



Life Stories Presents



Teaching *The* ***Thread***

SEASON TWO SUPPLEMENT



**“We are fundamentally
storytelling animals. We don’t
seem to be able to survive
without telling them. It enables
us to deal with a very difficult
and complex world, and frame
it in some way that we can
understand.”**

– ELIZABETH DALEY, EDUCATOR

AT A Glance



4

Episode Summary/
Topics Discussed



10

Interviewer
Bios



11

Episode Themes/
Lessons Overview

Season Two of ***The Thread*** unfolds with themes of resilience, compassion, and profound insight from sixteen remarkable individuals. From the iconic actor Frank Langella sharing unscripted wisdom garnered over six decades in the limelight to Loretta Ross's journey from personal trauma to pioneering reproductive justice, each episode delves into the depths of human experience. Suleika Jaouad's tale of surviving leukemia with grace, alongside her enduring love story with musician Jon Batiste, adds a poignant note. At the same time, James Cromwell's dual roles as a revered actor and impassioned activist underscore the power of using one's platform for societal change. Wolfgang Puck's culinary genius is matched only by his humility and philanthropy, contrasting sharply with Noah Wyle's transition from *ER* heartthrob to global humanitarian. Abigail Disney's fearless stance against wealth inequality echoes Molly Jong-Fast's bold political commentary, both rooted in legacies of activism. Viet Thanh Nguyen's perspective as a refugee and immigrant illuminates American complexities, while Fab 5 Freddy's pioneering contributions to hip-hop culture redefine artistic influence. Elizabeth Daley's stewardship of cinematic talent at USC parallels Kris Tompkins's environmental advocacy through Patagonia, demonstrating leadership in diverse realms. Joy Harjo's poetic voice resonates with ancestral wisdom, while Chip Conley's journey from hospitality mogul to elder wisdom advocate inspires reinvention. Wyatt Cenac's narrative of navigating systemic racism in comedy, and Dave Ferrucci's visionary quest in AI, complete this season's mosaic, celebrating diversity, courage, and the profound impact of individual stories on our collective consciousness.

Season Two features 16 episodes, each approximately 30 minutes long, are available on our Life Stories [YouTube channel](#) and at [LifeStories.org](#). The full-length interview and transcripts for ***The Thread*** episodes are also available for audiences to access anytime.

Episode Summary/Topics Discussed

This section introduces the interviewees with a brief synopsis and outline of the topline Social Studies and English Language Arts topics. Many of the interviews are interdisciplinary in scope so as you watch the episodes, we invite you to add your own ideas and connections to the relevant topics and themes.

Note: The series weaves together all five social and emotional competencies identified by the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#). The episodes also provide opportunities to strengthen [media literacy](#) by analyzing points of view, authorship, and filmmaking techniques.



Wyatt Cenac
Writer

A WRITER'S LIFE

Summary: Writer and comedian Wyatt Cenac, formerly a correspondent and writer on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, details the struggles of being a Black man in a virtually all-white professional situation. His dreams of huge career success after starting out as an intern at *Saturday Night Live* gave way to the harsh realities that people of color face in America, even in industries thought of as “progressive.” This episode of ***The Thread*** is a conversation with Wyatt Cenac whose story is one of frustration, introspection, and ultimately, a determination to help us all learn “to do better by one another.”

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Race and representation, the dynamics and responsibilities of being “the first” Black writer in late-night television, power, and privilege in the workplace, diversity, and inclusivity in Hollywood, microaggressions, the changes in cultural norms surrounding implicit bias, courage, and advocacy, the importance of accountability.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative illuminating broader social and cultural issues, identity and belonging, voice and tone, the complexities of communication across race and culture, living as a professional writer and comedian, exploring themes of identity, power, solidarity, implicit bias, standing up for one’s moral principles, social justice and equality of opportunity.





