

# Autobiography – tracing life long patterns essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Writing an autobiography can be a daunting task. Most writers including accomplished authors can write about many issues comfortably but when it comes to writing about themselves, there is always some hesitation.

This is normal and a natural human reaction. We tend to have a problem subjecting ourselves to objective analysis. In fact, writing autobiographies has many pitfalls and can lead to serious criticism because of this inherent inability to be objective, neutral and provide verifiable facts. This is well illustrated by this excerpt from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams. "It is said that Zaphod Beeblebrox's birth was marked by earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes, firestorms, the explosion of three neighboring stars, and, shortly afterwards, by the issuing of over six and three quarter million writs for damages from all of the major landowners in his Galactic sector. However, the only person by whom this is said is Beeblebrox himself, and there are several possible theories to explain this.

" Thus, when tracing our life long patterns one must follow some simple steps. Specific attention must be paid to three areas:

IdeasLanguagePlotIdeasAs with any narrative, you must begin with preconstruction. According to Labov, pre-construction begins with the most reportable event and proceeds backwards in time to locate events that are linked causally each to the following one (Labov, 2009).

Put down your ideas and categorize them in terms of people, places and events. Organize lists of events in chronological order. Make sure to have as many interesting facts as possible. Facts must be real events that occurred.

For formative experiences during childhood, it is best to consult with people who knew you from infancy such as parents and relatives. Where the autobiography is on someone else, interview your subject and obtain as much information as you can. Go back for clarifications and deeper information as often as you can. A proper compilation of ideas gives you a bird's eye view of the entire plot and instructs the language that you shall use to put together the autobiography. Language When tracing lifelong patterns, you always do so in first person singular. " I did", " I saw", " I said". Sample this opening sentence from the Confessions of J.

J Rousseau by Jean Jacques Rousseau, " I have entered a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean to present my fellow mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself." Not only do you use first person singular, but for the autobiography to be compelling the language should be highly descriptive to capture the reader's imagination. Plot One may wonder what plot has to do with autobiography. Well, to produce a great autobiography, you must tell it the way Hollywood tells it. Stories are not merely sequences of events; they have an overall form, which at minimum requires, as Aristotle put it, a beginning, a middle, and an end. Many scholars of narrative have elaborated on this basic characteristic of plot. (Mayer, p.

16) According to Labov, " stories have an initial orientation in which the context (time, place, situation, and participants) are specified. There is then some complicating action, some event or events that creates dramatic tension. Finally there is a resolution, a concluding action in which the tension

is resolved.” Examples of autobiographies that use complicating action to trace life long patterns include; *Life on the color line* by Gregory Howard Williams and *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. The former is autobiography of a white boy who discovered he was black and the trials and tribulations he went through as a consequence. The latter is a biography by the author, Art Spiegelman, on the life of his father a holocaust survivor. *Maus* is a graphic novel and the plot is developed using animals to represent various nationalities.

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