

# Biographical dictionaries: content and structure

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## 1. Summary

Biographical entries can range from short statements riddled with abbreviations and numbers (See: Who's who in America) to longer essays, especially written for a particular dictionary (See: Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians).

There is no singular structure or order in which biographical entries are made. Much of the content depends on a person's profession (e.g. scientists' research vs. artists' oeuvres).

The lowest common denominators, i.e. most common statements for a biographical dictionary entry seem to be:

- Name
- Birth and death dates
- Profession

Common are also the following categories:

- Education
- Important works / research / achievements
- Selected writings
- Bibliographical references

More extensive biographical dictionaries will also contain:

- Family (parents, spouses, children)
- Honors
- Memberships
- Address

## 2. Example Entries

**The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.**

Online: <http://www.bartleby.com/65/>

Darwin, Charles Robert

1809–82, English naturalist, b. Shrewsbury; grandson of Erasmus Darwin and of Josiah Wedgwood. He firmly established the theory of organic evolution known as Darwinism. He studied medicine at Edinburgh and for the ministry at Cambridge but lost interest in both professions during the training. His interest in natural history led to his friendship with the botanist J. S. Henslow; through him came the opportunity to make a five-year cruise (1831–36)

as official naturalist aboard the *Beagle*. This started Darwin on a career of accumulating and assimilating data that resulted in the formulation of his concept of evolution. He spent the remainder of his life carefully and methodically working over the information from his copious notes and from every other available source.

Independently, A. R. Wallace had worked out a theory similar to Darwin's. Both men were exceptionally modest; they first published summaries of their ideas simultaneously in 1858. In 1859, Darwin set forth the structure of his theory and massive support for it in the superbly organized *Origin of Species*, supplemented and elaborated in his many later books, notably *The Descent of Man* (1871). He also formulated a theory of the origin of coral reefs.

See his autobiography (ed. by N. Barlow, 1958) and *Life and Letters* (ed. by F. Darwin, 1887; repr. with intro. by G. G. Simpson, 1962); letters of Darwin and Henslow, ed. by N. Barlow (1967); *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin* ed. by F. Burkhardt et al. (10 vol., 1987–97); J. Barzun, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* (rev. ed. 1958); G. Wichler, *Charles Darwin: The Founder of the Theory of Evolution and Natural Selection* (tr. 1961); A. Moorehead, *Darwin and the Beagle* (1969, rev. ed. 1979); P. Appleman, ed., *Darwin* (1970, repr. 1983); D. L. Hull, *Darwin and His Critics* (1983); R. J. Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior* (1989); R. Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (1995); D. C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (1995); N. Eldredge, *Reinventing Darwin* (1995); S. Jones, *Darwin's Ghost: "The Origin of Species" Updated* (2000); J. Browne, *Charles Darwin: Voyaging* (1995) and *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place* (2002).

**Brockhaus - Die Enzyklopädie: in 24 Bänden. F.A. Brockhaus GmbH, Leipzig – Mannheim**  
Online: <http://grp.xipolis.net/suche/>

Darwin [englisch 'da:win],

Charles Robert, britischer Naturforscher, \* The Mount (bei Shrewsbury) 12. 2. 1809, † Down House (heute zu London-Bromley) 19. 4. 1882, Enkel von 3), Vater von 4); Begründer der modernen Evolutionstheorie. Das auf Wunsch seines Vaters 1825 in Edinburgh begonnene Medizinstudium brach Darwin 1827 ab und studierte dann in Cambridge bis zum Bakkalaureat (1831) Theologie. Schon während des Theologiestudiums an naturwissenschaftlichen, insbesondere geologischen und biologischen Problemen interessiert, verschaffte ihm die Empfehlung des Cambridger Botanikprofessors J. S. Henslow (\* 1796, † 1861) einen Platz auf dem Forschungs- und Vermessungsschiff >Beagle<. Die fünfjährige Reise (1831-36) führte über die Kapverdischen Inseln an die Ost- und Westküste des südlichen Amerika, von dort über die Galápagosinseln und Tahiti nach Neuseeland, schließlich über Mauritius, Kapstadt und Sankt Helena nach England zurück. V. a. der Aufenthalt auf den Galápagosinseln mit der ihnen eigentümlichen Vogelwelt führte ihn nach eigenen Worten >hauptsächlich auf das Studium des Ursprungs der Arten ...<. Nach England zurückgekehrt, lebte Darwin zunächst in Cambridge, ab 1837 in London und ab 1842 auf seinem Landsitz Down House.

