

BIOGRAPHY

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This lesson asks students to explore how to tell the story of one person's life—a biography. After discussing the narrative elements of a biography, students research, develop a story, engage in peer review and publish a biography. This lesson may take two to three class sessions.

STANDARDS

- United States History National Standards: Era 5, Civil War and Reconstruction (1850 – 1877), Standards 1, 2, and 3 (depending on the individual studied)
- Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts, grade 8: Reading Informational text 2, 6; Writing 2, 5, 8; Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 9
- College, Career and Civic Life Framework: Dimension 2. History

Note to teachers: If you are studying the Civil War, focus this lesson on Glenn Worthington, who experienced war firsthand and then helped preserve Monocacy National Battlefield as a historic site. If you are not studying the Civil War, provide some historical context for Glenn Worthington's experiences (i.e. where is Monocacy, when was the battle fought, etc.) and then use the biographical text about him as a case study. Either way, you will need to compile a list of individuals whom your students may want to research in order to write a biography.

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss and define the idea of biography. A biography is the true story of one person's life. An autobiography is the story of a person's life written by themselves. Biographies are written in the third person and highlight the main points of someone's life as the author defines them (the details in a life story, key moments or decisions).
2. Explain that, as a case study, students will examine biographical statements about Glenn Worthington, an individual who experienced the Civil War and was instrumental preserving Monocacy National Battlefield. In teams, students review material from the **Content Resources** and identify the main points highlighted in biographical statements of Glenn's Worthington's life: his early experiences, actions, choices, and values. Depending on your classroom needs, you may choose to compile information and present the biography of Glenn Worthington to the whole class.
3. Come back together to share what students discovered. What story do these biographical pieces tell about the life of Glenn Worthington? What main points do they make? What evidence do they cite? Is there causality implied? If so how, and why? (i.e. as a child, Glenn's early experiences helped shape his future interests, work and passions.) In what ways do these biographies tell a story (and not just list dates, facts)?
4. Individually or in teams, students choose one person about whom to write a biography (from a list of individuals you've developed related to your curriculum or classroom needs). They conduct research, identify main points, and organize their writing. What kinds of sources will they use (primary, secondary)? What images might support their

main points? Students may use the Biography worksheet to help organize their work. Build in time for peer review in the process. Is there anything missing from the story? Does the biography make you want to learn more?

5. Share final drafts. Were there any surprises for students in the process? Are there similarities between biographies? Consider creative ways to present biographies as a published piece, such as an anthology, classroom exhibition, theatrical presentation, website, poster, or graphic novel based on the individual biographies.

EXTENSIONS

Visit Monocacy National Battlefield Visitor Center and then the Worthington Farm to see the house where Glenn Worthington hid during the summer of 1864. Does this site feel significant today? If so, why? Be sure to check out the park's Visitor Center for exhibitions and interpretive programming on the Worthingtons, the Battle of Monocacy, and the Civil War.

CONTENT RESOURCES

Background and biographical information on the life of Glenn Worthington:

- [Women & children in the midst of war](#)
- [Remembrance and commemoration](#)
- [The Worthingtons](#)

Video/audio exploring Glenn Worthington's experience and the Battle of Monocacy:

- Video, "[Caught in the Crossfire](#)"

- Clip from *Maryland's Heart of the Civil War* film: 42:00 - 43:35
- Text from *A Collection of Commentaries* flipbook: chapter 11, pages 270 - 272 and chapter 12, pages 300 - 302
- Video clip from flipbook about the battle of Monocacy: <https://vimeo.com/101241212>
- Video clip of Glenn Worthington's eyewitness account: <https://vimeo.com/102229382>
- Video clip on the importance of Worthington's work to save Monocacy battlefield
- Video clip with 1932 speech by Glenn Worthington
- Link to *Fighting for Time* by Glenn Worthington

OTHER INDIVIDUALS STUDENTS MAY WANT TO RESEARCH

- James W. C. Pennington, born into slavery and escaped to become a minister and author
- Barbara Fritchie, resident of Frederick, MD and inspiration for Whittier's poem
- Jacob Engelbrecht, Civil War diarist and Mayor of Frederick, MD
- Henry Ossawa Tanner, witness to the war and world-famous African American painter
- Clara Barton, Civil War nurse and founder of the Red Cross
- Bradley Tyler Johnson, commander of the 1st Maryland Infantry, CSA

BIOGRAPHY WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to help organize your research as you prepare to write a biography. Remember a biography should be more than just a list of facts. It should be a compelling story.

1. Who will you research? Why do you find this person interesting? What do you want to learn?
2. What happened in this person's childhood? (For example, where are they from, what was their home/school life like?)
3. What are some of the big events in this person's life that could have inspired him or her to make decisions or choices? Has s/he said or written anything about personal choices, experiences?
4. What was this individual's relationship to civic, community, family and work life? Were they involved with any groups? Did their actions have any larger or lasting impact in any way?
5. Could the experience of the person you are researching be in some ways representative of an aspect of his/her historical context? If not, what about their experience is unique or different? How does their experience relate to the larger historical context in which they live?
6. How will your writing help readers discover something new about the person you are writing about? Can you inspire them to read more?

****Depending on your students, you might consider reformatting this worksheet as a graphic organizer for questions 1–3, leaving questions 4–6 as a writing project***

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