

To identify features of biographies

Over the next few weeks, we are going to be learning about biographies.

What is a biography?

A biography is writing about someone's life.

What is an autobiography?

If someone is writing about their own life, it becomes an autobiography.

Both these forms can also widen out to focus on a specific part of someone's life or their family.

What is its purpose?

A biography is usually written both to inform and to entertain. This means it is a mix of factual information and creative writing.

Who are the intended audience?

The audience is usually made up of people who are interested in the person being written about. However, sometimes biographies of people who aren't well known can be interesting because of an experience that they've had.

Have you ever read a biography?

What was the name of the person whose biography you read?

Did you enjoy reading it?

How are biographies structured?

The structure of biographical writing:

- Start in the middle of a story to grab the reader's attention and highlight a specific event of interest **OR**
Opening statement introduces the subject, and explains why he/she is known
- Significant events are ordered chronologically
- Closing statement explains how this person will be remembered and sometimes gives the writer's opinion

What are the features of biographies?

The language features:

- Refers to named individuals
- Contains dates linked to specific events
- Written in the past tense
- Can include direct and indirect speech and quotes from other sources

- Written in 3rd person
- Includes time adverbials/conjunctions to link ideas
- Events are anecdotal in style (rather than lists of facts) to engage the reader
- Descriptive language to create an accurate image of the scene and to provide detail about the person

Task 1

Read over the biography below and think about the features of the biography.

Named individual → **Usain Bolt**

As Usain Bolt rushed towards the finish line in the Beijing Olympics, the world watched in stunned amazement. This young man from Jamaica was crushing his opponents and was about to beat the 100m world record with an incredible time of 9.69 seconds...

Early Life

Factual information → Usain Saint Leo Bolt was born on the 21st of August 1986 in Sherwood Content, a small town in Trelawny, Jamaica. Usain Bolt grew up with his parents, Wellesley and Jennifer Bolt, his brother Sadiki and his sister Sherine. His parents ran the local grocery store. Bolt's family attended the local Catholic Church and even today he still makes the sign of the cross before all of his major events. As a boy all of Bolt's free time was spent playing cricket and football in the street with his brother. He was sports mad!

Specific dates → 21st of August 1986

Sprinting Beginnings

As a child, Bolt attended Waldensia Primary, where he first began to show his sprinting potential, running in the annual, national primary-schools' competition for his area. By the age of twelve, Bolt had become the school's fastest runner over 100 metres. Usain's father, Wellesley put his speed down to 'Yam Power'! (Yams are an important part of the Jamaican diet).

Bolt went William Knibb Memorial High School, where he still enjoyed playing team sports, but he was such a fast sprinter his teachers encouraged him to try track and field events. The school had a history of success in athletics with past students, so he was in good hands, winning his first medal, silver, in the high school championships in 2001. Bolt was so good that a former Olympic sprinter, Pablo McNeil decided to train him. Bolt usually trained hard but Pablo was sometimes annoyed by Bolt's practical jokes!

Competitions

Adverbials → At the age of 15, Bolt took part in the 2002 World Junior Championships in Kingston, Jamaica, where he won the 200m race. This made him the youngest world-junior gold medallist ever.

Anecdotal style → Bolt usually trained hard but Pablo was sometimes annoyed by Bolt's practical jokes!

Descriptive language to create an accurate image of the scene → This made him the youngest world-junior gold medallist ever.

Third person

In 2007 Bolt got his big chance. He broke the Jamaican 200m record and earned two silver medals at the World Championship in Osaka, Japan. Bolt decided he really could achieve success as a sprinter and began to take his career more seriously.

Past tense

Olympics

He qualified for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China and went on to win gold in both the 100 and 200 metre events - even breaking a world record in the 100m final, winning in 9.69 seconds! Bolt achieved a third gold medal in Beijing as part of the Jamaican relay team.

Usain Bolt went on to defend all of his Olympic gold medals during the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London. This included beating his own record for the 100m, running it this time, in 9.63 seconds! Bolt is the first man to win both the 100 and 200 metres in consecutive Olympic Games. He is also the first man in history to set three world records in a single Olympic Games competition

Whatever the future holds for Usain Bolt, you can bet it won't be boring. He is, in his own words, 'a living legend' and with him anything could happen!