Darwins Arbeiten betreffen die Geologie, wo er der von C. Lyell vertretenen Theorie des Aktualismus gegenüber der bis dahin akzeptierten Katastrophentheorie zum Durchbruch verhalf, ferner die Botanik und Insektenkunde, die ihm die Beschreibung einer Fülle bis dahin unbekannter Arten verdanken. Diese an sich schon bedeutenden Arbeiten werden durch die Begründung und Entwicklung der modernen Evolutionstheorie (Darwinismus) in den Schatten gestellt. Eine erste Fassung seiner Evolutionstheorie trug Darwin gleichzeitig mit A. R. Wallace, der ähnliche Gedanken entwickelt hatte, erst 20 Jahre nach ihrer Konzeption der >Linnean Society< vor (1. 7. 1858; Wallace, der die Priorität Darwins voll anerkannte, prägte später den Begriff >Darwinismus<.

In der Biologie wirkten Darwins Ideen umwälzend und regten eine Fülle von einschlägigen Untersuchungen an. Die Evolutionstheorie steht heute wie damals im Mittelpunkt der Biologie. Darwins spätere Werke bilden fast durchgängig eine weitere Stützung der Evolutionslehre. Seine Theorie hat weit über die Biologie hinaus befruchtend gewirkt und auf geistesgeschichtlichem Gebiet bis in die Politik hinein starke Wirkungen ausgeübt.

**Werke:**

Voyage of a naturalist round the world (1846; deutsch Reise um die Welt, 1831-36)

On the origin of species by means of natural selection, or ... (1859; deutsch Die Entstehung der Arten durch natürliche Zuchtwahl)

The descent of man, and selection in relation to sex, 2 Bände (1871; deutsch Die Abstammung des Menschen und die geschlechtliche Zuchtwahl)

**Sekundärliteratur:**

D. L. Hull: Darwin and his critics. The reception of Darwin's theory of evolution by the scientific community (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973, Nachdruck Chicago, Illinois, 1983)

S. Schmitz: C. Darwin. Leben, Werk, Wirkung (1983)

R. W. Clark: C. Darwin (aus dem Englischen, 1985)

A. und K. Steinmüller: C. Darwin. Vom Käfersammler zum Naturforscher ( <sup>3</sup> 1990)

E. Mayr: ... und Darwin hat doch recht. Charles Darwin, seine Lehre und die moderne Evolutionstheorie ( <sup>2</sup> 1994)

J. Heimleben: C. Darwin (53.-55. Tausend 1996)

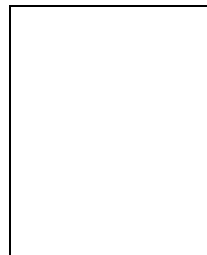
**Encyclopedia Britannica**

Online: <http://search.eb.com/>

George Washington

born February 22 [February 11, Old Style], 1732 , Westmoreland county, Virginia [U.S.]

died December 14, 1799 , Mount Vernon



George Washington, oil painting by Gilbert Stuart, c. 1796; in the White House. *Scala/Art Resource*

*byname Father of His Country* American general and commander in chief of the colonial armies in the American Revolution (1775–83) and subsequently first president of the United States (1789–97).

Washington's father, Augustine Washington, had gone to school in England, had tasted seafaring life, and then settled down to manage his growing Virginia estates. His mother was Mary Ball, whom Augustine, a widower, had married early the previous year. Washington's paternal lineage had some distinction; an early forebear was described as "gentleman," Henry VIII later gave the family lands, and its members held various offices. But family fortunes fell with the Puritan revolution in England, and John Washington, grandfather of Augustine, migrated in 1657 to Virginia. The ancestral home at Sulgrave, Northamptonshire, is maintained as a Washington memorial. Little definite information exists on any of the line until Augustine. He was an energetic, ambitious man who acquired much land, built mills, took an interest in opening iron mines, and sent his two oldest sons to England for schooling. By his first wife, Jane Butler, he had four children; by his second wife, Mary Ball, he had six. Augustine died April 12, 1743.

