

**TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Larkspur, California**

**Course of Study**

**BIOGRAPHY/AUTOBIOGRAPHY**  
**Classical Strand**

**I. INTRODUCTION: COURSE DESCRIPTION**

- A. This is a one-semester course that acquaints students with unique individuals and with the kinds of contributions individuals make to their cultures and times. They will read biographical literature from the past and present, will examine conflicting biographical accounts, and will learn to discern the biographer's bias. Students will practice the form by writing sketches about others and about themselves.
- B. This course addresses the following District student learning outcomes which ask students to:
- #1. communicate articulately, effectively, and persuasively when speaking and writing;
  - #2. read and analyze material in a variety of disciplines;
  - #4. demonstrate knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of the individual in a democratic society;
  - #10. analyze and propose solutions to contemporary issues using a variety of perspectives;
  - #11. interpret, experience, create and/or perform artistic work;
  - #14. demonstrate knowledge, skills and self-discipline necessary to achieve and maintain physical and emotional well-being.

Biography/Autobiography will contribute to the attainment of the following Tam 21<sup>st</sup> Century Goals,

- acquire, manage and use knowledge and skills;
- think critically and creatively;
- understand individual and cultural differences;

- take responsibility for self and community.
- C. This course continues the sequential learning established in freshman and sophomore English classes and makes a connection to their own and others' lives.
- D. The goals of Biography/Autobiography include the following:
1. gain knowledge of a number of ordinary and extraordinary individuals who deserve to be remembered for themselves, their accomplishments, their attitudes toward living, and their solutions to the problem of being human;
  2. know the point of view from which a biographer approaches her or his task;
  3. see biographers as historians and as artists; to compare the facts of their subjects' lives with the image of themselves they choose to show us; to recognize their achievements and their strengths and weaknesses;
  4. judge biographies, including choice of subject, purpose, structure, themes, style, tone, language and point of view using a set of critical standards;
  5. recognize the potential for good autobiographical, biographical and oral history material in the student and in those with whom the student comes in close contact;
  6. increase understanding of the subjective and objective qualities in the student's own autobiographical writing and to help students recognize the values of each;
  7. study the vocabulary that comes from the works under discussion;
  8. use critical thinking skills in analyzing and interpreting biographical literature, and in perceiving relationships to the students' own lives;
  9. establish the connection between writing and thinking through regular practice of the steps in the writing process.

## II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Writing:
  - a. use the stages in the writing process, especially responding, revising, and editing (R/LAF W W/S 1.0; 1.9);

- b. apply basic grammar and appropriate vocabulary in the context of their writing (R/LAF W W/O 1.0);
- c. write well-developed essays using the thesis statement effectively to focus the essay, and practice patterns of organization, such as chronology, classification, and steps in a process, with appropriate transitional techniques, language and form to suit purpose and audience (R/LAF W W/S 1.3);
- d. draw generalizations from recorded observation and experience—e.g., from stories, poems, journal entries, autobiographical and biographical pieces, descriptions and accounts—and support them with convincing evidence and examples (R/LAF W W/A 2.2);
- e. use deduction and induction, understand logical fallacies, know what constitutes evidence and authority, while distinguishing between primary and secondary sources (R/LAF W W/A 2.2);
- f. develop an interpretation that uses convincing textual evidence for support and explain the interpretation rationally to convince the reader of its soundness (R/LAF W W/A 2.2 a - e);
- g. examine ideas and information from a variety of sources and draw conclusions about the point and purpose of that information and to evaluate the conclusions and determine whether or not they are sound (R/LAF W W/A 2.4 d);
- h. analyze information from various sources through systematic notetaking, integrate material from outside sources into their own work, and acknowledge those sources (R/LAF W W/S 1.6).

2. Literature/Reading:

- a. understand and use the language of literary criticism, such as setting, characterization, foreshadowing, symbolism, and metaphor; consult sources to enrich understanding; recognize the relationship of specific incidents to theme; understand an author's method of narration, i.e., who tells the story and how far the narrator is from the action; be aware of and understand shifts in point of view (R/LAF R L/RA 3.0 S/F 3.1; N/A 3.2, 3.3, 3.4);
- b. put ideas in one's own words through such devices as paraphrase, precis, modeling, unscrambling sample passages, reading and interpreting maps, charts, and graphs; recognize that rereading enhances the reader's understanding and appreciation;

- c. determine the author's point of view and distinguish his or her bias from established fact (R/LAF R C/A 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5);
- d. recognize the importance of reading beyond the assigned works and use outside sources of reference; refine the use of research techniques;
- e. develop a greater understanding of the contributions of ethnic groups by studying their traditions, their cultural stance, their similarities and differences (R/LAF R L/RA 3.5 b).

