Literary Genre Bibliography: Biography

* All summaries are taken from the publisher.

Grades K-3


**Summary:** Tells the life and history of George Washington Carver, from a baby born into slavery to a celebrated botanist, scientist, and inventor.

**Curricular use:** This book would work well with the Growing Things (plant) science kits as well as Black History Month. It would also work for lessons on mindset and perseverance. Illustrations are by Frank Morrison.


**Summary:** The only authorized picture book biography of Mister Rogers, written and illustrated by Caldecott Medalist Matthew Cordell. How was Mister Rogers' Neighborhood created, and who was the man that started it all? This moving and informative picture book explores the history of this acclaimed television show and its inspiring creator in an accessible way for children. Mister Rogers' Neighborhood was groundbreaking in its own quiet, generous way. It introduced art, professions, food and even highlighted difficult subjects, like losing a loved one and divorce. This information was delivered both by live performers, like Fred Rogers himself and through a lively cast of puppets who lived in the land of make believe. Backmatter includes a short biography of Fred Rogers as well as exclusively published archival photos provided by Fred Rogers Productions, and an essay from the author. Available shortly after the release of the Mister Rogers' film, A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood starring Tom Hanks, this is the perfect picture book for all who appreciate the power and beauty of Fred's mission. Thoroughly illustrated with lively and captivating drawings, by Caldecott-winning author and illustrator Matthew Cordell, Hello, Neighbor! captures the spirit of the beloved television show.

**Curricular use:** Another great book for teaching SEL, this book would be good for Morning Meetings and as a jumping off point for further research about Mr. Rogers. There was another Fred Rogers book published in 2020, but I liked this one better. If you need more than one, look for Fred's big feelings: the life and legacy of Mister Rogers by Renauld, Laura.


**Summary:** A picture book biography sharing the true story of the nation's oldest student, Mary Walker, who learned to read at the age of 116.

**Curricular use:** This book would be good for lessons on perseverance as well as Women's History Month or Black History Month.
Grades 4-6:


**Summary:** Telling the inspiring human story behind the creation of the Paralympics, this young reader's biography artfully combines archival photos, full-color illustrations, and a riveting narrative to honor the life of Ludwig Guttmann; whose work profoundly changed so many lives. Dedicating his life to helping patients labeled “incurables,” Ludwig Guttmann fought for the rights of paraplegics to live a full life. The young doctor believed and eventually proved that physical movement is key to healing, a discovery that led him to create the first Paralympic Games. Told with moving text and lively illustrations, and featuring the life stories of athletes from the Paralympic Games Ludwig helped create, this story of the man who saved lives through sports will inspire readers of all backgrounds.

**Curricular use:** This book would be good for lessons on inclusion or if a classmate was paraplegic it would help teach acceptance. This was my favorite of the biographies I read! It may not get found on the shelf, but it is a great read!


**Summary:** John Hancock: extravagant, generous, and a certified dandy, with beautiful penmanship and a taste for trendsetting. Samuel Adams: sensible, vigilant, and a superb strategist, with fierce political reasoning and relentless dedication to his cause. Together, Hancock and Adams became quite the royal pain. Using their distinct skills and influence to spur on support for American independence, these two pushed the public to rebel against England with passion and persuasion. Their disobedience to the crown led to the battles of Lexington and Concord, and ultimately to the Revolutionary War. The team behind Thomas Paine and the Dangerous Word reunites for another tale of the journey toward American independence in this playful-yet-purposeful picture book, full of primary sources.

**Curricular use:** This book has already been quite popular at Van Allen. I think those students intrigued by Hamilton would enjoy this book and it would be a nice addition to Revolutionary War studies.


**Summary:** From acclaimed author and illustrator pairing comes a beautiful picture book biography about the Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin and how she fought for respect throughout her life.

Aretha Franklin is the Queen of Soul, a legend. But before she became a star, she was a shy little girl with a voice so powerful it made people jump up, sway, and hum along.

Raised in a house full of talking and singing, Aretha learned the values that would carry her through life—from her church choir in Detroit to stages across the world. When she moved to New York City to start her career, it took years of hard work before
she had a hit song. In the turbulent 1960s, she sang about "Respect" and refused to perform before segregated audiences. The first woman inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Aretha always remembered who she was and where she came from.

In this stirring biography of a true artistic and social icon, award-winning creators Katheryn Russell-Brown and Laura Freeman show young readers how Aretha's talent, intelligence, and perseverance made her a star who will shine on for generations to come.

**Curricular use:** This book would fit right in with our lessons about the 1960s. Aspiring performers will enjoy this book. It will also work well for Black History and Women’s History Months.


**Summary:** A stunning picture book about Mary "Mother" Jones and the 100 children who marched from Philadelphia to New York in a fiery protest against child labor.

Here's the inspiring story of the woman who raised her voice and fist to protect kids' childhoods and futures-- and changed America forever. Mother Jones is MAD, and she wants you to be MAD TOO, and stand up for what's right! Told in first-person, New York Times bestselling author, Jonah Winter, and acclaimed illustrator, Nancy Carpenter, share the incredible story of Mother Jones, an Irish immigrant who was essential in the fight to create child labor laws. Well into her sixties, Mother Jones had finally had enough of children working long hours in dangerous factory jobs, and decided she was going to do something about it. The powerful protests she organized earned her the name "the most dangerous woman in America." And in the Children's Crusade of 1903, she led one hundred boys and girls on a glorious march from Philadelphia right to the front door of President Theodore Roosevelt's Long Island home.

Open this beautiful and inspiring picture book to learn more about this feminist icon and how she inspired thousands to make change.

**Curricular use:** You could definitely pair this book with the Let the Children March or other Children's March information to show that history does indeed repeat itself. It would also work well for Women's History Month.

**Titles I didn’t have a chance to review, but were on my list:**


