

# THIS IS THE LIFE!

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GRADES 6 - 8

## OVERVIEW

Though this lesson focuses on science, it can be adapted to virtually any field of study. For schools with limited access to Internet and other technology, traditional tools of education (books, encyclopedias, pens, paper) can be employed.

This project can be done in a concentrated block of time, taking only a few days, or it can be spread out as time permits, even into a six-week long or semester-long project. This project encourages positive peer pressure and teamwork, since one student not doing his/her part affects the performance (and grades) of all. Each student will have specific individual duties, as well group responsibilities, to ensure that one or two students do not carry the load.

Essentially, students will research famous and some not-so-famous scientists. They will use the Internet to gather preliminary information, first viewing a video about biographies to become acquainted with the required material. They will then prioritize the scientists' importance in order of contributions, selecting those that will be explored in greater depth. Students will script an outline to order the presentations, as well as method of presentation (biographical or autobiographical). These presentations will be videotaped, allowing students to explore and develop potential skills areas.

## KEDT EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION SERIES

*Club Write- #102 - Biography and Autobiography*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- \* select various sources, including electronic and print, to locate information
- \* recognize common cultural traits
- \* collect and organize data
- \* present organized reports using visuals and other media to support meaning
- \* produce cohesive and coherent texts by organizing ideas
- \* produce communications using appropriate technology
- \* define the literary forms of autobiography and biography
- \* organize a script

- \* design a project, both individually and as a component of a greater whole
- \* devise appropriate grading criteria

## **MATERIALS**

*(each student)*

Guidelines for project sheet

Internet computer for each student

Materials necessary to portray the scientist of choice (props, clothing, etc.)

*(each class)*

Video camera

Videotape

Large bed sheet or other material for appropriate background

## **PREVIEWING ACTIVITIES**

In the computer lab, have the computers already "on" the following: Microsoft "Word" and access to the Internet. Have each student open a new file. Write the question, "What is the difference between magic and science?" on the board. Have the students write this as a title for their document. Read the question aloud, then say, "You have one minute to write your thoughts and ideas about this question. Write your response in your document." After one minute, tell the students to stop writing. Through class discussion, the students contribute their responses, which the teacher can write on the board. Choose one of the most likely responses as a transition to the next idea.

Explain that many changes in science have resulted from thinkers taking great risks, or going against the accepted thinking of their environment, in order to pursue their quest for knowledge. Tell students that they will find information about specific scientists, some well-known and some who are not well-known, who have helped to change the world. Say, "Unlike a typical report, you will not hand in a two-four page paper for me to read and then file away. Instead this will give you an opportunity to acquire some new skills. For those of you who are thinking about drama and acting, here is your chance! For those of you who are interested in other areas, there are other important jobs for you too. Everyone will be able to take part in this project. The only written materials that you will turn in are a resource list and a project evaluation."

Next, have the students focus on the computer. Tell students to move their cursor to the *edit* command on the top of the screen, click on the edit command, and highlight the *select all* command. Have the students use the *delete* button to clear the screen. When this has been done, have students go to the *minimize* button on the right side of the document, and then to minimize the file. Next, have the students go to the left on the new screen to the *File* command, and click on that. Highlight and double click *new*. Highlight and double *click* the *blank document* icon. Immediately a blank page will appear. Instruct students to type the form on the board onto the blank files. When finished, highlight the entire text by going up to the *Edit* command and highlighting *select all*. Then move the cursor to the edit command again, this time highlighting the *copy* command. Now have students move the cursor down to the bottom of the screen and click on the *maximize* button. A blank page will appear. Place the blinking cursor at the top left of the blank page, then have students go to the *edit* command on the top of the screen. Select the *paste* command. The student will then have two copies of the same document, and be able to switch easily back and forth from one to the other.

### FOCUS FOR VIEWING

To give the student a specific responsibility while viewing, *say*, "You will be watching a video about a famous person who helped to change America and the rest of the world. Though he was not a scientist, he has had very significant and lasting effects. We will be completing one of these forms while watching this video so that when it is time for you to search for information on your own, you will know what to do. While viewing this first segment, be sure to listen for the meaning, along with the root word and suffix, of biography."

