

A Note to Our Readers

Current Biography, which is published every other month, presents articles on people who are prominent in the news—in popular culture, sports, science and technology, national and international affairs, business, and the visual and performing arts. The profiles in this periodical are objective rather than authorized, and the sources of information are newspapers, magazines, books, the Internet and, in some cases, the biographees themselves. Each subject's preferred or professional name form is given in the heading of the article, with the full name supplied in the article itself. The heading of each profile includes the pronunciation of the name if it is unusual, date of birth if it is obtainable, and occupation. The article is supplemented by a list of selected references.

At the end of the year, all profiles published in the monthly issues will be cumulated alphabetically and printed in a single volume, *Current Biography Yearbook 2025*.

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Hilary Knight

Born: July 12, 1989

Occupation: Hockey player

“I live for that uneasy feeling in your stomach, where the hair on the back of your neck stands up,” hockey player Hilary Knight told *People* magazine (25 Jan. 2022). “There’s nothing like it. It’s like that adrenaline rush that it’s about to be go-time and the anticipation of a puck drop, and that’s when I’m happiest.” Indeed, Knight had many opportunities to experience that unique feeling over the course of her hockey career, which by the early 2020s included four seasons and two championships with the University of Wisconsin Badgers, several seasons of professional play, and numerous World Championship victories as a member of the US

women’s national hockey team. Having made her Olympic debut at the Vancouver Games in 2010, Knight earned two silver medals with the US women’s national team before helping capture the team’s first Olympic gold in twenty years at the 2018 Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. “It’s definitely helped to elevate our platform,” she explained to Lucas Aykroyd in an interview for the website of the 2018 Olympics (15 Aug. 2018) about the long-term ramifications of her team’s gold medal win. “A lot of the opportunities that we should be getting, just through



Hilary Knight. Photo via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

our play, we don't necessarily get. Now we're getting them. People want to hear from you and hear from our team. It's huge." Through her work with organizations such as the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association and her further achievements as a member of the national team—including a third silver-medal finish at the Olympics in 2022—Knight continued to work to raise the profile of her sport over the subsequent years, establishing herself as a role model for the next generation of hockey players.

Early Life and Education

Hilary Atwood Knight was born on July 12, 1989, in Palo Alto, California. The oldest of four children born to Cynthia and James Knight, she grew up with three younger brothers. Over the course of her childhood she lived in several different states, including California, Illinois, New Hampshire, and Idaho. An athletic child, she played a variety of sports from a young age and particularly enjoyed skiing, long a popular sport in her family. By the age of six, however, she had developed an interest

in hockey and began pursuing that sport, playing on local boys' teams.

Her passion for hockey was fueled further by the debut of women's ice

"I was just obsessed with the game and just wanted to get better."

hockey as an Olympic event at the Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan, in 1998. The US women's national team claimed the inaugural gold medal during that event, and the young Knight hoped that she would one day have the opportunity to do so herself.

Knight worked hard to develop her skills as a young player, though the progress sometimes came slowly. "I was sort of a late bloomer in the sport," she recalled in her interview for *People*. "I was just obsessed with the game and just wanted to get better. I couldn't even lift the puck until maybe two years or a year before high school." As a teenager she attended Choate Rosemary Hall, a preparatory boarding school in Connecticut with a strong hockey program. She won a regional championship with Choate's hockey team during her senior year and played field hockey and lacrosse for the school, from which she graduated in 2007. The school later inducted her into its Athletics Hall of Fame in 2015.

In addition to serving as a member of her high school's hockey team, Knight played for the Connecticut Polar Bears hockey team during her years in

Kendrick Lamar

Born: June 17, 1987

Occupation: Rapper

In a June 25, 2014, *New York Times* profile, journalist Lizzy Goodman described Kendrick Lamar as a “future king” of hip-hop. In 2012, Lamar’s major-label debut, *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* (styled *good kid, m.A.A.d. city* or *GKMC* for short), sold more than 1.2 million copies and was nominated for four Grammy Awards. (He was nominated for a total of seven Grammys that year, though, controversially, took home none.) “His lyrical style and his background”—Lamar was born and raised in Compton, California, the West Coast mecca of hip-hop—“have shaped his reputation as the kind of old-school rapper you don’t see much anymore, a street poet who has earned the affection of hip-hop purists as well as younger listeners,” Goodman wrote. On one hand, Lamar, cut a monastic figure for a celebrity. He has said in interviews that he does not smoke or drink and often works through the night after performances. Producer and musical artist Pharrell Williams compared Lamar’s skill and drive to that of iconic singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. “You can just see the kid’s



