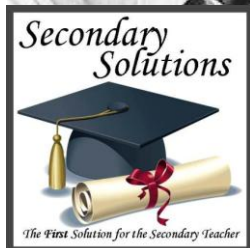
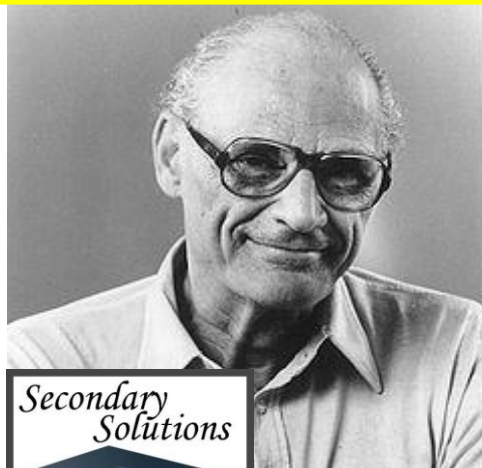


# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Shakespeare, Arthur Miller,  
Harper Lee, F. Scott Fitzgerald,  
George Orwell, S.E. Hinton, and  
John Steinbeck



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# Author Biographies

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## Exploring Expository Writing: Author Biography – George Orwell



British author George Orwell, the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair, was born on June 25, 1903, in Motihari, India near the Nepalese border. At the time of Blair's birth, India was part of the British Empire, and his father, Richard, worked as an agent in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service.

The Blair family lived a middle-class lifestyle, yet chose to return to England in 1907, when Eric was eight years old. Originally enrolling in a private school in Sussex, Eric won a scholarship to Wellington at age 13, and another scholarship to Eton, a prestigious college preparatory school.

From a young age, Eric Blair desired to be a writer. Although he had worked very hard to be accepted to Eton, teenaged Eric was no longer particularly interested in exerting himself academically, unless it was toward a goal he had chosen. To this end, he spent much of his time reading the works of well-known British authors, and less time completing the required academics.

After graduating at the bottom of his class from Eton, Blair joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma where he served for five years. In 1927, Blair resigned from his position so he could spend more time writing. He had also grown disdainful of the police force since he felt that working as a policeman supported a political structure he did not believe in. The burgeoning author did write about his time as a police officer, though, in *Burmese Days* (1934).

Now living in London and Paris, Blair chose to live among the poor and those who had been trampled upon in society. Originally titled *A Scullion's Diary*, the author compiled his experiences in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). Upon publishing this novel, Eric Blair took the pen name of George Orwell so he could rid himself of his Eton background and reinvent himself as an anti-authoritarian citizen who belonged to no particular social class. *Down and Out in Paris and London* also began Orwell's lifelong ambition of writing to enlighten people about painful truths and to place himself in the position of being an arbiter of moral conscience.

In his next book, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), Orwell brought to life the miners in north England. He also criticized English socialists who he thought used all the appropriate vocabulary, such as "proletarian solidarity," (supporting the working class) but who did not actually live out the life of their mottos.

After finishing *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell traveled to Spain to fight for the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War. There, Orwell first lived in a land without class distinctions and watched his socialist comrades live according to their beliefs. After being wounded, Orwell fled from Spain as the Communists tried to eradicate their previously socialist allies. In 1938, the author composed *Homage to Catalonia* about his time in Spain. In the volume, Orwell relates that his experiences in Spain showed him that socialism was truly possible, but also forced him to realize that class differences, as well as violence, conflict, and power struggles will always exist.

When war began between England and Germany in 1939, Orwell was unable to fight against fascism since he was recovering from a bout with tuberculosis. He instead joined

the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) working as a producer for its Indian division. Some believe that Orwell's stint with the BBC may have inspired the "newspeak" language he employs in *1984*.

In 1943, Orwell resigned from the BBC and went to work as a literary editor for the Tribune and began writing *Animal Farm* (1945), a modern fable which speaks out against Stalinist Russia and the Communist Regime. Later in 1945, the author relocated to the Scottish island of Jura where he composed *1984* (1949). When Orwell wrote *1984*, the world was recovering from World War II and the issues it raised concerning fascism. This same time period also marks the beginning of the Cold War and democratic countries' reckoning with rising communist states. This masterpiece portrays Orwell's fear of mankind evolving into an overly bureaucratized state and reflects the pain the author suffered as he continued to cope with tuberculosis.