**Chip
Conley**
Hospitality
Entrepreneur

DARING TO BE YOURSELF

Summary: Chip Conley, author and entrepreneur, takes us through his life's journey from growing up in California, through his years at Stanford, to going out on his own at the age of 26 and building the second largest boutique hotel company in America. After tremendous success as a hotelier, he became the Head of Global Hospitality & Strategy at Airbnb and today is working on a new venture, the Modern Elder Academy. This episode of *The Thread* is a conversation with Chip Conley, a creative entrepreneur and someone who continues to help others find purpose and meaning.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Coming-of-age in the 1960s, gender roles and family expectations, sexual identity and social acceptance, risk-taking and entrepreneurship, personal growth in midlife, social responsibility and philanthropy, mental health and well-being, mentorship, generational dynamics in the workplace, aging, legacy and impact.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative and storytelling, identity and self-discovery, overcoming adversity, themes of persistence, ambition, resilience, and purpose, aging and wisdom, mentorship, generational differences, the human condition, including personal growth through reflection.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**James
Cromwell**
Actor

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Summary: One of film and television's most respected character actors, Emmy-winner James Cromwell is perhaps now best known for his most recent role as the iconoclastic "radical sheep" in a family of cut-throat conservative capitalists on *Succession*. James Cromwell speaks candidly about his motivation, not as an actor but as an activist. In this fascinating episode of *The Thread*, you will meet a man who has walked the talk as a fighter for animal rights (earning him multiple arrests for civil disobedience), who has directly confronted government officials about taking more decisive action to protect the environment, and is a passionate patriot committed to civil rights and social justice.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Coming-of-age in a family of performers, McCarthy era and the Hollywood blacklist, the Civil Rights Movements, the anti-war movement, interconnectedness of social justice issues such as animal rights, environmentalism and climate change, insights on political power and corporate influence, the role of media and its influence on culture, the power of art as a form of social commentary.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative and storytelling, the use of language and rhetoric, character development, themes of family history, artistic expression, and social activism, critical thinking and analysis of the entertainment industry, and use of persuasive powerful language.

 [Download Lesson](#)



Elizabeth Daley

FOR THE LOVE OF FILM

Summary: Dean Elizabeth Daley came to the USC School of Cinematic Arts as its interim director in 1991 and has helped mentor young filmmakers who have gone on to great creative achievement, including *Black Panther* director, Ryan Coogler, and *Grey's Anatomy*'s creator, Shonda Rhimes. You may not know her name, but there is no one in Hollywood who doesn't immediately take Elizabeth Daley's call -- from Steven Spielberg to George Lucas, from Ron Howard to Robert Zemeckis -- all of them USC alumni. This episode of *The Thread* is a fascinating behind-the-curtain conversation with Dean Elizabeth Daley, who shares her secret of cultivating great storytellers and -- spoiler alert -- storytelling is the secret of life.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Media literacy, film history, the evolution of storytelling through different mediums, the impact of film and television on society, the evolution of media consumption, the role of education in a changing media landscape, the economics and business of media, the power of mentorship and collaboration exemplified by her work at USC.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative, the importance of media analysis, exploring the language of cinema, the rhetoric of storytelling, understanding critical media literacy, the impact of media on society, the evolution of literacy in a digital age, critical thinking and film analysis including identifying themes, character development, editing choices, and the filmmaker's intent and point of view.

 [Download Lesson](#)



Abigail Disney
Producer

THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

Summary: As the granddaughter of Roy Disney, Abigail Disney could easily have rested on a family inheritance of fame and fortune and led a quiet life of comfortable privilege. Instead, she has chosen a bold path of promoting societal change by producing documentary films that highlight peace and social justice, particularly focusing on women who are making a difference. She is also one of the nation's most vocal champions on the issue of wealth inequality, fearlessly challenging the corporate practices of the company that bears her name. This episode of *The Thread* is a conversation with a person who unselfishly uses the gift of her birthright to change our world for the better.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** American History, social responsibility and corporate ethics, capitalism and its impact on society including economic inequality, the impact of generational wealth and privilege, labor rights and fair wages, the climate crisis, the intersection of personal identity and family legacy, the influence of the Disney corporation in American culture.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Narrative and storytelling, rhetoric and persuasion, metaphors, and language to convey complex ideas and personal experiences, including familial conflict, identity formation, family legacy, the American Dream, the importance of individual conscience, and social responsibility.