Contents of this article:

Introduction

- Childhood and youth
- Prerevolutionary military and political career
  - Early military career
  - Marriage and plantation life
  - Prerevolutionary politics
- Revolutionary leadership
  - Head of the colonial forces
  - The Trenton-Princeton campaign
- Presidency
  - Postrevolutionary politics
  - The Washington administration
  - Retirement
- Additional reading
  - Appearance
  - Washington's writings
  - Biographies
  - Presidency and political career
  - Military career
  - Special topics

**Who's who in America. Chicago: A.N. Marquis, c1899-. 2003.**

Garfield, Eugene, information scientist, author, publisher; b. N.Y.C., Sept. 16, 1925; s. Ernest and Edith (Wolf) Garofano; m. Faye Byron, 1945 (div.); 1 child, Stefan; m. Winifred Koziolk, 1955 (div.); children: Laura, Joshua, Thea; m. Catherine Stout, 1983; 1 child, Alexander Merton. BS, Columbia U., 1949, MS, 1954; PhD, U. Pa., 1961, Vrije U., Brussels, 1988; DHL (hon.), SUNY, Albany 1990; DL (hon.), Thomas Jefferson U., 1991; MD (hon.), Università Di Roma Tor Vergata, 1994, Charles U. Prague, 1995. Rsch. chemist Evans R&D Corp., 1949-50; chemist Columbia U., 1950-51; mem. staff machine index project Johns Hopkins U., 1951-53; pres. Eugene Garfield Assocs., Phila., 1954-60; chmn., founder Inst. Sci. Info., 1960-93, chmn. emeritus, 1994-; pub., owner the Scientist 1986-. Adj. prof. info. sci. U. Pa., 1974, mem. libr. bd. overseers; coun. mem. Rockefeller U., 1978-. Creator sci. info. svc. Current Contents, 1956; bi-weekly columnist Current Contents in Current Contents, 1956-, Commentary in The Scientist, 1986-; author Essays of an Information Scientist, 15 vols., 1962-93 (Book of Yr. Am. Soc. Info. Sci. 1977), Citation Indexing: Its Theory and Application in Science, Technology and Humanities, 1979 ..., developer Sci. Citation Index, 1961-, Index Chemicus, 1960- ... Honors ... Address

**A Biographical dictionary of Irish writers / [edited by] Anne M. Brady and Brian Cleve. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.**

Jordan, Neil, b. Sligo 1951. Ed. UCD (University College Dublin). Worked as labourer and teacher. Began writing career with short stories, *Night in Tunisia and other Stories*, Dublin 1976, London 1979 (winner of Guardian Fiction Prize), repub. Dingle 1982, and two novels, *The Past*, 1980, and *The Dream of a Beast*, 1983. Turned to the cinema with screen-plays *Travellers*, 1980, and *Angel* (also directed), 1983. *Company of Wolves*, 1984, adapted from the story by English novelist Angela Carter, won him 'Best Director' in the film section of British Critics Circle 1984.

## Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians

Online: <http://www.grovemusic.com/index.html>

(Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(*b* Salzburg, 27 Jan 1756; *d* Vienna, 5 Dec 1791 ). Austrian composer, son of (1) Leopold Mozart. His style essentially represents a synthesis of many different elements, which coalesced in his Viennese years, from 1781 on, into an idiom now regarded as a peak of Viennese Classicism. The mature music, distinguished by its melodic beauty, its formal elegance and its richness of harmony and texture, is deeply coloured by Italian opera though also rooted in Austrian and south German instrumental traditions. Unlike Haydn, his senior by 24 years, and Beethoven, his junior by 15, he excelled in every medium current in his time. He may thus be regarded as the most universal composer in the history of Western music.

1. Ancestry and early childhood.
2. Travels, 1763–73.
3. Salzburg, 1773–80.
4. The break with Salzburg and the early Viennese years, 1780–83.
5. Vienna, 1784–8.
6. The final years.
7. Early works.
8. Works, 1772–81.
9. Works, 1781–8.
10. Works, 1789–91.
11. Aftermath: reception and scholarship.

