Definition: **autobiography** from *Philip’s Encyclopedia*

Narrative account of a person’s life, written by the subject. The modern autobiography has become a distinctive literary form. The first important example of the genre was the 4th-century *Confessions* of Saint Augustine. The modern, introspective autobiography, dealing frankly with all aspects of life, is usually dated from the remarkable *Confessions* of Rousseau (1765-72; published 1782). See also biography.

Summary Article: **autobiography**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

A person’s own biography, or written account of his or her life, distinguished from a journal or diary by being a connected prose narrative, and distinguished from memoirs by dealing less with contemporary events and personalities. *The Boke of Margery Kempe* (c. 1432–36) is the oldest known autobiography in English.

Forms of autobiography include the **confessional**, which attempts to make a faithful description of moral weakness and the inner life, as in the influential *Confessions* of St Augustine (early 5th century) and the *Confessions* of the French philosopher and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1781); the **would-be exemplary**, seeking to promote a particular cause or outlook espoused by the writer, as in *Mein Kampf*, written in the 1920s by the future German dictator Adolf Hitler, or the autobiography of English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1873); and **military and political memoirs**, intended as contributions to history.
APA

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