you able to continue the friendship?
7. What kind of people do you like to spend time with? Are you a member of a group? How important is "belonging" to you?
8. What qualities do your friends bring out in you? Do different friends bring out different qualities? Explain.
9. What do you give to your friends?
10. What can people learn about you by looking at your friends?
11. How does peer pressure affect you? Has it ever helped you? Has it ever caused you problems?

"BRAG PAGE"

Requirements: One page story

It's time to brag about yourself. Write about the achievements, talents, accomplishments, and rewards of your lifetime—and don't be modest!

1. What moments in your life have most pleased you? When have you been most proud of yourself? Perhaps you saved a dog's life, caught a fish, helped a friend at school, or made a speech. What pleased you most about what you did or about what happened?
2. What awards have you received in your lifetime? Perhaps you won a spelling bee, a blue ribbon, a poetry contest, a dance contest, a most valuable player award, or a perfect attendance certificate. Be sure to mention trophies, plaques, certificates, cash prizes, or other awards. Include recognition from schools, clubs, churches, charities, community organizations, hobbies, or other sources.
3. What are your talents, large and small? Perhaps you are known as a talented singer, a good cook, an interesting conversationalist, a versatile athlete, a gifted artist, or a great baby sitter. Whatever your talents, tell about them!
4. What special skills help make you unique? Perhaps you could touch your nose with your tongue, recite the alphabet backwards, walk on your hands, or do a great Donald Duck imitation.
5. When other people have complimented you over the years, what have they most often said? Perhaps they have complimented your smile, your sense of humor, your beautiful eyes, your organizational skills, or your athletic ability. Tell about your most frequent compliments!

"The Future"

Requirements: One page story

At your age, you have lived less than 25% of your probable life span. There is much more future ahead of you than there is past behind you.

Most people who write about their lives write from a position just the opposite of yours. Because they are in their sixties or seventies, they have lived most of their lives already. They look back when they write. They write almost entirely of the past.

You, on the other hand, can spend more time looking toward the future. Because you have so much future ahead of you, it is a good idea to think about and write about that future.

Choose from the questions below to help you write.

1. Where would you like to live as an adult? Would you prefer a city, a town, or a rural community? Would you like to live in the United States or a foreign country? Would you like to be near an ocean, the mountains, or somewhere in the middle? What kind of climate would you prefer?
2. What kind of house would you like to have? What kind of car do you want to drive?
3. What would be your ideal vacation as an adult? Why?
4. How do you envision yourself making a living? What would be your perfect job? Why do you think this is the perfect job for you?
5. What kind of leisure time activities do you think you will enjoy?
6. What kind of adult do you think you will be? Describe yourself as a neighbor, a member of the community, a spouse, a parent, and a grandparent.
7. What kind of country do you think the United States will be when you are about 30 years old? How will the world be different than it is today?
8. What problems do you see in your future? What do you think you can do about them now?
9. What looks brightest in your future?

AUTOBIOGRAPHY PROJECT

Completed Checklist

Assignment	Completed	Typed	Graded
Chapter 1			
Name Poster			
Chapter 2			
Family Tree			
Chapter 3			
Chapter 4			
Chapter 5			
Chapter 6			
School Chart			
Chapter 7			
Chapter 8			
Chapter 9			
Chapter 10			
Chapter 11			
Chapter 12			

Name:

