Two Biographies of African American Slaves Who Achieved Greatness

Born into slavery, Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth achieved freedom and historical importance during their lives. Dedicated to the welfare of their race and to the equality of all people, they earned their places in history through powerful words and deeds. What was life like for these slaves? How did they achieve greatness? Read these biographies to find out.

Sarah Albee has written more than 100 children's books. Her most recent is a middle-grade book about the history of the world. Sarah was a newspaper cartoonist and semi-professional basketball player before becoming a children’s book writer and editor.

Enjoy all of these Nonfiction Readers’ & Writers’ Genre Workshop titles in this set.

Biography
• Frederick Douglass
• Sojourner Truth

Informational Texts
• The Greenville Gazette
• Yukon Adventures Magazine

Memoir
• The World War II Years
• Newcomers to America

Persuasive Essays
• Perspectives on the American Revolution
• Should School Be Year-Round?

Reviews: Book/Movie
• Matilda
• Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
• Stuart Little
• Charlotte's Web

by Sarah Albee
How to use this book
1. Learn about the genre by reading pages 2–3. Get background information about the subjects of the biographies on pages 5–7. (Shared reading)
2. Read the biographies for enjoyment. (Leveled texts)
3. Reread the biographies and answer the questions on pages 16–17 and 28–29. (Shared reading)
4. Reread the last biography. Pay attention to the comments in the margins. See how an author writes a biography. (Leveled text)
5. Follow the steps on pages 30–31 to write your own biography. (Shared reading)
6. Complete the activity on the inside back cover. Answer the follow-up questions. (Shared reading)

Analyze the Biographies
Use your graphic organizer to help you answer these questions.

- What connections can you make to the subjects of these biographies?
- What connections can you make to the challenges each person faced?
- Which person do you admire most? Explain.
- How did each person’s attributes contribute to his or her success?
- What can readers learn from these biographies?
Frederick Douglass

Sojourner Truth

Biographies of Two African American Slaves Who Achieved Greatness

by Sarah Albee

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Make Connections Across Texts .......... Inside Back Cover
What is a biography?

A biography is a factual retelling of another person’s life. The person may have lived long ago or in recent history, or the person may still be alive today. Biographies can cover a person’s entire life or just important parts of a person’s life. When possible, a biography includes direct quotes from the person. This helps the reader make a connection to the person.

What is the purpose of a biography?

A biography helps a reader understand the people, places, times, and events that were or are important in the subject's life. It provides a summary of the person’s major life experiences and achievements. In addition, the way the author writes the biography helps a reader get a sense of the person as a real human being who had (and perhaps still has) an impact on the lives of others.

How do you read a biography?

The title will tell you the subject of the biography and may include something interesting about him or her. The first paragraph will try to “hook” the reader by capturing his or her attention. As you read, note the setting. The setting often influences what happens in a person’s life. Also pay close attention to the sequence of events in the person’s life. Ask yourself: Did this event happen to the person, or did the person make it happen? How did this event affect the person’s life? What do I admire about this person? Is there something in this person’s experiences that I could apply to my life?
A biography starts with a strong “hook.”

A biography tells the person’s date and place of birth.

A biography tells about the person’s family, childhood, and important events.

A biography describes the person’s impact on the world.

A biography describes the person’s personality and characteristics.

A biography quotes the person and/or people who knew the person.

Who writes biographies?

People who write biographies want to learn more about others’ life stories and how those people made their marks on the world. Some people write biographies because they are interested in a certain topic, such as sports, history, or cooking. Others write biographies simply because they are interested in people!
Tools for Readers and Writers

A Strong Ending

A strong ending leaves readers feeling satisfied and ties up the loose ends of the story. It might also make readers want to find out more about the topic, or inspire them to join a cause.

Biographies often begin with the subject's birth and end with his or her death. But a strong biography ending also puts its subject into a historical context and helps the reader understand the person's place in history. A good biography ending keeps readers thinking about the subject's life. It may also show readers how the person's life connects to their own.

Descriptive Language: Adjectives

Good authors want readers to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste everything through written words. To accomplish this task, authors include descriptive language in the form of adjectives. Adjectives can be grouped by what they describe, including time, distance, and feelings.

