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What is a Change Agent?

Grades 6-12



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Purpose: This activity introduces students to the concept of a change agent, and it helps students identify agents of change in history and in their own communities.

Program Link: As a part of the Agents of Change: Pioneering Women Dentists program, students will be learning about pioneering women in dentistry who acted as change agents to overcome obstacles and break down barriers for women in the dental field.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this program, students will...

- Define the term change agent
- Identify historic examples of change agents, well-known, present-day examples of change agents, and change agents within students' local communities
- Identify and discuss change agents' defining characteristics
- Complete a CNN Heroes nomination form for a change agent in their personal lives

Materials:

- [CNN Heroes Nomination Form](#)

Procedure:

1. Warm-Up:

- Have students answer the following questions:
 - How would you describe a hero?
 - Who is one of your heroes, and why?
- Review students' answers

2. Defining a Change Agent:

- Explain to students that there are different actions that cause a person to be considered a hero. Many heroes, however, are viewed as change agents.
- Ask students: What do you think of when you hear the phrase change agent?
- Work with students to come up with a definition for this term.
- Sample change agent definitions:
 - Change agents are people who help bring about or are working toward bringing about change in the world
 - Change agents are people who often overcome obstacles/stand up for what they believe in to bring about positive change

3. Identifying Change Agents:

- Tell students that now that they have a working definition for the term change agent, it is time to identify people who have been/are change agents
- Have students work together to brainstorm historic and well-known current examples of change agents
- Next, explain to students that while many historic and well-known people have acted as change agents, anyone can work to bring about positive change in the world

- To help students understand how ordinary people can act as agents of change, have students review profiles on [CNN Heroes](#). These profiles could either be printed out in advance, or if possible, the students could view these profiles as a class together digitally. Ideally, the profiles examined should include people from a range of backgrounds and age groups. For instance, CNN Heroes has a [Young Wonder](#) section that focuses on kids who are making a difference. Feel free to have students look through different profiles individually, in small groups, or as a class. Really, this activity's purpose is to give students a better idea of who might be considered a change agent in their own community based on what they read about in the profiles.
- After viewing the profiles, have students brainstorm examples of change agents from their own community/personal lives
- Once historic and local examples of change agents have been identified, have students think about and discuss the characteristics/actions these change agents showed/took to bring about change

4. **Wrap-Up:**

- As a concluding activity, have each student select a change agent from their personal lives/local community who is particularly inspiring to them
- Have the students create a CNN Heroes nomination for their selected change agent
- To do this, students need to fill out the [CNN Heroes nomination form](#) which will require them to answer the following three questions about their chosen change agent:
 - Tell us about your nominee and what is special about his/her work
 - Accomplishments and Impact: How is his/her work making a difference?
 - Why do you view your nominee as a change agent?
- The first two questions come directly from the CNN Heroes' nomination form that can be found online at: <https://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/2020/nominations/index.html>. The third question is a replacement question that helps students think through what makes a person a change agent.

5. **Extension Activity:**

- Once students have identified change agents from their personal lives and have completed a CNN Heroes nomination form, consider having students make a video nomination for their selected change agents
- While the parameters of the video nomination can vary, students should share the information that they wrote for their CNN Heroes nomination form as a part of the video

Curriculum Connections

National Social Studies Education Standards 6-12	
NSES IV	h. Work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.
NSES X	j. Recognize and interpret how the “common good” can be strengthened through various forms of citizen action.

Common Core	Writing	Speaking & Listening
6	W.6.10	SL.6.1.C
7	W.7.10	SL.7.1.C, SL.7.1.D
8	W.8.10	SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D
9-10	W.9-10.10	SL.9-10.1.C, SL.9-10.1.D
11-12	W.11-12.10	SL.11-12.1.C

Bibliography

CNN. “CNN Heroes.” Accessed August 15, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/specials/cnn-heroes>.

Southern Poverty Law Center. “Change Agents in Our Own Lives.” Teaching Tolerance. Accessed August 15, 2010. <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/change-agents-in-our-own-lives>.

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*For more information about this activity or the National Museum of Dentistry please email Patrick Cutter at pcutter@umaryland.edu or call 410-706-0600.