George Orwell, né Eric Arthur Blair, died on January 21, 1950, in London, England.

### ***Comprehension Check: Author Biography—George Orwell***

**Directions:** *Using the article about George Orwell, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Explain why Orwell left his job as a police officer with the Indian Imperial Police in Burma.
2. What two goals did Orwell strive for throughout much of his writing?
3. Name three books that Orwell has published and the year in which they were written.
4. How was Orwell both enamored with and disappointed by the socialism he witnessed during the Spanish Civil War?
5. Explain how the political events of the 1940s influenced Orwell's writing at that time.
6. As a young man, Orwell supported socialism and a society without class differences. His later works, however, demonstrate the author's fear of bureaucracy and governmental control. In your opinion, are these two governmental approaches mutually exclusive or compatible with each other? Explain your views.

## Exploring Expository Writing: Author Biography

### *William Shakespeare*



William Shakespeare is perhaps one of the most widely recognized names in the history of English literature and even the world. He has been dubbed by many as the greatest writer of the English language and the world's most influential dramatist. Shakespeare's work, the greater part composed within a short span of twenty-three years, includes thirty-eight plays, one-hundred fifty-four sonnets, two narrative poems, and many other poems. Shakespeare has managed to endear himself to readers of all ages, classes, and races over the centuries largely due to his versatility and ability to capture the human spirit. His works touch situations and subjects that allow most readers to relate to his characters. A fellow dramatist said, "He was not of an age, but for all time!" Shakespeare's language is stunning, dramatic, and comical, giving the impression that the author was a man of tremendous wisdom and experience.

Little is known of Shakespeare's life, lending to a mysterious and therefore, extremely intriguing shroud. Compared to many influential people of his time, however, much is known about Shakespeare's background. Church records indicate that William Shakespeare was baptized by his parents, John Shakespeare, an influential citizen and glover by trade, and Mary Arden, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, on April 26, 1564 at the Church of the Holy Trinity in the town known as Stratford-upon Avon. Though we cannot be absolutely sure, the accepted date of his birth is April 23, 1564, as it was the general custom of the time that a child was baptized three days after birth. This is also a rather convenient date as it coincides with his death 52 years later on April 23, 1616. It is also interesting to note that Shakespeare was buried at the same church in which he was baptized.

We safely assume that Shakespeare attended a local grammar school, beginning at about the age of six. His education would have included rhetoric, Christian ethics, and, of course, the classics, much of which would have been taught in Latin. Though Shakespeare had to leave school at the age of thirteen to help his father, it is commonly believed that he continued his studies on his own. His writing reveals that he must have been conversant in Latin and French and must also have had at least a little knowledge of several other languages. We also know from his works that he was extremely well read as he often drew from other works in developing his stories. In general, Shakespeare seems to have been a lover of knowledge.

From the time that Shakespeare left school until the year he married in 1582, little is known of his life. Shakespeare's wife's name was Anne Hathaway and she was eight years his senior.

Shakespeare and Anne had three children. Susanna was born in 1583 and eventually lived to marry a physician. Two years after Susanna, Anne gave birth to twins: Hamnet and Judith. Judith lived to marry and have three children. Hamnet, however, died of unknown causes at the age of eleven. Shakespeare's four grandchildren died without marrying, ending Shakespeare's direct line.

Shakespeare again becomes lost in history between the time of his twins' births and 1592, when a noted critic wrote an attack on one of Shakespeare's plays. Although negative, this attention from an influential critic implies that Shakespeare must have been a part of the theatrical scene for some time. Many believe, in fact, that Shakespeare spent those years working as an actor and generally immersing himself in theater in London. Shakespeare was a member of at least two acting troupes, Pembroke's Men, who performed several of Shakespeare's plays for Queen Elizabeth I, and the Chamberlain's

Men, who were great favorites of King James I. The latter performed in the Globe, a theater they built themselves on the south bank of the Thames, and eventually were renamed The Kings Men.