 [Download Lesson](#)





**Molly
Jong-Fast**
Writer

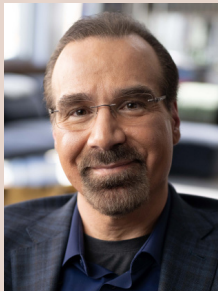
INHERITING BOLDNESS

Summary: Molly Jong-Fast, has become one of the premier writers and political commentators of our time. Still only in her mid-forties, the prolific Ms. Jong-Fast is already the author of two novels and a memoir, and since 2016, she's been a go-to observer of the tumultuous American political scene, writing for *Vanity Fair*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Bulwark*. For this election year, her quick-witted commentary garnered her a spot as a political analyst on MSNBC. This episode of ***The Thread***, like Molly Jong-Fast herself, is as fun as it is insightful and thought-provoking.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** McCarthyism and Cold War politics, second-wave feminism, political activism and American History, contemporary political issues, sobriety exploring political rhetoric, social class and social responsibility, how a personal narrative can illuminate broader historical, political, and social issues.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** The use of an autobiographical structure to convey personal growth and struggle, figurative language, legacy and identity, resilience and hope, the role of privilege and responsibility, and the power of language.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Dave
Ferrucci**
Computer
Scientist

SEEING THE FUTURE

Summary: Dave Ferrucci takes us on the intensely personal journey that led him to become one of the world's leading architects of artificial intelligence. Ferrucci famously led the IBM Watson team that designed the first computer system to win on *Jeopardy!*. Now his mission is to design artificial intelligence systems that combine the ChatGPT large language models (LLM) with reasoning engines that offer greater protection from the potential dangers of AI. In this episode of ***The Thread***, we are in conversation with a true visionary whose unique gift is his ability to put technology in human terms that help us see the future with hope and excitement.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Social class and mobility, family dynamics and conflict, cultural identity, social change and technology, AI, ethics and responsibility.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Narrative structure, metaphor and simile, the themes of perseverance, the transformation of technology, the ethics and responsible use of technology for good.

 [Download Lesson](#)





**Fab 5
Freddy**
Visual Artist

A HIP-HOP PIONEER

Summary: One of rap and hip-hop earliest breakthrough artists, Fab 5 Freddy began dreaming of his future as an artist at an early age. The son of an accountant and a nurse, his godfather, bebop pioneer drummer and composer Max Roach, turned young Freddy's home into a gathering place for jazz greats like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis. On this episode of *The Thread*, you'll meet the multi-talented groundbreaking visual artist, filmmaker, and a man dubbed the "hip-hop architect," the extraordinary Fab 5 Freddy. You're in for a real treat.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Race and ethnicity, race and representations in the media, civil rights and social justice, cultural movements and countercultures, the history of hip hop, entrepreneurship, art and social justice, the criminal justice system, and the war on drugs.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Narrative and storytelling, autobiography and memoir, character development, figurative language, the themes of Identity, creativity, innovation, and social change.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Joy
Harjo**
Poet

THE POWER OF POETRY

Summary: Joy Harjo, the first Native American chosen to be our nation's Poet Laureate and the 2024 recipient of the Frost Medal for distinguished lifetime achievement in poetry, is a dream weaver. In this mesmerizing conversation, she describes growing up in Oklahoma and learning the stories of the Muscogee traditions and tragedies from elders. In a gently lyrical voice as vivid and compelling as her poetry, Joy Harjo unspools the thread of her life and the universal truths she has learned from it in this episode of *The Thread*. And in the tradition of all the great storytellers, she paints pictures for the mind's eye to behold: "*What are we without winds becoming words?*"

