



Two Minute Biopic

Grade Levels: Middle or High School

Biopic: *A film dramatization of a person's life.*

Overview:

Students create a short, dramatic biopic of another classmate, based on facts provided by that subject. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the creative choices needed to dramatize someone's life. They will also touch on the ethics around dramatizing real events and filling in the gaps.

Supplies:

1. Pen or pencil
2. A few sheets of paper

Steps:

1. Working individually, student should write ten sentences about their life. Each sentence should touch on a key moment and span from birth to present day, but they should be things that the student feels comfortable discussing openly. For example:
 - A. "I was born in Dallas on Wednesday March 23, 1992."
 - B. "One of my favorite early childhood memories was playing with my stuffed bear named Peg."
 - C. "I was in a car accident when I was 10 and got a long scar on my leg from surgery." (etc....)
2. Students should not write their names on the paper.
3. After each student has listed their facts, the teacher collects them and redistributes randomly, ensuring a student does not get their own facts. It's okay if one student recognizes another's paper or facts.
4. With a new paper, each student must now write a short monologue (2-3 paragraphs), speaking as if they were that person.
 1. Imagine they were an actor, onstage, telling the compelling story. They become the character.
 2. They should focus on 1 or 2 moments only.
 3. They should take creative license to flesh out the details. For example, if they focused on the car accident example above, then they should add details to tell the story from the beginning, middle, and end. For example, "It was a drizzly November evening when my sister picked me up from soccer practice. She got her license only a few months before, and it was always a bit scary riding with her. But I appreciated not having to wait an hour for my mom, so I went with it. We were merging onto the interstate when all of a sudden an 18-wheeler in front of us slammed on their breaks..."
 1. If the students are having trouble, here are some prompts:
 1. How old were you?
 2. Where exactly did this take place?
 3. When was it? Time of day, year?
 4. What were you wearing? Why?
 5. What were the circumstances that led to the event?
 6. How can you make it more exciting but believable?
5. Students share their stories in a theatrical way, and then discuss the liberties that were taken. The author is identified, then students can compare the actual event to the dramatized.
 1. What were the key differences?
 2. Regarding the things that were changed, how far did it get away from the truth? Is this lying? Ethical?
6. Time permitting – revisions can be done as a group to make it more fantastic.