Shakespeare was eventually able to purchase the second largest home in Stratford, suggesting that he had at least earned a comfortable living. Shakespeare continued to write and act, though less and less, until he retired to Stratford in 1613. He died on April 23, 1616.

### **Comprehension Check: Author Biography**

*Directions: Based upon the article on William Shakespeare, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Why are the dates of Shakespeare's birth and death interesting? What are the dates?
2. How do we know when Shakespeare was born?
3. After reading this, what more might you want to know about Shakespeare that historical records are lacking? Why?
4. Rewrite the following three sentences as one, clear sentence: *Shakespeare was not poor, but neither was he ever really wealthy. This is believed to have influenced his writing. Many think his social-economic position enabled him to relate to all levels of economic and social states.*
5. The article, though it gives the facts of his life, does not really describe Shakespeare as a person. Based on this and other things you know of him and his work, write a brief description of what Shakespeare might have been like.
6. Some critics believe that author biographies are sometimes helpful in understanding what a person wrote. Many other critics, however, feel that an author's life should not be brought into the analysis of a piece of literature. In other words, they feel we do not need to know about Shakespeare in order to understand or appreciate *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Based on what we know of Shakespeare, do you think his autobiographical material is important? Why?

## Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing

### *Author Biography: John Steinbeck*

John Ernst Steinbeck Jr. is considered one of the greatest American authors of all time. Famous for such works as *Tortilla Flat*, *Cannery Row*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, and *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck artfully created believable characters living real life, and in doing so, brilliantly captured the strength and determination of the human spirit.

Steinbeck was born February 27, 1902 in Salinas, California, the only son of John Ernst Steinbeck Sr. and Olive (Hamilton) Steinbeck. His father was the treasurer of Monterey County, and his mother was a public school teacher. He grew up in the vast agricultural heart of the Salinas Valley, about 25 miles off the Pacific Coast, which later became the setting for many of his novels.

Growing up an avid reader, Steinbeck was captivated by adventure stories such as Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (The Death of King Arthur). At age 14, he decided to become a writer, and spent hours in his bedroom writing stories and poems, and even attempting his own translation of Malory's famous novel.

Steinbeck entered Stanford University in 1919, enrolling in writing, literature and a few science courses. Never fully committed to the idea of college, Steinbeck occasionally took classes which interested him, but left in 1925 without ever receiving a degree. He then moved to New York, and worked several odd jobs, from newspaper reporter to construction worker. He returned to his native California two years later, where he worked as a caretaker for an estate and completed his first novel, *Cup of Gold*, in 1929.

While the novel *Cup of Gold* was never a significant financial or critical success, Steinbeck was able to afford to marry his first wife, Carol, in 1930. Finally settled, Steinbeck concentrated on his writing, and in 1935, published the very successful novel, *Tortilla Flat*. Based on the lives of California *paisanos* (people of Indian and Spanish descent), Steinbeck was able to capture the often bleak, yet painfully realistic side of human life—a side of life he was able to witness firsthand.

*Of Mice and Men*, published in 1937, and *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, were arguably Steinbeck's most famous and controversial novels. *Of Mice and Men* was originally conceived as a play, and after Steinbeck rewrote the novelette for the stage, it received the Drama Critics Circle Award in 1937, and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. *The Grapes of Wrath*, a gritty, candid illustration of the lives of farmers during the Depression, received harsh criticism. This criticism did not deter people from buying the book, however, and the novel eventually became a huge success, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1940.

After his marriage began to crumble, Steinbeck decided to travel with respected friend Ed Ricketts, a marine biologist. *Sea of Cortez* (1941), and *The Forgotten Village* (1941) were said to have been inspired by Ricketts and their travels together. He divorced Carol in 1943, and married his second wife, Gwendolyn, with whom he had two sons, Thomas and John. After another rocky marriage, they divorced in 1948, and in 1950 he married his third wife, Elaine Scott.