*Kendrick Lamar at the 2018 Pulitzer Prize ceremony.
Photo by Fuzheado, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The album's title refers to Compton, which he told Rebecca Haithcoat for *LA Weekly* (20 Jan. 2011), is his "mad city." The record is structured as a day in the life of a seventeen-year-old artist, who reckons with friends, enemies, and the streets of Compton while pursuing a girl named Sherane. Recordings and voicemails from Lamar's parents, with whom he is close, provide interludes throughout the record. Lamar plays on a lot of familiar hip-hop tropes, but his perspective is more meta. In "The Art of Peer Pressure," Lamar deflates a classic gangsta rap image. "Look at me," he raps with almost sarcastic bravado, "I got the blunt in my mouth." Badu wrote that Lamar recognizes the tension between the reality and "mythology" of Compton in real time. She quotes a verse from the song "Compton": "Harsh realities we in made our music translate / To the coke dealers, the hood rich, and the broke n——that play . . . Roll that kush, crack that case, ten bottles of rosé / This was brought to you by Dre . . . In the city of Compton / Ain't no city quite like mine." Lamar has always seen himself as more of an "observer," he told Goodman. His verses, Frere-Jones wrote, are "reportage rather than confession," and sometimes that reportage takes on an astonishing empathy for its characters.

Critical reception for the record was unanimously positive and unusually rich. Ahmed called it "a landmark event, a modern masterpiece." Jon Caramanica for the *New York Times* (28 Oct. 2013) wrote that the album required "ways of listening that went out with the Clinton presidency or with the advent of the seven-inch single. There are almost no obvious entry points, nothing bite-size to latch onto." Lamar's raps are lyrically dense, but critics say that (much like Joyce's prose) there are rewards in that depth. Words often come fast and furious to Lamar, lending the impression of having so much to say and not enough time to say it. "I put my energy into making music," he told Goodman, "That's how I get my thoughts out, instead of being crazy all the time." The album is a vivid portrait

"Lamar's frustration with the 'fakeness' that he observes in the music industry continues on."

of a city—Lamar pointedly features Compton legend MC Eiht on the track "m.A.A.d. city"—but Ta-Nehisi Coates argued in a piece for the *New York Times* (6 Feb. 2013) that Lamar's vision of Compton carries a troubling universality for cities across the United States. "Hip-hop originates in communities where such hazards are taken as given. Rappers generally depict themselves as masters, not victims, of the attending violence," he wrote.

Mandy Moore

Born: April 10, 1984

Occupation: Actor and singer

Teen pop star-turned-actor Mandy Moore earned much acclaim for her role in the hit network television drama *This Is Us*, which concluded in 2022. She was nominated for an Emmy Award for her performance as matriarch Rebecca Pearson in 2019. The show called upon all of Moore’s talents as an actor, as she was asked to play Rebecca at different stages of her life, including as a new mom, a teenager, and an aging grandmother. “Had I been told going into this audition, ‘This is what the show is going to be, this is what you can expect,’ I would’ve been like, Oh no, no, no, no,” Moore told David Canfield for *Vanity Fair* (25 May 2022). “I can’t do that. I’m a 31-year-old woman.

There’s no way; I have no life experience. I don’t have the bandwidth to even imagine what any of that would be.”

But, in fact, Moore was more than capable of pulling off that feat, having had plenty of life experience at a relatively young age. At just fourteen years old she was signed to a major record label, and she was a teen pop sensation by the age of sixteen. Her 1999 hit single “Candy” is one of the most recognizable songs of the Y2K era. Despite her success in music, Moore quickly shifted her focus to acting, winning her breakout role in



Mandy Moore at SXSW Festival, 2018. Photo by Daniel Benavides, via Wikimedia Commons.

Dolly Parton

Born: January 19, 1946

Occupation: American singer-songwriter

Sassy, flashy Dolly Parton, the leading lady of country music, has over the years “crossed over” to become a pop-rock megastar. The song-writing Tennessee mountain soprano came to prominence in Nashville in the late 1960’s as the protégé of the legendary Porter Wagoner; struck out on her own in 1974, and in each of the following two years was chosen best female singer by the Country Music Association (CMA). In 1977, Parton moved with great flair into the mainstream of popular music with her new, rock-oriented backup band, Gypsy Fever. The dimpled Parton, who accentuates her pretty face and buxom figure with flamboyant coiffures, heavy make-up, and come-hither clothes, carries off her painted-woman gimmickry with the innocence of a backwoods girl who has finally come into glad rags, and when she chirps out her down-home hit songs—such as the aggressive “Jolene” and the tender “I Will Always Love You” and “Love Is Like a Butterfly”—in her high, often tremulous, childlike voice, her sincerity, warmth, and homespun good spirits reach the hearts of good old boys and city slickers alike.



