

Name

Date

Rewriting history

■ Read this autobiographical account by the explorer Roald Amundsen and rewrite it as a biography.

How did I happen to become an explorer? When I was 15 years old, the works of Sir John Franklin, the great British explorer, fell into my hands. I read them with a fascination which has shaped the whole course of my life. Strangely enough the thing that appealed to me most strongly was the sufferings Sir John and his men endured. A strange ambition burned within me to endure those same sufferings and I decided to be an Arctic explorer.

I began at once to fit myself for this career. At every opportunity of freedom from school, from November to April, I went out in the open, exploring the hills and mountains around Oslo, increasing my skill in traversing ice and snow and hardening my muscles for the coming great adventure. At 18 I graduated from the college, and entered the university, taking up the medical course. Then once my army training was over, I undertook the next step in my preparation for Arctic exploration. I worked up to the position of mate aboard a sailing ship that took me to the Arctic then spent two years as an officer on a voyage to Antarctica. On my return to Norway, I got my skipper's license and began making plans for my first Arctic expedition.

In 1900, I bought the ship for my first expedition, a small fishing smack from the northern part of Norway. The winter and spring of 1902–1903 I spent in preparation for my great adventure of the Northwest Passage. I besieged every possible source of funds—the learned societies and the private patrons of science. The rest of my time was spent in selecting and ordering supplies.

Despair almost overcame me at times, because we could not raise sufficient funds. The more impatient suppliers began pressing me for payment. Finally, one of my creditors demanded payment within 24 hours, with the threat that he would have me arrested for fraud. So at midnight of June 16th, 1903 in a heavy rainstorm, my crew went down to the wharf where our ship was tied, went aboard, and cast southward toward the North Sea. When dawn arose we were safely away, on a three-year quest, which would see us succeed in an enterprise that had baffled our predecessors for four centuries.



At last! The great adventure for which I have been preparing my whole life was under way! The Northwest Passage was at last to be ours!

Dear helper

Objective: Distinguish between biography and autobiography; develop the skills of biographical and autobiographical writing.

Task: Help your child pick out key facts from the autobiographical piece and rewrite it as biography, using simple modern English and editing out old-fashioned or emotive/subjective language.