

Independent Reading: Life Studies

Mr. Burke/Spring 2009

Overview

Whereas during first semester you chose a topic and could read any kind of books you wanted to investigate it, this semester we will specifically read biographies, autobiographies, or memoirs that all have something in common. Last year, for example, one student read three biographies of influential leaders (Mao, Roosevelt, and Hitler). Another student, who loves animals and nature, read biographies or autobiographies by or about Diane Fossey, Jane Goodall, and Rachel Carson.

This semester we will choose three books that allow you to study the lives of people you find interesting and think are important. These people might be coaches, leaders in some field, historical figures, or people you respect. My hope is that you will accept this invitation to learn more about people you respect or find interesting and to learn from their lives some lessons that you can apply to your own.

Standards

This assignment meets a variety of state standards, including:

1. Synthesizing content from several sources.
 - Reading a wide variety of materials independently.
 - Developing the main ideas of a composition through supporting evidence.
 - Synthesizing information from multiple sources; identifying complexities and variations in the information and the different perspectives found in each type of source.
 - Writing expository compositions and responses to literature that marshal evidence to support a thesis.
 - Delivering expository presentations that include visual aids.

Requirement

This assignment asks each of you to:

1. Read three books that fall into any of these categories:
 - Autobiography
 - Biography
 - Memoir
 - Nonfiction book about a team or distinct group of people (e.g., *The Nine*, by Jeffrey Toobin, about the Supreme Court justices)
- Choose books appropriate to your age and reading level. Each book should be a full-length, well-written, serious book (as opposed to a short fan biography).

Steps

Each of you must:

1. Read one of these books each grading period.
2. Bring your book every Tuesday and Thursday.
3. Come to class at the end of the grading period having finished that book and write an essay about it.
4. Give a presentation about the people you study in which you discuss their importance.
5. Write an essay at year's end that incorporates the three different books and shows your ability to write an effective essay about a subject (e.g., leadership) using details and evidence from multiple sources.