Draw Conclusions

Good authors include many details about their biographical subjects, but they do not tell readers what to think about those details. Good readers put these details together and use them to draw conclusions about the subjects and understand why they acted the way they did. Conclusions are usually drawn at the end of a story or chapter and are made from at least three or four details. Different readers might draw different conclusions from the same details.
Meet the Subjects

Frederick Douglass
was born a slave and became a freeman when he was an adult. He worked all his life to advance the causes of freedom and equal rights for all people, regardless of color or gender. He is remembered for his powerful use of language as a writer and as a speaker.

Sojourner Truth
was the self-given name of an African American who was born into a family of slaves. At the age of nine, she was taken from her family and sold to another slave owner. Years later, as a free woman, Sojourner traveled around the United States to preach against slavery and discrimination. She, too, knew that words were a powerful force of persuasion in the fight for freedom and equality.
**Frederick Douglass**

1818

Born a slave (exact date unknown) on a plantation on the eastern shore of Maryland

1825

Sent to Baltimore to work as a houseboy for Hugh Auld, a distant relative of his master

1838

Escapes from slavery by borrowing another man’s papers and posing as a sailor. Marries Anna Murray.

1841

After speaking at an antislavery meeting in Nantucket, Massachusetts, he is hired to be a full-time antislavery speaker.

**Sojourner Truth**

1797

Born a slave (exact date unknown) in Hurley, New York, about 7 miles west of the Hudson River

1806

Sold to John Nealy

1815

Marries fellow slave Thomas. First child, Diana, is born.

1826

Daughter Sophia is born. Escapes from slavery later that year. Taken in by Isaac and Maria Van Wagenen.

1829

Moves to New York City with her two youngest children
1843
Changes her name to Sojourner Truth. Becomes a traveling preacher.

1844
Joins the Northampton Association in Massachusetts

1847
Moves to Rochester, New York, and begins publishing his weekly paper, The North Star

1850
Publishes Narrative of Sojourner Truth. Begins speaking at abolitionist and women's rights meetings.

1864
Travels to Washington, D.C. to help freed slaves. Meets President Lincoln.

1865
Civil War ends. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution is passed, ending slavery.

1867
African American men win the right to vote.

1870
Dies of a heart attack in Washington, D.C. on February 20, after returning home from a meeting about women's rights

1883
Dies on November 26 at the age of about 86
Frederick Douglass: Free at Last
On a cold, dark night, six-year-old Frederick snuggled up with his mother. Despite her weariness, she sang her child to sleep. He fell asleep, safe and secure in her arms.

When he awoke the next morning, he was shivering with cold inside the burlap sack that he used as a blanket. His mother was gone. She worked long hours on a distant plantation. She knew that if she was not punctual for work, she would be whipped. Frederick had seen her only four or five times in his young life.

This would be the last time Frederick saw his mother. She died when he was about seven.

Frederick was born a slave on a large plantation in Maryland, sometime around 1818. No one kept track of slaves’ birthdays, so he was never certain exactly when he was born.

When he died in 1895, he was a freeman and one of the world’s greatest orators and statesmen. Two senators and a Supreme Court justice attended his funeral. All the black schools in Washington, D.C. closed in his honor. He had served in the administrations of three presidents.

How did someone born into such dismal circumstances manage to achieve such remarkable accomplishments in his lifetime?
His Early Years

Frederick's first master, Aaron Anthony, owned both Frederick's mother and his grandmother. People whispered that Frederick's father was a white man, but that didn't matter. If your mother was a slave, you were one, too.

Slave life was harsh on the plantation where Frederick lived. The slaves lived in run-down shacks. They had only rags to wear. They were not given enough food to eat. Frederick had nothing to wear but a thin, knee-length shirt. He went barefoot even in wintertime.

When Frederick was about eight, he learned that he was to be sent to Baltimore to work as a houseboy for a man named Hugh Auld, who was a distant relative of his master. Frederick was excited. He had never seen a big city. And perhaps his new master would give him enough food to eat.

At the Aulds' home, Frederick did have more to eat and warmer clothes to wear. One day, Mrs. Auld even offered to teach Frederick to read.

