

**Level:** Intermediate – Upper intermediate (B1–B2)

(The first section, Biographies, can be used with pre-intermediate/A2 students as a 60-minute lesson.)

**Age:** Teenagers

**Time:** This lesson can be divided up in various ways to suit the time you have with your students. Below are four time options that you can choose from depending on the length of your class. However, these are just suggestions and there are many other ways you could divide the lesson up. Please note the webquest is an optional activity and not included in the timings below.

120 minutes – Complete all activities in Biographies, Stephen King, and Oscar Wilde.

90 minutes – Complete all activities in Biographies and Stephen King.

60 minutes – Complete Biographies but without the biography excerpt activity and autobiography excerpt activity (these could be done as homework). Complete all activities in Stephen King.

45 minutes – Complete all activities in Stephen King and Oscar Wilde.

**Summary:** This lesson is divided into three sections: Biographies, Stephen King, and Oscar Wilde. Students will (depending on the length of lesson):

- 1 read about biographies;
- 2 be a ghostwriter;
- 3 read about Stephen King;
- 4 ask questions to correct information;
- 5 read about Oscar Wilde;
- 6 find famous quotes online.

**Key skills:** reading, writing, speaking

**Subskills:** finding facts, writing biographical excerpts, talking about personal details, forming questions

**Materials:** one copy of the Biographies, Stephen King, and Oscar Wilde worksheets per student (depending on your choice of lesson)

## BIOGRAPHIES

1 Discuss the following with your students:

*Are you interested in the lives of well-known people? What kind of well-known people are you most interested in? (e.g., performers, writers, historical figures, and athletes)*

*Have you ever read a biography or autobiography? If so, what new and interesting facts did you discover about the person? If not, whose biography or autobiography would you most like to read?*

2 Hand out Biographies worksheet 1. Have students read the article about autobiographies. Which famous people are mentioned in the article?

When they have finished, check whether they know all the famous people. Ask students which ones they would like to read about.

3 Next, ask students to complete the matching exercise, in which they try to match the celebrities to the title of their biography or autobiography.

Check the answers as a class. Have students read any of the books? Which one would they most like to read and why?

**Key:** 1 c; 2 e; 3 g; 4 a; 5 f; 6 d; 7 b

4 Read the made-up excerpt from an autobiography below but don't tell students it's made up. Can students guess whose autobiography it is?

*I've played some interesting, and often pretty crazy, characters in my time: a murderous barber, an eccentric chocolate maker, a guy with scissors for hands. But my kids just keep asking me when I'm going to be a pirate again.*

**Answer:** Johnny Depp

Tell students that it was a made-up excerpt and that you're now going to ask *them* to make up a short excerpt from the biography or autobiography of a famous person (dead or alive). When they're ready, they read their excerpt to the other students, who must try to guess who the person is.

5 Remind students that a ghostwriter is someone who secretly writes an autobiography for a famous person whose name will appear on the work as the writer. They are going to imagine that they have become a ghostwriter for someone in the class. Hand out Biographies worksheet 2.

Divide the class into pairs. Their first task is to write some questions. Have students reorder the words in questions 1–10 under Be a ghostwriter on the worksheet.

Check the answers as a class.

**Key:** 1 *Where and when were you born?*; 2 *Where do you live?*; 3 *How long have you lived there?*; 4 *Do you have any brothers or sisters?*; 5 *What do your parents do?*; 6 *Who was your childhood best friend?*; 7 *What do you do before you go to bed?*; 8 *What's the worst thing you've ever done?*; 9 *What would I find if I looked through your trash?*; 10 *What moment of your life would you most like to relive?*

Now tell students to write three extra questions in the spaces provided on the worksheet. Monitor, helping students with their questions as necessary.

6 Go over the Phrasebook on the worksheet with the class, which contains phrases they can use in their interviews. Then ask students to interview their partner, the subject of the "autobiography," and take notes.

