

# 1 Biography and autobiography

**You're learning:**

- To understand what a biography is and what an autobiography is.

An autobiography is the story of someone's life written by that person. A biography is the story of someone's life written by someone else. When we read autobiographies and biographies we learn about a person's life. We may be inspired by their achievements, or we may just learn more about their everyday life.

## Activity 1

Look at the front covers of these biographies and autobiographies.

Using a table like the one below, decide which are autobiographies and which are biographies. Make sure you can justify your choices.



	Biography (✓)	Autobiography (✓)	What are your reasons?
1			
2			

## Activity 2

A blurb informs people about a book's contents in order to encourage them to buy it.



- 1 Read the blurbs from the two autobiographies shown here and look at their front covers.

These two books would probably appeal to different groups of people (or 'audiences'). For each book say whether you think the book would be enjoyed most by:

- a** males, females, or both. Explain why.  
**b** people your age, people older than you, or everybody. Explain why.

**Blurb A**

Her story is a Cinderella fairytale of an ordinary Liverpool schoolgirl who was transformed into a style icon and cover girl, sought after by fashion and lifestyle magazines the world over.

*Welcome to my World* is Coleen's chance to reflect on this amazing journey and share her love of fashion with her fans. From puffa jackets to Prada bags, Coleen reveals the secrets behind her famous wardrobe, her style, her guide to shopping, her do's and don'ts, her beauty regimes and her body workouts. It is also the story of a young girl who has managed to keep true to her working-class roots whilst being catapulted into a world beyond her wildest dreams.

– From *Welcome to My World*  
by Coleen McLoughlin

**Blurb B**

Ralph Glasser's *Gorbals Trilogy* is an extraordinary account of a remarkable life. In *Growing Up in the Gorbals*, Glasser describes his childhood and adolescence in the impoverished slums of the Glasgow tenements in the 1920s and the hardships and heartaches that went with it. At 14 he left school to become a barber's soap boy but he soon started the night classes that would eventually lead him to a scholarship to Oxford. In *Gorbals Boy at Oxford* he describes his new life, the incredible characters he met and the arrogance of Oxford academic life, and in *Gorbals Voices, Siren Songs*, Ralph Glasser's brilliant trilogy concludes in the wayward world of post-war London.

– From *Growing up in the Gorbals* by Ralph Glasser

- 2 Some public figures have a 'ghost writer', a professional writer who either improves their autobiography or writes the vast majority of it for them. Which of the texts above do you think is most likely to have had a ghost writer and why?

**Knowledge about language: Nouns and verbs**

Nouns are naming words. Proper nouns have capitals and are the names of people, places, months and brand names.

Nouns usually have *a*, *an* or *the* in front of them.

Verbs are doing words. They tell us what a person or thing does.

- 1 Look at Blurb A. List the nouns in the last sentence which begins 'It is also the story...'
- 2 Look at Blurb B. List the verbs in the third sentence 'At 14 he left school...'

## Self-evaluation

Look at the skills you have been practising on pages 8 to 10. How well are you doing? Choose the statement that shows how confident you feel in each area.

- I understand the difference between skimming and scanning.
- I can use skimming skills to decide whether a text might be relevant for what I need.
- I can use scanning skills to find and select specific information.
- I can identify examples in the text that support my opinions.

