

Memoir

Definition of Memoir

Memoir is a written factual account of somebody's life. It comes from the French word *mémoire*, which means “*memory*,” or “*reminiscence*.” This literary technique tells a story about the experiences of someone's life. A literary memoir is usually about a specific [theme](#), or about a part of someone's life. It is a story with a proper [narrative](#) shape, focus, and subject matter, involving reflection on some particular event or place.

Memoirs are often associated with popular personalities, such as celebrities, sportsmen, soldiers, singers, and writers. It allows making a connection with what the [audience](#) finds captivating, interesting, appealing, and engaging.

Memoir and Autobiography

Memoir falls under the category of [autobiography](#), but is used as its sub-[genre](#). The major difference between memoir and autobiography is that a memoir is a centralized and more specific storytelling, while an autobiography spans the entire life of a person with intricate details such as the childhood, family history, education, and profession. A memoir is specific and focused, telling the story of somebody's life, focusing on an important event that occurred at a specific time and place.

Examples of Memoir in Literature

Example #1: *A Moveable Feast* (By Ernest Hemingway)

Ernest Hemingway was an acclaimed celebrity during the times when the public treated American writers like movie stars. His memoir *A Moveable Feast* was published after his death in 1964. This memoir is a collection of

stories about his time spent in Paris as a writer in 1920s, before attaining popularity. During these days, he was acquainted with many other famous writers, including Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein.

Example #2: *Speak Memory* (By Vladimir Nabokov)

This memoir is about the description of Nabokov's childhood, and the years he spent before moving to America in 1940; however, it is not the exact reason of writing this memoir. More notably, this book is about a tale of his art, as it serves as a model of that art. In addition, it includes themes, [imagery](#), and symbols that build up a structure in the minds of readers besides making up the book. Like always, Nabokov's [prose](#) writing is flawless, brilliant, and overwhelming, while his playful writing [style](#) makes his work seem fascinating.

Example #3: *Homage to Catalonia* (By George Orwell)

This is Orwell's gripping tale of his days during the Spanish Civil War. He has described it with his typical trademark of journalistic wink, which is one of his best works. Honest and unwavering, Orwell narrates his personal experience without inducing any agenda, recording different things from that era as he saw them. Philip Mairet said of this account that the work shows people a heart of innocence living in revolutionary days.

Example #4: *Maus* (By Art Spiegelman)

Although we can find many deeply affecting memoirs to make this list, *Maus* is one of the most well-liked memoirs, with its distressing story covered with perfect illustrations by Spiegelman. We might think that imagining different characters appearing with animal faces would make the story horrible and less intense and more irritating, it is rather the opposite. If we know the *comic* style, we learn that blank iconic faces and the outlook of the mice in this memoir allows the audience to put themselves in their shoes, to understand the story more easily.

Function of Memoir

Memoir has been around since ancient times. Perhaps Julius Caesar, who wrote and depicted his personal experiences about epic battles, was the first memoirist. Later, it became a popular and acclaimed literary genre. Memoir serves to preserve history through a person's eyes. Through memoir, celebrities also tell harsh sides of their careers. Rock stars tell their fans about tough days spent in distress, drug addicts reveal their struggle in seeking normal life, soldiers write war experiences, people who are mentally ill describe ups and downs to achieve clarity, and authors tell particular events that happened before their eyes. Hence, the function of memoir is to provide a window for the audience to have a look into the lives of other people.