**Note:** If your lesson ends here, to wrap up you could ask students to tell the rest of the class the most interesting fact they have learned about their partner during the interview.

7 When they've finished, they write an excerpt from the autobiography. Each student's job is to make the other person's life seem as interesting as possible, because there is going to be a class vote to decide which book should be published. They must also think of a title for the autobiography.

When students are finished, have them imagine they are publishers. They can publish only one of the autobiographies. Have each student read their excerpt aloud, then hold a class vote. Which book does the class want to publish?

## STEPHEN KING

1 Ask students:

*What is the best horror story you've ever read?  
Do you know the names of any horror writers?  
Have you ever heard of Stephen King?*

Do your students know the names of any Stephen King books (some examples: *The Shining*, *Carrie*, *'Salem's Lot*)? Have they ever read any? What do they know about his life?

2 Hand out the Stephen King worksheet. Explain that they're going to read about Stephen King, but in each paragraph there's one incorrect fact. For example, in the first paragraph it says that he was born in 1997, but that is wrong. They should read the other paragraphs and circle what they think is the false information in each one.

When they have finished, tell students to compare their answers in pairs. Then check the answers as a class.

**Key:** 2 *dog*; 3 *surfing*; 4 *People magazine*; 5 *"I was a Teenage Barbie Doll"*; 6 *Madonna*; 7 *Gone with the Wind*; 8 *Spain*; 9 *boredom*; 10 *UFO*; 11 *subway*; 12 *Skyfall*

3 Students now work in pairs to write questions to discover the true facts about Stephen King's life, using the question words below each paragraph as prompts; for example, *When was Stephen King born?* If the questions are too difficult for your group of students to formulate, write the questions on the board, with the words in the incorrect order. Students then reorder the words to make the questions; for example, *was / Stephen King / born / when?*

**Key (suggested questions):** 2 Who raised Stephen King?; 3 Why did he begin writing?; 4 Which magazine did he write a weekly column for?; 5 What was the title of the first short story he sold?; 6 Who did he marry in 1971?; 7 What was the name of the novel published in 1973?; 8 What did King become known as?; 9 How did Bachman die?; 10 What was King hit by?; 11 Where did King publish *Riding the Bullet*?; 12 What movie was adapted from *The Body*?

4 After students have written the questions, have them ask you the questions. Answer by giving them the correct facts. Students make a note of the facts and correct the text.

**Key:** 1 1947; 2 his mother; 3 because he loved reading; 4 the school newspaper; 5 "I was a Teenage Grave Robber"; 6 Tabitha Spruce; 7 *Carrie*; 8 the king of horror; 9 he died of cancer; 10 a van; 11 on the internet; 12 Stand by Me

## OSCAR WILDE

1 Write on the board, "I have nothing to declare but my genius." Explain that it is a quote by a famous 19th-century writer. He said it to New York customs officials as he entered the USA (to declare something – to state officially that you have brought goods into a country). Do they know who it is?

**Answer:** Oscar Wilde

2 Ask students what they know about Oscar Wilde. Write what they tell you on the board. Then hand out the Oscar Wilde worksheet and ask them to read the article to check the information on the board. Did they find out anything from the article that they didn't already know?

**Note:** If your students don't know anything about Oscar Wilde, you could have three Oscar Wilde facts ready to write on the board. Students can then check whether they are true or false by reading the article. Make sure at least one of the statements is false.

3 Ask students to read the quotes underneath the article. See if they can identify the five Oscar Wilde quotes. Then see if they can match the other quotes to the five celebrities.

Check the answers as a class and discuss the meanings of the quotes. Ask students if they know any famous quotes.

**Key:** Oscar Wilde – 1, 2, 5, 8, 9; Albert Einstein – 7; Groucho Marx – 3; John Lennon – 6; Marilyn Monroe – 4; Woody Allen – 10

## WEBQUEST



Tell students that they are going to do a webquest, where they will search for quotes by famous people, read the quotes aloud to the class (or in groups), and then ask the others to guess whose quotes they are.

