

Autobiography Example Analysis Worksheet

A systematic guide for extracting lessons from any autobiography example

PART 1: Basic Information

Autobiography Title/Source:

Author:

Type/Category: ☐ High School/Academic ☐ College/University ☐ Professional ☐ Creative/Literary ☐ Cultural ☐ Spiritual ☐ Short Form ☐ Other:

Intended Audience:

Approximate Length: _____ words/pages

Your Purpose for Analysis:

PART 2: First Impressions

Initial Reaction: What was your immediate response after reading? What stood out?

Emotional Impact: How did this autobiography make you feel? What emotions did it evoke?

Memorable Moments: What scenes, lines, or ideas stuck with you?

PART 3: Structure Analysis

Opening

First Sentence/Paragraph: Copy it here:

Opening Strategy: ☐ Scene/moment ☐ Question ☐ Statement ☐ Reflection ☐ Dialogue ☐ Description ☐ Other: _____

Hook Effectiveness: Rate 1-5: _____ Why did it work (or not)?

Organization

Overall Structure: ☐ Chronological ☐ Thematic ☐ Blended ☐ Circular ☐ Question-based ☐ Pivotal moments ☐ Other: _____

Major Sections/Divisions: 1.

_____ 2.
_____ 3.
_____ 4.

Transitions Between Sections: How does the author move between different time periods or themes?

Pacing

Fast-Paced Sections: (Where and why?)

Slow-Paced Sections: (Where and why?)

Pacing Effectiveness: Does the pacing serve the story? Where could it improve?

Conclusion

Closing Strategy: ☐ Reflection ☐ Forward-looking ☐ Circular (returns to opening) ☐ Present moment ☐ Wisdom/insight ☐ Other: _____

Final Sentence/Paragraph: Copy it here:

Ending Effectiveness: Rate 1-5: _____ What makes it satisfying (or not)?

PART 4: Voice and Tone Analysis

Voice Characteristics

Describe the author's voice in 3-5 adjectives: _____

Formality Level: ☐ Very formal ☐ Somewhat formal ☐ Conversational ☐ Casual ☐ Intimate

Tone Throughout: ☐ Reflective ☐ Humorous ☐ Serious ☐ Vulnerable ☐ Critical ☐ Optimistic ☐ Melancholic ☐ Analytical ☐ Other: _____

Tone Shifts: Does tone change? Where and why?

Authenticity

Feels Genuine: ☐ Very authentic ☐ Somewhat authentic ☐ Feels performed Why?

Voice Consistency: Does the voice remain consistent throughout, or does it shift?

PART 5: Content Analysis

What's Included

Time Period Covered:

Major Life Events/Experiences: 1.

2.

3.

4.

Themes/Central Ideas: 1.

2.

3.

Types of Details Included: ☐ Family background ☐ Childhood memories ☐ Education ☐ Career/work ☐ Relationships ☐ Challenges/struggles ☐ Achievements ☐ Cultural identity ☐ Values/beliefs ☐ Turning points ☐ Daily life ☐ Other: _____

What's Excluded/Limited

Notable Absences: What topics you expected to see but didn't?

Strategic Omissions: Why might the author have left these things out?

Balance

Personal vs. External Events: More focus on: ☐ Internal experience ☐ External events ☐ Balanced

Description vs. Reflection: More focus on: ☐ What happened ☐ What it means ☐ Balanced

Past vs. Present: More focus on: ☐ Past events ☐ Present understanding ☐ Balanced

PART 6: Literary Techniques

Specific Details

Examples of Effective Specific Details:

Level of Specificity: ☐ Very specific (names, dates, places) ☐ Somewhat specific ☐
Mostly general ☐ Too vague

Showing vs. Telling

Examples of “Showing”: (Scenes, dialogue, sensory details)

Examples of “Telling”: (Summary, explanation, reflection)

Balance Effectiveness: Is the show/tell balance appropriate for the purpose?

Dialogue

Dialogue Used: ☐ Extensively ☐ Moderately ☐ Sparingly ☐ Not at all

Dialogue Effectiveness:

Scene Construction

Most Vivid Scene:

What Made It Vivid: ☐ Sensory details ☐ Dialogue ☐ Action ☐ Emotion ☐ Setting
description ☐ Other: _____

Figurative Language

Metaphors/Similes Used:

Symbols or Recurring Images:

Effectiveness: Does figurative language enhance or distract?

PART 7: Perspective and Reflection

Time Perspective

Narrative Distance: ☐ Immediate (present tense/recent past) ☐ Moderate (looking back
a few years) ☐ Distant (looking back decades)

Dual Perspective: Does the author show both past self and present self perspectives? ☐
Yes, effectively ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not really

Examples of Dual Perspective:

Depth of Reflection

Level of Analysis: ☐ Deep analysis of experiences ☐ Moderate reflection ☐ Mostly description without much interpretation

Quality of Insights: Are the insights fresh and meaningful, or clichéd?

Best Insight/Observation:

Growth/Change

Does the author show transformation? ☐ Clear before/after ☐ Gradual evolution ☐ Ongoing process ☐ No clear change

How Change Is Demonstrated:

PART 8: Audience Awareness

Assumptions About Reader

What does the author assume readers know?

What does the author explain?

