

Lesson Skill: Comparing and contrasting biography and autobiography

Strand Reading — literary nonfiction

SOL 3.6

4.5

5.5

Materials

- Several biography picture books (related to other content areas if possible)
- Biography Feature Chart (attached)
- Chart paper
- Interactive notebooks

Lesson

Day 1

1. Explain that, during the next five days, the class will be learning about biographies and autobiographies. Write Biography on the top of chart paper, and ask students if anyone can define it. Explain that a biography is the true story of someone's life, and add the definition onto the chart. With students, define *feature* (distinctive characteristic), and define *genre* for them (a category in literature [or any artistic composition] characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject).
2. Read a few short biographies aloud, and ask students what features they notice in the biography genre. List five main features on the biography chart paper.
 - Date and place of birth
 - Childhood
 - Major events
 - Achievements
 - Date of death [if applicable]
3. Read the first short biography, and have students identify the features. For this modeling exercise, keep the list short to keep the focus on the features. (Students may need help sorting out major events from achievements.)
4. For the next part, consider using biographies of people from the social studies curriculum (See attached sample Biography Feature Chart). Start with a well-known current figure such as the President of the United States. After reading the two short biographies, pair students and have them select a biography to buddy-read from a collection of biographies. Ask them to create a page labeled Biography in their interactive notebook and write down the features the class already listed, in addition to others they notice. Bring the class back together, and ask students to share the list of features for the biographies.

Day 2

5. Once students have a good idea of what a biography is and they understand its features, explain that most biographies are written in a timeline of the person's life. Ask the same pairs of students to think of a person they would like to write a biography about. Tell them they are going to research that person then create a timeline about him or her. Do this in the library or in your school's computer lab. They are to put their timeline into their interactive notebooks on a page labeled with the name of the person they are researching.

Day 3

6. Once students have had adequate time to research and create their timelines, bring them together to share. Model by sharing a biographical timeline you create, then model writing the biography. Have students write their biographies on the page opposite their timeline. Once finished, give students time to share their biographies with the class.

Day 4

7. Read excerpts from an autobiography.
8. Write Autobiography on the top of the chart paper. Explain that an autobiography is an account of a person's life written by that person. Write a definition on the chart paper under the word Autobiography. Have students create the same chart in their interactive notebooks. Point out that an autobiography has the same features as a biography but is more personal and is typically written in the first person.
9. Give each student a large piece of paper. Have students draw a shape that fills the entire paper, such as a circle, heart, or shape of their choice. Have students write their name in the center and put a circle or boundary around it. Have students write single words or short statements about meaningful things in their lives. They may also draw small pictures to illustrate. Explain that students should use their graphic to create a timeline of themselves in their interactive notebooks just like they did with their biographies. Allow students time to share when they are done.
10. Model autobiographical writing for students. Have students use their timelines to write their own autobiographies in their interactive notebooks on the page beside their timeline.

Day 5

11. Provide time for students to finish and share their autobiographies.
12. As a class, reflect on the last five days. Go back and look at the Biography and Autobiography charts. Read over the biography features, then have students think about the differences in an autobiography. Have them name autobiography features while you write them on the chart. Have students also write the features in their interactive notebooks. Discuss the differences between a biography and autobiography.

Strategies for Differentiation:

- Provide copies of the text so that students can read along as they listen.
- Pair buddies so that able readers can assist others.
- Provide examples of timelines to help students understand why timelines are helpful.
- Use timelines that are relevant to the social studies curriculum.

Biography Feature Chart

Features

Person One

Christopher Columbus

Date of Birth (Place)

1451, Spain

Childhood

Worked in father's cheese stand

Three brothers

Accomplishments

Received funding from Spain's Queen Isabella

Major Events

First European to discover a sea route to America

Discovered Western Hemisphere (landed at San Salvador)

Death

1506

The following chart is from the Grade Three Social Studies Curriculum Framework

Explorer	Country (Sponsor)	Reason for Exploring	Successes/Achievements
Christopher Columbus	Spain	To find a western sea route to Asia	First European to discover a sea route to America; discovered Western Hemisphere (landed at San Salvador)
Juan Ponce de León	Spain	To discover riches and land to conquer	First European to land in Florida (near St. Augustine); gave Spain a claim to Florida
Jacques Cartier	France	To colonize the New World	Explored the St. Lawrence River Valley (near Québec, Canada) and gave France a North America claim
Christopher Newport	England	To discover riches; to find a western sea route to Asia; to colonize Virginia	Arrived at present day Jamestown; made four additional voyages, bringing more people to Jamestown; was one of the first men to reach the Fall Line of the James River