



Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes 
ARTEFFECT

Unsung Heroes - Introduction Visual Arts Lesson Plan

Objective

Students will create an original work of art based on their interpretation of an Unsung Hero's story, character, and actions. Students will also reflect on their experiences by writing an "Impact Statement" that articulates their journey of discovery and creative process 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 Plan

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.

Step 2: Define an Unsung Hero

Introduce students to 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: *An individual who has created positive change in history by improving the lives of others and is largely unrecognized for their contribution. The individual's impact must have stood the test of time.*



Step 3: Meet Unsung Hero Irena Sendler

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:

<https://bit.ly/Sendler-Life-in-Jar>



Step 4: Choose Your LMC Unsung Hero

Find your LMC Unsung Hero on the approved list:

<https://bit.ly/ArtEffectUnsungHeroes>

Students choose an individual from the approved list from the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes. Student can choose an individual who stands out as a role model for them and where they can make a relevant connection to the story or cause. Next, they create **a concept** for their work of art that demonstrates thoughtful, original, and creative ideas. The concept is personally relevant to the student in exploring visually (e.g., through narrative, storytelling, abstraction, portraiture) how the Unsung Hero created profound and positive change in history by improving the lives of others through his or her actions.



Step 5: Discover Your Hero & Become a Visual Storyteller

VA:Cr3.1.IIIa
VA:Cn10.1.IIa

Students should invest a significant amount of time upfront selecting an individual from the [pre-approved list of LMC Unsung Heroes](#):

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 appearance and characteristics while developing an original interpretation (source images and historical photos can be used for reference and inspiration but should not be directly copied).
4. Decide whether to pursue a realistic, abstract and/ or nonobjective interpretation.



Step 6: Select Process & Media

VA:Cr1.2.IIa

Two-dimensional

Dry Media

graphite, charcoal, colored pencil, pastel, etc.

Wet Media

acrylic, oil, watercolor, gouache, ink wash, printmaking, etc.

Mixed Media

photography, graphic design, textile, collage, paper.

Digital Media (must be printed)

Three-dimensional

sculpture, assemblage, ceramic, etc.





Step 7: Introduce Project Criteria & Evaluation

VA:Re8.1.Ia
VA:Re9.1.IIa
VA:Re9.1.IIIa

Visit the LMC website to view student award [winners](#) and [finalists](#) from previous years:

Look through ARTEFFECT student artworks on the website. Using the [Judging Rubric](#), have students work in teams to assess the example artworks and Impact Paper. When finished, have each group share their totals and discuss how they arrived at their scores with their peers. Scoring is weighted as follows:

- 🌟 Creative Interpretation (40%)
- 🌟 Aesthetic Value (40%)
- 🌟 Impact Paper (20%)



Step 8: Produce Artwork

VA:Cr1.1.IIIa
VA:Cr2.1.IIa
VA:Cr2.2.IIIa
VA:Cn10.1.IIIa

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

How will they arrange their composition? (Perspective?)

What media will they use? (Acrylic? Pen/ink? Ink and watercolors? Mixed Media?)

What material will they use for a base? (Paper? Wood panel? Canvas? Digital?)

Always keep in mind that student work should have a direct correlation to their Unsung Hero's story.





Step 9: Critique Artwork

VA:Cr3.1.IIa Set an internal deadline in your classroom and provide an opportunity for your students to discuss their artwork 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.



Step 10: Write Impact Paper

VA:Pr6.1.IIa Upon completion and critiquing of artwork, students will write an Impact Paper (about 500-1,000 words) that articulates their vision, interprets the work for the viewer, and discusses the personal journey the project provided. See full prompts to address on the [Impact Statement Outline](#). Discussion points:

VA:Cn11.1.Ia

Encourage students to reflect upon their experiences with the project.

Have students talk about their journeys in selecting their Unsung Heroes.

How do their artworks express their Unsung Hero's character traits, heroic act(s), and/or social impact?

How did they creatively and uniquely create their artworks in respect to the process?

How has the process of creating this project changed their outlook on life and their ability to impact a community or audience? How will they share their artworks with others?

National Core Arts Standards—Project Key

Creating:

- VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- VA:Cr1.2.IIa** Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
- VA:Cr2.1.IIa** Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.
- VA:Cr2.2.IIIa** 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.
- VA:Cr3.1.IIa** Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.
- VA:Cr3.1.IIIa** Reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.



Presenting:

- VA:Pr6.1.IIa** Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.

Responding:

- VA:Re8.1.Ia** Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
- VA:Re9.1.IIa** Determine the relevance of criteria used by others to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.
- VA:Re9.1.IIIa** Construct evaluations of a work of art or collection of works based on differing sets of criteria.

Connecting:

- VA:Cn10.1.IIa** Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through artmaking.
- VA:Cn10.1.IIIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.
- VA:Cn11.1.Ia** Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes **ARTEFFECT**



The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC) celebrates individuals who created positive change in history by improving the lives of others through their extraordinary actions in service to others and society. By sharing the stories of these individuals who did extraordinary things, LMC seeks to inspire the hero within everyone.

Expanding LMC's mission, ARTEFFECT invites educators and their students to explore the diverse stories of LMC Unsung Heroes and their invaluable lessons as role-models from history through the visual arts. It includes an annual competition, professional development, and exhibitions. The ARTEFFECT lesson plans support teaching and learning to generate unique, creative interpretations of these stories in an array of artistic mediums. Students are encouraged to showcase their artworks beyond the classroom to explore the potential of their art to create positive community impact and inspire social action.

The ARTEFFECT competition invites U.S. and international middle and high school students to submit high-quality art projects that creatively interpret an LMC Unsung Hero's story in a unique and compelling way accompanied by an Impact Statement. Since 2016, over 2,000 students have participated in the competition. The annual competition accepts submissions from November-May and awards top prizes to students and recognition to their teachers. To learn more about the competition, the prize categories, and the full guidelines, visit: <https://bit.ly/ArtEffect-Competition>.

Connect with ARTEFFECT educators:

Facebook: [ARTEFFECT Art Educators Facebook Group](#)
LMC Website: www.LowellMilkenCenter.org