Biography, Autobiography & Memoir

In the simplest terms a biography is an account of the series of events that make up a person's life as told by another person. A work is considered biographical if it covers the entirety of a person's life. An autobiography also covers the entirety of a person's life, but it is written by that same person. A memoir is a form of autobiography which only covers the highlights of a person’s life, a particular meaningful event or a short time span. The one thing that all three types of writing should have in common is a compelling subject. Everyone has a story to tell and even the most “ordinary” person can become extraordinary in the hands of a skilled author.


Josephine Tasher de la Pagerie, rose from a precarious existence on the island of Martinique to become the wife of Napoleon and empress of France. This book is an intimate portrait of a morally flawed and shallow woman. Readers will be hard pressed to garner much sympathy for Josephine who brings many of her troubles on herself. Infidelity, avarice, and dishonesty dominated her life as did two disastrous marriages. This book is not for scholars looking for a groundbreaking work on Josephine. Instead it will appeal to history buffs interested in a fascinating character who lived and survived during very troubled times.


This book is hilarious. Laugh out loud funny! Kathy begins her autobiography with her childhood. Raised in an Irish Catholic family in suburban Illinois, Kathy relates the crazy antics of her dysfunctional upbringing in a way that only she can do. She also reveals her shocking and sad relationship with her addict brother. Fast forward to 2009, Kathy's book takes you on a fun, honest, relatable trip. I didn't want the book to end. From laughs to tears, she does not disappoint.


Who hasn't asked themselves "What am I doing?, Where am I going?" Who hasn't gotten stuck on the couch, trying to experience life vis-à-vis the television? Meet Donald Miller who early in his life writes a critically acclaimed memoir and is now suffering writer's block. Enter two film makers from Nashville who want to turn his life into a movie. Together they rewrite “the story” of Donald Miller and Mr. Miller discovers he is not all that happy with his story...come along for the stories and discoveries he makes along the way.


After a head-on collision with a truck on a narrow bridge, Don Piper claims to have died and gone to heaven. Ninety minutes later he “came back to earth.” He makes no attempt to diminish the grueling pain and suffering he endured during his recovery and his dismay at being returned from his heavenly paradise. His vision of heaven involved luminous gates, streets paved with gold, reunion with relatives and an inexpressible joy. Although his story will certainly inspire those recovering from serious injuries and provide reassurance to Christians who've lost a loved one, this skeptic thinks his description of life after death reads like a Christian children's storybook.

Kevin Richardson chronicles his life and career as a lion keeper and animal behaviorist at the South African Lion Park and the Kingdom of the White Lion Sanctuaries. Richardson, who became an overnight sensation through his YouTube videos which starred him and his pride, shares how he ended up working at the parks. Further, he discusses his unique methods on how he develops his personal bonds with animals. It is a wonderful read.


Daniel Tammet had a difficult childhood – he cried constantly as a baby, had epilepsy as a child, and didn’t relate well to other people. His parents were amazingly supportive of him, however, and he grew up in a household that both indulged his differences and exposed him to experiences that forced him out of his autistic shell. As an adult, Daniel learned that he has Asperger’s syndrome, a high-functioning version of autism. He also has synesthesia, a cross-wiring of the senses that causes him to experience numbers, letters, and other abstract concepts as colors, shapes, sounds, and feelings. To Daniel, Wednesdays are blue, and the number five is “a clap of thunder or the sound of waves crashing against rocks.” Daniel might not be able to remember faces, but he can calculate huge sums by following a visual landscape that numbers form in his mind. Unlike many savants, Daniel is able to describe vividly and articulately what his mind does that is so unique. Also recommended is Tammet’s subsequent book, *Embracing the Wide Sky*, which explores the workings of the brain.


What happens when your fiancé dumps you days before the wedding when everything’s been paid for and the guests are on their way? You have a fabulous party and then take your brother on the honeymoon. Franz and Kurt Wisner reconnected so well they turned the honeymoon into a two year trip. Travel with them on their journey around the world to 53 countries.