But when Mr. Auld found out, he flew into a rage. It was against the law to teach a slave to read. Slave owners were worried that if slaves became educated, they would realize how discontented and unhappy they were and revolt.

Frederick’s master unwittingly taught Frederick a time-everlasting truth: Knowledge is power. From that moment on, Frederick resolved to teach himself to read and write.
Teenage Years

Over the course of the next seven years, Frederick taught himself to read and write. One day, he read a book that was filled with essays about freedom, democracy, and abolition. For the first time Frederick became aware that there were people trying to abolish—or end—slavery.

In 1832, when Frederick was about fifteen years old, he learned that Captain Anthony, his old master, had died. Frederick found himself back on the plantation in Maryland, now the property of Thomas Auld, another of his old master’s heirs.

Thomas Auld was a cruel man. Frederick was whipped often and not given enough to eat. Auld felt that Frederick had been spoiled by city living. He decided to send Frederick away for a year to be “broken in” by a man named Edward Covey.

Working for Covey was nearly intolerable. Frederick was whipped until the blood flowed down his back. He was forced to toil long hours no matter how hot, cold, or stormy the weather.

But one day, when Covey tried to whip him, Frederick decided to fight back. After that, Covey never tried to hit Frederick again.

Longing for Freedom

In 1834, Frederick was sent out to work on yet another farm. His new master, William Freeland, treated his slaves somewhat better—but he was still a slave owner. Frederick resolved to try to escape the moment he got the chance.

He and four fellow slaves devised an escape plan. But somehow, their plan was discovered. Frederick and the others were thrown into jail. As the leader of the plot, Frederick feared he would be severely punished.
To Frederick’s surprise, Freeland decided instead to send him back to Hugh Auld in Baltimore. Perhaps he felt a belated sense of guilt for the way Frederick had been treated.

Back with Hugh Auld once again in Baltimore, Frederick worked at a shipyard. While in Baltimore, Frederick had the chance to get to know other black people, some of whom were free and many of whom were educated. He became engaged to a free woman named Anna Murray.

Frederick earned money, but he had to turn over most of his wages to his master. 

On one occasion, Frederick delayed turning over his weekly wages to his master by a day. Auld angrily took away some of Frederick’s privileges. Frederick became more determined than ever to run away at the first opportunity.

Finally, when he was about twenty-one years old, that opportunity came.

Frederick Douglass’s first wife, Anna Murray, was a free woman when they became engaged.
Freedom at Last!

Frederick dressed himself in a sailor’s uniform. Pretending to be a free sailor, he bought a train ticket to Wilmington, Delaware. To avoid giving anyone the chance to question him, he hopped onto the train just as it was leaving.

Once he arrived in Wilmington, Frederick took a boat to Philadelphia and then a night train to New York City. He arrived on September 4, 1838.

Soon after he arrived, Anna joined him in New York. They were married on September 15, 1838. They made their way to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Massachusetts was a free state.

In New Bedford, Frederick and Anna found odd jobs to do. They were poor but happy to be living as a free couple. Their first child, Rosetta, was born in 1839. The Douglasses would eventually have four more children.

A New Career

Despite his long working hours, Frederick found the time to attend antislavery meetings. One day he found himself at a meeting with a white man named William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison was a well-known abolitionist. Frederick was unexpectedly called upon to speak. Despite his initial nervousness, Frederick stood up and gave a moving speech about his life as a slave.
Garrison was impressed, and soon after that, the Massachusetts Antislavery Society offered Frederick a job. He would travel around and speak to groups about slavery. Frederick’s new career was launched.

Frederick’s speeches moved many people, black and white. On at least one occasion, he said, “No man can point to any law in the U.S. by which slavery was originally established. Men first make slaves and then make laws.” In 1845, Frederick wrote a book about his days as a slave.

After his book was published, Frederick became worried that his old master might try to recapture him. So he fled to the United Kingdom. He stayed for two years. While there, he continued to speak about the evils of slavery as well as the importance of other civil rights—like free speech, freedom of the press, and getting a fair trial.

While Frederick toured the United Kingdom, some of his British supporters collected $700. They sent the money to Hugh Auld and bought Frederick’s freedom. He was now legally a freeman.