Severely criticized and equally celebrated, Steinbeck wrote 28 novels in all. His later works, *Cannery Row* (1945), *East of Eden* (1951), a semi-autobiographical piece, and *The Winter*

of *Our Discontent* (1961), were a few of the most acclaimed novels of his later years. After receiving numerous nominations throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Steinbeck was finally awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. Steinbeck died in New York, December 20, 1968, at the age of 66.

Steinbeck's empathy with life during the Depression and his ability to capture human existence in all of its harsh cruelty and captivating glory, made his novels a powerful platform for social and political issues and established Steinbeck as one of the most effective and brilliant writers of his time.

### **Comprehension Check: Author Biography**

**Directions:** After reading the article on John Steinbeck, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Steinbeck wrote 28 novels in all. In the order in which they were published, list the names of the novels mentioned in the article.
2. Compare and contrast *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, according to the information you are given in the article.
3. In one or two paragraphs, summarize Steinbeck's personal life, from his childhood to his death.
4. In your own words, describe the general qualities of Steinbeck's novels, according to the article. Why do you think his novels are still popular today?
5. If you were completing a research project on Steinbeck, what two research questions would you want to investigate further? Form two questions for your research. Why did you choose to find out more about these ideas?
6. Referring to the information in the article, draw a timeline of **ten** important milestones in Steinbeck's life. Be sure to include a brief description and dates for each event.



## Standards Focus: Author Biography – Arthur Miller (1915-2005)

Known and respected for his intimate and realistic portrayal of the working class, Arthur Miller remains one of the most prolific playwrights of his time. At the peak of his career immediately following World War II, American theater was transformed by his profound ability to capture the heart of the common man and make his audiences empathize with his plight as he attempts to find his way in an often harsh and unsympathetic world.

Arthur Miller was born in 1915 in New York, into a middle-class Jewish immigrant family. His father was a clothing manufacturer and store owner who experienced significant loss after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. Miller attended Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, and was a gifted athlete and an average student. After being rejected the first time, Miller was finally accepted into the University of Michigan in 1934, where his studies focused on drama and journalism. He graduated in 1938 with a Bachelor's degree in English. Two years later, he published his first play, the relatively unsuccessful *The Man Who Had All the Luck* and married his college girlfriend Mary Slattery, with whom he later had two children, Robert and Jane.

Miller's first prominent play was *All My Sons* (1947), a tragedy about a factory owner who knowingly sold faulty aircraft parts during World War II. *All My Sons* won the Drama Critics Circle award and two Tony Awards. His 1949 play *Death of a Salesman* was also an enormous critical success, winning the Drama Critics Circle Award, the Pulitzer Prize, and several Tony Awards, including Best Play, Best Author, and Best director. To this day, *Death of a Salesman* remains his most famous and respected work.

In 1950, Miller's troubles began. After directing a production of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, Miller began getting negative attention for his very public political and social commentary. In 1953 *The Crucible* opened on Broadway, depicting a deliberate parallel between the Salem Witch Trials and the Communist Red Scare that America was experiencing at the time. This production brought more suspicion onto Miller at a very unstable time in American history, and in June of 1956, he was called to testify in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), for which he was found in contempt of court for his refusal to cooperate and identify names of Communist sympathizers. This ruling was later overturned by the United States Court of Appeals, but damage to his reputation had taken place nonetheless.

That same year, he divorced his wife and married actress and American icon Marilyn Monroe; however, his marriage to Monroe did not last long—they divorced in 1961. His plays *After the Fall* (1964) and *Finishing the Picture* (2004) are said to loosely depict their turbulent and unhappy marriage. After divorcing Monroe, Miller married Inge Morath, with whom he had a son, Daniel, in 1962 and a daughter, Rebecca, in 1963. There have been unconfirmed reports that Miller's son Daniel was diagnosed with Down syndrome shortly after he was born and that Miller institutionalized Daniel and never saw or spoke of him again, even in his poignant autobiography *Timebends: A Life* (1987).

Miller's other plays include *Incident at Vichy* (1965), *The Price* (1968), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972), *The American Clock* (1980), *The Ride down Mount Morgan* (1991), *Broken Glass* (1994), and *Resurrection Blues* (2002). He also wrote a novel, *Focus* (1945), a book of short stories in 1967, several screenplays and television movies, and *Echoes down the Corridor* (2000), a collection of essays. In addition, he collaborated with Inge (who was a photographer) on several books. He received the Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1999 and the National Book Foundation's medal for his contribution to American literature in 2001.