Cultural/Contextual References: Are they accessible to diverse readers?

Inclusivity

Does this autobiography feel accessible to: - Readers from different backgrounds? ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No - Readers of different ages? ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No - Readers with different beliefs? ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No

What makes it inclusive or exclusive?

Purpose Clarity

What is the author trying to accomplish? ☐ Share personal story ☐ Inspire readers ☐ Establish credibility ☐ Explore identity ☐ Process experience ☐ Teach lessons ☐ Other:

Does the autobiography achieve this purpose?

PART 9: Strengths and Weaknesses

Top 3 Strengths

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Areas for Improvement

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Overall Effectiveness

Rate Overall Quality: _____ / 10

Why This Rating:

PART 10: Lessons for Your Writing

What Works Well (That You Want to Emulate)

Technique 1: What they did: _____ How you'll apply it:

Technique 2: What they did: _____ How you'll apply it:

Technique 3: What they did: _____ How you'll apply it:

What Doesn't Work (That You'll Avoid)

Weakness 1: What didn't work: _____ How you'll avoid it:

Weakness 2: What didn't work: _____ How you'll avoid it:

Specific Elements to Borrow

Opening Strategy: Could you use a similar opening approach? How?

Structural Choice: Could you use a similar structure? How would you adapt it?

Voice/Tone: What aspects of voice/tone could you adopt?

Detail Type: What kinds of details worked well that you could include?

PART 11: Application to Your Project

Your Autobiography Context

Your Purpose:

Your Audience:

Your Length Target:

Your Main Theme/Focus:

Direct Applications

From this example, I will:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Adaptations Needed

This example differs from my project in these ways:

Therefore, I'll adapt by:

PART 12: Action Items

Based on this analysis, create a specific action plan:

Immediate Next Steps

1. [] Action: _____
Timeline: _____

2. [] Action: _____
Timeline: _____

3. [] Action: _____
Timeline: _____

Techniques to Practice

1. Technique: _____
Practice plan: _____

2. Technique: _____
Practice plan: _____

3. Technique: _____
Practice plan: _____

Questions to Answer for Your Own Writing

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PART 13: Comparative Analysis (Optional)

If analyzing multiple examples, use this section to compare:

Example A: _____ **Example B:** _____

Similarities:

Differences:

Which approach works better for your purposes and why?

Can you combine elements from both?

PART 14: Final Reflection

Key Takeaways

The most important lesson from analyzing this example:

One thing I'll definitely incorporate:

One thing I'll definitely avoid:

Changed Perspectives

Has analyzing this example changed your approach to your own autobiography?

New ideas generated:

Tips for Using This Worksheet

For Best Results:

1. **Read the example once for enjoyment**, noting general impressions
2. **Read again with this worksheet**, taking detailed notes
3. **Focus on lessons applicable to your project**, not every detail
4. **Compare multiple examples** to see different approaches
5. **Return to your analysis** as you write your own autobiography
6. **Share insights** with writing partners or instructors

Don't: - Get overwhelmed trying to fill every blank - Force applications that don't fit your project - Copy directly rather than adapting thoughtfully - Analyze so much you never start writing - Judge the example too harshly—focus on learning

Remember: Analysis is a tool for improvement, not an end in itself. The goal is extracting lessons that help you write YOUR autobiography more effectively.

Quick Analysis Version (15 Minutes)

Short on time? Focus on these key sections:

- ☐ Part 2: First Impressions
 - ☐ Part 3: Opening and Closing only
 - ☐ Part 5: What's Included/Excluded
 - ☐ Part 6: One technique that stands out
 - ☐ Part 9: Top 3 Strengths
 - ☐ Part 10: One lesson to apply
 - ☐ Part 11: Direct application to your project
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Extended Analysis Version (2+ Hours)

For deep dive analysis:

- Complete all sections thoroughly
 - Add examples and quotes throughout
 - Compare with 2-3 other examples
 - Create detailed action plan
 - Draft sample passages using techniques learned
 - Share analysis with writing group for discussion
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Analysis for Different Purposes

If Analyzing for Academic Assignment:

Focus on: Structure, techniques, how context shapes choices, comparison with other examples

If Analyzing for Personal Writing:

Focus on: Voice, emotional impact, what resonates with you, techniques you can realistically apply

If Analyzing for Professional Biography:

Focus on: Tone, balance of personal/professional, achievement presentation, audience assumptions

If Analyzing Published Memoir:

Focus on: Literary craft, scene construction, how the author handles time, universal themes

Follow-Up Activities

After completing this worksheet:

1. **Try the technique:** Write a 500-word passage using one technique you identified
2. **Compare approaches:** Analyze a second example and note differences
3. **Discuss with others:** Share your analysis with a writing group
4. **Revise your outline:** Incorporate lessons into your autobiography plan

5. **Create a techniques list:** Start a master list of effective techniques from all examples analyzed
6. **Write a response:** Draft your own version of a scene from the example, adapted to your story

Record Your Analyses

Keep track of all examples analyzed:

Date	Example Title/Source	Main Lesson Learned	Applied to My Writing
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Building Your Technique Library:

As you analyze multiple examples, you'll develop a personal library of techniques that work for you. Return to these analyses as you draft, revise, and polish your own autobiography.