### VIEWING ACTIVITIES

**Insert** cued-up **CLUB WRITE** video. **Begin** with boy saying, "Writing Club has been working on biographies and autobiographies for the past month." **Pause** when a picture of young Elvis is shown and the boy says, "... so biography tells the story of a person's life." Have students type the meaning of biography in the appropriate place. **Resume** the video, **pause** when the boy says, "Elvis became the ambassador of a new kind of music called rock and roll." **Say**, "On your form, where would we put this?" (accomplishment) Students record answer.

**Resume** video. **Pause** where the man says, "He managed to rise above that poverty and fulfill his dream of becoming an international superstar." (Note: the picture will be of one of Elvis's Vegas costumes). **Say**, "Where would we put the fact of Elvis's poverty?" (obstacles) Have students type that information. **Resume**. **Pause** where the curator says, "because he didn't always want to bring attention to himself; he wanted to help those in need." **Say**, "Where would you put the facts that he sold billions of records and gave to many charities?" (achievements) Students type information in appropriate place. **Resume**. **Pause** video where the curator says, "that he had encountered." **Ask**, "Where do these facts go?" (personal facts) Have students type this information. **Resume video**. **Pause** where boy says, "\_and died of a heart attack at the age of 42". **Ask**, "Where does this information go?" (death, personal information, etc.) and have them fill in the blanks. **Fast Forward** video past students planning the biography, including graphics showing brainstorm, rough draft, revise and final copy, to where the girl in blue shirt is reading to the class. **Stop video**. **Say**, "What we just saw was a biographical approach to Elvis's life. Now, we will watch for the difference between an autobiography and biography." **Begin** with the teacher saying, "Those were wonderful biographies..." **Resume**. **Stop** the video after the boy says, "... and to make sense of their life experiences." **Say**, "If we were watching an autobiographical approach, what would be the difference?" (Elvis would be telling the story) Explain that the scientist project will be flexible enough to allow the students to decide whether they wish to show the selected scientists through biographical, autobiographical or a combination approach.

Next, explain that the video camera will be used to record this project. (Note: since most schools cannot afford video switchers or other more sophisticated equipment, the work will probably need to be done using one camera, in a very easy-to-follow sequence) **Rewind** the video to where the girl in blue is speaking. **Play** video, saying, "This is the type of shot which we will need to use." **Stop and eject** video. (**Note**: this could also be used in another way. Hook up a video camera or videotape various shots of volunteers in the class to demonstrate some basic shots and limitations of the videotape).

Next, tell the students to find the print command on the computer. Have them *print* the sheet that they have just completed on Elvis. After they have printed their form, have them *delete* the Elvis information. Have the students *access Internet*. When the address line appears, have the girls type the address: *www.astra.ua.edu*. **Say**, "Most of you have probably heard about Marie Curie, but most women scientists aren't that famous. The University of Alabama has

developed a site to help you learn more about women in science. Boys, because there is more information about male scientists, please type in [biography.com](http://biography.com)."

Meanwhile, the teacher distributes to each student slips of paper with the name(s) of scientist(s), (depending upon the time and familiarity of students with the Internet). Tell the students that they can find preliminary information about the scientist(s) that they have been assigned; they will not be expected to complete the entire form, but it is imperative that they locate the scientists' greatest accomplishments(s). They can either type the information, or if so inclined, cut and paste it to the file. The students will continue to work on this research until five minutes before class ends, at which time they should print out their results. Say, "Students, this is a group effort; you are locating information about specific scientists, but this does not necessarily mean that this is the scientist that you will do. You will pool your information. Tomorrow, you will decide which specific jobs that you wish to do, and then you will need to determine, based upon the preliminary information, which scientists merit portrayal. Your group will need to work together to decide exactly how you want to portray these scientists on video. Not all of you will actually portray a scientist, but each of you will have an important and specific responsibility for the successful completion of this project."

### POST VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Depending upon the size and personality of each class, students may choose to work as one group, or they can work in groups of 7 - 8. Each student will have his/her own specific jobs. This is where the teacher's knowledge of the students would be best used, since some classes might require that the teacher assign various responsibilities, while other classes might be able to complete this project with a minimum of teacher instruction. Specific jobs would include the following: video camera operator, props, scripting, etc. as needed. All students should have a specific responsibility, in addition to finding out about a specific scientist.