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Native American History, Muscogee Creek tribe, the Tulsa Race Massacre, themes of belonging, identity, and ancestry, storytelling and the oral tradition, discrimination and racism against Native Americans, the role of art and creativity, the power of storytelling and poetry to challenge societal norms, promote understanding, and inspire change.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Poetry and the power of language, the power of storytelling in preserving culture and passing on oral and written traditions, imagery and metaphors, creative writing, and the importance and power of words to evoke emotions, connect, inspire, and create meaning.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Suleika
Jaouad**
Writer

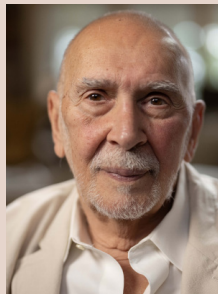
SURVIVING AND THRIVING

Summary: Suleika Jouad's life was forever changed when she was diagnosed with a rare form of acute myeloid leukemia at the age of 22. Told she had only a 35% chance of survival, Ms. Jouad was determined not to become defined by her illness. Shortly after her diagnosis, she reconnected with a fellow Juilliard student whom she had met as a teenager, the now-renowned musician Jon Batiste. They were married in 2022, just after her leukemia returned following a prolonged period of remaining cancer-free. In this episode of *The Thread*, we hear of their unshakable love and the healing power of music.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Family and relationships, health, chronic illness and overcoming adversity, the social determinants of health, disability studies, art and creativity, cultural identity, access to health care, and the importance of resilience in navigating life's challenges.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative and the power of storytelling, chronological structure in storytelling, the use of metaphors and similes, emotional, descriptive, and precise language to convey complex ideas and describe struggle and resilience, overcoming adversity, living a meaningful life, the transformative power of art and creativity to process and express emotions.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Frank
Langella**
Actor

UNSCRIPTED WISDOM

Summary: Frank Langella's six-decade career as an actor has earned him four Tony awards for his work on the Broadway stage, an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor, and television's highest honor, the Emmy Award. In this profoundly insightful episode of *The Thread*, we meet the man behind the artistic mask. Frank Langella has portrayed iconic characters, from a tortured ex-president (*Frost/Nixon*) to an immortal Transylvanian Count (*Dracula*). The Frank Langella you will meet in this episode is a complex and thoughtful human being, even more fascinating in real life than the characters he's played on stage and screen. Now, at age 86, he shares his hard-earned wisdom with eloquence and humility. He sums it up best in one sentence: "It's important to always live life, at any age, with a question mark, not an exclamation point."

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** The power of an educator to change a student's life, the role of the arts to illuminate historical figures, the importance of the arts in society, intergenerational learning and wisdom, and the role of film and theater in shaping popular culture.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative techniques such as chronology, character development, conflict and resolution, an actor's process of portraying a character, such as historical background, inner life, and emotions, using a narrative to understand literature and analyzing texts cited in the interview.

 [Download Lesson](#)





**Viet Thanh
Nguyen**
Writer

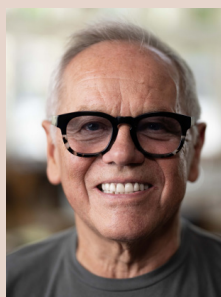
AMERICA THROUGH MY EYES

Summary: Winner of both a MacArthur Fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship, Viet Thanh Nguyen is a modern-day Tocqueville. He arrived in America as a four-year-old refugee after the 1975 fall of Saigon and has become one of our nation's most distinguished novelists and academics. His visceral and unsparing observations about his adopted country earned him the *New Yorker* magazine's accolade as "a conscience of American literature." Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his first novel, *The Sympathizer* (recently adapted as a critically acclaimed HBO mini-series co-starring Robert Downey, Jr.), Professor Viet Thanh Nguyen honors us with a candidly personal interview on this unique and timely episode of ***The Thread***.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** The Vietnam War, the refugee and immigrant experience, assimilation, cultural identity, racism, representation and personal identity, cultural norms, American identity and individualism, parenting and generational change, the legacy of war, memory, trauma, and resilience, art and cultural narratives.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal history and the development of voice, impact of childhood on identity, Vietnamese-American experience, cultural identity, and voice, fiction and character development to explore complex personal and societal issues.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Wolfgang
Puck**
Chef