Arthur Miller died of heart failure in February of 2005 at his Connecticut home. He was 89 years old.

## Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing—Arthur Miller Biography

*Directions: Use the biography of Arthur Miller to answer the following questions. Write the letter of the correct answer on the line provided.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ What is the author's purpose for writing this biography about Arthur Miller?
  - a. To persuade the reader to read Miller's plays
  - b. To describe Miller's home life while growing up
  - c. To inform the reader about Miller's life and works
  - d. To entertain the reader before reading Miller's plays
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Based upon the information given in paragraph 3, the reader can assume that:
  - a. Miller was a talented and respected writer.
  - b. Miller was appreciative of the awards he received.
  - c. Miller did not use success as his motivation.
  - d. Miller was paid large sums of money for his work.
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Which event happened the same year that Miller was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee?
  - a. *All My Sons* won the Pulitzer Prize.
  - b. Miller's son Daniel was born.
  - c. Miller married Marilyn Monroe.
  - d. Miller's conviction for contempt was overturned.
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ In which paragraph would it be most appropriate to insert information about Miller's connection with Elia Kazan, a friend and former member of the Communist party?
  - a. paragraph 1
  - b. paragraph 2
  - c. paragraph 3
  - d. paragraph 4
  
5. Read the following sentence: *His father was a clothing manufacturer and store owner who experienced significant loss after the Stock Market Crash of 1929.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Which word or words would *best* replace the underlined words in the sentence above?
  - a. caught a wealth of poverty
  - b. wasted his money
  - c. fell into poverty
  - d. was made poor
  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Which of the following would be *least* likely to fit in the article on page 6?
  - a. A paragraph highlighting Miller's testimony to the HUAC
  - b. A paragraph about Marilyn Monroe's movies
  - c. A paragraph about Miller's writings in college
  - d. A paragraph about the authors and playwrights who influenced Miller
  
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Which of the following questions would be *most* appropriate to ask Miller if you were a reporter who had been granted an interview with him?
  - a. *How did your Jewish upbringing influence your work?*
  - b. *Which of your three wives did you love the most?*
  - c. *How much money do you make?*
  - d. *Why did you get married so many times?*

## **Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing**

### *Author Biography: Harper Lee (1926- )*

Nelle Harper Lee was born in the small town Monroeville, Alabama on April 26, 1926 to Amasa Coleman Lee, a lawyer and former newspaper editor, and Frances Finch Lee. The youngest of four, Harper Lee was a self-confessed tomboy who enjoyed reading and writing at a very young age. She went to the local grammar school and high school in Monroeville with author Truman Capote (*In Cold Blood*), upon whom the character Dill is said to be based.

After high school, Lee attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery, then transferred to the University of Alabama to study law. After three years, Lee realized her passion was not law, but writing, and she quit school to move to New York just one semester short of receiving her law degree.

After moving to New York, Lee supported herself by working as an airline reservation clerk while writing short stories about her life in the South. In 1957, she submitted her short stories to the J.B. Lippincott publishing company. Agents of the firm encouraged her to take a year to string her short stories into one major work. After two and a half years, Lee completed the novel and in 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* became an international success, and was eventually translated into over thirty languages. It won the *Pulitzer Prize* for fiction in 1961 and was adapted for screen in 1962. The film, starring Gregory Peck, was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Peck received the Academy Award for Best Actor.

In 1966, Lee was appointed to the National Council of Arts by then President Lyndon B. Johnson, and has received several honorary doctorates from universities such as the University of Alabama, Sewanee University, and Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama.

Today, Lee prefers a private existence, giving few interviews and speeches. After decades of silence, Lee was prompted by Oprah Winfrey to put pen to paper yet again, writing a letter which appeared in the July 2006 issue of Oprah's *O* magazine. The letter describes a time in Lee's life in which books were scarce, and there were no public libraries, yet her parents continued to read anything they could get their hands on to the young Lee. She lamented our modern-day lack of attraction to books, asking Oprah, "Can you imagine curling up in bed to read a computer?" and declaring "I still plod along with books. I prefer to search library stacks because when I work to learn something, I remember it."

