Answer Key



A memoir (mem-wahr) is a type of nonfiction, meaning that it is a true story. It is usually a story that the author writes about his or her self, like an *autobiography*, except that a memoir only focuses on a specific event or time period in one's life. Not all memoirs are autobiographical; some are written about other people's lives. **Gertrude Stein:** Stein is most well known for being friends with all the great artists in Paris in her time, such as Ernest Hemmingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Picasso. But she was also a very talented artist, writer and critic.

"Paris, France is exciting and peaceful. I was only four years old when I was first in Paris and talked French there and was photographed there and went to school there, and ate soup for early breakfast and had leg of mutton and spinach for lunch, I always liked spinach, and a black cat jumped on my mother's back. That was more exciting than peaceful. "

-Paris, France: Personal Recollections (1940)



Autobiography: A true report of a person's life, written by that person





Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is a memoir.

This quote shows that the story is about

a man's experience in Paris. She used the

word "I" to describe what she ate in Paris.

Answer Key

MEMOIR

Winston Churchill: Churchill is most famous for leading Great Britain during WWII. After the war though he wrote many memoirs, essays and books about his experiences.

"I have followed, as in previous volumes, as far as I am able, the method of Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, in which the author hangs the chronicle and discussion of great military and political events upon the thread of the personal experiences of an individual. I am perhaps the only man who has passed through both the two supreme cataclysms of recorded history [WWI and WWII] in high cabinet office."

-Memoirs of the Second World War (1959)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is a memoir.

This quote talks about a man's experience

in a position of power during World War I

and World War II.

Henry David Thoreau: Thoreau's writings cover many genres at the same time. They are nonfiction, often philosophy but are always written as a memoir. A memory of a certain time and place he experienced.

"Concord River is remarkable for the gentleness of its current, which is scarcely perceptible, and some have referred to its influence the proverbial moderation of the inhabitants of Concord, as exhibited in the Revolution, and on later occasions. It has been proposed, that the town should adopt for its coat of arms a field verdant, with the Concord circling nine times round. I have read that a descent of an eighth of an inch in a mile is sufficient to produce a flow. Our river has, probably, very near the smallest allowance. ...Compared with the other tributaries of the Merrimack, it appears to have been properly named Musketaquid, or Meadow River, by the Indians."

- The Hound (1922)



How are Thoreau's descriptions different from an autobiography?

Thoreau's descriptions are different from an

autobiography because the poem is not

detailing accurate, specific events. This poem

talks about his experience at Concord River

and is more descriptive about the river and

not true reporting about his life.

Answer Key

MEMOIR

Most people decide to write a memoir when they reach old age, after they've had many experiences in their lives. However, you may have had some experiences so far that are well worth writing about! Let's practice writing in the style of a memoir. Can you recall a very important or significant event that happened in the past year? Why was it important to you? Tell a story about it, and remember to use first person ("I") past tense.



Student answers will vary, but the story should have elements of a memoir as they write about an experience in their lives. They should use the first-person point of view in their writing.