Parton accepting an award in 2010. Photo by Curtis Hilbun, via Wikimedia Commons.

Sam Pollard

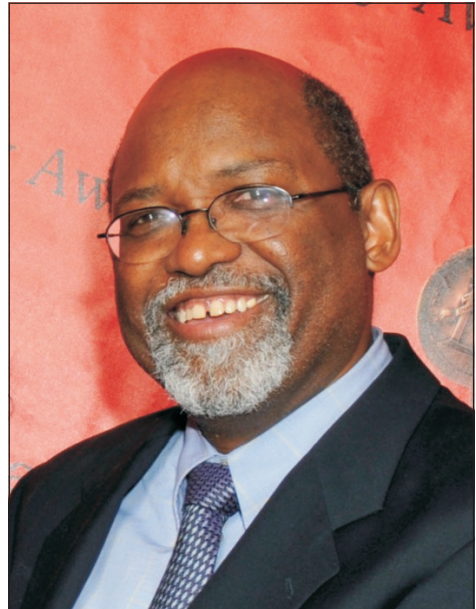
Born: April 20, 1945

Occupation: Filmmaker

Sam Pollard is a documentary filmmaker, prolific film editor, and longtime producer. In 2020, he released *MLK/FBI*, a documentary he directed about the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)'s campaign to discredit civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Pollard, who grew up during the height of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, is interested in the variety of experiences of being Black in America. He has chronicled the lives of celebrities like Sammy Davis Jr. and tennis star Arthur Ashe, but he has also examined the lives of ordinary Black Americans. His critically acclaimed 2016 film, *Two Trains Runnin'*, combines tales of obscure Delta blues legends and the violent Freedom Summer of 1964.

“When I think about his documentaries, they add up to a corpus—a way of telling African-American history in its various dimensions,” the scholar and historian Henry Louis Gates told Nicolas Rapold for the *New York Times* (15 Jan. 2021). Pollard won a Peabody Award for Career Achievement in 2021.

Pollard also enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Academy Award–winning director Spike Lee in the 1990s. He edited some of the director's most beloved films, includ-



Sam Pollard in 2011. Photo courtesy of the Peabody Awards, via Wikimedia Commons.

Chappell Roan

Born: February 19, 1998

Occupation: Singer-songwriter

Chappell Roan burst onto the scene as a major pop star in 2023 and 2024, earning both critical and commercial success with her powerful vocals, catchy melodies, and signature drag-influenced style. Her seemingly sudden rise, however, belied years of effort to develop her image and break into the industry. The singer was a teenager living in small-town Missouri when she earned her first record deal in 2015, and she assumed she was on the fast track to fame. “I was seventeen and I thought I was gonna win a Grammy,” she recalled to Shaad D’Souza in an interview for the *Guardian* (29 Dec. 2023). “It’s funny, because, when you sign to a label, that’s when the real work begins.” She began to gain a small following after her first official releases in 2017 and attracted more attention with the 2020 single “Pink Pony Club.” Nevertheless, she struggled to reach larger audiences, and in mid-2020 she was dropped by Atlantic Records.

Though difficult, that setback ultimately proved fortuitous, as Roan took time to reexamine her approach even as “Pink Pony Club” became a hit. In 2022, she began to release new music independently, steadily building a dedicated fan base with her distinct style as well as her presence on social-media apps such as TikTok. She went on to sign with a new label,



Chappell Roan. Photo by Justin Higuchi, via Wikimedia Commons.

Rebecca Yarros

Born: April 14, 1981

Occupation: American author

Rebecca Yarros is an American author who burst into the literary scene with her romantic-fantasy hit *Fourth Wing* in 2023. A well-established author before that, Yarros began writing in 2003, when her husband was deployed to Afghanistan. She sold her first book, *Full Measures*, to Entangled Publishing in 2014, and has primarily worked with them ever since. She had written sixteen contemporary military romance novels before pitching a fantasy novel in 2022. Taking place at an elite war college, and featuring two dragon riders as they feud then fall in love, *Fourth Wing* became both Entangled Publishing and Yarros' breakout hit. It sold two million copies in the first six months, and has remained on the *New York Times* bestsellers list for over a year. The book exploded into popularity, and six months later, *Iron Flame* was released. Despite being riddled with publication errors, this book also saw very positive public reception and over half a million copies sold on release day. As of today, Yarros has written over twenty books, and has no plans to stop any time soon.



Yarros at the 2024 National Book Festival. Photo by Fuzheado, via Wikimedia Commons.