

WRITING A BIOGRAPHY

1 Look at these facts taken from a biography. Combine the sentences to make one sentence, using the words given

a) Robert Capa was a famous photojournalist. **Robert Capa, the...**

He was also the founder of Magnum Photos.

He was born in Budapest in 1913.

b) He was a very talented photographer. **A talented...**

He was self taught.

He started working for a publishing house when he was just 18.

At the same time he studied journalism at a Berlin university.

c) There was much political upheaval in the 1930s. **During the 1930s...**

Many of the student companions became involved.

Capa was also very much involved.

d) Capa had to leave Hungary as a result. **Consequently....**

Later he had to leave Berlin too.

He went to live in Paris.

2. Quickly read the **rest of the autobiography**. Match paragraphs A-D to the descriptions.

- an evaluation of his achievements** **his continuing success**
 the end of his career **how he built his reputation**

Robert Capa	
photographer	
A	DURING HIS FIRST years in Paris, Capa worked mainly on local photo stories. It was not until 1939 that he got his big break. He was sent to cover the Spanish Civil War and, as a result, his work started to appear regularly in top magazines and newspapers. It was his picture of Loyalist soldier falling to his death which brought him international repute and became a powerful symbol of war.
B	In 1939, shortly after the Spanish Civil War, Capa worked in New York for a while. However, he quickly returned to Europe on the outbreak of World War II and stayed there for six years. His photographs of the Normandy invasion became some of the most memorable war photos in history, and he received the Medal of Freedom Citation for his work.
C	Capa's job as a war photographer often put him in great personal danger, but despite the risks his motto was always: 'If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough'. However, on 25 May 1954, Capa's luck ran out. He was working on an assignment in French Indochina when he stepped on a land mine. He was killed instantly.
D	Today Robert Capa is considered one of the finest war photographers of all time. He was an exceptional photojournalist who used his camera to express and record the horror of the events around him. Not surprisingly Capa hated war, especially his often passive role in it. 'It's not always easy to stand aside and be unable to do anything except record the sufferings around one', he said

3 Read the biography again and answer the questions.

a) How did Robert Capa get his 'big break'?

b) What do you think he was trying to achieve through his pictures? How did he feel about his work?

c) Did any of the facts about his life surprise you? What do you think was the most interesting fact?

d) How does the writer use direct quotations? What effects do they have?

e) Do you think Robert Capa was a brave man? Would you describe him as a 'hero'?

4 When you write a biography it is useful to follow this plan:

- **Paragraph 1: The early years**
- **Paragraph 2: How he/she built his/her career and reputation**
- **Paragraph 3: His/her continuing success/bad luck**
- **Paragraph 4: The evaluation of his/her achievements**