

# Autobiography

## Definition of Autobiography

Autobiography is one type of [biography](#), which tells a life story of its author, meaning it is a written record of the author's life. Rather than being written by somebody else, an autobiography comes through the person's own pen, in his own words. Some autobiographies are written in the form of a fictional tale; as novels or stories that closely mirror events from the author's real life. Such stories include Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, and J.D Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. In writing about personal experience, one discovers himself. Therefore, it is not merely a collection of anecdotes – it is a revelation to the readers about author's self-discovery.

## Difference between Autobiography and Memoir

In an autobiography, the author attempts to capture important elements of his life. He not only deals with his career, and growth as a person, he also uses emotions and facts related to family life, relationships, education, travels, sexuality, and any types of inner struggles. A [memoir](#) is a record of memories, and particular events that have taken place in the author's life. In fact, it is the telling of a story or an event from his life; an account that does not tell the full record of a life.

## Examples of Autobiography in Literature

---

### Example #1: *The Box: Tales from the Darkroom* (by Gunter Grass)

---

A noble laureate and novelist, Gunter Grass, has shown a new [perspective](#) of self-examination by mixing up his quilt of fictionalized approach in his autobiographical book, "The Box: Tales from the Darkroom." Adopting the individual [point of view](#) of each of his children, Grass narrates what his children think about him as their father and a writer. Though it is really an

experimental approach, due to Grass' linguistic creativity and dexterity, it gains an enthralling momentum.

---

### **Example #2: *The Story of My Life* (by Helen Keller)**

---

In her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, Helen Keller recounts her first twenty years, beginning with the events of the childhood illness that left her deaf and blind. In her childhood, a writer sent her a letter and prophesied, "Someday you will write a great story out of your own head that will be a comfort and help to many."

In this book, Keller mentions prominent historical personalities, such as Alexander Graham Bell, whom she met at the age of six, and with whom she remained friends for several years. Keller paid a visit to John Greenleaf Whittier, a famous American poet, and shared correspondence with other eminent figures, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Mrs. Grover Cleveland. Generally, Keller's autobiography is about overcoming great obstacles through hard work and pain.

---

### **Example #3: *Self Portraits: Fictions* (by Frederic Tuten)**

---

In his autobiography, "Self Portraits: Fictions," Frederic Tuten has combined fringes of romantic life with reality. Like postmodern writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges, and Italo Calvino, the stories of Tuten skip between truth and imagination, time and place, without warning. He has done the same with his autobiography, where readers are eager to move through fanciful stories about train rides, circus bears, and secrets to a happy marriage; all of which give readers glimpses of the real man.

---

### **Example #4: *My Prizes* (by Thomas Bernhard)**

---

Reliving his success of his literary career through the lens of the many prizes he has received, Thomas Bernhard presents a sarcastic commentary in his autobiography, "My Prizes." Bernhard, in fact, has taken few things too seriously. Rather, he has viewed his life as a farcical theatrical [drama](#) unfolding around him. Although Bernhard is happy with the lifestyle and

prestige of being an author, his blasé [attitude](#) and scathing wit make this recollection more charmingly dissident and hilarious.

---

**Example #5: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (by Benjamin Franklin)**

---

“The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin” is written by one of the founding fathers of the United States. This book reveals Franklin’s youth, his ideas, and his days of adversity and prosperity. He is one of the best examples living the American dream – sharing the idea that one can gain financial independence, and reach a prosperous life through hard work.

**Function**

Through autobiography, authors can speak directly to their readers, and to their descendants. The function of the autobiography is to leave a legacy for its readers. By writing an autobiography, the individual shares his triumphs and defeats, and lessons learned, allowing readers to relate and feel motivated by inspirational stories. Life stories bridge the gap between peoples of differing ages and backgrounds, forging connections between old and new generations.