

# UNDERSTAND A SHORT BIOGRAPHY ABOUT A FAMOUS PERSON

Biographies tell the story of a person's life—where they come from, what challenges they faced, and what they accomplished. Understanding short biographies in English is an important skill because these texts appear in exams, books, documentaries, websites, and even professional contexts. Biographical reading also helps you learn how to identify key information, follow chronological order, and recognize the difference between important details and background information.

Biographies often use past simple, past continuous, and expressions that show time, achievements, changes, and influence. They also include descriptive adjectives, short anecdotes, and references to key life moments such as childhood, education, early career, and major accomplishments.

## 1. Common Language Used in Biographies

Biographies tend to follow a predictable pattern. Recognizing common structures makes the text easier to understand.

### Typical Elements of a Biography

- **Birth and background**  
*She was born in... / He grew up in...*
- **Early interests or talents**  
*He showed an interest in music at a young age.*
- **Education or first experiences**  
*She studied engineering at...*
- **Challenges or obstacles**  
*He struggled at first...*
- **Major achievements**  
*She became the first person to...*
- **Legacy or influence**  
*His work continues to inspire...*

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## 2. Useful Vocabulary for Biographical Reading

Word / Phrase	Meaning	Example
<b>childhood</b>	early years of life	<i>During her childhood, she lived in Brazil.</i>
<b>achievement</b>	something important someone accomplishes	<i>Winning the award was a major achievement.</i>
<b>career</b>	professional path	<i>His career began when he joined the company.</i>
<b>inspiration</b>	someone or something that motivates others	<i>Her story is an inspiration to many.</i>
<b>legacy</b>	long lasting impact or influence	<i>His legacy includes charities he founded.</i>
<b>turning point</b>	moment that changes a person's life direction	<i>The accident became a turning point in her career.</i>

## 3. Short Reading - "The Story of Malala Yousafzai"

*(Original text written for educational purposes)*

Malala Yousafzai was born in 1997 in Mingora, Pakistan. From an early age, she loved going to school and believed strongly in the importance of education. When she was just 11 years old, she began sharing her experiences as a student through an online diary, where she described how difficult it was for girls to attend school in her region.

In 2012, Malala became known around the world after surviving a tragic attack. The event became a turning point in her life. Instead of giving up, she continued speaking publicly about human rights and equal access to education. Her courage and determination quickly made her an international symbol of hope.

In 2014, at only 17 years old, she became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, Malala continues her work through the Malala Fund, an organization that supports girls' education around the world. Her story inspires millions of people to believe that one voice—even a young one—can create meaningful change.

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## 4. Identifying Key Information in Biographies

Biographies usually answer these questions:

✓ **Who is the person?**

Name and basic identity

✓ **Where and when were they born?**

Background and origins

✓ **What important events happened in their life?**

Key moments, achievements, struggles

✓ **How did they contribute to society?**

Impact and influence

✓ **Why are they considered important?**

Legacy or inspiration

Understanding these points helps readers focus on essential details without getting lost in extra information.

## 5. Dialogue - Talking About a Biography

### Dialogue 1 - Sharing Key Facts

**A:** Have you ever read anything about Malala Yousafzai?

**B:** Yes! She was born in Pakistan and started speaking about education when she was very young.

**A:** Right, and she became famous worldwide after surviving an attack.

**B:** She's truly inspiring. I admire how she continues helping girls get access to school.

### Dialogue 2 - Describing Achievements

**A:** What makes her story so remarkable?

**B:** Well, she became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.

**A:** That's impressive.

**B:** And she still works to support education through her foundation.

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## 6. Biographical Text Structures You Should Notice

Structure	Purpose	Example
<b>Chronological order</b>	shows events as they happened	birth → childhood → achievements
<b>Cause and effect</b>	explains why something happened	<i>Because she spoke publicly, she gained international attention.</i>
<b>Contrast</b>	shows change or growth	<i>Her life before and after the event was completely different.</i>
<b>Anecdotes</b>	add emotional detail or personality	<i>She remembers writing her diary late at night.</i>

Recognizing these structures helps you read faster and understand more deeply.

## 7. Mini Reading - “A Young Innovator”

Many biographies focus on young achievers:

When Kelvin Doe was a child in Sierra Leone, he enjoyed taking apart old radios to see how they worked. By the age of 13, he built his own batteries to provide electricity for his neighborhood. Later, he created a small community radio station using recycled materials. His creativity caught the attention of international organizations, and he was invited to visit the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Today, he uses his knowledge to promote innovation among young people in Africa.

This type of text helps students identify achievements, background, and influence.

**Reference:**

*British Council. (2024) Roald Dahl. Learn English Teens. British Council.*

Recovered from: <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/magazine-zone/roald-dahl>