



Name: _____

Date: _____

Genre of Writing: Biographical / Research

Due Date: _____

Who Is the Unlikely Hero?

Purpose: This biographical writing activity motivates students to research the life and accomplishments of an “unlikely hero” and to write a biography of that person to share with the class who will attempt to identify the “hero.”

Standards:

- * Students will use written language skills (vocabulary, conventions, and styles) to communicate effectively for different purposes and for a variety of audiences.
- * Students will use various writing strategies for different purposes (persuasion, expository, enjoyment, and information).

Preparation for the Unlikely Hero Writing Activity

- * Familiarize the students with the biography format by reading and discussing the guidelines for writing a biography and the sample biographies included in this activity.
- * Challenge the students to identify the “unlikely hero” of each sample biography by using the information included in the first few paragraphs of the writing. Read the final paragraphs of the biography in which the true identity of the person is revealed.
- * Research time will be allotted. There is no plagiarism allowed! I will review plagiarism with the class, and any paper that has been plagiarized will receive a score of zero.

Unlikely Hero Writing Activity

- * students select a person to research who has achieved something special or who has made a significant contribution to the world in spite of having lived a very ordinary life or having overcome difficulties along the way.
- * Student write a biography of this person according to the guidelines.
- * Students read their biographies orally to the class and challenge their classmates to name the “unlikely hero.” They then read the final paragraphs of the biography where the identity is revealed.

Guidelines for an Engaging Biography

Introduction

- * You will need an effective opening: question, setting, quote, alliteration, riddle, etc.
- * Write a few sentence to introduce your hero to the reader without naming him or her.
- * Include a bit of mystery or suspense that will encourage the reader to want to identify the character.

First Body Paragraph

- * Use a transition and a topic sentence. Your topic sentence should be about your subject’s early life and/or childhood. Do not use the full name of your hero. Instead, use a nickname, middle name, initials, or refer to him or her as “this young boy or this young girl.”
- * Include at least four details and informational facts from your research that describes the early life and or childhood of this person.
- * Use a closing transition (thus, therefore, Because, So) and restate your topic sentence.

Second Body Paragraph

- * Use a transition that illustrates additional information (Also, Furthermore, In addition) and a topic sentence that tells what you will be writing about....the next few years of your hero. Again, do not use the full name of your hero.
- * Include at least four details and informational facts from your research that describes the next few years of your hero. (college years, after college, etc.)
- * Use a closing transition (thus, therefore, Because, So) and restate your topic sentence. Remember that you can only use one closing transition per paragraph; therefore, you can not use “thus” twice for the first body and second body paragraph.

AFTER READING THE SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH ALOUD, STUDENTS CHALLENGE THEIR CLASSMATES TO IDENTIFY THE UNLIKELY HERO.

Third Body Paragraph

- * Use a transition that illustrates additional information (Also, Furthermore, In addition) and a topic sentence that tells what you will be writing about (your hero’s accomplishments, contributions, and achievements). Remember, if you used for example “in addition,” in the second body paragraph, you cannot use it in the third body paragraph.

* Include details and information from your research that explains what this hero did to become famous. The final sentence will reveal the mystery and identify the “unlikely hero.”

Conclusion

* Use a closing transition for the concluding paragraph: In conclusion, All in all, In the final analysis, etc. Write a few sentences that sum up your hero’s accomplishments, contributions, or achievements.

* If the character is still alive, mention the current status of your hero; otherwise mention the place and date of his or her death.

Suggested Biographies for Students

Neil Armstrong

Martin Luther King

P.T. Barnum

Abraham Lincoln

Louis Braille

Charles Lindberg

Jimmy Carter

Nelson Mandela

Julia Child

Florence Nightingale

Hillary Clinton

Isaac Newton

Leonardo da Vinci

Annie Oakley

Joe DiMaggio

Rosa Parks

Walt Disney

Elvis Presley

Frederick Douglass

Paul Revere

Amelia Earhart

Sally Ride

Thomas Edison

Jackie Robinson

Albert Einstein

Eleanor Roosevelt

Ben Franklin

Babe Ruth

Bill Gates

Shirley Temple

Gandhi

Mother Teresa

Jane Goodall

Harriet Tubman

Alfred Hitchcock

Mark Twain

Houdini

Sam Walton

Helen Keller

George Washington

Alicia Keys

Oprah Winfrey

Sample Biography for an Unlikely Hero (This paper must be double spaced/ 12 font)

The small amount of time that she and her sister did not spend fighting, they were best friends. Joanne told her sister stories and sometimes did not have to sit on her to make her stay and listen. Often the stories became games in which they both played regular characters.

To begin with, Joanne's early childhood was pleasant, and it was certainly nothing that made her famous. Joanne and her family moved to the countryside when she was nine. She met Sean two years later, and he was the first of her friends to drive. Some of her happiest memories involve zooming off in Sean's battered old Ford Anglia. He was the first person with whom Joanne discussed her ambition to be a writer, and he was the only person who thought she would be a success. Therefore, Joanne's early childhood was carefree time in her life without the pressures and responsibilities of success.

However, Joanne's early adulthood is when she would first begin her rise to fame and become a writing hero to millions. After high school, Joanne studied French at the University of Exeter. After graduation, she worked in London for Amnesty International, and one day while riding on a crowded train the idea for a book "fell into her head." It was probably a good thing that she did not have a pen because she sat for four hours, while all the details bubbled up in her brain, and the main character became real to her. She began to write the book that evening. Joanne set to work in a kind of frenzy, determined to finish the book and get it published. Six years later, her agent called to say that Bloomsbury had offered to publish the book. Thus, Joanne's raise to fame began when she was a young adult on her way to become a famous author.

****At this point, challenge students to identify the "unlikely hero."**

In addition, Joanne became such a famous writer that she was able to quit teaching. Joanne was advised to continue teaching, since writers of children's books do not tend to get paid very well. However, within a few weeks of publication, the author got a grant from the Scottish Arts Council, which enabled her to write full time. Shortly after that an American company, Scholastic, agreed to pay a remarkable 100,000 pounds for the rights to publish in America. J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter books truly found that, "there is always room for a story that can transport people to

another place.” Because Joanne’s writing became so successful, she was able to quit teaching and just focus on writing.

In conclusion, Joanne became an unlikely hero to many through her writing. In 1998, Warner Bros. secured the film rights for the books, giving a seven-figure sum. The films have magnified the success of the books, making Harry Potter into one of the most recognizable media products. On December 21, 2006, J.K. Rowling finished her final book of the Harry Potter series--*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. She continues to write, but there is little chance of continuing the series about a scrawny, black-haired, bespectacled boy who did not know that he was a wizard.