

Essay No. 5 - Biography

Choose and research one person (dead or alive) and write a **900-1000 word report** that chronicles his/her personal and public life, career, achievements, and other notable facts. You must choose someone who you've read about in this class. You are welcome to choose Leland Melvin, but you are also welcome to choose anyone else mentioned in *The Lions of Little Rock* or *Chasing Space*.

The piece should be written in the *third person*, so your opinions about him/her should not be included in the report.

You must use **at least three resources** to give credibility to your work. While some facts about famous people can be attributed to “common knowledge,” the majority of your information should come from reputable sources. (i.e., George Washington was our country's first president. This is a basic fact most Americans learn in early elementary school and does not need to be attributed to a source.)

Suggested resources include:

- Books! (Such as *The Lions of Little Rock* or *Chasing Space*)
- Biographies, autobiographies, or memoirs in print at your local library
- Online resources, such as:
 - History.com
 - Biography.com
 - Pulitzer.org
 - Hbschool.com/ss1/biographies/

**Wikipedia is not a credible source.*

*** Make sure you have permission from your parent(s) to do any online searching.*

Pre-Writing Research and Organization

(1) Gathering information can happen in several ways. It is important to organize information in a way that is most useful to **you**. If you are not organized, writing a report will be much harder than it has to be. Suggestions for organizing facts include:

- Notecards
- List-making in a Google Doc or by hand on notebook paper
- Some other way that makes sense in your brain and can be handed in to me

(2) Decide how you want the information to break down. In chronological order? In order of specific importance? Personal life, public life, and legacy? These topics will turn into paragraphs. Organizing the topics early will make writing the paper much easier!

Time to Write!

You are not a robot, so don't write like one! Endeavor to write *various styles* of sentences: short and long, using conjunctions and transitional phrases. (More on sentence lengths: <http://www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-lab/process/sentence-length.php>)

Boring example:

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of the United States. He became president in March 1861. He was assassinated in April 1865. He was born in Kentucky. He was a lawyer in Illinois. He was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives and served for eight years. Then he was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1846.

More interesting example:

Abraham Lincoln, born and raised in Kentucky, became the 16th President of the United States. He began his political career as a lawyer in Illinois. After eight years in the Illinois State House of Representatives, Lincoln was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1846, where he served until his election to the presidency in March 1861. Lincoln only served four years as president on account of his assassination in April 1865.

Important Dates

- **Thursday, March 26** (in class) - Bring three copies of your outline for group critique (this is the first Thursday after spring break)
- **Tuesday, March 31, by 5 p.m.** - Email me your rough draft.
- **Thursday, April 16** (in class) - Bring me a beautiful, clean copy of your final biography paper and your NOTES. Yes, turn them in. I want to see them alongside your paper.