Unsung Heroes
Art Project: High School Lesson Plan
Objective

Students will create a personal work of art based on their interpretation of an Unsung Hero’s character and actions. They will also reflect on their experiences by writing an artist statement that articulates their personal journey and interprets their work for the viewer. The activities will fulfill multiple parts of the National Art Standards, which are color coded in the lesson plan for easy reference.

Lesson

Step 1: Reflect

Have students take a few minutes to reflect on the following two situations in their sketchbook:

1. A time in their life in which they made a personal decision and/or sacrifice through their actions that improved the life of someone else.

2. An event in their life when they were given an opportunity to better the life/lives of others and chose not to do so through their actions.

Give your students the opportunity to share with the class their responses to the questions above. As the teacher, share your own personal experiences as an example to begin the conversation.

Define an

Step 2: Unsung Hero

Introduce the concept of an Unsung Hero. How do your students define the term “unsung”? What characteristics does a “hero” possess? Give students time to work in their sketchbooks individually to define each term. Have students then share their answers with a neighbor. Next, as a class, define “unsung” and “hero” on the board through descriptive words.

Share with the students the following definition:

Unsung Hero: One who has created positive change in history by improving the lives of others and has yet to be recognized. The individual’s impact must have stood the test of time.
Meet Unsung Hero Irena Sendler

Step 3: Take 15 minutes to watch the video, “The Irena Sendler Project Documentary: Life in a Jar,” which tells the story of a Catholic social worker who saved the lives of 2,500 Jewish children during the Holocaust and the U.S. students who discovered her unknown story decades later.

View the video here: http://lowellmilkencenter.org/irena-sendler-storytellers/

Choose Your Project Category

Step 4: Option 1: Create a work of art about an already discovered Unsung Hero, which demonstrates thoughtful, self-directed and independent ideas that are personally relevant in exploring visually (literally or abstractly) how the Unsung Hero created profound and positive change in history by improving the lives of others through his or her actions.

Visit: http://lowellmilkencenter.org/art-project-heroes/

Option 2: Create a work of art about a newly discovered Unsung Hero, which demonstrates thoughtful, self-directed and independent ideas that are personally relevant in exploring visually (literally or abstractly) how the Unsung Hero created a positive change in history by improving the lives of others through their actions.

Note: If a student plans to enter the LMC Unsung Heroes Art Competition using a newly discovered Unsung Hero subject, he or she will need to receive prior approval on the topic by emailing artcompetition@lowellmilkencenter.org.
Discover Your Hero &
Step 5: Become a Visual Storyteller

Students should invest a significant amount of time upfront either searching for their newly discovered Unsung Hero or researching the already discovered Unsung Heroes featured on LMC’s website:

Which stories move you?

Which Unsung Hero inspires you visually?

Students should become highly acquainted with their Unsung Hero’s story and the impact of his or her actions on the lives of others. To this end, students can take the following steps:

1. Deconstruct the story making note of the climax (illustration).

2. Consider any and every visual from the story, including:

   Location (maps, geography, etc.)
   Unsung Hero (images)
   Significant Objects

3. Consider using the Unsung Hero’s face while reconstructing the scene with photos for reference material.

4. Decide whether to pursue a realistic, abstract and/or nonobjective interpretation.

Step 6: Select Process & Media

Dry Media
Graphite charcoal, colored pencil, pastel, etc.

Wet Media
Acrylic, oil, watercolor, gouache, ink wash, printmaking, etc.

Digital Media/Mixed Media
Photography, graphic design, textile, paper collage, etc.
Introduce Project
Step 7: Criteria & Evaluation

Visit: http://lowellmilkencenter.org/art-project-examples/

Look through Unsung Hero art project examples. Using the rubric at the end of the lesson plan and the judging criteria below, have students work in teams to assess the example artworks and artist statements. When finished, have each group share their totals and discuss how they arrived at their scores with their peers.

Connection to Unsung Hero (40%)
Aesthetic Value (40%)
Artist Statement (20%)

Step 8: Produce Artwork

Students will need to invest a significant amount of time planning their piece. Questions they should consider include:

How will they handle their composition? (Viewpoint? Angles?)


What support will they work on? (Paper? Wood panel? Canvas? Digital?)

Always keep in mind that student work should have a direct correlation to their Unsung Hero’s story.
Set an internal deadline in your classroom and provide an opportunity for your students to discuss their work with their peers. This is an important part of the project and allows students to advocate for their Unsung Hero’s story while making meaningful connections.

Encourage students to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate their finished artworks while providing each other with constructive feedback on ways in which the works can be improved.