**Writer, Editor, Statesman**

In 1847, Frederick and Anna moved to Rochester, New York. There, Frederick launched a weekly abolitionist newspaper called *The North Star*, serving as both an editor and a writer. In one issue, he wrote: “The white man’s happiness cannot be purchased by the black man’s misery.” He continued lecturing, writing, and editing several other publications over the course of his career. He and Anna helped dozens of runaway slaves make their way north.
to Canada. He donated much of the income he received for his lectures to help fugitive slaves.

For the 1861 election, Douglass campaigned for Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was elected, and the Civil War began the same year. Douglass helped recruit black soldiers to fight for the North. He was very proud when his son Lewis became a soldier. In one of his most important wartime speeches, Douglass declared, “We are not fighting for the dead past, but for the living present and the glorious future.” Douglass helped Lincoln with his re-election in 1864 and grieved deeply when the president was assassinated in 1865.

**Right to Vote**

In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed, giving black men the right to vote. Douglass had fought hard for this day. He continued to fight for the right to vote for women, believing it was long overdue.

After Anna died in 1882, Frederick remarried. His new wife was a woman named Helen Pitts. Many people were shocked because she was a white woman, but Frederick answered his critics by saying that color did not matter when two people loved one another.

Frederick Douglass held several important governmental positions late in his career. When President Benjamin Harrison appointed him to a post in Haiti in 1889, Douglass became the first African American minister to another country.

Frederick's last day, February 20, 1893, was spent at a meeting about women's rights. He died peacefully at home that night.

For his entire life, Frederick Douglass had understood and respected the power of words. Today, his words continue to inspire others who embrace the cause of liberty and justice for all.
Analyze the Subject

- Frederick Douglass understood the power of words, meaning he knew that words could change lives. Can you identify two examples of when Douglass used his words to try to make a difference?
- What were some of Douglass’s accomplishments?
- What kinds of challenges did Douglass face?

Focus on Comprehension: Draw Conclusions

- Some masters treated their slaves better than others. How can you tell?
- Many people cared about Frederick Douglass. How can you tell?
- What can you conclude about Frederick Douglass’s feelings toward others?

Analyze the Tools Writers Use: A Strong Ending

Look at the last paragraph in this biography.

- Did the ending make you want to learn more about Frederick Douglass or about the history of equal rights? Why?
- Did you come away wanting to learn more? Why and about what?
Focus on Words: Descriptive Language—Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. Some adjectives describe an aspect of time. Make a chart like the one below. Identify which noun or pronoun each adjective below describes and then define the adjective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
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<th>Noun or Pronoun Described</th>
<th>Definition of Adjective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>punctual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>time-everlasting</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>belated</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>overdue</td>
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This wood engraving of Douglass resisting a mob in 1843 during an antislavery meeting in Indiana appeared in Douglass's autobiography.
Sojourner Truth: From Slave to Legend
Wham! The hammer fell. Nine-year-old Isabella stood on the auction block, terrified and shivering in her thin dress. She had just been sold to John Nealy for the sum of one hundred dollars, along with a flock of sheep. This was the day she had been dreading—she would have to leave her mother, father, and brother forever.

Isabella, or Bell as she was known, had been born a slave around the year 1797. She was the youngest of ten or eleven children. She had grown up listening to her grief-stricken parents tell how each of their children had been taken away from them and sold. Sometimes they told her stories of happier moments, but more often their stories recounted the terrible times when her siblings had been torn from their arms and sold away. Bell heard the muffled cries of her siblings in her nightmares.

And now it was Bell’s turn.

Bell was born on a farm in New York State about ninety miles north of New York City.
It wasn’t until the 1830s that slavery was abolished in the Northern states. Slavery continued in the South until the end of the Civil War.

**Sold Again and Again**

As she followed John Nealy, her new master, back to his home, Bell realized she could not understand him. Nealy and his wife spoke English. Bell spoke only Dutch. The master who owned Bell’s parents had come to New York from Holland.

