

Resources for Teachers: Biographies to use in the Classroom

Black History:

The Butler: A Witness to History by Wil Haygood - 921 Allen, E.

With a forward by the Academy Award nominated director Lee Daniels, *The Butler* also includes an essay, in the vein of James Baldwin's jewel *The Devil Finds Work*, that explores the history of black images on celluloid and in Hollywood, and fifty-seven pictures of Eugene Allen, his family, and the presidents he served. 96 pages.

James Earl Jones by Judy L. Hasday - 921 Jones, J.

Born in the rural south during the Great Depression and raised by his maternal grandparents, the once-mute child named James Earl Jones emerged from years of self-imposed silence to become a multitalented, award-winning actor and performer. Jones's range is remarkable; his deep resonant baritone voice has won him many voice-only roles, most notably as the evil Lord of Sith Darth Vader in *Star Wars* and the stern but loving father Mufasa in *The Lion King*. 126 pages.

Scott Joplin by Katherine Preston - 921 Joplin, S.

Scott Joplin fought a lifelong campaign to have ragtime music accepted by the American public. Born in Texas in 1868, Joplin showed enormous musical talent at an early age. When he was 20 years old, he began to tour the Midwest, demonstrating his command of the piano whenever he could find work. Shortly after ragtime underwent a popular revival in the 1970s, he was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his opera *Treemonisha* - a resounding tribute to a composer who dedicated his life so completely to music. 110 pages.

I Have a Dream: The Life and Words of Martin Luther King, Jr. by Jim Haskins - 921 King, M.

In *I Have a Dream* Jim Haskins, the author of numerous books on civil rights history, sets the story of this visionary's life and leadership against the backdrop of King's own voice - his memories, sermons, letters, and speeches. In her introduction, Rosa Parks adds a personal dimension, recalling King as she knew him. 111 pages.

Madam C.J. Walker: Entrepreneur by A'Lelia Perry Bundles - YA 921 Walker, C.J.

Madam C.J. Walker rose from an impoverished childhood to become America's first black female millionaire. Born Sarah Breedlove in 1867 in Delta, Louisiana, Walker was orphaned at the age of 7, married at 14, and widowed at 20. She worked as a St. Louis laundress for almost 20 years. Then, in 1905, she invented a new hair-care preparation for black women and began to sell it door-to-door. In an era when most urban black women worked as cooks or maids, Walker owned a corporation and employed hundreds of people across the nation. 111 pages.

STEM:

October Sky by Homer Hickam, Jr. - 921 Hickam, H.

It was 1957, the year *Sputnik* raced across the Appalachian sky, and the small town of Coalwood, West Virginia, was slowly dying. Faced with an uncertain future, Homer Hickam nurtured a dream: to send rockets into outer space. The introspective son of the mine's superintendent and a mother determined to get him out of Coalwood forever, Homer fell in with a group of misfits who learned not only how to sustain their hope in a town that swallowed its men alive. As the boys began to light up the tarry skies with their flaming projectiles and dreams of glory, Coalwood, and the Hickams, would never be the same. 428 pages.

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson - 921 Jobs, S.

Based on more than forty interviews with Jobs conducted over two years - as well as interviews with more than a hundred family members, friends, adversaries, competitors, and colleagues - Walter Isaacson has written a riveting story of the roller-coaster life and searingly intense personality of a creative entrepreneur whose passion for perfection and ferocious drive revolutionized six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing. 627 pages.

George Lucas: A Life by Brian Jay Jones - 921 Lucas, G.

Lucas's colleagues and competitors offer tantalizing glimpses into his life. His entire career has been stimulated by innovators including Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola, actors such as Harrison Ford, and the very technologies that enabled the creation of his films – and allowed him to keep tinkering with them long after their original releases. Like his unforgettable characters and stories, his influence is unmatched. 550 pages.

Rocket Girl: The Story of Mary Sherman Morgan, America's First Female Rocket Scientist by George D. Morgan - 921 Morgan, M.

A beautiful story well told. Mary Sherman Morgan, a woman who toiled in obscurity and liked it that way, rises from a dirt-poor and abusive childhood to break the gender barrier in rocket engineering. She goes on to solve the last remaining problem keeping America from the stars. Mary's contribution would have forever vanished were it not for this book. An inspiration for women and men everywhere. 325 pages.

Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future by Ashlee Vance - 921 Musk, E.

There are few industrialists in history who could match Elon Musk's relentless drive and ingenious vision. A modern alloy of Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Howard Hughes, and Steve Jobs, Musk is the man behind PayPal, Tesla Motors, SpaceX, and SolarCity, each of which has sent shock waves throughout American business and industry. More than any other executive today, Musk has dedicated his energies and his own vast fortune to inventing a future that is as rich and far-reaching as a science fiction fantasy. 392 pages.

Sports:

Michael Jordan: The Life by Roland Lazenby - 921 Jordan, M.

Basketball journalist Roland Lazenby spent almost thirty years covering Michael Jordan's career in college and the pros. He witnessed Jordan's growth from a skinny rookie to the instantly recognizable global ambassador for basketball whose business savvy and success have millions of kids still wanting to be just like Mike. Lazenby draws on his personal relationships with Jordan's coaches; countless interviews with Jordan's friends, teammates, and family members; and interviews with Jordan himself to provide the first truly definitive study of Michael Jordan: the player, the icon, and the man. 708 pages.

Michael Phelps: Beneath the Surface - 921 Phelps, M.

Michael Phelps' life has been far from ordinary. *Beneath the Surface* is his account of his journey swimmer to perhaps the greatest swimmer of all-time. Along the way, the Olympic gold medalist set a lofty goal - to change the face of swimming. This is the story of his pursuit. 282 pages.

Tony Stewart: From Indy Phenom to Nascar Superstar by John Close - 921 Stewart, T.

It really doesn't matter what kind of car Tony Stewart gets behind the wheel of - he always finds a way to win. He started his racing career in the open-wheel ranks, capturing USAC Midget, Spring, and Champ car titles, and an Indy Racing League (IRL) crown, before making a name for himself in the stock car world. Follow Stewart along the roller-coaster ride, discovering how he, as he puts it, tries to become "the Deion Sanders of auto racing." 159 pages.

Double Play: Faith and Family First by Ben & Julianna Zobrist - 921 Zobrist, B.

He was a sports-crazy kid growing up in rural Illinois, the son of a pastor. She was the happy-go-lucky middle child who loved to sing in her father's church. Because Ben Zobrist forked over \$50 for a college baseball tryout just weeks after high school graduation, he started his unlikely rise to Major League Baseball *and* met the love of his life - Julianna. Their incredible story is told in *Double Play*, but with several surprising twists along the way. 243 pages.

Courage to Soar: A Body in Motion, A Life in Balance by Simone Biles - YA 921 Biles, S.

Simone takes you through the events, challenges, and trials that carried her from an early childhood in foster care to a coveted spot on the 2016 Olympic team. Through years of hard work and determination, Biles has relied on her faith and family to stay focused and positive, while having fun competing at the highest level and doing what she loves. In her own words she takes you through the events, challenges, and trials that carried her from an early childhood in foster care to a coveted spot on the 2016 Olympic team. 250 pages.

I Beat the Odds: From Homelessness to The Blind Side and Beyond by Michael Oher - YA 921 Oher

An offensive tackle for the Baltimore Ravens, Michael Oher is the young man at the center of this true story, depicted in the award-winning book and movie *The Blind Side*. Though the odds were stacked heavily against him, Michael had a burning desire deep within his soul to break out of the Memphis inner-city ghetto and into a world of opportunity. In *I Beat the Odds*, Michael reflects on how far he has come from the circumstances of his youth to offer powerful advice on how anyone can achieve a better life. 250 pages.

World History:

Queen Elizabeth II: A Celebration of Her Majesty's 90th Birthday by Tim Ewart - 921 Elizabeth, II.

Queen Elizabeth II is the longest-reigning monarch in British history. She is the figurehead of the Commonwealth – a total of 53 countries, head of state for 16 countries, manages 1200 members of staff and hosts on average 30,000 people a year at garden parties or investitures. Using memorable photographs and fascinating documents, some of which are from the National Archives, the book looks at how the Queen's reign has seen some of the most unforgettable events in the history of the 20th and 21st centuries, while also maintaining traditions that link the United Kingdom of today with a history that stretches back over more than a thousand years. 128 pages.

Ascent: Two Lives Explored: The Autobiographies of Sir Edmund & Peter Hillary - 921 Hillary.

Father and son, Sir Edmund and Peter Hillary are an unusual breed - adventurers, explorers, extraordinary athletes, and rugged individualists. *Ascent* is a frank and engaging book, written with humor and total honesty by a father and son who do not always see eye to eye, but share a love of adventure which they communicate unstintingly. Here are the stories of two men who discovered the world on their own terms - who live lives far outside the realm of the conventional. 223 pages.

The Unlikely Secret Agent by Ronnie Kasrils - 921 Kasrils, E.

It is 1963. South Africa is in crisis and the white state is under siege. On August 19th, the dreaded security police descent on Griggs bookstore in downtown Durban and arrest Eleanor, the white daughter of the manager. They threaten to "break her or hang her" if she does not lead them to "Red" Ronnie Kasrils, who is wanted on suspicion of involvement in recent acts of sabotage, including the toppling of electricity pylons and explosions at a security police office in Durban. But Eleanor has her own secret to conceal: she is, like Ronnie, a clandestine agent for the underground ANC and must protect her handlers and Ronnie at all costs. 183 pages.

Mandela: The Authorized Portrait - 921 Mandela, N.

Nelson Mandela occupies a unique place in our world. In *Mandela: The Authorized Portrait* the narrative of his epic journey to freedom is accompanied by the most complete collection of images ever assembled and by more than sixty specially commissioned interviews. World leaders, friends, and associates ranging from President Bill Clinton to Tony Blair, from Bono to President Thabo Mbeki, from his comrades in the South African struggle against apartheid to Muhammad Ali have all contributed their individual stories to build a compelling picture of this inspirational man through the eyes of those closest to him. 355 pages.

I Am Malala - 921 Yousafzai, M.

When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, when she was fifteen, she almost paid the ultimate price. *I Am Malala* is the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons. 327 pages.

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand - 921 Zamperini, L.

On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane's bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War. 473 pages.

Surviving the Angel of Death: The True Story of a Mengele Twin in Auschwitz by Eva Mozes Kor & Lisa Rojany Buccieri - YA 940.53

Eva Mozes Kor has written a very moving and vivid account of an extraordinary and horrific experience. It is an important document showing the strength of the human spirit and the capacity to forgive. 141 pages.

*****While all biographies included in this list contain relevant educational material, classroom teachers and homeschool parents are encouraged to review biographies to ensure that they coincide with curriculum needs and are appropriate for students' grade levels.*****