WORKS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

## American men & women of science. Published: New York: R.R. Bowker, c1989-

Gray, Constance Helen, ANATOMY. Personal Data: b Medway, Mass, February 27, 1926; c 2. Education: Univ. Mass, BS, 1947; Univ. Hawaii, MS 1951; Univ. Calif, Berkeley, PhD(anat), 1974. Professional Experience: RETIRED; from asst prof to prof biol, Calif Polytech State Univ, 1985-1988; lectr, Calif Polytech State Univ, 1976-1978; Lectr anat, Univ Calif, Berkeley, 1974-1976. Memberships: Soc Neurosci; AAAS; Am Pub Health Asn. Research Statement & Publications: Neuropathology; cancer education. Mailing Address: 2630 Bonifacio Dr, Tracy, CA 95376

## 3. Content Descriptions

### Encyclopedia Americana

Online: <http://go.grolier.com/uni.html>

Short summary

Life

Work

Influence

## Bibliography

**American writers; a collection of literary biographies. Leonard Unger, editor in chief. New York: Scribner [1974]-**

Introduction  
Childhood and education  
The poet at work  
Criticism  
Bibliography

**A critical dictionary of English literature and British and American authors living and deceased, from the earliest accounts to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Containing over forty-six thousand articles (authors), with forty indexes of subjects. By S. Austin Allibone. Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1874-1892.**

Name  
Profession  
Works

**The International authors and writers who's who. Cambridge, England: International Biographical Centre, c1986-**

Grass, Guenter (Wilhelm); b. 16 Oct 1927, Danzig, Germany (now Gdansk, Poland). Author; Dramatist; Poet; Artist. m. (1) Anna Schwartz, 1954, divorced 1978, 3 s., 1 d., (2) Ute Grunert, 1979. Education: ... Publications: ... Honours:... Memberships: ... Address: ...

**Dictionary of American library biography / editorial board, George S. Bobinski, Jesse Hauk Shera, Bohdan S. Wynar ; edited by Bohdan S. Wynar. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1978.**

Longer essays  
Name (years)  
Short biography  
Library life / achievements  
Works

**Who was who in the theatre, 1912-1976: a biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, directors, playwrights, and producers of the English-speaking theatre / compiled from Who's who in the theatre, volumes 1-15 (1912 1972). Detroit: Gale Research Co., c1978.**

Name  
Profession  
Birth and death dates  
Education  
Spouses  
Roles  
Favorite part

Recreations  
Clubs

**Dictionary of women artists / editor, Delia Gaze; picture editors, Maja Mihajlovic, Leanda Shrimpton. London; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997.**

Dewing, Maria Oakley  
American Painter, 1845-1927  
Short biographical notice (birth, education, spouses, death)  
Principal exhibitions  
Selected writings  
Bibliography  
Essay on important works

**Contemporary artists / editor[s], Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast ; advisers, Jean-Christophe Ammann ... [et al.]. Detroit: St. James Press, c2002.**

Name  
Nationality:  
Born:  
Education:  
Career:  
Awards:  
Address:  
Selected Individual Exhibitions  
Selected Group Exhibitions  
Collections  
Publications  
Articles about artist  
Essay about works

**The biographical dictionary of scientists. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.**

Bessemer, Henry (1813-1898)  
Discipline and most important invention  
Biography with work  
Honors and fellowships  
Further reading

**Biographical dictionary of geography / Robert P. Larkin and Gary L. Peters. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993.**

Name  
Birth  
Education  
Career  
Important work  
Death  
Selected bibliography

Chronology  
References

**Biographical dictionary of Chinese women / editors-in-chief, Lily Xiao Hong Lee and A.D. Stefanowska; assisted by Sue Wiles. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, c1998-**

Name, birth date, location, profession  
Early childhood  
Education  
Life and work  
Bibliography

**Dictionary of American biography, under the auspices of the American council of learned societies. New York, C. Scribner's sons, 1928-58.**

Name, (birth-death)  
Early childhood  
Education  
Life and important works  
Bibliography

**Australian dictionary of biography. Melbourne University Press; London, New York, Cambridge University Press [1966]-**

Name (birth-death)  
Profession  
Childhood, family  
Education  
Life and work  
Bibliography