The Nealy family were cruel to Bell. They whipped her when she didn’t understand their orders. They gave her meager clothing to wear. She suffered terribly from the harsh Northern winters. Above all, Bell was terribly lonely. Most Northern slave owners owned only one or two slaves. Slaves who lived in the South on large plantations usually lived among large groups of other slaves. Northern slaves, in contrast,
had few opportunities to make
connections with one another.
Bell’s parents did not live
far away, but she rarely
saw them.

Her wretched
circumstances improved
somewhat after just a year
when Nealy sold her to
another family that owned
an inn. Bell worked hard
doing all sorts of tasks amid
the rough, *rowdy* crowd. She did
not remain there for long, though.
In 1810, when she was about thirteen,
that family sold Bell to yet another owner.
She would remain with her new owner, John
Dumont, for the next sixteen years.

**Fighting for Her Freedom**

Bell grew to be nearly six feet tall. That
would have been considered tall for a man at
the time—it was an extraordinary height for a
woman. Strong and hardworking, she learned
to speak English fluently, but she never lost her
Dutch accent. Her voice was low and *muted*
and pleasing to the ear. Her face was expressive.

While living with the Dumonts, Bell married
another of their slaves, a man named Thomas.
Together they had five children, one of whom
is believed to have died in childhood. Three of
them were sold away while still very young.
In 1817, a new law was passed in New York State that changed Bell's life. This law decreed that slaves born before 1799 must be given their freedom by July 4, 1827. Slaves born after 1799—including Bell’s children—would have to remain servants until they reached adulthood.

John Dumont promised to free Bell earlier than the law stated. But he broke his promise, so Bell made a decision.

As soon as she got the opportunity, she picked up her baby, Sophia, and ran away from the Dumont farm, leaving her older child, Peter, in the care of her husband. It was 1826.

Bell walked to the home of a Quaker family that lived nearby. Their name was Van Wagenen. She appealed to them for help. The Van Wagenens were abolitionists, which means they believed that slavery should be abolished. They took her in, then paid John Dumont twenty dollars for Bell and five dollars for baby Sophia. Bell and her baby were free at last.
Fighting for Her Child

Bell lived with the Van Wagenens for one year. Then, in 1827, she learned some alarming news: The Dumonts had sold her five-year-old son, Peter, to a slave owner in Alabama. Bell knew it was against New York law to sell a slave to someone in the South. But she also knew she had very little power to fight to get her child back. She could not read or write. She had no money to pay a lawyer. But she had courage and a great deal of inner strength.

Bell asked some abolitionists for help. They went to court to get Peter back. After many months of fighting, Bell won her case. Her little boy was returned to her. It was unheard of for a black woman to sue a white man. But the man had underestimated Bell’s strength and determination.

Inspired by God

Bell moved to New York City with Sophia and Peter. She worked as a servant in wealthy homes. She also joined a church.

Bell had always believed in God, but slaves could not attend the same church as white people. Now at last she had found a place where she felt she belonged.

Members of her new church often stood up to preach and to sing. Bell started to do this as well. Her faith in God grew stronger than ever.
Bell became a preacher. She began speaking more and more to crowds at religious gatherings. Often she sang as well. She was an electrifying speaker. Many people came to listen to her powerful speeches about God.

Bell lived in New York City for about ten years. But when she was about forty-six years old, she decided to make a big change in her life. She changed her name to Sojourner Truth. A sojourner is someone who travels from place to place. As for her last name, Sojourner said, “Truth is powerful and it prevails.”

Travel is what Sojourner did. For almost a year, she traveled around New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, preaching about God and inspiring crowds.

Her New Life Begins
Sojourner arrived in Northampton, Massachusetts in the winter of 1843, intending to stay for a short time. She remained there for thirteen years!

She joined a community called the Northampton Association. Many of the members were abolitionists. Many also fought for women’s rights.

While she was living there, Sojourner met Frederick Douglass. She also met another famous abolitionist named William Lloyd Garrison.

In 1850, because she could not read or write, Sojourner dictated her story of growing up in slavery to a friend named Olive Gilbert.
The book was published that same year. Olive, however, felt free to add her own interpretation to the events of Sojourner’s life. That makes it hard to be sure of the actual facts.

Because of racial tensions, bookstores were afraid to sell Sojourner’s book. So she packed her bag full of copies, determined to sell the book herself. Sojourner received a modest income from sales of her life story.

