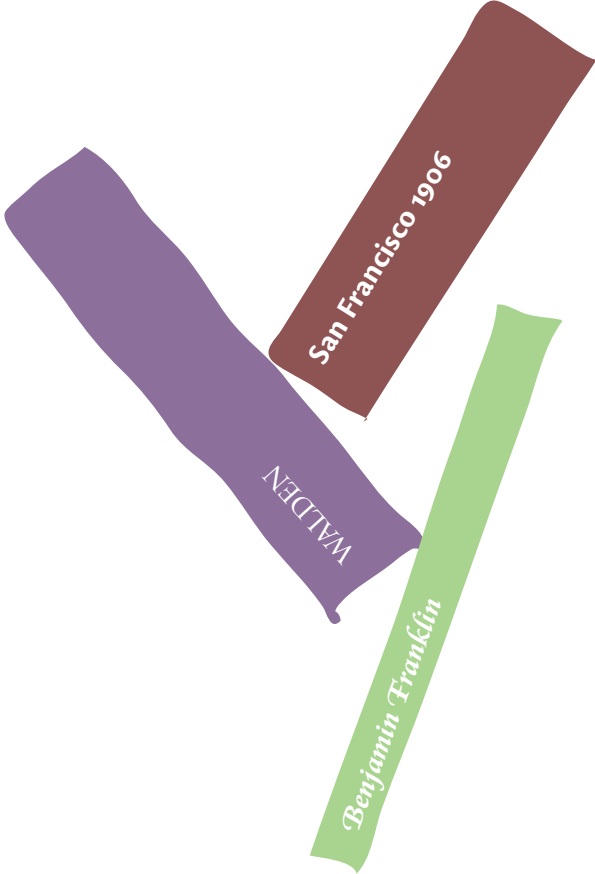


# LEARNING GENRES NONFICTION

Nonfiction stories are true stories, meaning that they actually happened in real life. The most common form of nonfiction literature that we see every day is called *journalism*. This includes almost everything on the news, magazines or in newspapers. There is no exaggeration or stretching of the truth in nonfiction. Can you think of any other forms of nonfiction literature?



*Journalism*: The investigation and reporting of events and issues to a broad audience



**Jack London:** Jack London was most famous for his fiction writing, but he was also a well-respected journalist. He wrote reports on the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and the poor living conditions of England’s working class during the Industrial Revolution.

“On Wednesday morning at a quarter past five came the earthquake. A minute later the flames were leaping upward. In a dozen different quarters south of Market Street, in the working-class ghetto, and in the factories, fires started. There was no opposing the flames. There was no organization, no communication. All the cunning adjustments of a twentieth century city had been smashed by the earthquake.”

-The Story of an Eyewitness: The San Francisco Earthquake (1906)



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

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Answers: documentary film, biography, autobiography, memoir, blog, history textbooks, encyclopedia

# NONFICTION



**Benjamin Franklin:** Franklin was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was a printer, inventor and an avid writer as well. His writings cover a large area, from humor to politics and invention.

“I imagine it will be found pretty generally true, that the same convexity of glass, through which a man sees clearest and best at the distance proper for reading, is not the best for greater distances. I therefore formerly had two pairs of spectacles, which I shifted occasionally, as in travelling I sometimes read, and often wanted to regard the prospects [look outside]. Finding this change troublesome, and not always sufficiently ready, I had the glasses cut and half of each kind put in the circle [glasses frame].”

-Franklin’s description of his new invention, Bifocals (1785)



What elements of this quote suggest it is nonfiction?

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**Henry David Thoreau:** Thoreau was one of America’s most influential thinkers. He only wrote a few books in his lifetime, all nonfiction accounts of one experience or another. He often used nonfiction stories to express his philosophy for life and love of nature.

“For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods...”

-Walden (1854)



How is Thoreau’s nonfiction writing different from journalism?

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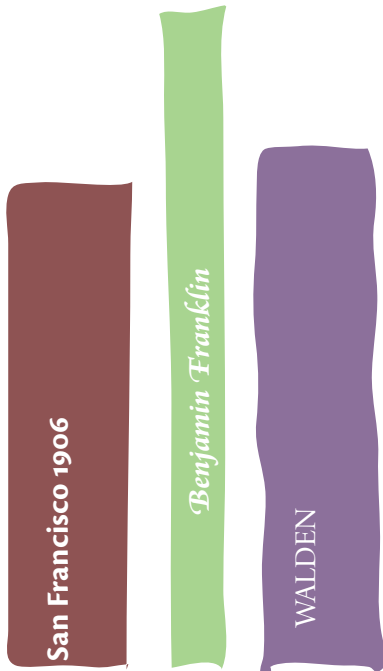
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# NONFICTION



Writing a nonfiction story may not be as easy as it seems! Some journalists and writers spend years interviewing, researching and getting information to write a true story. Let's practice writing some nonfiction. Pick a partner to interview and ask about the last vacation he or she took. Ask questions like, "Can you visualize the details of being there?" "What did it look, smell and feel like?" "Can you remember what you did each day?" Write down the answers on a piece of scratch paper, and reassemble the story in the space to the right.



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