

VIDEO

Write With. . . Life Stories: The Names We Carry with Katie Couric

by 826 National and Life
Stories

GRADES 9–12

TYPE

MEMOIR

How do the names we carry affect our identity? In this lesson, you will explore the names you carry and the impact they have on your self-image.

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 video, Katie Couric touches on her competitive nature from childhood and explores her trailblazing experience as the first female anchor of a network evening newscast. Please visit “[Katie Couric: From Tragedies to Triumphs](#)” to see the full lesson created by Life Stories.

STEP 1

This lesson invites you to consider a driving question related to identity:

- Throughout our lives, others bestow us with names: abbreviations of our full name, nicknames, pet names, names based off our personality traits. Sometimes these names describe us perfectly, and sometimes they are based on how the other person perceives us. **How do the names that others give us influence our sense of self?**

To begin, watch a clip from Katie Couric’s *The Thread* video: [6:32–8:31](#). In this clip, she reflects on a character trait that her dad first observed in her as a child—*moxie*.

After viewing, jot the answers to the following questions in your notebook, or discuss with a partner:

- Why did her dad describe her in this way?
- How does Katie feel about being labeled as someone with “moxie”?
- What does the word mean to her? How do you know?

STEP 2

Next, take a couple minutes to brainstorm a list of labels and/or character traits people have called you, or observed in you, over the years.

It can be helpful to start with positive labels and character traits, though we encourage you to also make space for names, labels, or character traits that you have neutral or negative associations with, if you feel comfortable doing so. Aim for at least ten labels, traits, or names.

Example:

- *Positive*
- *Friendly*
- *Driven*
- *Competitive*
- *Bold*
- *Moxie*
- *Brave*
- *Impatient*
- *Loud*
- *Bossy*

Once you have ten or more entries, review your list:

- Circle the entries that you feel most strongly represent who you are now, or that represent who you strive to be.
- Cross out any entries with negative associations or that you do not want to write about.
- Put a question mark next to entries that you feel don't accurately represent you.
- Put a star next to two entries you want to explore further through writing (these can be positive, negative, neutral, or inaccurate entries).

STEP 3

Next, choose one of the writing prompts below. As you write, think about how the names we are given can influence our sense of self. You may also choose to explore how you can take steps to let go of names that don't serve us and to reclaim our identities.

Prompt 1:

Our identities, or senses of self, are a **social construct**, meaning they are partly formed by our interactions and relationships with those closest to us. But we also have the individual power to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct our identities, owning the labels and names that serve us (like moxie) and shedding the ones that don't.

- **Social construct:** concepts or ideas that are created by and accepted by groups of people (society)

Write about a time when someone recognized a character trait in you that you didn't yet recognize in yourself. Some questions to consider:

- How did you feel about this new label when you first heard it?
- In what ways has this label, character trait, or name stuck with you since?
- How has this label, character trait, or name shaped your decisions or actions?
- How do you think it might serve you in the future?

Prompt 2:

Watch this segment of Katie Couric’s *The Thread* video: [8:30-10:28](#). Think about how her sense of self (someone with moxie) may have influenced her response to the challenges she faced early on in her career as a female broadcast journalist.

Now, write about a time in your life when you were faced with a challenge that you overcame.

Some questions to consider:

- Which aspects of your identity, or character traits you identified in your list, helped you to overcome this challenge and why?
- Which aspects of your identity, or character traits you identified in your list, made facing this challenge more difficult? Explain.
- In what way did the challenge itself shape who you are and influence how you understand yourself?
- Look back at the traits you crossed out or placed a question mark next to. Would you like to reclaim any of those labels to better serve your sense of self, or are you looking to shed them for good? Explain.

MATERIALS

- “Katie Couric: From Tragedies to Triumphs” – *The Thread* video
 - For prompts 1 and 2: [6:32–8:31](#)
 - For prompt 2: [8:30-10:28](#)
- Writing journal and writing utensil