

## Biography H 1330

**BACKGROUND:** *A work about an individual person may be either biographical, critical, or both. Biographical works focus on the personal aspects of the individual's life, critical works on the individual's professional, intellectual, or artistic achievements. The provisions in this instruction sheet do not apply to works that are predominantly critical, only to works that are predominantly biographical and in narrative form. For provisions dealing with other forms of material that are sometimes biographical in nature, such as correspondence, diaries, and interviews, see the appropriate specific instruction sheet, for example, H 1480, H 1538, H 1678. For classification of biography, see F 275 (General); F 605, sec. 1 (Government officials); and F 632 (Literary authors writing in more than one language).*

**DEFINITIONS:** The following definitions apply for purposes of this instruction sheet:

*Biography (including Autobiography):* A narrative work more than 50% of which recounts the personal aspects of the life of one or more individuals. (In the case of historical figures, particularly those from the distant past, where little is known of the personal details of their lives, the limitation of the definition to "personal aspects" does not apply.) **Personal aspects** include such details as the individual's early years, education, marriage and other personal relationships, personal habits and personality, family life, travels, personal experiences and tragedies, last years and death, etc. **Life** means a relatively large portion of the individual's life, not just a single brief incident.

*Collective biography:* A biography of two or more individuals.

*Individual biography:* A biography of one person.

*Partial biography:* A work that includes some, but less than 50%, biographical material.

**1. General rule.** Assign an appropriate combination of the following types of headings to a biography:

- the name heading(s) for the person(s) [*no more than four*]
- if appropriate, a "class of persons" heading with the free-floating form subdivision **–Biography**
- if appropriate, heading(s) to bring out the person's association with a place or organization, or involvement with a specific event
- topical headings, as appropriate for the work

Each of these headings is discussed specifically in sections 1.a.-1.d., below.

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### 1. General rule. (Continued)

**a. Name heading for the person.** Assign the heading as established in RDA form in the name authority file. Do not subdivide the name by **–Biography**.

*Exception: --Biography has been established and may be used under the names of four individuals: Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616; Muhammad, Prophet, -632; Jesus Christ; and Mary, Blessed Virgin, Saint. Do not submit a proposal to establish --Biography under the name of any other individual.*

If the biography focuses on a specific aspect of the person's life subdivide the name heading using the appropriate topical subdivision from H 1110, for example, **–Childhood and youth**, **–Health**, **–Death and burial**. Assign this heading as the first heading.

**Literary authors.** For literary authors who write under various names and have more than one name heading, use the heading that serves as the "base heading" for the author, that is, the heading having the complete set of references for the author. Free-floating use of the subdivision **–Biography** after headings for individual literary authors was discontinued in 1998. The subdivision is established under **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616**, and continues to be used under that heading as an exceptional practice.

**Official name heading vs. personal name heading.** For individuals who have both an official name heading and a personal name heading, use the personal name heading. For example, use **Reagan, Ronald** rather than **United States. President (1981-1989 : Reagan)**.

**Collective biography.** If the work is about two, three, or four persons, assign the name heading for each. If the work is about more than four persons, omit the name headings.

**b. [Class of persons]–Biography.** This heading designates the group of people to which the biographee belongs, as discussed in the work being cataloged, for example, **Musicians, Heads of state, Football coaches, Italy–Kings and rulers**, etc.

*Note: This heading is assigned to individual biographies primarily for the benefit of public library users who are seeking biographies of a particular type of person rather than a particular individual. The heading should be selected with that in mind. If the biographee belongs to no discernable class of persons of the type judged likely to be sought by the typical public library user, it may be omitted.*

1. *General rule.*

*b. [Class of persons]-Biography. (Continued)*

**Persons with multifaceted lives or careers.** For a biography that discusses the entire life of a person, select the single heading that best encompasses his or her career or lifelong pursuits. In order to achieve consistency, check the bibliographic database first to determine the heading that has been used on other biographies of the same person. If a single heading cannot adequately encompass the person's career or lifelong pursuits, assign more than one heading, provided that the work being cataloged discusses the various aspects of the person's life designated by the headings assigned. If the work focuses on only one facet, assign only that one heading. For example, if a work discusses Albert Schweitzer's experiences only as a medical missionary, assign a heading for only that aspect of his career.

**Headings qualified by sex or ethnic group.** Assign headings that specify the sex or ethnic group of the class of persons, such as **Women architects**, **African American lawyers**, etc., if that is a significant aspect of the work. When assigning this heading, assign it *in addition to the unqualified heading for the class of persons*. *Examples:*

*Title: "Just make them beautiful" : the many worlds of a designing woman / by Helen Rose.*

600 10 \$a Rose, Helen.  
 650 #0 \$a Costume designers \$z California \$z Los Angeles \$v Biography.  
 650 #0 \$a Women costume designers \$z California \$z Los Angeles \$v Biography.

*Title: Black in Selma : the uncommon life of J.L. Chestnut, Jr.*

600 10 \$a Chestnut, J. L.  
 650 #0 \$a Lawyers \$z Alabama \$v Biography.  
 650 #0 \$a African American lawyers \$z Alabama \$v Biography.

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### 1. General rule.

#### *b. [Class of persons]–Biography. (Continued)*

**Collective biography with no class of persons.** If a collective biography encompasses a group of people for which a heading representing a class of persons does not exist and cannot be formulated, establish the subdivision **–Biography** under the appropriate topical heading. For example, establish **Art–Biography** for a collective biography of artists, dealers, collectors, museum personnel, etc.

**c. Headings for place, organization, or event.** Assign headings of this type, with the subdivision **–Biography**, in addition to the class of persons heading described above, if that is a significant aspect of the work. *Examples:*

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651 #0 $a Ohio $v Biography.
610 10 $a United States. $b Department of Agriculture
      $x Officials and employees $v Biography.
650 #0 $a World War, 1939–1945 $v Biography.
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**d. Topical headings.** Assign headings for other topics discussed in the work, using appropriate subject headings without biographical subdivisions.

### 2. Special situations.

**a. Founders of major religions.** Assign no heading to designate the class of persons.

**b. Animals and pets.** See H 1720, sec. 3.

**c. Spouses of famous people.** For a biographical work about a famous person's spouse who is or was active in a particular field, assign the heading for the class of persons that designates the spouse's own field. If the spouse has no special career of his or her own, and the work describes personal experiences as the spouse of a more famous person and his or her career, assign the heading for the specific category of spouses, for example, **Ambassadors' spouses, Entertainers' spouses**, etc., as the "class of persons" heading. If appropriate, also assign headings for the name of the more famous person and the class of persons to which he or she belongs.

**d. Immigrants.** See H 1581, sec. 3.c.

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**3. *Partial biography.*** To works about an individual person that are less than 50% biographical, assign only the name of the person, subdivided if appropriate by subdivisions listed in H 1110, and the appropriate topical headings. Do not assign headings to designate the class of persons, or the individual's sex, ethnic group, association with a place, organization, etc. Examples of this type of work are critical works about individual artists, literary authors, philosophers, theologians, etc., as well as works about the life and times of individual statesmen or rulers in which there is more about the history of the time than the life of the ruler.