

The Author's Blueprint: From Life Story to Legendary Tale

Materials Needed:

- A short, engaging biography of an author the student enjoys (books from the "Who Was?" series are excellent for this age). Example: *Who Was Roald Dahl?* or *Who Was J.K. Rowling?*
- Access to the internet to look up a few quotes by the chosen author.
- Paper and a pen/pencil.
- A shoebox or other small- to medium-sized box.
- Art supplies: markers, colored paper, glue, scissors, etc.
- 5-7 small, personal objects chosen by the student (e.g., a favorite small toy, a photo, a rock from a vacation, a ticket stub, a medal).
- Index cards or small pieces of paper to use as labels.

Lesson Plan

Part 1: The Hook - Author Detective (15 minutes)

The goal of this warm-up is to spark curiosity about how an author's real life can sneak into their fictional stories.

1. **Present a Mystery:** Start by sharing a few interesting, but seemingly random, facts from your chosen author's life. For example, for Roald Dahl:
 - "This author was a fighter pilot in World War II."
 - "He worked for a chocolate company as a young man and got to taste-test new candies."
 - "He wrote his stories in a small hut in his backyard."
2. **Connect the Clues:** Now, read a few famous quotes or describe a famous scene from one of their books. For Dahl, you might mention the fighter pilots in *The BFG* or the entire plot of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.
3. **Ask Guiding Questions:** Prompt your student to be a detective. Ask, "How do you think being a chocolate taster might have given him the idea for Willy Wonka's factory? Do you see a connection between being a pilot and the amazing flying scenes in his books?" This helps them see that authors don't just invent things out of thin air; they are inspired by their own lives.

Part 2: The Investigation - Reading & Mapping a Life (25 minutes)

Here, we will actively read the biography to find more connections between the author's life and their work.

1. **Create a "Life Map":** Take a blank piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. On the left side, write the heading "Key Life Events." On the right side, write "How It Might Influence a Story."
2. **Read Together:** Read the biography aloud together. Pause after each significant event (e.g., a childhood experience, a unique job, a major success or failure, a family story).
3. **Fill the Map:** After each pause, work together to fill in the chart. For example, if you read that the author felt like an outsider in school, you would write that on the left. On the right, you could brainstorm: "Maybe this is why they write about characters who are different or don't fit in, like Harry Potter." The goal isn't to be 100% correct, but to practice making logical inferences. This is

a key reading comprehension skill.

Part 3: The Big Idea - What's a Biography For? (10 minutes)

This is a short discussion to solidify the main concept before moving to the creative part of the lesson.

1. **Review the Life Map:** Look over the completed chart. Ask, "After reading this, do you feel like you understand the author better? Why does knowing about their life make their books more interesting?"
2. **Define Biography:** Explain simply that a biography is the story of a person's life, told by someone else. It's not just a list of facts; it's a narrative that shows how a person became who they are. The biographer chooses the *most important* events to tell that story.

Part 4: The Creative Project - "My Life in a Box" (45-60 minutes)

Now, the student gets to be both the author and the subject! They will apply what they learned about biographical storytelling to their own life.

1. **Introduce the Project:** Say, "Just like an author's life is full of events that shape their stories, your life is a story too. We are going to create a 'Biography Box' about you. A biographer would have to interview you to get this information, but you get to be the expert on yourself!"
2. **Gather Your Artifacts:** Have the student find 5-7 small objects that represent important memories, personality traits, or future dreams. This could be anything: a seashell from a family trip, a drawing they are proud of, a LEGO figure that represents their creativity, a photo of a pet.
3. **Write the Story Tags:** For each object, the student will write a short "museum tag" on an index card. The tag should explain what the object is and why it's an important part of their life's story. Encourage them to use descriptive language.
 - Example for a soccer medal: "This medal is from my first big tournament. It reminds me that hard work pays off and that I love being part of a team."
4. **Decorate the Box:** While writing the tags, they can also decorate the outside of the shoebox to represent their personality. This adds another layer of creative expression.
5. **Assemble the Box:** Place the objects and their matching story tags inside the box.

Part 5: The Presentation - Curator of My Museum (10 minutes)

This is a fun, low-pressure way to assess their understanding and celebrate their work.

1. **Share the Story:** Ask the student to act as a museum curator and present their "Biography Box" to you. They will take out each object one by one and read its tag, explaining its significance.
2. **Ask Follow-up Questions:** Engage with their presentation by asking questions like, "If you were writing a book, how might that memory of the beach trip inspire a story?" or "Which of these objects do you think says the most about who you are?" This ties their personal project directly back to the lesson's main theme about authors.

Differentiation & Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Brainstorm ideas for objects together. Provide sentence starters for the tags, such as "This object is important because..." or "This reminds me of a time when..."
- **For an Extra Challenge:** After completing their own box, challenge the student to become a true biographer. They can interview a family member (a grandparent, sibling, or parent) and create a Biography Box for them, carefully selecting objects and writing tags that tell that person's story.