

Deconstructing Biographies & Autobiographies

Wide Reading Assignment

Find a biography or autobiography to read and study in detail. Write the answers to the questions below and hand your assignment to your teacher by the due date: _____

- 1) Look at the cover of the book. Does the cover of the book show that it is a biography/autobiography and not a fictional story? How?
- 2) What is so special or interesting about this person? Why has a book been written about them?
- 3) Read the first chapter of the book. How is the subject of the book introduced? What are your reactions to him/her?
- 4) How does the writer create interest in the story in the first chapter?
- 5) At what point in the person's life does the book begin? Why do you think the author has started at that point?
- 6) Is the book about the person's whole life or just one part of a person's life? Why do you think the author chose to do this?
- 7) How is the story ordered? (e.g. in flashback, chronological or other?) Why do you think the author used this order for the events?
- 8) What evidence has the author used in writing this book? (e.g. notes, letters, diaries, articles etc.) Look for an Appendix, or references to evidence throughout the book. Is this evidence reliable as a source for describing this person's life?
- 9) If no evidence has been identified, why has the author left it out?
- 10) Who is the author of the book? What is their connection with the subject? Do you think they have authority to write about this person? Why / Why not? Do you think their account is reliable? Why / Why not?
- 11) Does the author make use of dialogue between the 'characters'?
 - a) If so, do you think this is *exactly* what was said at the time? How do you know? Why might an author use dialogue instead of simply describing what happened?
 - b) If not, why doesn't the author use dialogue?
- 12) Most biographies/autobiographies include some images of the subject in the centre of the book. Choose three important images. Describe why the author has included these and what they are supposed to show about the subject.