FOOD FOR LIFE

Summary: Described as "the first and perhaps the only chef that you and your grandma know by name," Wolfgang Puck is the epitome of the American dream. An émigré from Austria in 1973, Mr. Puck's brilliance as a chef became immediately evident, a reputation that has only grown stronger over the next five decades. His unrivaled status as America's premier epicurean led him to create two of the most storied restaurants in the nation: Ma Maison and Spago. Mr. Puck has also used his stature to build a foundation that has contributed millions of dollars to vital food programs like Meals on Wheels. Yet, for all his fame, Wolfgang Puck retains a gracious humility and a disarming sense of humor. This episode of ***The Thread*** will whet your appetite to learn more about this extraordinary man.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Family dynamics and upbringing, migration, and immigration, entrepreneurship, social responsibility, and community involvement, mentorship, social mobility and class.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Childhood trauma, personal narrative, themes of perseverance, overcoming adversity, mentorship, the pursuit of passion and dreams, resilience, determination, and personal growth, expanding definitions of family, and exercising social responsibility, and community support.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Loretta
Ross**

Professor
and Activist

FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE

Summary: In this emotional and candid episode of *The Thread*, we meet the extraordinary Loretta Ross, a survivor of childhood sexual assault who has transformed her trauma into a lifelong commitment to keeping other women safe from harm. We follow her life's journey and her unwavering commitment in adulthood to the fight for women's rights and social justice. Loretta Ross helped create the very concept of "reproductive justice," a cause that remains central to her life's work as an activist and now as an academician. After suffering hardships that would have sent most people into paralysis and despair, Loretta Ross has always maintained positivity and hope. Her story is sure to touch your soul and inspire your heart.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Racial and gender equality, sexual violence, reproductive justice, the historical context of the reproductive rights movement, first-person narrative of a Black woman feminist activist and scholar, intersectionality, activism, critique of the feminist movement.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative and perspective taking of a Black woman activist in America, themes of resilience, hope, determination, justice, equity, empowerment, language and rhetoric about social justice, feminism, and the personal experience of sexual violence, young single motherhood, prioritizing education, and accomplishing personal goals and dreams.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Kris
Tompkins**
Conservationist

PROTECTING LIFE ON EARTH

Summary: Kris Tompkins co-founded the outdoor clothing company Patagonia in 1973 guiding it to become a billion-dollar global enterprise. In this revealing episode of *The Thread*, she talks about the work she and her late husband, Doug, have done to extend Patagonia's corporate principle of protecting the planet from the climate crisis into the concrete action of rewilding. This includes buying millions of acres in South America to protect the land and the endangered species that inhabit it. Kris Tompkins is a rare example of how you can succeed in business without compromising your integrity and principles.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Conservation and environmentalism, the impacts of globalization, cultural and social change, entrepreneurship and innovation, ethical business practices and leadership, the climate crisis, human relationships and personal loss.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative and biographical storytelling, character exploration and self-reflection, cross-cultural activism, themes such as innovation, perseverance, environmental stewardship, loss, love, grief, and the impact one person can make.

 [Download Lesson](#)



**Noah
Wyle**
Actor

WALKING THE TALK

Summary: If you thought you already knew Noah Wyle, you're in for a surprise. This is a profoundly thoughtful man of depth and integrity, and you will discover that the compassion of his fictional alter ego reflects the values that Noah Wyle brings to the world even when he's not on camera. His commitment to caregiving took him to Macedonia for Doctors of the World during the war in Kosovo and later to join the board of Human Rights Watch. In this candid and emotional episode of *The Thread*, we reconnect with an old friend who continues to seek and discover new facets of meaning and purpose in his life.