Sojourner continued to travel and preach, but she also began to speak out at abolitionist meetings. Sometimes when she rose to speak, people heckled her. But she had a remarkable ability to transform deafening jeers from hostile crowds into hushed silences. Sometimes she sang and even made people laugh. Sojourner’s fame grew. She began to speak out for equal rights for all men—and women.

Sojourner delivered her most famous speech in 1851, at a women’s rights convention in Ohio. “Look at me! Look at my arm!” she said. “I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ain’t I a woman?”

Her speech was written down by a woman named Frances Gage and published so many years later it’s difficult to be sure of Truth’s exact words. But all agreed she was a powerful speaker.

The author’s use of the descriptive adjective deafening shows readers that people felt strongly about the subject of slavery. Many people thought it was okay to have slaves.
Fighting for the Downtrodden

In 1857, Sojourner moved to Michigan with some of her grown children. (She and her husband had separated.) By now she was around sixty years old. The Civil War started in 1861. Sojourner encouraged black men to enlist in the Union army. She traveled to Washington, D.C. to help care for black families who had escaped slavery. Many of these families had spent their whole lives as slaves and knew very little about how to find jobs and run their own homes. Sojourner made many inspiring speeches that encouraged them to improve their lives.
In October 1864, one of the most exciting events in Sojourner’s life took place: She managed to meet with the president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln! She was a major supporter of Lincoln’s efforts to bring about an end to slavery and wanted to offer him her encouragement for the difficulties he was facing with the war.

The president was assassinated just six months later on April 14, 1865.

Even after the war ended in 1865 and slavery was abolished, Sojourner continued to speak and travel around the country. She fought for the right to vote not just for black men, but for all women as well.

In 1870, thanks in part to Sojourner Truth’s speeches, the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed, giving black men the right to vote. (Women would not be allowed to vote until 1920.)

Sojourner died at home in 1883. She had demonstrated again and again how powerful words can be. Born a slave, Sojourner Truth died a legend. After her death, Frederick Douglass wrote, “Venerable for age, distinguished for insight into human nature... , devoted to the welfare of her race, she has been for the last forty years an object of respect and admiration to social reformers everywhere.”

Readers learn more about Sojourner Truth’s character: Even after slavery was abolished, she turned her energies and speaking abilities to other causes.

The author ends Sojourner’s biography on a strong note by using the words of Frederick Douglass, another freed slave, to describe her and her contributions to society.
Reread the Biography

Analyze the Subject
• Sojourner Truth was persistent, meaning she never gave up. Identify two examples of this.
• What were some of her biggest accomplishments?
• What was one of the most important influences in Sojourner’s life?

Focus on Comprehension: Draw Conclusions
• Sojourner Truth had many talents. How can you tell?
• What can you conclude about record keeping during this time?
• What can you conclude about Sojourner Truth’s feelings toward others?

Focus on Theme
A theme is a book’s main idea, or what the book is mostly about. Themes are usually implied, meaning it’s the reader’s job to connect ideas presented in the book and generate one central big idea. Many literary themes exist, including man’s struggle with nature and the importance of family, friendship, love, responsibility, and overcoming adversity. What is the theme of this biography? What evidence from the biography supports your answer?

Analyze the Tools Writers Use: A Strong Ending
Look at the last paragraph in this biography.
• Did the ending make you want to learn more about Sojourner Truth or about the struggle for freedom? Why?
• Did you come away thinking about the power of words? Will it inspire you use to words differently?
Focus on Words: Descriptive Language—Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. Some adjectives describe sounds and noises and help the reader understand something about the person or people making those sounds. Make a chart like the one below. Identify which noun each adjective below describes and then define the adjective.

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<td>21</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>deafening</td>
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slaves washing clothes by a stream in 1860
How does an author write a BIOGRAPHY?

Reread “Sojourner Truth: From Slave to Legend,” and think about what the author did to write this biography. How did she describe Sojourner Truth’s life? How did she show what Sojourner accomplished?