You may want to direct students to the website [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com). Tell them to write down the two quotes that appeal to them the most and then, when everyone has finished, they can share their quotes with their classmates. The Phrasebook on the worksheet gives them language they can use to make guesses about whose quotes their classmates are reading aloud.

## HOMEWORK TASK

Students imagine that they have reached the end of their lives and that they managed to fulfill all their dreams – they got the job of their dreams, married the person of their dreams, became rich and famous, or whatever it may be. They write an excerpt from their autobiography, describing some of the most fascinating episodes from their imaginary lives.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Autobiographies

Autobiographies are extremely popular, and these days, it seems like everyone is writing them: pop stars, politicians, soap stars, athletes. And you don't even have to be close to the end of your life to write an autobiography: Rafael Nadal has written one, and so has Justin Bieber!

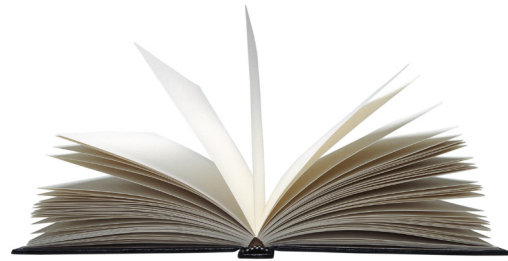
When Bob Dylan started his autobiography, he said he found it hard to remember what had happened in his past. Other people wanted to write about him too: Dylan once found someone going through his trash, looking for material to use in an unauthorized biography.

The unauthorized biography is what every celebrity fears. Not only can the author write about your life without your approval, but they also make all the money.

If a celebrity wants to write an autobiography but isn't a good writer, he or she can employ a ghostwriter to do the work. A ghostwriter is a professional writer who is prepared to write a book but let someone else take the credit.

But you don't have to be famous to write an autobiography. Sometimes your autobiography can make you famous. Frank McCourt, who wrote *Angela's Ashes*, the story of his poor childhood in Ireland, was at the top of the autobiography charts for several years. Dave Pelzer also became famous after writing three books about his childhood, including *A Child Called "It,"* another best seller.

So ... whose autobiography will you read next?



Match the celebrities to the title of their (auto)biography.

- 1 Steve Jobs
- 2 Frank McCourt
- 3 Roger Federer
- 4 Lady Gaga
- 5 Hillary Clinton
- 6 Kurt Cobain
- 7 Barack Obama

- a *Poker Face*
- b *Dreams from My Father*
- c *The Man Who Thought Different*
- d *Heavier Than Heaven*
- e *Angela's Ashes*
- f *Living History*
- g *Quest for Perfection*

## Be a ghostwriter

Put the words in order to create 10 questions to use in an interview with your partner. Then invent three more questions.

### Personal details

- 1 were / where / born / when / and / you ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 live / you / do / where ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 long / lived / how / there / you / have ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 sisters / have / do / or / any / you / brothers ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 what / parents / your / do / do ? \_\_\_\_\_

### Interesting information

- 6 your / childhood / was / friend / who / best ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 you / do / before / bed / you / do / what / go / to ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 the / you've / worst / what's / thing / ever / done ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 trash / what / if / would / find / looked / through / I / your / I ? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 moment / like / relive / would / life / what / your / most / to / of / you ? \_\_\_\_\_

### Extra questions

- 11 \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ ?

### PHRASEBOOK

#### When you're trying to remember something

- Let me think ...
- Now, when was that?
- I think it was around the time I ...

#### Using well to introduce a reply

- Well, usually I read a chapter or two of my

book before I go to bed.

- Well, I grew up in Budapest, but now I live in Vienna.

#### Asking about the other person

- So how about you?
- Was it the same for you?
- Go on; tell me a little more.