### 3. Speaking and Listening:

When speaking, students will:

- a. function effectively in class discussion by answering and asking questions coherently and by clarifying responses with clear explanations; conceive and develop ideas that are soundly reasoned and well supported;
- b. become more proficient in the various roles in editing and response writing groups; learn new roles: for example, panel chair, panel member, large group discussion leader, recorder, resource person;
- c. learn argumentation techniques that allow both sides of a question to surface; learn skills in logic and reasoning to support arguments on conflicting sides of a question (R/LAF L/S O/D 1.5, 1.6);
- d. give careful attention to preplanning a speech; develop a regard for the audience with respect to gaining attention, sustaining interest, making efficient use of time; learn skills in organizing for various modes of presentation: analysis, persuasion, explanation, interpretation, direction, and comparison (R/LAF L/S O/D 1.7 A/E 1.13);
- e. practice oral interpretation of literature, using the techniques of emphasis, expression, dramatic pause, inflection; practice parts in dramas, attempting realistic character identity, fluency in reading dialogue, and appropriate tone and mood (R/LAF L/S S/A 2.3 a—e; 2.5).

When listening, students will:

- a. develop techniques that promote supportive, polite concern for the speaker, and learn the skills necessary to offer tactful, constructive criticism;
- b. identify main and subordinate ideas presented in lectures and discussions, and evaluate them for sound reasoning and convincing support; take into

account the nuances, the subtle shades of meaning (R/LAF L/S A/E 1.11—1.14).

C. Student Assessment:

Students will be assessed through a variety of indicators including homework, group work, oral presentations, visuals related to the reading, quizzes on the literature, essays and other writing assignments.

Students will be expected to take an essay examination that requires them to apply the thinking and writing skills they have developed in order to synthesize and analyze material from three to four major works covered during the semester. Students will be expected to support their main ideas with specific examples from the works under discussion.

See the Biography/Autobiography Resource Binder for sample assessments

D. Course Assessment:

Biography/Autobiography will be assessed through formal and informal surveys of the students. Course and unit goals will be reviewed by teachers on a regular basis.

### III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

A. Methods

Students will complete a variety of interrelated writing assignments adapted from the James Moffet writing sequence. More than one paper may be required for each assignment. In addition to four process papers per semester, minor papers will be assigned regularly.

Eight different writing types have been identified as the focus for the upper division writing program: observation, reflection, controversial issue, interpretation, evaluation, report of information, autobiography, and speculation. See the introduction to the Upper Division program for specifics on the writing modes.

B. Materials

Every teacher of Ancient Literature will teach a selection of the following titles to guarantee consistency throughout the district. Each student will read at least four major works per semester with required reading including a variety of short stories, poems, novels, and nonfiction.

Materials covered may include the following:

Baker, Russell	<i>Growing Up</i>
Bradley, Bill	<i>Life on the Run</i>
Brown, Claude	<i>Manchild in the Promised Land</i>
Brown, Dee	<i>Bury My Heart in Wounded Knee</i>
Curie, Eve	<i>Madam Curie</i>
Farago, Ladislas	<i>Patton</i>
Foxfire	<i>Oral Histories</i>
Hellman, Lillian	<i>Pentimento</i>
Herriott, James	<i>All Creatures Great and Small.</i>
Markham, Beryl	<i>West With the Night</i>
Manchester, William	<i>John F. Kennedy</i>
Morris, Wright	<i>Will's Boy</i>
Sandburg, Carl	<i>Abraham Lincoln: the Prairie Years</i>
Thoreau, Henry David	<i>Walden</i>
Lindbergh, Anne Morrow	<i>North to the Orient</i>
Steffan, Lincoln	<i>Autobiography of Lincoln Steffan</i>

#### Handbook of Grammar and Composition

Sebranek, Patrick, ed.

*Writers, INC.*

#### IV. GENERAL INFORMATION

Biography/Autobiography is a 5 credit course open to all juniors, seniors and second semester sophomores.

- A. Prerequisites: There are no course prerequisites.
- B. Requirements Met.

This course may be used in partial fulfillment of the English graduation requirement. It meets part of the District requirement for two Classic Stand Courses.

This course is accepted toward the "b" or "g" requirement for UC admissions. It is also accepted for the CSU English requirement.