

VIDEO

Write With. . . Life Stories: Find Your Funny with Roz Chast

by 826 National and Life
Stories

GRADES 9–12

In this lesson, you will find the funny in your everyday life experiences and depict those moments in a cartoon.

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

About [Life Stories](#)

Life Stories is a 501(c)(3) non-profit media organization that creates and distributes documentaries, interviews, and educational resources about people whose lives inspire meaningful change. These stories address issues of civics, history, politics, the arts and culture by shining the spotlight on relatable human stories of purpose and meaning in times of change. We provide open access to all our content for communities and classrooms through our curated website and YouTube channel.

About [The Thread](#)

The Thread is a new documentary interview series exploring what it means to live a purpose-driven life through conversations with multi-faceted people who have helped shape our society. Each 30-minute episode takes viewers on a personal journey into the life of extraordinary people who candidly share their triumphs and failures. *The Thread* is available on the Life Stories website and YouTube channel, and as a podcast across all major platforms. Teaching *The Thread* brings the series into the classroom with episode

lessons designed to strengthen social emotional learning and media literacy skills and expand the scope of subject matter in Social Studies and English Language Arts. Future seasons of *The Thread* will include similar curricular support.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Introduction:

In this lesson, Roz Chast reflects on growing up as an anxious child of immigrants, with overprotective parents and an odd sense of humor. Chast discusses the challenges of aging, the importance of pursuing what you love, and how storytelling emerges as a way to make sense of life, connect with others, and express empathy. Please visit [Roz Chast: Drawing From Life](#) to see the full lesson provided by Life Stories.

Before You Begin:

- Decide which of Roz Chast’s cartoons you’d like students to view (suggested cartoons are linked in the materials section.) We recommend choosing at least three cartoons, with a mix of dialogue-based and situational humor.

STEP 1

Begin by watching a section of Roz Chast’s *The Thread* interview ([6:19 -10:37](#)). In this clip, Roz Chast says, “. . . I also liked, with cartoons, how you didn’t have to choose between drawing and writing. I liked to write also, but when I wrote without the drawings it felt sort of lopsided, and when I drew

without the words, it also felt lopsided.” Keeping this quote in mind, read at least three of Roz Chast’s cartoons—you’ll return to these cartoons in the next step, so you only need to read them for enjoyment here. After you’ve read the cartoons, answer question 1 on page 1 of the [Find Your Funny with Roz Chast—Handout](#)

STEP 2

Read Roz Chast’s cartoons again. This time, think about the ways she uses writing to convey the joke or humor in her cartoons. Answer the rest of the questions on page 1 of the handout.

STEP 3

Much of Roz Chast’s inspiration for new cartoons comes from her real-life experiences: conversations she has with family, observations she makes at the grocery store, inspiration from the TV shows she’s watching, etc. The thing all these experiences have in common is that they make her laugh.

On page 2 of the handout, reflect on this past week. Brainstorm a list of the up to ten things that have made you laugh, such as conversations you’ve had with friends or family, conversations you’ve overheard, observations you’ve made, or a new fact you learned. This list only needs to make sense to you, so feel free to use bullet points and incomplete sentences. After you’ve brainstormed your list, circle one item that you’d like to explore further.

STEP 4

Next, on page 3 of the handout , answer the questions about the brainstorm item you circled. These questions will help you dig deeper into the details of your chosen funny event.

STEP 5

Draw your cartoon on page 4 of the handout! Include the details you developed on page 3.

Note: In a cartoon, the writing and the drawing can both be simple and still make an impact! If you didn't already read Roz Chast's cartoon ["About Cookies On This Site,"](#) take a look at it now for inspiration. Try completing the elements separately (the writing first, then the drawing or vice versa), and then put the two together.

STEP 6

In the video, Roz Chast says, "What's so interesting [about creating cartoons] is discovering yourself, what feels right for you." In your writing journal, reflect on what you learned about yourself and your sense of humor from creating your cartoon.

MATERIALS

- Examples of Roz Chast's cartoons. Suggested:
 - From Roz Chast's Instagram (account *not* required)
 - [On hankies](#)
 - [On Great British Baking Show](#)
 - [On "Space Flavored"](#) and ["The Verdict"](#)
 - Published examples from *The New Yorker* (account *not* required)

- [“New for Fall”](#)
- [“About Cookies on This Site”](#)
- [“November”](#)
- [Find Your Funny with Roz Chast—Handout](#)
 - 1 copy per student
- Writing journal and writing utensil