I’VE GOT A GREAT IDEA!

grade 9
pre-visit activity - 90-minutes
LANGUAGE ARTS

OBJECTIVES
• Students will work in a small group to view and evaluate a news story.
• Students will write a critique.
• As a class, students will compile a list of criteria to evaluate news programs.

MATERIALS
• Access to the Internet
• Paper and pencils

PROCEDURE
1. Remind students that their field trip to CNN is coming up soon, and that they will have the opportunity to see many people involved in writing, editing, producing and broadcasting the news. Tell students that many things must be considered in the writing and production of a news broadcast. Today students will have an opportunity to evaluate the presentation of a news story within a group.

2. Divide students into groups of two to three students each.

3. Ask students to go to CNN Student News or CNN.com to find a story that is of interest to the group. Advisory: Pre-screen current news content to determine if it is age-appropriate for your students. Ask students to evaluate and write a critique of the story, answering the following questions:
   a. What is the story about? (Answer who, what, when, where, why questions.)
   b. What is the headline or lead-in to the story? Is it effective?
   c. What images or video are used to tell the story? Do these images add to the story? Why or why not?

LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

ELA9RC2
The student participates in discussions related to curricular learning in all subject areas. The student:
   b. Responds to a variety of texts in multiple modes of discourse.
   d. Evaluates the merits of texts in every subject discipline.
   e. Examines the author’s purpose in writing.

ELA9RC3
The student acquires new vocabulary in each content area and uses it correctly. The student:
   a. Demonstrates an understanding of contextual vocabulary in various subjects.
   b. Uses content vocabulary in writing and speaking.
   c. Explores understanding of new words found in subject area texts.

ELA9W1
The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure. The student:
   a. Establishes a clear, distinctive, and coherent thesis or perspective and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout.
WHAT’S THE STORY HERE?

grade 9
pre-visit activity - 60 – 90-minutes

LANGUAGE ARTS

PROCEDURE (CON’T)

d. Do you think the story is presented in a balanced way? Why or why not?
e. Is the story subjective or objective? How do you know?
f. Are there any questions you have about the story that were not answered?
g. How does the way the story was presented impact your reaction to it?

4. Ask each group to read their critique to the class. When all groups have had an opportunity to present their critiques, work with the class to develop a list of criteria to use when evaluating news reports.

CLOSING

Once the class list has been completed, have a class discussion based around this question:

Is it important to evaluate and critique the messages and presentations of various news programs?

ASSESSMENT

1. Assess the critique made by each group.
2. Informally assess the discussion.

GIFTED CONNECTION

Ask gifted students to view a variety of different presentations of one particular news story during the coming week. (Students may view television, newspapers, Internet, etc.) Students should critique the presentation of the story in each medium, as well as compare and contrast the message each story presented.

L.A. STANDARDS (CON’T)

ELA9W1

b. Selects a focus, structure, and point of view relevant to the purpose, genre expectations, audience, length, and format requirements.
c. Constructs arguable topic sentences, when applicable, to guide unified paragraphs.
d. Uses precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, and active rather than passive voice.
e. Writes texts of a length appropriate to address the topic or tell the story.
f. Uses traditional structures for conveying information (i.e., chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question).
g. Supports statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.

ELA9C2

The student demonstrates understanding of manuscript form, realizing that different forms of writing require different formats. The student:
a. Produces writing that conforms to appropriate manuscript requirements.
WHAT’S THE STORY HERE?

grade 9
pre-visit activity - 60 – 90-minutes
LANGUAGE ARTS

L.A. STANDARDS (CONT’D)

ELA9C2

b. Produces legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

c. Reflects appropriate format requirements, including pagination, spacing, and margins, and integration of source material with appropriate citations (i.e., in-text citations, use of direct quotations, paraphrase, and summary, and weaving of source and support materials with writer’s own words, etc.).

ELA9LSV1

The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions. The student

a. Initiates new topics and responds to adult-initiated topics.

b. Asks relevant questions.

c. Responds to questions with appropriate information.

e. Offers own opinion forcefully without domineering.

f. Volunteers contributions and responds when directly solicited by teacher or discussion leader.

g. Gives reasons in support of opinions expressed.

h. Clarifies, illustrates, or expands on a response when asked to do so; asks classmates for similar expansions.
CNN HEROES

grade 9
pre-visit activity - 60 - 90 minutes

LANGUAGE ARTS

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read biographies of CNN Heroes.
- Students will identify and write a nomination for a hero of their choice.
- Students will analyze the difference between a celebrity and a hero.