Topics Discussed

- ▣ **Social Studies:** Social class and privilege, family upbringing, the role of celebrities in public life and activism, humanitarian efforts and philanthropy, activism, and social justice, media and representation, political engagement, animal rights, and environmentalism.
- ▣ **English Language Arts:** Personal narrative and storytelling, character development as an actor, rhetorical strategies, thematic exploration of self-discovery, social responsibility, personal growth, and activism.

 [Download Lesson](#)



Interviewer Bios

(In alphabetical order)

David Bender is a political activist, author and former host of the talk radio show *Politically Direct* on Air America Radio. Guests on his talk show included five Nobel Peace Prize Laureates: Jimmy Carter, Al Gore, Barack Obama, Desmond Tutu, and Elie Wiesel. In 2000, joining with the late musician David Crosby, he co-authored and co-produced a book and four-hour documentary series *Stand And Be Counted*, that recounted the history of artist activism on social and political issues. Mr. Bender has also conceived and produced *VISIBLE*, a documentary series chronicling the history and global impact of LGBTQ+ images originating on American television. This critically acclaimed series was released on the Apple+ streaming platform in 2020.



Ari Fishman is an accomplished executive producer with a diverse career spanning multiple platforms. He has had the privilege of contributing to some of the most iconic shows in television history. His journey has taken him through the vibrant worlds of Nickelodeon, Comedy Central (*The Daily Show With Jon Stewart*), PBS (*Charlie Rose*), HBO (*Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*), VICE, Adult Swim, Hulu (*Eater's Guide To The World*), and Netflix, each step driven by his unwavering commitment to illuminating narratives that resonate. His dedication to storytelling and production has been recognized through numerous accolades, including four Emmy® Awards and two Peabody Awards. The art of cultivating compelling narratives has also led him to receive two Directing Emmy nominations and recognition from the prestigious James Beard Foundation.

Jackie Glover is the executive director of Harvard's Black Film Project. The newly created initiative founded by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. will support leading and emerging filmmakers focusing on the Black experience. Glover was the former Head of Documentary Programming for Onyx Collective, a new brand for Disney, where she worked with Onyx Collective's roster of emerging and established creators of color to produce, acquire, and develop non-fiction projects. Previously, Glover was senior vice president of HBO Documentary Films, where she was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the department's programming, including development, acquisitions, and production. Projects included Emmy® Award-winner and Peabody Award-winner *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality*, Emmy® Award-winner *King in the Wilderness*, Emmy® Award-winner *Jim: The James Foley Story*, Academy Award®-winner *Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1*, and Spike Lee's Academy Award®-nominated documentary *4 Little Girls*, and his Emmy® Award-winning documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*. Glover also produced *Unchained Memories: Readings From the Slave Narratives*, for HBO, which received 4 Emmy® nominations. Glover's projects have received numerous awards, including 10 Emmys and 5 Oscars. Glover holds a bachelor's in fine arts from New York University Tisch School of the Arts and is a member of the documentary branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Matt Henderson a native New Yorker, has worked in the Film & Television Industry for over fifteen years. As a producer at *Life Stories* he's worked on a number of films including *The Silent Witness*, which was recently received an Emmy nomination for Best Short Documentary, *Fragments of Paradise*, which had its World Premiere at the 2022 Venice Film Festival, winning Best Documentary on Cinema; *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality*, which won a Peabody Award and an Emmy Award for Outstanding Social Issue Documentary; *The Soul of America*; *Gordon Parks: A Choice of Weapon*; and *Obama: In Pursuit of a More Perfect Union*. Matthew bridges the technical and creative hemispheres having worked for over ten years as a Camera Assistant and Camera Operator. His passion for storytelling coupled with his ability to conceptualize compelling, and soulful visuals has allowed him to film all around the world. Whether it's a remote aboriginal village in Eastern Australia, floating along the Venice like canals of Makoko, Nigeria in Africa, or filming at depths of five-hundred feet below the Atlantic Ocean, his approach to filmmaking is always the same - tell the story you find, not the one you expect to find.