**ACTION PLAN**

The video can be shown to other science classes at grade level. For example, the videos might be useful as an introduction to various "movers and shakers" in life science, such as Charles Darwin and the study of evolution. As an introduction to basic physics, a segment on Isaac Newton would be helpful.

**EXTENSIONS**

The possibilities are mind-boggling!

**Science**

For students interested in the mechanics of video production, take a tour of a local TV facility. (hint: some PBS stations are constantly looking for volunteers) Correspond with a particular scientist(s) or researcher in a field of study. The Internet has access to many sites for this.

**Math**

Students can adapt this format to a study of famous mathematicians.

**Language arts**

A student could begin his/her own autobiography in a journal or on videotape. Students could read various plays, books and stories dealing with a specific scientist or idea. Students can design a display - for example, a time line - for use in the school library about the scientists.

Students could write information for use in the school newspaper to inform students about the contributions of each scientist and how each student is touched by the scientist's work.

Students can design crossword puzzles about that particular scientist or area of study.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY/RESOURCE LIST**

Haber, Louis, Women Pioneers of Science. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. San Diego, California. 1979.

Gleason, Diana C. Breakthrough: Women in Science. Walker and Company. New York. 1983.

Hume, Ruth Fox. Great Men of Medicine. Random House, New York. 1951.

[www.astra.ua.edu](http://www.astra.ua.edu)

[www.biography.com](http://www.biography.com)

[www.femina.cybergirl.com](http://www.femina.cybergirl.com)

your local PBS station (or another TV station)

**List of scientists:** (This is just a beginning list - it can be adapted to a particular field of study, or century, etc.)

**Female:**

Rosalind Franklin

Beatrix Potter

Grace Hopper

Chien Shiung Wu

Maria Mitchell

Barbara McClintock

Dian Fossey

Mary Calkins

Jane Goodall

Elizabeth Blackwell

Emily Noether

Evelyn Granville

Sally Ride

Alice Fletcher

Florence Sabin

Dr. Sylvia Mead

Margaret Mead

**Male:**

Robert Fulton

Michael Farraday

Jonas Salk

Copernicus

Thomas Edison

Alexander Bell

Crick and Watson

Joseph Henry

Charles Darwin

G. Marconi

Nikola Tesla

Benjamin Franklin

James Watt

Lee de Forest

Leonardo da Vinci

Gail Borden

Charles Duryea

<b>STUDENT PROJECT GUIDELINES</b>
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1. This is a group effort, but that does not mean some of you will be able to sit back and let the others do all the work. Each of you will be assigned a specific duty on which you will be graded, as well as your participation in the group.

2. You and your class members will design a grading matrix for how you think that your project should be graded. This can include observations by your peers regarding your efforts.

3. This project will last from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.  
Important dates to remember: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment of duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Decision about scientists: \_\_\_\_\_

Research finished: \_\_\_\_\_

Script prepared: \_\_\_\_\_

Taping dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Final project due/ viewing date and evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

4. This project, since it will be recorded, will be seen by other students. You will want to make sure that you apply your very best efforts. Therefore, you need to decide what will appeal to your classmates, and prepare a logical manner to move from one scientist to the next.

5. Each presentation of a scientist can be from one to three minutes in length. Be sure to include all necessary information, and find a creative way to present the material. (Check with your teacher first if you plan on doing something really "strange".)

6. You are also responsible for knowing and using this vocabulary:

**Edit:** to arrange shots in a specific order

**Shot:** one "picture"

**Monologue:** one person speaking at length

**Biography:** a life story

**Autobiography:** the author's own life story

**Costume:** clothing worn by the actor

**Script/ shot log:** a written set of instructions telling what will be done in what sequence

**Portrayal:** acting a part

**Articulation:** understandable speech, so that each word is clear

**Volume:** loudness

**Transitions:** smooth changes from one idea/scene to the next

### Form to be copied from board

Researcher:

Subject's name:

Place and DOB:

Place, age, DOD:

Accomplishments:

Education:

Personal life:

Obstacles:

Key search word(s):