

Me-Oh-My-Oh, That's My Bio!

Draw on what you wrote in your journal (in response to the questions a biographer might ask you) to create a book jacket for your biography. Be as imaginative as you wish, but be sure to include the following in your design:

- **Title:** Your name or a meaningful expression that speaks of the “you that’s you”
- **Subtitle:** A descriptive phrase for your story that says something about a personal value, quality, or talent or describes a life-changing event
- **Publisher:** Parents’ names/family name
- **Author:** Your name
- **Image:** A picture or motif that speaks to your story and grabs the reader’s attention

back cover

spine

front cover

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Tremendous Testimonials

I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as an historian this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.

H. G. Wells, author and historian

I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene . . . No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.

Albert Einstein, physicist

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

C.S. Lewis, author

Socrates taught for forty years, Plato for fifty, Aristotle for forty, and Jesus for only three. Yet the influence of Jesus' three-year ministry infinitely transcends the impact left by the combined 130 years of teaching from these men who were among the greatest philosophers of all antiquity.

Anonymous

As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by his effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet.

Kenneth Scott Latourette, historian

Which of the above testimonials speaks loudest to you?
In three or four sentences, tell why.

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Testimonies

Match the letter of these ancient testimonies to their correct source. You will need to use most of the sources more than once.

Testimonies

- _____ The only non-Christian to write about a Jesus tradition before that tradition was written in the canonical Gospels.
- _____ Wrote that Jesus was active during the reign of Tiberius Caesar.
- _____ Assumed that Christ was present in Rome and set off riots there.
- _____ Declared that sometime between AD 26 and 36, Jesus was put to death by order of Pontius Pilate.
- _____ Wrote to the Roman Emperor asking for advice on how to deal with Christians who wouldn't submit to Roman law and beliefs (pagan worship).
- _____ He wrote, "Mockery of every sort was added to their (Christians') deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. . . . Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed."
- _____ Claimed that Christians worshiped Christ at the Eucharist.
- _____ His goal was to prove that the Jews were a noble people.
- _____ Felt that Christians were moral people but were followers of a weird superstition.
- _____ Declared that Jesus was hanged at Passover time.
- _____ Wrote to refute the report of a "miraculous" darkening of the sun at the time of Jesus' death.
- _____ Claimed Jesus was a magician who led others away from the true (Jewish) faith.
- _____ The only Roman historian to mention Pontius Pilate.
- _____ Greek satirist who ridiculed Christian faith, especially faith in the Resurrection.
- _____ Believed that the destruction of the Jewish nation was linked to the condemnation and execution of Jesus.
- _____ Some scholars believe that a later Christian writer may have made additions to this writer's account of the rule of Pilate.
- _____ Declared that, although executed, Jesus' teachings lived on in his followers.
- _____ Accused Jesus of being a bastard and a sorcerer.

Sources

- A—Tacitus
- B—Suetonius
- C—Pliny the Younger
- D—Josephus
- E—Thallus
- F—Mara bar Serapion
- G—Lucian of Samosata
- H—Celsus
- I—Babylonian Talmud

Combating Prejudice, Stereotypes, and Hate

Prejudice

Making a decision about a person or group without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes.

Stereotype

A “fixed” way of thinking about a person or a group that allows little room for individuality.

Place a check mark next to whichever of the following statements are stereotypes.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jews are hardworking | <input type="checkbox"/> Jews are stingy and rich. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asians are humorless. | <input type="checkbox"/> Asians are smart. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blacks are great athletes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Blacks are lazy. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blondes are stupid. | <input type="checkbox"/> Blondes have more fun. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overweight people are jolly. | <input type="checkbox"/> Overweight people are gluttons. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Latinos are industrious. | <input type="checkbox"/> Latinos are all on welfare. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guys are better at sports. | <input type="checkbox"/> Girls have higher GPAs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native Americans are close to nature. | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Americans drink too much. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay people are artistic. | <input type="checkbox"/> Gay people are pedophiles. |

What are some ways popular culture reinforces stereotypes and prejudicial thinking through movies, TV, and music?