George Kunhardt is a three-time Emmy Award-winning documentary director and producer. His upcoming film, *Becoming Katharine Graham*, airs in 2025. He is the Executive Producer of the critically acclaimed documentary series *The Thread*, that profiles exceptional individuals whose paths have led to meaningful lives. Past films include *The Silent Witness* (2023, Emmy Nominated); *Fragments of Paradise* (2022, Winner Best Documentary, Venice Film Festival); *Lincoln's Dilemma* (Apple TV+, 2021); *A Choice of Weapons: Inspired by Gordon Parks* (HBO, 2021); *The Soul of America* (HBO, 2020); *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight For Equality* (HBO, 2019, Emmy® Award and Peabody Award Winner); *John McCain: For Whom The Bell Tolls* (HBO, 2018, IDA Award Winner); *King in the Wilderness* (HBO, 2018, Emmy Award Winner and NAACP Image Award Nominated); *The Newspaperman: The Life and Times of Ben Bradlee* (HBO, 2017, PGA Award Nominated); *Becoming Warren Buffett* (HBO, 2017); Jim: *The James Foley Story* (HBO, 2016, Emmy Award Winner); and *Living With Lincoln* (HBO, 2015). Kunhardt graduated from Wheaton College as the college's first film major. He is a founding board member and Executive Director of Life Stories, a division of The Kunhardt Film Foundation. He lives in Bedford, New York with his wife Jackie and their sons George Jr. and James.

Teddy Kunhardt is an award-winning filmmaker. He has received three Emmy Awards, including his role as director and producer of the Emmy® and Peabody-winning film *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality*. Kunhardt's recent projects include Emmy®-nominated *The Silent Witness*, *The Thread* Season 1 & 2, *Lincoln's Dilemma* and the award-winning documentary *Fragments of Paradise*, which premiered at the 2022 Venice Film Festival. His previous projects are *A Choice of Weapons: Inspired by Gordon Parks*, *Obama: In Pursuit of a More Perfect Union*, *The Soul of America*, the IDA Award-winning *John McCain: For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Emmy winner *King in the Wilderness*, Emmy winner *Jim: The James Foley Story* among others. Kunhardt received his education at Skidmore College and the Institute of Culinary Education. He is a founding board member and executive director of Life Stories, a division of the Kunhardt Film Foundation. He lives in Chappaqua, New York, with his wife Sarah, son Henry, and daughter Beatrice.

Kevin Maney is a bestselling author, award-winning columnist, and founding partner at Category Design Advisors (CDA). His books include the business strategy bestseller *Play Bigger*; the novel, *Red Bottom Line* set in Moscow in 1991; and the critically acclaimed biography *The Maverick and His Machine: Thomas Watson Sr. and the Making of IBM*. Kevin has collaborated on four books with General Catalyst CEO Hemant Taneja. He's contributed to *Newsweek*, *Fortune*, *The Atlantic*, *Fast Company*, CNN, and ABC News, among other media outlets. For 22 years, Kevin was a columnist, editor, and reporter at USA Today. He's appeared frequently on television and radio, including CBS Sunday Morning and NPR. As a founding partner of CDA, Kevin has helped leadership teams at hundreds of companies all over the world focus their strategic thinking through category design.

Noah Remnick is a journalist and educator based in New York City. He has a PhD in American history from the University of Oxford and teaches college courses at correctional facilities across New York through the Center for Justice at Columbia University.







Mark Salter was the late Senator John McCain's chief of staff, foreign policy advisor, and senior advisor in his presidential campaigns. Salter is the author of *The Luckiest Man*, a memoir of his experiences working for Senator McCain, with whom he co-wrote seven books. He has collaborated on numerous *New York Times* bestsellers, including most recently, *Enough* by former Trump White House staffer Cassidy Hutchinson, and has written for several publications, including the *Washington Post* and *The Atlantic*. Salter was born and raised in Davenport, Iowa, and graduated from Georgetown University in 1981. He is the father of two daughters and currently resides with his wife, Diane, on the coast of Maine.

