

## FAMILY BIOGRAPHY

As we know, a biography is a person's life story. This family biography is the life history of someone's family—your family. I'm asking you to put together, over the next several weeks, the story of your family's history.

You'll be making many of the same decisions that the people who write any biographies have to make. What are the important details to include? What branch of your family tree makes the best story? Where can you find the information?

Here are some things to keep in mind. First, it's important to talk to several other people. You may have a limited understanding of your own story, but there is lots of other information out there of which you probably are not even aware. Find it. Next, be sure to go back in time as far as you can. Your family's history doesn't begin the day you were born. You might find that some of the most interesting details in your story come from many years ago. Finally, it's YOUR story. Tell it the way you want to tell it. If there are things that are nobody's business, well, they're nobody's business. One guide: when you are making your decisions about what to include and what to leave out, think about choosing 1) the most interesting details (always a good idea), and 2) the details which you think are most important to your life as you live it today.

In my opinion, this is the most meaningful and interesting assignment you will do in this class—and it may be the most important thing you can do in school. Like so many things, the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. Be ready to learn something unexpected. Have fun.

Vacation  
Homework!!

### Requirements:

#### 1. The story of your family's life

You need notes from a **minimum** of three separate interviews (20+ questions & answers).  
The narrative is a minimum of 1,500 words in typed, double-spaced pages.

Do this too!  
Get a head start!

#### 2. A visual representation of that narrative

In the past, students have used PowerPoint presentations, photographs in albums and on storyboards, drawings, live performances, and even wooden sculpture to depict their stories.

#### 3. A presentation of the history (speech plus visuals)

minimum of five minutes—maximum 20 minutes

#### 4. A five paragraph essay

prewrite  
draft (single paragraph super outline)  
peer conference #1  
expansion (three single paragraph outlines plus intro & conclusion)  
peer conference #2  
final draft (typed, double-spaced)

**The topic: Is it important to know your family history?**

You will have several class periods to work on this project (peer conferencing will take at least two, probably), but you will not be able to rely only on class time. Your interviews, for example, will take place over the winter break. We will begin our presentations by the beginning of February.

December 15, 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian:

On the reverse side of this letter, you will find a description of our first big project of English 9B. This biography project directly addresses the new Common Core California State Content Standards for ninth grade dealing with research and literary nonfiction. In addition, because of its complexity, the project also involves a broad range of other standards including those for English language conventions, persuasive composition, organization and presentation of knowledge and ideas, analysis of that information, and the use of digital media. It is an important project.

And your student will need your help. Because of the nature of the Family Biography, your student will need to interview family and friends in order to assemble the most complete family “picture” possible. However, be reassured that each student is encouraged to tell this story in her/his own way. There is NO requirement as to content, and your student should feel absolutely free to include and/or leave out anything. This is a project of exploration and discovery, and former students of mine have found it truly the most important thing we do in this class. It can also be lots of fun. Thank you in advance for your help.

Jeffrey Waid

➔ I am sending two copies of this letter to you so that you may ***keep one for your records***. Please return the other with your signature indicating that you have read it. Do not hesitate to contact me here at school with any questions and/or concerns regarding this or any matter pertaining to you and your student. Thanks.

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_