## STEPHEN KING

Read the text about Stephen King's life. There is an incorrect fact in each paragraph. Circle the incorrect fact.

1 Stephen Edwin King was born in Portland, Maine, in 1997 the second son of Donald and Nellie Ruth Pillsbury King.

*Example: When was Stephen King born?*

2 His father abandoned the family when Stephen was two years old. He said he was going to buy tobacco and never came back. Stephen and his older brother, David, were raised by their dog.

*Who* \_\_\_\_\_

3 Stephen says he began writing because he loved surfing. The Dr. Dolittle books by Hugh Lofting, in particular, inspired him to become a writer. He first began sending stories to publishers when he was about 12.

*Why* \_\_\_\_\_

4 Stephen attended elementary school in Durham and then Lisbon Falls High School, graduating in 1966. Since his sophomore year at the University of Maine at Orono, he wrote a weekly column for *People* magazine.

*For which* \_\_\_\_\_

5 King made his first short story sale to a mass market men's magazine. The story was called "I Was a Teenage Barbie Doll" and it appeared in *Comics Review* in 1965.

*What* \_\_\_\_\_

6 In January 1971, he married Madonna, who he met in college. In the autumn of the same year, King began teaching high school English classes. Writing in the evenings and on the weekends, he continued to produce short stories and to work on novels.

*Who* \_\_\_\_\_

7 In the spring of 1973, the publisher Doubleday & Co. accepted his novel *Gone with the Wind* for publication. King was 26, and *Gone with the Wind* was the fifth novel he had written. His wife rescued it from the trash after King had thrown it out, believing it to be no good.

*What* \_\_\_\_\_

8 The book was published in 1974, and King was soon able to leave teaching and write full time. A couple of years later, the novel was turned into a successful movie, and King became known as the king of Spain, the master of the macabre.

*What* \_\_\_\_\_

9 Around this time, King was producing so much material that he decided to use a pseudonym for some of his work. The name he chose was Richard Bachman. Under this name, King published five novels before making Bachman die of boredom.

How \_\_\_\_\_

10 King himself almost died in June 1999 after being hit by a UFO while out walking near his home. The accident left him in critical condition. It was several months before he was able to walk again.

What \_\_\_\_\_

11 In the year 2000, King abandoned traditional book publishing for a period and published *Riding the Bullet* on the subway.

Where \_\_\_\_\_

12 Much of King's work has been adapted for movies and television, including *Carrie*, *The Dead Zone*, *The Shining*, and *Christine*. The movie *Skyfall* was adapted from his novella *The Body*.

What \_\_\_\_\_

Now write questions to ask your teacher for the correct facts about Stephen King. Use the lines in the text above to write your questions.



## OSCAR WILDE

### Famous quotes

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, better known to the world as Oscar Wilde, was born on October 16, 1854, in Dublin, Ireland. The man who told New York customs officials "I have nothing to declare but my genius" was famous for his plays and poems. He was famous, too, for his eccentric and sometimes controversial lifestyle, which made him popular with some people and very unpopular with others. He was also known for his witty comments, some of which were used to ridicule his enemies. The most memorable of these comments have become some of history's most famous quotes.

Look at the quotes and choose five that Oscar Wilde said.  
Match the rest of the quotes to the famous people in the box.

Albert Einstein	Groucho Marx	John Lennon	Marilyn Monroe	Woody Allen
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- 1 "I can resist everything except temptation." \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 "Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much." \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 "I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception." \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 "It's not true I had nothing on. I had the radio on." \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train." \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 "We're more popular than Jesus now." \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 "You do not really understand something unless you can explain it to your grandmother." \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 "There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 "I am not young enough to know everything." \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 "I am not afraid of death; I just don't want to be there when it happens." \_\_\_\_\_

### PHRASEBOOK

#### Guessing

- That sounds to me like something a man / a woman would say.
- That sounds to me like something a young person / an older person would say.
- That has to be ...
- Could it be ... ?