Use the judging rubric as a guideline when conversing about the aesthetic value and how well each work connects to the Unsung Hero’s life and/or heroic actions.

Upon completion and critiquing of artwork, students will write an artist statement composed of 500-1,000 words that articulates their vision, interprets the work for the viewer, and discusses the personal journey the project provided.

Encourage students to reflect upon their experience with the project.

Have them talk about their journey in selecting their topic.

How does their work express their hero’s character and heroic act(s)?

How did they creatively and uniquely create their work in response to process?

How has the process of creating a work changed their outlook on life?
Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.

Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.

Demonstrate understanding of the importance of balancing freedom and responsibility in the use of images, materials, tools, and equipment in the creation and circulation of creative work.

Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.

Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.

Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

Determine the relevance of criteria used by others to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.

Construct evaluations of a work of art or collection of works based on differing sets of criteria.

Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through art-making.

Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.
The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC) celebrates individuals who created positive change in history by improving the lives of others through their courageous and compassionate actions. By sharing the stories of these ordinary people who did extraordinary things, LMC seeks to inspire the hero within everyone. The Unsung Heroes Art Project carries out this mission by giving students an opportunity to generate unique, creative interpretations both literal and abstract that honor the legacies of Unsung Heroes in an array of artistic mediums.

LMC’s Annual Art Competition, open to students in grades 6-12, carries a grand prize of $7,500. Winning art projects are displayed temporarily at LMC’s Exhibit Center in Fort Scott, Kansas, and given full consideration for display in a permanent collection. To learn more about this student art competition, please visit: www.LowellMilkenCenter.org/art-competition.

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# Unsung Heroes Art Competition Scoring Rubric

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<tr>
<td><strong>Creative Interpretation of the Unsung Hero’s Story (40)</strong></td>
<td>The art demonstrates the Unsung Hero’s story. There are <strong>fine, developed details</strong> that express the hero’s character and heroic act(s) in a manner that is <strong>creative and unique</strong>.</td>
<td>The art demonstrates the Unsung Hero’s story. There are <strong>fine details</strong> that express the hero’s character and/or heroic act(s) in a <strong>creative way</strong>.</td>
<td>The art demonstrates the Unsung Hero’s story. There are <strong>some details</strong> that express the hero’s character and/or heroic act(s) in a <strong>creative way</strong>.</td>
<td>The art is creative but <strong>limited</strong> in its narrative nature. The interpretation of the hero is <strong>not fully evident</strong>.</td>
<td>The art is creative but the interpretation of the hero is <strong>not evident</strong>.</td>
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<td><strong>Aesthetic Value (40)</strong></td>
<td>The art demonstrates a <strong>high level</strong> of aesthetic value. The artist utilized the elements and principles of art and art processes in a way that created a <strong>strong sense of composition, quality, voice, execution and use of materials</strong>.</td>
<td>The art demonstrates a <strong>good level</strong> of aesthetic value. The artist utilized the elements and principles of art and art processes in a way that created a <strong>sense of composition, quality, voice, execution and use of materials</strong>.</td>
<td>The art demonstrates a <strong>some aesthetic value</strong>. The artist utilized the elements and principles of art and/or art processes in a way that created an <strong>emerging sense of composition, quality, voice, execution and use of materials</strong>.</td>
<td>The art demonstrates a <strong>limited aesthetic value</strong>. The artist utilized the elements and principles of art and/or art processes in a way that created a <strong>novice sense of composition, quality, voice, execution and use of materials</strong>.</td>
<td>The art demonstrates <strong>very limited</strong> aesthetic value. The artist utilized some of the elements and/or principles of art and/or art processes in a way that created a <strong>limited sense of composition, quality, voice, execution and use of materials</strong>.</td>
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| Points total /80                              | 15-20 | 10-15 | 5-10  | 1-5  | 0   |
| **Artist Statement (20)**                    | The artist statement is **500-1,000 words in length** and addresses the criteria in a manner that is articulate, uses language conventions with a **high level** of competency, and captures the reader’s imagination. | The artist statement is **500-1,000 words in length** and addresses the criteria in a manner that is articulate, uses language conventions with a **some level** of competency, and captures the reader’s imagination. | The artist statement is **500-1,000 words in length** and addresses most of the criteria in a manner that is articulate, uses language conventions with a **limited level** of competency, and captures the reader’s imagination. | The artist statement is not **500-1,000 words in length** and addresses some of the criteria in a manner that is articulate, uses language conventions with a **low level** of competency, and captures the reader’s imagination. | The artist **did not provide** an artist statement. |

| Points /20 |       |       |       |      |     |
| **Total Points /100** |       |       |       |      |     |

Comments: