

Name _____ Date _____

Practice Using Lively Language

Why are some biographies more exciting to read than others? It's in the language the writer uses. Biographies with lots of details are more interesting to read. Details add colorful "brushstrokes" of information about the events of a person's life.

1. Read the following passages about Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's childhood on a cattle ranch in the Southwest. Think about which passage you like best?

During her first years on the isolated ranch, Sandra had no other children to play with, but she found plenty of things to entertain her. There was a world of deserts and canyons to explore and all sorts of wild animals to get to know. Many of the creatures of the desert became Sandra's pets. Sandra recalled: "One day my father was on a roundup and he found a tiny baby bobcat that had been abandoned by its mother. He put it in his jacket and brought it home. We kept him for years, and he grew up to be a great big gray cat." from *Sandra Day O'Connor* by Norman Macht, Chelsea House Publishers, 1992.

During her childhood on the ranch, Sandra played by herself because there were no other children to play with. She explored the land and got to know the animals that lived there. Once, her father found a bobcat and brought him home. It became a pet.

The first selection has many details, making it more interesting than the second one. They tell more about what is happening, who the people are, and what the bobcat was.

2. **Using Colorful Quotes** Look at the first passage from the Sandra Day O'Connor biography. Notice that many of the interesting details come from a quote from Sandra herself. The quote not only gives you a picture of the baby bobcat but tells you about Sandra's father. What details show this?

3. **Using Adjectives** Look at the first selection. Can you find all the adjectives? List them here.

4. How do they help make the biography more interesting to read? _____

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Writing Warm-up: From Your Own Life

Now practice writing a biography by using the subject you know best—yourself! Think about one or two people who have been important to you. Perhaps it was someone who gave you a gift that opened new worlds to you. Or it might have been someone you admire and hope to be like someday.

Use the web below to organize your thoughts. Write your name in the center. Write the names of people who have been important to you in the circles. (You can add more circles if you like.) Take notes around the circles. Then use your notes to write about these people's influence on your life.