Task 2

Read over the biography on Kandinsky below.

Copy and complete the table below giving examples of features. It may help you to highlight and label the features first. One example has been provided for you.

<u>Feature</u>	<u>Example</u>
Start in the middle of a story to grab the reader's attention and highlight a specific event of interest <u>OR</u> Opening statement introduces the subject, and explains why he/she is known	
Significant events are ordered chronologically	
Refers to named individuals	
Contains dates linked to specific events	
Written in the past tense	
Can include direct and indirect speech and quotes from other sources	
Written in 3rd person	In his lifetime...
Includes time adverbials/conjunctions to link ideas	
Events are anecdotal in style (rather than lists of facts) to engage the reader	
Descriptive language to create an accurate image of the scene and to provide detail about the person	
Closing statement explains how this person will be remembered, and sometimes gives the writer's opinion	

Extension: Explain why each feature is used.

Kandinsky

In his lifetime, Wassily Kandinsky changed the face of art world and was one of the pioneers of abstract modern art. In a time where everything represented what was seen, Kandinsky wanted to explore the relationship between colour and form to create a visual experience that engaged the sight, sound, and emotions of the public.

Early life

Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow, the capital city of Russia, in 1866. As a child, Wassily was very talented and played the piano and cello he also enjoyed drawing and writing poetry. It is easy to imagine the early influences on the young boy with his keen eye for colour and love of music. Moscow was famous for its outstanding architecture with imposing buildings like the Kremlin, and the future artist would have soaked it all up. His family were very well off (his father was a tea merchant) and the fortunate Kandinsky family would often travel to Italy to visit places like Venice, Rome and Florence. He would have visited a great many monuments and art galleries and must have seen some amazing art as a youngster.

Early Career

Originally, Kandinsky's heart was set on becoming a lawyer and between 1886 and 1892 he studied law and economics at the University of Moscow. However, during his time there, he was sent to Vologda (a village in north-western Russia) to study the lives of the people who lived there. Whilst he was there, he became extremely impressed with the colourful ways they decorated their village houses and by their folk art. These forms and colours truly inspired him and had a huge influence on his artwork. When he was thirty years old, he decided to be an artist and gave up law and enrolled at the Munich Academy of Art. Kandinsky's early work was based on folk art and was heavily influenced by pointillism and fauvism – which is impressionist art. His most famous picture of this period was *The Blue Rider* (1903). He then discovered the work of Monet who did not use fine detail but emphasised colour more than the subject and in 1910, Kandinsky produced his first abstract watercolour.

Abstract Art

Kandinsky was certainly one of the earliest and most influential abstract painters of the 20th century. He did not want to paint pictures of what people could see but wanted to convey feelings and emotion and even the sound of music through the colours and shapes in his paintings. Kandinsky thought that yellow conveyed the crisp sound of a brass trumpet and certain colours placed together could create harmonies like the chords on a piano. The shapes he thought most interesting were the circle which created a spiritual feeling, the triangle which created aggressive feelings and the square which created calm feelings.

Der Blaue Reiter

Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) was an art movement formed by a number of Russian and German artists - including Kandinsky - that lasted from 1911 to 1914. The group of artists wanted to promote modern art. Although they all painted in their own different styles, they all had one thing in common, they wanted to express spiritual truths through their art and said, 'The artist must train not only his eyes but his soul.' Like Kandinsky, they believed that there was a connection between the spiritual and symbolic associations of colour and the link between visual art and music. Unfortunately, the group was disbanded by the First World War and Kandinsky was forced to move back to Russia.

Bauhaus

When World War I ended, Kandinsky was invited to teach at the Bauhaus Art School in Germany. The school was opened by Walter Gropius in 1919. Gropius felt that a new period in history had begun and wanted to create a new architectural style that reflected the new era. However, the Nazi party (who ruled in Germany at the time) were very critical of this new modern movement and closed it down in 1933. Even though the artists were forced to leave Germany, they had a major influence on art and architecture in Western-Europe and the USA in the following years. Because they had been exiled under the Nazi regime, they had been forced to move to other parts of the world and were able to spread their talents far and wide.

Kandinsky's art and ideas have inspired many generations of artists, from his students at the Bauhaus to the Abstract Expressionists after World War II and is still greatly admired to this day.