

BIOGRAPHY/AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Thomas Jefferson: Jefferson was one of the most important figures in the early history of the U.S. His autobiography is a great resource for learning what America was like when it was young.

“At the age of 77, I begin to make some memoranda and state some recollections of dates and facts concerning myself, for my own ready reference and for the information of my family.

The tradition in my father's family was that their ancestor came to this country from Wales, and from near the mountain of Snowdon, the highest in Great Britain.”

-Autobiography (1821)



How can we tell from this introductory paragraph that we are reading an autobiography?

I can tell this is an autobiography because
the author writes the word “I” and mentions
his age. He also talks about his own experiences.

Alexander von Humboldt: Humboldt was a German scientist and adventurer in the 1800s. Even though few people talk about him today, he made many great discoveries and his life story is a fascinating tale that takes place all over the globe.

“A biography of Alexander Von Humboldt, which shall contain a full and conscientious account of his life and labors, written in a style sufficiently clear and untechnical to meet popular tastes, has long been a necessity in our literature. Those biographies which are already in existence do not possess this character: they are rather chronicles of his achievements in the various departments of Natural Science, than stories of a life almost unexampled for its wealth of experiences, its labors, and successes.”

- The Life Travels and Books of Alexander von Humboldt (1859) by R.H. Stoddard



What elements of this quote suggest it is a biography? How is this different from an autobiography?

This quote mentions a person and states that
the author will write about another person’s
achievements and his character. This is different
from an autobiography because this biography
is a true story of someone’s whole life, written
by another person.
