

# Student Handout: Unit 4 Lesson 1



## Windows and Mirrors Biography and Autobiography

Suggested time: 1 Hour

### What's important in this lesson:

- In this unit, you will read about the lives of others – that's the **Windows** part of this unit title – and take some time to think about yourself – that's the **Mirrors** part
- You will need to know what the terms biography and autobiography mean, and how these kinds of stories are different from fictional stories
- Today and during the next three lessons, you will be expected to read for 30 minutes a day

### Complete these steps:

1. With your teacher, discuss the key features of biographical writing. Read the notes on the Student Resource "Biography and Autobiography".
2. Choose one of the readings provided by your teacher.
3. After 30 minutes of reading, record your progress in the "Reading Log" Handout 1. The log gives you an opportunity to comment on any one idea or quotation that you have read about, and to apply what you have read to your own experience.
4. Review your understanding of biographical writing by comparing it to novels or short fictional stories you have read in the past. Complete this comparison on the VENN diagram Handout 2:
  - One circle represents fiction, e.g., novels.
  - The other circle represents non-fiction, e.g., biography.
  - Where the circles overlap represents what these have in common.
  - List features of fiction in the fiction circle, e.g., it's imaginary.
  - List features of non-fiction in the non-fiction circle, e.g., it's based on truth.
  - List features in common in the overlapping section, e.g., both have characters.Your teacher can help you if you are not sure how to do it.
5. Finally, write a half-page reflective journal in your Writer's Notebook.

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**Hand-in the following to your teacher:**

1. Your Reading Log Handout 1 for today, for a progress check
2. Your Venn Diagram Handout 2
3. Your half-page journal in your Writer's Notebook

**Questions for the teacher:**

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## Windows and Mirrors: Other Voices Biography and Autobiography

### THE THEME:

This unit's title, "Windows and Mirrors" refers to two ideas:

- (1) we may look out at the lives of others (*windows*) to help us see ourselves (*mirrors*) more clearly; and
- (2) the way we see ourselves influences the way we view the outside world.

### THE SKILLS:

In Lessons 1-4, you will read a number of biographical excerpts and selections. These selections may be either biographies or autobiographies. You will be using this reading material to develop

- skills in distinguishing fact from opinion,
- empathy by examining values, motivation and goals, and
- self-awareness by reproducing conflicts in their own script and monologue.

### BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY—WHAT ARE THEY?

- **Possible Prior Knowledge:** You may be familiar with the popular A&E television series "Biography" or CBC's "Life and Times"
- A **Biography** is a person's story written by another person. An **Autobiography** is a person's story written by himself
- **Length:** A biographical work may be very long and detailed, tracing a person's life from birth to death, or it may be relatively short and focus on a specific time or achievement of the subject's life
- Very short biographies may be called a **Profile** or **Biographical Sketch** or **Memoir** and may be only a few paragraphs or pages in length.
- **Accuracy:** Most biographers research their subjects with great care and write as objectively as possible. Some biographers, however, move beyond the facts, to insert opinions or draw conclusions not based on research. Some autobiographies are an accurate picture of the writer's life, but some writers may change the way that events really occurred or people behaved.

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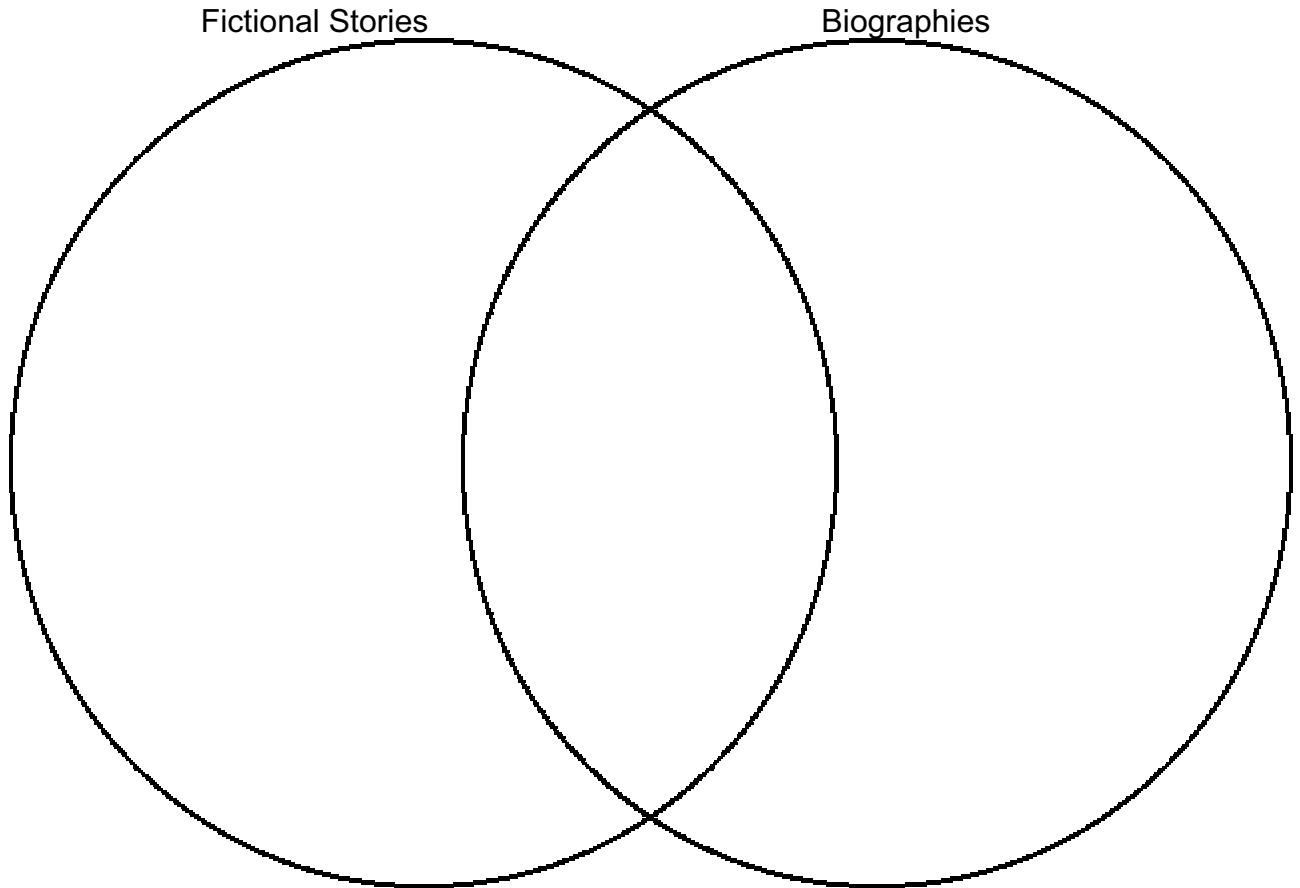
## VENN: Graphic Organizer for Compare/Contrast

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A VENN diagram is an easy way to compare and contrast. In what ways are fictional stories different from true life biographies?

Where the circles overlap, list ways that the two types of writing are similar. In the outer circles, list ways the two types of writing are different



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## “Windows and Mirrors”

In this unit you will read a number of biographical pieces. Please keep track of your readings by completing the log below.  
If you need more entry lines, draw a copy of the chart on the back of this sheet.

	Author, Title, *Genre and page #	One quote or idea in this piece that I noticed was...	I noticed because...OR This reminds me of....(relate to experience in your own life)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

\* For genre, column 1, use short forms: **Bio** for biography and **Auto** for autobiography.