

# English Biography Unit

Tuesday 22nd September

# Explore these biographies on Espresso:

- [https://central.espresso.co.uk/espresso/modules/e2\\_life\\_stories/index.html?source=subject-English-KS2-English-Resource%20types](https://central.espresso.co.uk/espresso/modules/e2_life_stories/index.html?source=subject-English-KS2-English-Resource%20types)

## Whilst watching think about...

- What features do they have in common?
- How are they organised?

L.O. Identify the features and structure of biographies.

## Biographies

Read the selection of biographies.

What features do they have in common?

Which techniques have been used to engage the reader?

How are they structured?

What organisational features do they have?

## Features

### Success Criteria:

Opening sentence which hooks the reader;

Opening paragraph to briefly summarise the person's life;

Recount key events in chronological order;

Cohesive devices showing passing of time;

Written in third person;

Written in past tense.      **Fact and opinion**

**In your Remote Learning Book, list the features found in each biography.**

L.O. Identify the structures and features of biographies.



### *Elizabeth Fry*

Elizabeth Gurney, born into a rich family on 21 May 1780, soon wanted to help people who were less fortunate than herself. Growing up in a large, happy, wealthy family in Norfolk, she was soon aware of the difference between her life and the lives of the local villagers.

As soon as she married, and became Elizabeth Fry, she started a school for poor children in her village and a soup kitchen to ensure that no one in the village, however poor, would ever go hungry. She vaccinated as many people as she could to ensure the area was kept free from smallpox, a deadly disease in Victorian Britain.

Apart from her natural kindness, Elizabeth Fry was inspired by her strong religious beliefs as a Quaker. Although the rest of her family were more relaxed, and wore fashionable clothes, and enjoyed music and dancing, Elizabeth became very strict, wearing simple, plain clothes and a plain white cap.

In 1813, a bitterly cold winter, Elizabeth Fry had heard about terrible conditions of women prisoners in Newgate Prison in London. She collected warm clothes and blankets from some of her rich friends and took them to the prison. But she was so shocked by the misery she saw that she decided to make it her life's work to change conditions in prisons, not just for women, and not just in Britain, but across Europe for men and women alike.

Mrs Fry believed that if prisoners had useful things to do there would be an end to drunkenness and fighting. She wanted to help the prisoners at Newgate become better people, so she organised a school, where the women were taught to read, write and sew. They could then make things which could be sold to make a little money.



The change she brought to Newgate Prison was extraordinary, and many people were impressed, including her brother-in-law who was an MP. He persuaded Parliament to change the law about prisons.

In 1819, another severe winter, Elizabeth Fry and some helpers opened a soup kitchen and warehouse for the homeless in London. She did all this work as well as bringing up eleven children of her own! She eventually died in 1845.



ELIZABETH FRY READING TO THE PRISONERS AT NEWGATE, 1823

L.O. To identify the structure and features of biographies.

## Harriet Tubman

### *Freedom fighter*



Harriet Tubman was born in 1820 in the American South, where many slaves worked on large farms and plantations. She and her family were owned by a rich farmer, and lived in a small shack, with no furniture and only a bare, dirt floor to sleep on.

Harriet was only three years old when she was first put to work carrying messages. By the age of nine she was cleaning and babysitting for her master and other rich families who lived nearby. Some of these were cruel to her, but she dared not complain in case she was sold and separated from her family.

At night, Harriet loved to listen to the adult slaves talking about freedom, and she vowed that one day she would be free. In 1849 she heard a rumour that her master was going to sell some of his slaves, so she decided to escape.

L.O. To identify the structure and features of biographies.

She headed North on a long and dangerous journey on the 'underground railway'. This was not a real railway, but a special route for escaped slaves set up by people who believed slavery was wrong. The escaping slaves were known as 'passengers' and hid in safe houses called 'stations'. The people who organised the railway and helped the slaves were called 'conductors'.

In the north of America there was no slavery, and when Harriet finally reached Pennsylvania she was free. However, she couldn't stop thinking about her family, so she decided to become a conductor on the underground railway. Over the next ten years she returned to the South nineteen times, and helped to free over 300 slaves, including her sick and aged parents.



Despite poor health, Harriet bravely devoted her life to the fight for human rights. She set up schools for ex-slaves, and homes for the sick and elderly, and worked tirelessly to ensure that freed slaves could become part of society. She became known as the 'Moses of her people' because she led so many to freedom.

When she died at the age of 93, Harriet was honoured by her country and given a full military funeral.

