

PUBLIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY¹

Time: 30 min. minimum, can be longer unit
Age: 8th grade and up

WHAT IS IT?

- Students write a short autobiographical essay, highlighting their “public experiences” have made them the person that they are.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

In order to understand what motivates you for public action (self-interests), it is important to consider what events made you the way you are.

WHEN IS THIS USEFUL?

Early stages of PA.

MATERIALS: None

CORE CONCEPTS: self-interests, public

SKILLS: sharing stories, being imaginative and creative

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- A. It may be a good idea to discuss the differences between public and private. See also Public or Private Persons? [[link: Public or Private](#)]
- B. For students who have trouble writing, begin with Personal Time Line Lesson [[link: Time Line](#)] that help students start to think about their lives chronologically and publicly.

ACTIVITIES / STEPS:

- A. Describe autobiography as a form and genre to students
Optional: Students can read passages or entire autobiographies (e.g. The Autobiography of Malcolm X, I, Rigoberto Manchu, etc, Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Barbara Lewis, Kids with Courage: True Stories about Young People Making a Difference).
- B. Students list important experiences or moments in their lives where they interacted with the public or discovered that they were interested in things that involved others.
- C. Based on list, students create outline for autobiography.
- D. Write autobiography
- E. Edit (could use peer editing)

¹ Developed by Roudy Hildreth, Center for Democracy and Citizenship



EVALUATION:

1. Was it difficult to put your “public life” down on paper? Describe what was hard about it?
2. Did the process of writing lead you to think of new items that weren’t on your original brainstorm list?
3. In what ways do you think of the events you wrote about differently as a result of this assignment? Do you understand yourself an a different way?
4. In what ways do you have a “public life”? Does it surprise you that you have interacted in public as much or as little as you have?