Lee has also been recently seen at the annual essay writing contest for high school students, held for the last six years at the University of Alabama. In January of 2006, she gave her first interview since 1964 to the New York Times at the essay contest award ceremony. "They always see new things in it," she said of the student essays about *To Kill a Mockingbird*. "And the way they relate it to their lives now is really quite incredible." To date, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has remained her only published novel.

## Pre-Reading Preparation

### Author Biography: S.E. Hinton



Susan Eloise Hinton was born on July 22, 1948 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A self-confessed tomboy, Hinton grew up wanting to be a cowboy or a writer. She was an avid reader, but found the young-adult books she read rather unoriginal and unrealistic. At age sixteen, aggravated with the social climate at her high school and frustrated with the quality of available reading materials, Hinton took pen to paper and wrote one of the most-read and loved books for young adults: *The Outsiders*. This first edition, published in 1967, was an instant success, earning numerous awards.

Hinton wrote *The Outsiders* under the pen name S.E. Hinton, after publishers expressed concern that a woman's name on the book would keep boys, the target audience, from reading it. The trick worked, and *The Outsiders* became an instant young-adult classic, enjoyed by boys and girls alike.

After writing *The Outsiders*, Hinton suffered from writer's block, which caused her to plummet into a depression. After some soul searching and a big nudge from her boyfriend at the time, Hinton wrote the acclaimed *That Was Then, This Is Now* which was published in 1971. She married her then-boyfriend, David, in 1970, and they eventually had a son, Nicholas, in 1983.

In 1975, S.E. Hinton published *Rumble Fish*, then *Tex* in 1979. In 1983, the movie, *The Outsiders*, was released. Hinton worked closely with the director, Francis Ford Coppola and with up-and-coming stars Tom Cruise, Matt Dillon and Rob Lowe. Later, *Rumble Fish*, *Tex* and *That Was Then, This Is Now* were also made into movies. In 1988, she wrote *Taming the Star Runner* and in 1995, deviated from writing for young adults and wrote two children's books, *The Puppy Sister* and *Big David, Little David*.

After almost 20 years, Hinton made a literary comeback with the adult novel, *Hawkes Harbor*, which was published in 2004. Although *Hawkes Harbor* is a far more mature and complex novel than her earlier works, Hinton continues to captivate and entertain readers, just as she did with her very first novel.

## Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing

**Directions:** After reading the article about S.E. Hinton, answer the following questions on the lines provided. Be sure to use complete sentences.

1. What does it mean to be a “self-confessed tomboy”? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why did Hinton use only the initials of her first and middle names when publishing *The Outsiders*? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Explain why it took Hinton so long to write and publish another book after *The Outsiders*. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which of her books were eventually made into movies? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In the following sentence, “In 1988, she wrote *Taming the Star Runner* and in 1995, deviated from writing for young adults and wrote two children’s books, *The Puppy Sister* and *Big David, Little David*,” what does the word deviated mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is Hinton’s most recent novel and how is it different from her other novels? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What 2-3 questions would you ask if you were granted a personal interview with Hinton? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. In your opinion, why do you think there isn’t much personal information about Hinton in this short biography? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. On a large sheet of paper, use the information in this biography to help you draw a timeline of Hinton’s life and works. Be sure to include important dates, showing her literary accomplishments and major events in her life. Illustrate with pictures and include a colorful key.

## Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing

### **Author Biography: F. Scott Fitzgerald**

Considered to be one of the greatest American storytellers, F. Scott Fitzgerald unquestionably led a chaotic, yet intriguing life. Despite his alcoholism and bouts of depression and insecurity, and his wife's infidelity and mental instability, Fitzgerald became a highly acclaimed and successful writer. His most popular novel, *The Great Gatsby*, is considered to be a classic American novel, and a dark and disconcerting portrait of America in the 1920's.



Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 24, 1896. He is a descendant of the famous patriot, Frances Scott Key, most well-known for writing the “Star Spangled Banner.” His father, Edward Fitzgerald, was a salesman for Procter & Gamble in New York, and his mother, Mary (Mollie) McQuillan, was heiress to the fortune from her father's grocery business. Fitzgerald attended the St. Paul Academy, the Newman School, and Princeton, but dropped out of Princeton to join the Army in 1917. In June of 1918, Fitzgerald was assigned to Camp Sheridan, near Montgomery, Alabama. It was at this time that he met Zelda Sayre, the eighteen year-old Southern socialite who would later become his wife.

In July 1919, Fitzgerald returned to St. Paul to polish his novel *This Side of Paradise*. It was a literary and monetary success, and allowed Fitzgerald the financial security to finally marry Zelda in 1920. In October 1921, they had their only child, a daughter they named Frances Scott, and nicknamed “Scottie.” The Fitzgeralds moved frequently over the next few years, from Long Island to Rome to Paris. Fitzgerald wrote *The Beautiful and the Damned* and *Tales of the Jazz Age* in 1922, and it was in Paris where Fitzgerald finished writing *The Great Gatsby*. The novel was published in 1925, and while it was both hailed and rejected by critics, sales were a considerable disappointment compared to the success of his first novel. Fitzgerald continued to augment his lavish lifestyle by writing short stories for newspapers and magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post*.

In the Spring of 1930, Fitzgerald's life began a downward spiral. His drinking became an increasing problem, Zelda suffered from the first of several mental and physical breakdowns, and their marriage splintered. Fitzgerald was forced again to sell short stories to help pay for Zelda's psychiatric treatment and hospitalization. While working on his fourth novel, *Tender is the Night* in 1932, Zelda suffered a relapse, and was again hospitalized. Fitzgerald was finally able to finish *Tender is the Night* in 1934.

Fitzgerald's admitted low point was in 1936-1937, when his alcoholism was out of control, his debts were soaring, he was unable to write, and he lived in and out of hotels in North Carolina. Scottie was sent away to boarding school, since he was unable to provide a stable home for her. Zelda continued her decline, was permanently hospitalized, and eventually died in 1948 in a hospital fire.

Fitzgerald moved to California in 1937 and worked for major Hollywood studios writing movie scripts. While working on his final novel, *The Last Tycoon*, Fitzgerald suffered a heart attack and died December 21, 1940 at the age of 44. *The Last Tycoon* was published posthumously in 1941.

## Comprehension Check: Exploring Expository Writing

*Directions:* Using the article about F. Scott Fitzgerald on the previous page, answer the questions below using complete sentences.

1. When and where was F. Scott Fitzgerald born? \_\_\_\_\_

2. After what famous person was he named? What was this person known for? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What kind of school experience did Fitzgerald have? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Explain why the author of this article considered Fitzgerald's life to be "chaotic." \_\_\_\_\_

5. List the names and dates of publication of Fitzgerald's major works. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Describe Zelda Fitzgerald. \_\_\_\_\_

7. About what kinds of characters and situations can you conclude Fitzgerald wrote? Explain your response. \_\_\_\_\_

8. What would you imagine happened to Fitzgerald's daughter Scottie? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

9. From the information given in the article, what conclusion could be drawn about American society during Fitzgerald's time? \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Americans were motivated and philosophical.
- b. Americans were interested in art and science.
- c. Americans were very religious and devoted.
- d. Americans were restless and reckless.

10. Using the information in the article, create a timeline of 5-7 important dates and events in Fitzgerald's life on a separate piece of paper.

## ANSWER KEYS

### Comprehension Check: Author Biography—George Orwell

1. Orwell wanted to spend more time writing and he felt that working as a policeman supported a political structure that he did not believe in.
2. Orwell wrote to enlighten people about painful truths and to place himself in the position of being an arbiter of moral conscience.
3. *Burmese Days* (1934), *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), *Animal Farm* (1945), *1984* (1949)
4. Orwell was enamored with his first vision of a society without class distinctions. Witnessing the Spanish Civil War showed him that socialism was truly possible, but also forced him to realize that class differences, as well as violence, conflict, and power struggles will always exist.
5. Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* to speak out against the Stalinist Russia of the 1940s. *1984*, in which a governmental system controls every aspect of its citizens' lives, brings to life Orwell's fears about the fascism which gripped Italy, Spain, and Germany in the 1940s.
6. *Answers will vary.* Since students may believe that Orwell changed his opinion about the role of government over the course of his lifetime, while others may believe that he held both ideas throughout his life. By definition, socialism depends on governmental structure and oversight to create and maintain an egalitarian society which many people equate with bureaucracy and governmental control.

