

Middle School Lesson 4

Research Paper: Who Inspires You?



Students will write a research paper focusing on an individual that founded a volunteer organization.

Greg Mortenson is the founder of Central Asia Institute, an organization that builds schools for children in Afghanistan and Pakistan (see resource 8). Greg Mortenson is an excellent example of an individual of small means seeing a need and making a commitment to help. However, if you have a local community hero that your students would relate well to, please feel free to use that individual as an example.

Essential Questions for Students

- What impact can an individual have in the community?
- How can one individual's efforts serve to bring the community together?
- How do volunteer efforts help serve the basic needs of others?

Outcomes

- Student will evaluate how a service organization addresses the basic needs of others.
- Students will analyze the impact volunteer work has on their communities.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to locate sources and gather data for research topic.

Targeted Content Standards

- Civics – Standard 10
Understands the roles of volunteerism and organized groups in American social and political life.
- Language Arts – Standard 4
Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
- Life Skills – Thinking and Reasoning – Standard 1
Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument.

Timeline

- One class period to introduce research project and Central Asia Institute.
- Additional class periods will depend upon the amount of work assigned as homework.

Advanced Preparation/Materials Needed

- Copy of *Listen to the Wind* by Susan Roth (optional)
- Copy of *Three Cups of Tea – Young Readers Edition* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin (optional)

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Key Vocabulary

(Definitions taken from www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary and www.wikipedia.org.)

- Fact
a piece of information presented as having objective reality
- Reference
something (a sign or indication) that refers a reader or consulter to another source of information (as a book or passage)
- Research
the collecting of information about a particular subject
- Volunteer
a person who voluntarily undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service

Lesson

- Read *Listen to the Wind, Three Cups of Tea*, or a story about a local philanthropist to your students. Ask students what the human need was. What was the solution to meeting this need? Were there lots of resources immediately available?
- Ensure that students have a clear idea of what it means to volunteer. Brainstorm a list of all the volunteer organizations or projects the students have heard about.
- Ask students individually to write down five things they are interested in.
- Next, have students compare the two lists. What is on their list of interests that someone has turned into a service project? (Some examples include musicians raising money for autism, artists creating works to be auctioned at fundraisers, players selling memorabilia on eBay to benefit a charity, knitting chemo caps for cancer patients or sweaters for children in Afghanistan, reading for radio stations that serve the blind, etc.).
- After students have had the opportunity to make connections, describe the research project. The goal of the research paper is to focus on how *another person took their passion (music, art, hiking, knitting) and created a way to serve others and connect communities*.
- Ensure that all students are familiar with the Key Vocabulary (Fact, Reference, Research, and Volunteer).
- Review timelines and assessment criteria with students.

Extension Activities

- Email/write the individual (or the organization they left behind) with questions that you were not able to answer through your research.
- How have nonprofit organizations impacted the United States?
- What organizations usually respond to national disasters? How were they started?

Accommodations/Modifications

- Provide a more structured guide regarding the information to be included in the report.
- Modify due dates or report length if appropriate.
- Allow alternatives for presenting the information (for example, allow students to use oral presentations, collages, or other forms of media).

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Family Connection

- Encourage your students to talk to family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, or coaches about their experiences with volunteer organizations, either as a volunteer or a service recipient.