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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
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From Narratives to Biography: Who will listen to their stories?

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In this unit, elementary students will focus on reading and writing different forms of biography including autobiography, memoir, and narrative. They will read an example of autobiography and memoir prior to writing their own stories, with the understanding that we all have a story to tell. These examples will be drawn from pre-Civil War fugitive slave narratives. Using these narratives, students will write about what they might have seen and how they might have felt if they had been in the narrator's place. From these examples, the students will develop an understanding of time, space, and scale. Finally, using the principles of biography that we develop in the classroom, students will write a short graphic biography of a family member.

Key words: biography, autobiography, memoir, narratives, fugitive slave narratives

(Developed for Literacy, grade 4; recommended for Literacy, grades 4-6)

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