

# BARTON

## LIBRARY

*Dare to know*

### Autobiographical Fiction

*Fiction that is based on events in the author's life but employs fictional characters intermixed with fictional events.*

A genre in which stories depict fictional characters and events to represent, perhaps loosely, the author's real-life thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The term was coined by writer Serge Doubrovsky in 1977. Fiction has always been a medium for poignant observations of real people, human dynamics, and societal and cultural dilemmas. Autobiographical fiction allows an author to explore the truth of these reflections, while changing character and place names, creating composite characters, and/or adjusting or enhancing the story for dramatic effect. The end result, while interweaving fact and fiction, should still be similar to the author's real life. Autobiographical fiction shares similarities to **realistic fiction**, although an autobiographical example may be fantastical in nature. Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) is perhaps the first autobiographical novel. Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847), George Henry Borrow's *Lavengro: The Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* (1851), Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (1913), Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929), Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932), Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (1945), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), William S. Burroughs's *Junkie* (1953), Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) and *The Dharma Bums* (1958), Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), and Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

Fabricated events
Embellished locations
Imaginary characters
Humor

Irony
Exaggerated conflicts and consequences
Inspired by real experiences

### Benefits of Reading

Provides readers a window into the lives and narratives of others
Offers readers different perspectives on

common circumstances
Allows readers to reflect on their own lives

### Modern Literary Examples

<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> (2007) by Alexie Sherman
<i>Cherry</i> (2018) by Nico Walker
<i>Every Cloak Rolled in Blood</i> (2022) by

James Lee Burke
<i>Fan Fiction</i> (2021) by Brent Spiner
<i>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</i> (1971) by Hunter S. Thompson

<i>Humboldt's Gift</i> (1975) by Saul Bellow
<i>In the Shadow of the Banyan</i> (2012) by Vaddey Ratner
<i>Loudmouth</i> (2020) by Robert Duncan
<i>Patterns of Childhood</i> (1976) by Christa Wolf
<i>Post Office</i> (1971) by Charles Bukowski
<i>Richard Yates</i> (2010) by Tao Lin

<i>Rubyfruit Jungle</i> (1973) by Rita Mae Brown
<i>Shantaram</i> (2003) by Gregory David Roberts
<i>Summertime</i> (2009) by J. M. Coetzee
<i>A Vision of Battlements</i> (2017) by Anthony Burgess