

The Story of My Life

WORKSHEET A

1. Quickly read through the story to guess the identity of the speaker. Then answer the questions on Worksheet B to check your guess.

“I lived a long time ago, but I had a very exciting life, you know. I was the James Bond of the eighteenth century. In fact, his character must have been based on me. Let me tell you something about myself.

I was born in Venice in 1725. My father, Gaetano, and my mother, Zanetta, were actors, which is probably why I am so theatrical. They spent their lives travelling around Europe and left me in the care of my grandmother. When I was nine, I was sent to study under Dr. Gozzi, in Padua. I was an excellent student and received my doctorate at just seventeen years old. Naturally, I thought I would have a career in the Church, but destiny had other plans for me. My three weaknesses: wine, women and gambling, were a constant source of trouble for me. A scandal forced me to leave Rome, where I was working as a secretary for Cardinal Acquaviva.

I travelled around Italy, finally settling back in Venice in 1764. I worked for a while as a violinist in the San Samuele Theatre and during that time I made friends with some very powerful people.

In 1749, I was busy enjoying the good life when I met the love of my life. She was a Frenchwoman called Henriette. The months we spent together were the happiest days of my life, and when she left me to return to France she took my heart with her.

I had to make a fresh start so I went to Lyons, where I became a Freemason. I met and made friends with some more powerful people. I was under suspicion from the Inquisition for my conduct and so had to travel very frequently and I needed places to stay. I moved to Paris, then Dresden, Prague, Vienna, and once again back to Venice. I did some writing and some translation but in 1755 my luck ran out. I was arrested and denounced as a magician. It sounds rather comical now but it wasn't at the time; I was sentenced to five years in prison, although I managed to escape after one year and fled to Paris. Once there, I introduced the Lottery, a move that made me a millionaire. However, I was a gambler and when I had spent all of my money, I borrowed some from other people. When they wanted it back, I ran away to England, Germany and then Spain.

In 1787 I met Mozart in Prague and attended the first performance of the opera *Don Giovanni*, which was marvellous. Of course, by this time I was an old man working as a librarian in the Bohemian castle of Dux (now in the Czech Republic), with just my memories to keep me company until my death in 1798.

You probably aren't interested to know that I translated Homer's *Iliad* into Italian verse, or that I wrote a number of other literary works. No, you're no doubt more interested in my love life; everyone else is. Well, I wrote all about that in my autobiography, which is called *The Story of My Life*. Do you have any idea who I am yet? ”

'Who am I' crossword

2. Answer the questions. Write the answers in the crossword to reveal my name.

1. My father's name (6)
2. Where I came from (6)
3. My mother's name (7)
4. I was convinced that I would have a career in the _____ (6)
5. The profession of my parents (6)
6. Who did I meet in Prague? (6)
7. I should have spent five years here but I only stayed for one (6)
8. This forced me to leave Rome (7)
9. I translated this famous story from Greek into Italian (5)
10. I became one of these in Lyons (9)
11. The love of my life was from this country (6)
12. What was the name of my true love? (9)
13. What did I start up in Paris? (7)
14. Which musical instrument did I play? (6)
15. What was my last job? (9)