### Comprehension Check: Author Biography--Shakespeare

1. The date of his birth and the date of his death are the same date 52 years apart. April 23, 1564 and April 23, 1616.
2. Though we are not exactly sure of the day, we can place it with relative confidence due to the records of the Church. Baptism was given when a baby was 3 days old and Church records indicate that Shakespeare was baptized April 20, 1564.
3. *Answers will vary.*
4. *Answers will vary.*
5. *Answers will vary.*
6. *Answers will vary.*

### Comprehension Check: Author Biography—John Steinbeck

1. *Cup of Gold* (1929), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *Sea of Cortez* (1941), *The Forgotten Village* (1941), *Cannery Row*, (1945), *East of Eden* (1951), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961)
2. *Of Mice and Men* was conceived as a play; won the Drama Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1937. *The Grapes of Wrath* received harsh criticism, but the general public loved it; won the Pulitzer in 1940.
3. Born in 1902 in Salinas, CA. Father—John Ernst, Mother—Olive Hamilton; He liked to read and write; at 14 tried to translate *Le Morte d'Arthur*; went to Stanford, but did not graduate; married Carol in 1930; had friend Ed Ricketts; divorced Carol in 1943, married Gwendolyn; had two sons; divorced in 1948; married Elaine Scott in 1950.
4. Ability to capture the human spirit; captured the bleak, but realistic side of life; empathetic with life during the Depression; captured all the glory and cruelty of life; platform for social and political issues. *Answers will vary.*
5. *Answers will vary.*
6. *Timelines will vary.*

### Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing—Arthur Miller Biography

1. c. to inform the reader about Miller's life and works
2. a. Miller was a talented and respected writer.
3. c. Miller married Marilyn Monroe.
4. d. paragraph 4
5. c. fell into poverty
6. b. a paragraph about Marilyn Monroe's movies
7. a. How did your Jewish upbringing influence your work?



### **Exploring Expository Writing—S.E. Hinton**

*Answers may vary*

1. She thinks of herself as a tomboy, enjoying the activities boys usually do.
2. The publishers thought that having a woman's name would not sell the book to the target audience: boys.
3. She had writer's block, depression.
4. The Outsiders; Rumble Fish; Tex; That Was Then, This is Now
5. veered away from the usual
6. Hawkes Harbor, adult novel, more mature, complex
7. *Answers will vary.*
8. *Answers will vary.*

### **Comprehension Check: Exploring Expository Writing—F. Scott Fitzgerald**

1. St. Paul, Minnesota on Sept. 24, 1896
2. Frances Scott Key; writing the "Star Spangled Banner"
3. Attended the St. Paul Academy, Newman School, and Princeton; dropped out of Princeton to join the Army in 1917.
4. He was an alcoholic who suffered from depression and self-doubt; his wife was unfaithful, had mental breakdowns, and was in and out of hospitals
5. 1919, *This Side of Paradise*; 1922, *The Beautiful and the Damned* and *Tales of the Jazz Age*; 1925, *The Great Gatsby*; 1934, *Tender is the Night*; 1941, *The Last Tycoon*
6. She was a Southern socialite who cheated on her husband, had mental and physical breakdowns, was extremely unstable, and died in 1948 in a hospital fire.
7. *Answers will vary.* Student answers may include that he wrote about people like himself and his wife, since that is what he knew best.
8. *Answers will vary.* Student answers may include that since she had such a turbulent family life, she may have turned out to have some problems of her own. She did not have a stable home to grow up in, so she may have suffered in some ways.
9. d. Americans were restless and reckless.
10. Timelines will vary in size, style, and quality