Close the Book on Hate Campaign Pledge

I pledge from this day onward to do my best to interrupt prejudice and to stop those who, because of hate, would hurt, harass, or violate the civil rights of anyone. I will try at all times to be aware of my own biases against people who are different from myself. I will ask questions about cultures, religions, and races that I don’t understand. I will speak out against anyone who mocks, seeks to intimidate, or actually hurts someone of a different race, religion, ethnic group, or sexual orientation. I will reach out to support those who are targets of harassment. I will think about specific ways my school, other students, and my community can promote respect for people and create a prejudice-free zone. I firmly believe that one person can make a difference and that no person can be an “innocent bystander” when it comes to opposing hate. By signing this pledge, I recognize that respect for individual dignity, achieving equality, and opposing anti-Semitism, racism, ethnic bigotry, homophobia, or any other form of hatred is a non-negotiable responsibility of all people.

My Signature

Biblical Criticism

Source Criticism

Following the wise axiom “consider the source,” source criticism operates from the premise that biblical writings are a combination of documents and therefore, strives to decipher as much as possible about these original sources and about those who wrote them, asking questions such as, “What did this Scripture passage look like before it ended up in its current form? Were there changes? If so, why?”

Is it reliable?

Where does
this come
from?

Form Criticism

Focuses on what each section of the Bible text does: Does it address people or God? Is it praise, complaint, narrative, parable, or request? Are there typical word groups or structure patterns that reoccur? One of the tools of form criticism is comparing biblical to contemporary, nonbiblical literary forms and genres.

Why does it look
like this?

Is it reliable?

Redaction Criticism

Investigates both the motivation and historical setting in which the text was redacted (edited) and what motivated the redactor to redact in the first place. Redaction criticism analyzes instances where the editor/author may have redacted an earlier text or tradition, assesses the overall significance of such modifications, and interprets them in the light of the redactor’s literary and theological purpose.

What does
it mean?

Where is the
author coming
from?

Textual Criticism

Textual criticism compares the minor changes and mistakes the copyists made down through the centuries so that the translations we have today are as accurate as possible.

Where does
this come
from?

Historical Criticism

Uses the tools of archaeology, dating methodologies (e.g., carbon dating), customs, and other avenues of historical research to understand the historical context of the biblical text and thus what the original author wanted to convey.

What does
it mean?

Where is the
author coming
from?

Why does it look
like this?

Is it reliable?

דָּתָא | יי, וְנִיחָא | יי, לְאֶרְשִׁי | עִמָּשׁ

1. The old rabbi stood naked but smiling. Thin, steady streams of dark blood oozed from his ears. Tufts of beard had been pulled roughly from his face, and his chest displayed the marks of cruel beating. Only the old man's eyes belied the pain in his body. Bright and wide, they peered through the low flames that were already searing his feet. And still, the rabbi smiled.
2. Around him lay the bodies of his murdered family and pupils, their screams now silenced, their lives cut short, the old man's hopes brutally vanquished. The fire's white-hot embers spit and coughed as if disgusted by the duty for which they had been marshaled. The old rabbi closed his eyes.
3. Though bound fast to an iron stake, across shoulders and loins, shackled at the neck, arms stretched behind and tightly manacled, the rabbi began a gentle davening. His lips moved. Tears appeared at the corner of his eye and instantly evaporated, no human match for the inhumane flames. But remarkably, the rabbi's smile—serene and knowing—broadened.
4. Standing back from the fire's heat and stench, a small knot of torturers watched, amazed. Slowly the knot unraveled, and a squat, sweaty man approached the rabbi.
5. "What's so damned funny, Jew? Don't you get it? The joke's on you. Where's your god now? Are you praying to your god, Jew? Are you praying for rescue? Or for rain?"
6. The squat fellow's henchmen roared at their leader's weak attempt at wit. The rabbi, too, smiled and opened his eyes.
7. "Yes. I am praying."
8. "Well, if I were you, Jew, I'd make it a damn good prayer!"
9. "Ah, it is a good prayer, and a very old one, one I have prayed since I was a boy."
10. The torturer turned to his cohorts. "Listen to this, boys. Do you believe this? The old Jew thinks he's a kid again. Bring me some of that oil-soaked wood, and let's get this over with. I need a drink."
11. The men brought the fuel to the pyre and gingerly added it to the flames. The wood caught quickly and built a furious cyclone of flame around the old man. But he did not see it. He was davening again, eyes shut, and praying. This was the rabbi's prayer:
12. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone!
 All my life I have loved you, Lord,
 With all my heart and all my soul.
 And you . . . you have given me every blessing but one,
 But now you give even that to me.
 I give you thanks, O Lord, for that gift,
 For allowing me—finally—
 To love you with all my strength.
 Amen."

All: Pray the *Shema*.