MATERIALS

- Access to the Internet

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss the meaning of the word “hero.” List on the board heroes identified by students in the class. Divide the list into categories such as Sports Figures, Humanitarians, etc.

2. Ask students to list what they feel are the important characteristics that are common to all the heroes listed on the board.

3. Ask students to go to http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/index.html and view or read the transcripts of a few of the videos about nominees for CNN Heroes. Allow students about 20 minutes to explore the site. Discuss with students what character qualities these individuals seem to have in common.

4. Have students look again at the list of heroes made at the beginning of class and answer the following questions: Are there any people on the list who are celebrities, but lack the qualities of an actual hero? What is the difference between a celebrity and a hero?

5. Ask students to re-read two or three biographies of people nominated for the CNN Hero honor. Ask students to choose either someone in their own life, or someone they might know of, who they think is a hero. Have students write a nomination for that person. Students may need to do research through personal interviews or the Internet to gain information on their selected hero. Students may want to go to

LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

ELA9RC2
The student participates in discussions related to curricular learning in all subject areas. The student:

b. Responds to a variety of texts in multiple modes of discourse.

c. Relates messages and themes from one subject area to those in another area.

d. Evaluates the merits of texts in every subject discipline.

ELA9W1
The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure. The student

a. Establishes a clear, distinctive, and coherent thesis or perspective and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout.

b. Selects a focus, structure, and point of view relevant to the purpose, genre expectations, audience, length, and format requirements.

c. Constructs arguable topic sentences, when applicable, to guide unified paragraphs.

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CNN HEROES

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LANGUAGE ARTS

PROCEDURE (CON’T)

the nomination form located in the top menu of the CNN Heroes page to see how nominations are done.

6. Once papers are written, ask students to once again name people who they feel are heroes. Compare this list with the list made at the start of the lesson. Has the list changed? How? Why? Discuss with students why heroes are important.

CLOSING

Discuss with students why they think CNN has decided to dedicate time and effort to celebrating heroes. In what other ways might we celebrate the accomplishments of people who make a difference in other peoples’ lives?

GIFTED CONNECTION

Ask gifted students to research a hero from another country and evaluate their contributions to their native society. Students will then compose a song or rap about the person researched.

ASSESSMENT

1. Assess the paper written by students in step 5.
2. Informally assess student’s discussion about heroes.

L.A. STANDARDS (CON’T)

ELA9W1

e. Writes texts of a length appropriate to address the topic or tell the story.

f. Uses traditional structures for conveying information (i.e., chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question).

g. Supports statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.

ELA9W2

The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

ELA9C1

The student demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats. The student:

a. Demonstrates an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, diction, and syntax.

b. Correctly uses clauses (i.e., main and subordinate) and mechanics of punctuation (i.e., end marks, commas, semicolons, and quotation marks).
### L.A. STANDARDS (CON’T)

**ELA9C1**
- c. Demonstrates an understanding of sentence construction (i.e., subordination, proper placement of modifiers) and proper English usage (i.e., consistency of verb tenses).

**ELA9C2**
The student demonstrates understanding of manuscript form, realizing that different forms of writing require different formats. The student:
- a. Produces writing that conforms to appropriate manuscript requirements.
- b. Produces legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
- c. Reflects appropriate format requirements, including pagination, spacing, and margins, and integration of source material with appropriate citations (i.e., in-text citations, use of direct quotations, paraphrase, and summary, and weaving of source and support materials with writer’s own words, etc.).

**ELA9LSV1**
The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions. The student:
- a. Initiates new topics and responds to adult-initiated topics.
- b. Asks relevant questions.
- c. Responds to questions with appropriate information.
- e. Offers own opinion forcefully without domineering.
- f. Volunteers contributions and responds when directly solicited by teacher or discussion leader.
- g. Gives reasons in support of opinions expressed.
- h. Clarifies, illustrates, or expands on a response when asked to do so; asks classmates for similar expansions.

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**NOTE TO TEACHERS:**
ADDITIONAL LESSON PLANS AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FROM CNN STUDENT NEWS AT:
HTTP://WWW.CNN.COM/US/STUDENTNEWS/DISCUSSION/ARCHIVE/