1. Decide on Someone to Write About
   Remember, a biography is a factual retelling of someone’s life. Therefore, you must research his or her life and, if possible, interview the person. In “Sojourner Truth: From Slave to Legend,” the author wants to show readers how Sojourner Truth used the power of words to help bring about big changes.

2. Decide Who Else Needs to Be in the Biography
   Other people will likely be an important part of your subject’s life. Ask yourself the following questions:
   • Who was in the person’s family?
   • Who were the person’s friends and neighbors?
   • Who did the person go to school with or work with?
   • Who helped or hurt the person?
   • Which people should I include?
   • How will I describe these people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person or Group</th>
<th>How They Impacted Sojourner Truth’s Life</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td>made young Bell aware that someday she would be taken from them and sold as a slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Wagenen family</td>
<td>took Bell in and paid for her and her daughter Sophia to be free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton Association</td>
<td>shared Bell’s views about abolishing slavery and granting equal rights to women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recall Events and Setting

Jot down notes about what happened in the subject’s life and where these things happened. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Where did the person’s experiences take place? How will I describe these places?
- What were the most important events in his or her life?
- What situations or problems did the person experience?
- What did the person accomplish?
- What questions might my readers have about the subject that I could answer in my biography?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Setting(s)</th>
<th>Important Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sojourner Truth</td>
<td>United States: New York; Massachusetts; Michigan; Ohio; Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>1. Is sold as a slave, at the age of nine, to John Nealy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Marries another slave, Thomas, and has five children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Becomes free at last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Becomes a preacher and changes her name to Sojourner Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Gives most famous speech at women’s rights convention in Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Meets President Lincoln</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

belated (bih-LAY-ted) delayed beyond the appropriate time (page 12)

deafening (DEH-feh-ning) extremely loud (page 25)

muffled (MUH-fuld) toned down in sound (page 19)

muted (MYOO-ted) softened (page 21)

overdue (oh-ver-DOO) delayed beyond the expected time (page 15)

punctual (PUNK-chuh-wul) on time (page 9)

rowdy (ROW-dee) boisterous and undisciplined in behavior (page 21)

time-everlasting (TIME-eh-ver-LAS-ting) ageless; enduring forever (page 10)
How to use this book

1. Learn about the genre by reading pages 2–3. Get background information about the subjects of the biographies on pages 5–7. (Shared reading)

2. Read the biographies for enjoyment. (Leveled texts)

3. Reread the biographies and answer the questions on pages 16–17 and 28–29. (Shared reading)

4. Reread the last biography. Pay attention to the comments in the margins. See how an author writes a biography. (Leveled text)

5. Follow the steps on pages 30–31 to write your own biography. (Shared reading)

6. Complete the activity on the inside back cover. Answer the follow-up questions. (Shared reading)

Make Connections Across Texts

Complete a graphic organizer like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of Subject</th>
<th>Frederick Douglass</th>
<th>Sojourner Truth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important Influences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyze the Biographies

Use your graphic organizer to help you answer these questions.

- What connections can you make to the subjects of these biographies?
- What connections can you make to the challenges each person faced?
- Which person do you admire most? Explain.
- How did each person’s attributes contribute to his or her success?
- What can readers learn from these biographies?
Two Biographies of African American Slaves Who Achieved Greatness

Born into slavery, Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth achieved freedom and historical importance during their lives. Dedicated to the welfare of their race and to the equality of all people, they earned their places in history through powerful words and deeds. What was life like for these slaves? How did they achieve greatness? Read these biographies to find out.

Sarah Albee has written more than 100 children’s books. Her most recent is a middle-grade book about the history of the world. Sarah was a newspaper cartoonist and semi-professional basketball player before becoming a children’s book writer and editor.

Frederick Douglass
Sojourner Truth

Enjoy all of these Nonfiction Readers’ & Writers’ Genre Workshop titles in this set.

Biography
- Frederick Douglass
- Sojourner Truth
- John Adams
- Abigail Adams

Informational Texts
- The Greenville Gazette
- Yukon Adventures Magazine

Memoir
- The World War II Years
- Newcomers to America

Persuasive Essays
- Perspectives on the American Revolution
- Should School Be Year-Round?

Reviews: Book/Movie
- Matilda
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- Stuart Little
- Charlotte’s Web