Karin Young Shiel is an Emmy Award-winning producer of film and television. She most recently co-produced the A24 narrative feature film *Sing Sing*, starring Colman Domingo, and the award-winning short film *Behind These Walls*. As Executive Producer and Producer for Sesame Workshop, Shiel created specials and home videos, including the Grammy Award-winning ABC prime-time musical special *Elmo Saves Christmas*, which won three Emmy Awards, including Outstanding Children's Special and a WGA Award. She is active in carceral reform and efforts to bring people together across differences. She is honored to be part of the *Life Stories* team.

Nancy Steiner has been producing and directing nonfiction content for network and cable television for over 35 years. In addition to working at NBC and CBS, she has created series and one-off films for the Kunhardt Film Foundation, and most recently contributed to their comprehensive collection of online interviews, *The Thread*. Additionally Nancy created 50 short pieces for the Council on Foreign Relations about global diplomacy, currently shown in over 100 countries. She is a master certified life/executive coach at [Steiner Coaching Solutions](#), working with adults of all ages as well as entrepreneurs at the Harvard Business School.

Episode Themes

The versatility of ***The Thread*** invites creativity across disciplines. As you plan different approaches to incorporating these stories, here are some related themes discussed across episodes.

 ACTIVISM	 ART & CULTURE	 EDUCATION	 ENTREPRE-NEURSHIP	 TRAIL BLAZERS	 WRITING & POETRY
Wyatt Cenac	Wyatt Cenac	Elizabeth Daley	Chip Conley Friedman	Wyatt Cenac	Wyatt Cenac
James Cromwell	James Cromwell	Abigail Disney	Elizabeth Daley	Chip Conley	Molly Jong-Fast
Abigail Disney	Abigail Disney	Dave Ferrucci	Dave Ferrucci	Dave Ferrucci	Fab 5 Freddy
Loretta Ross	Molly Jong-Fast	Joy Harjo	Wolfgang Puck	Fab 5 Freddy	Joy Harjo
Kris Tompkins	Fab 5 Freddy	Viet Thanh Nguyen	Kris Tompkins	Joy Harjo	Suleika Jouad
Noah Wyle	Suleika Jouad	Loretta Ross		Wolfgang Puck	Viet Thanh Nguyen
	Frank Langella			Kris Tompkins	Loretta Ross
	Noah Wyle				



Episode Lessons Overview

The Episode Lessons supports educators using *The Thread* in schools and other educational settings. The series traverses a broad spectrum of life stories and experiences, making the videos and educational resources easily adaptable as multidisciplinary resources. This learning journey through storytelling can expand the scope of traditional subject matter and help students gain new perspectives on themselves and their world.

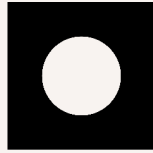
Each Episode Lesson includes:

- ▣ **Episode:** Name, occupation, title of interview
- ▣ **Interview Log:** Date, place, and name of interviewer
- ▣ **Biography:** Brief background of the interviewee
- ▣ **Episode Overview:** Overview of the scope of *The Thread* episode
- ▣ **Learning Objectives:** Relevant ELA and SS topics and themes discussed
- ▣ **Teaching Tips:** Two lesson activities for deeper engagement (First Take, *The Thread* Up Close)
- ▣ **Connections:** Discussion and writing prompts to deepen engagement and understanding
- ▣ **Activity:** Suggested engagement exercise connected to the topics and themes
- ▣ **Additional Resources:** For expanding student learning on the ideas, people, and events shared

Use the **Download a Lesson** tab provided under each episode in this guide, or access all lessons at [Teaching The Thread](#)



The Thread



Life Stories

Individual Lives. Collective Impact.

WWW.LIFESTORIES.ORG

