

Biography Paper

You may have been asked to read and critique the biography of a famous person. The books at NVCC are all arranged according to the Library of Congress cataloging system. This means that there is no section called "biographies" such as you might find in many public libraries. Here they are found within the subject category the person is known for, so they are more difficult to browse for. If you are searching for ideas, you might want to start with some Internet sites:

Biographical Dictionary	http://www.s9.com/biography/
Internet Public Library	http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/ref15.00.00/
Librarian's Index	http://lii.org/pub/topic/notablepeople
Presidential Bios	http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/index.html
Ready Reference Bios	http://www.itcompany.com/info retriever/biog.htm#SUBJECTS
Time's Person of the Year	http://www.time.com/time/poy2000/
Yahoo's People Page	http://dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/People/

- ⇒ Or, scan the tables of contents in magazines and periodicals
- ⇒ Or, take a look at an encyclopedia or some of the biographical reference books.
- ⇒ Or, use a keyword search in Libris, the NVCC online catalog. Since using just the word **biography** will result in too many titles to look through (2,814 and counting), combine it with a limiter, or a subheading, to get more manageable results.

Keep the requirements of the assignment in mind when deciding on a person to write about.

Keep in mind that today's entertainers and other pop icons might be more exciting to think about, but chances are you won't find enough of the required academic material to prepare a term paper.

Okay, now you have someone in mind: what's next?

Books: search in our [Online Catalog](#), using your person's name as a subject. See over for suggestions of recent biographies. Look for biographies and/or other books with biographical information on your person. If NVCC has nothing, other libraries can be searched from the same computer. Ask a librarian for help.

Remember, the bibliography in a well-written book can lead you to articles in scholarly journals.

If you are required to provide a book review on the book you chose, you might want to make sure that the book review is readily accessible before you decide on the book. Remember: reviews of older books are generally more difficult to obtain. However, if the book has recently been re-issued in another format (paperback, CD, DVD) that review would probably be acceptable.

Academic journal articles: NVCC currently subscribes to several academic journals that focus on history. Use the tables of contents to scan for ideas.

Electronic Databases: (available from the Electronic Databases page of the library's website): for articles about specific people, and for book reviews of your book. If you're unsure whether the article is suitable for your paper, print just the 1st page and check with your instructor. The bibliography from a well-written article can lead you to other useful book titles.

Internet sites: can sometimes be valuable. See the handout "Evaluating a Web Site" to learn how to identify academically appropriate Web sites.

Make sure, when gathering source material, that you have **complete citation information** for each item you will be using in your bibliography. This will save time later you do your works cited page.

Some of our newest biographies include:

Alexander the Great the man behind the legend DVD DF 234.2 A449

Francis Crick: discoverer of the genetic code QH 429.2 .C75 R53

Her Dream of Dreams: the Rise and Triumph of Madam C.J. Walker HD 9970.5 .C672 W3558

His Excellency: George Washington E 312 .E245

In the name of the father: Washington's legacy, slavery, and the making of a nation E 310 .F97

In remembrance of Martin DVD E 185.97 .K5 I574

J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography PR 6039 .O32 Z6616

John Paul Jones: Sailor, Hero, Father of the American Navy E 207 .J7 T4

Khrushchev: The Man and his Era DK 275 .K5 T38

Lincoln at Home: Two Glimpses of Abraham Lincoln's Family Life E 457.25 .D66

Mockingbird : a portrait of Harper Lee PS 3562 .E353 Z94

Nostradamus: The Man Behind the Prophecies BF 1815 .N8 W56

Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became its Most Influential Justice KF 8745 .O25 B57

Seabiscuit: An American Legend SF 355 .S4 H55

The Soul of Abraham Lincoln E 457.2 .B29

Unbelievable : The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Notorious B.I.G. ML 420. N76 C65

Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography DS 126.6 .A67 R83

Some questions to get started:

- In what ways was this person's life outstanding?
- Would I like/love/dislike/despise this person if I met him/her today?
- Do I admire this person? Were his/her actions admirable?
- How did this person influence his/her culture and times?
- Did this person have special positive qualities or character traits?
- Did he/she have negative aspects, which led to mistakes? How did he/she respond or react to these mistakes? How would you have dealt with your person's hardships?
- How was this person's life a (positive or negative) example?
- Who were the figures (historical, literary, musical, religious, philosophical, etc.) who influenced your person and molded his/her character?
- Was this person mostly known for being married to, the child of, or parent of, someone else famous - or infamous?