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Exploring the Tales of Everyday People

🔗 CI Level

🔗 Duration: 1 h

🔗 Group lesson

🔗 Age: adults

🔗 Lesson goals

Students can understand a wide range of recorded and broadcast audio material, including some non-standard usage, and identify finer points of detail including implicit attitudes and relationships between speakers.

Students can scan quickly through several sources in parallel and can identify the relevance and usefulness of particular sections for the task at hand.

🔗 Teacher tip

Ask the students to prepare electronic devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones) with access to the Internet for this lesson, if possible. In one of the tasks they will browse a website.



1

Warm-up

Exercise 1: Read the quotes. What cities could match these descriptions?

“ I love ____. The energy, the theatre, the food, the people, the parks, the museums. ”
- Unknown

“ ____ is not a city, it's a world. ”
- Iman

“ ____ is the meeting place of the peoples, the only city where you can hardly find a typical American. ”
- Djuna Barnes

“ ____ is an ugly city, a dirty city. Its climate is a scandal, its politics are used to frighten children, its traffic is madness, its competition is murderous. But there is one thing about it - once you have lived in ____ and it has become your home, no place else is good enough ”
- John Steinbeck

Do you know which city they are actually about? Have you ever been there?

2**Vocabulary****Exercise 2: Match the words with their definitions.**

1. showing sympathy and concern for others' suffering or misfortune
2. worthy of attention or notice; extraordinary or exceptional
3. full of energy, color, and life; lively
4. holding one's attention or interest; fascinating
5. having different kinds, forms, or appearances; diverse
6. unprocessed or untreated; not refined or polished; genuine and authentic
7. truthful and straightforward in speech or behavior
8. inspiring deep consideration or contemplation
9. causing feelings of happiness and contentment; touching

candid

raw

heartwarming

vibrant

various

compassionate

thought-provoking

remarkable

captivating

3**Reading****Exercise 3: Read the article and complete it with the words above.**

If you've ever spent time scrolling through social media, chances are you've come across the online blog "Humans of New York." This fascinating project began in 2010 when photographer Brandon Stanton started taking pictures of people on the streets of New York City and sharing their stories on his blog. Since then, it has grown into a global phenomenon with millions of followers on various social media platforms.

What makes "Humans of New York" so ____ (1) is its ability to capture the essence of humanity through ____ (2) photographs and personal anecdotes. Each post features a portrait of a person, accompanied by a quote or story that gives a glimpse into their life. Some posts are ____ (3), while others are heartbreaking, but all of them are ____ (4).

Through "Humans of New York," we get a glimpse into the lives of everyday people who make up the ____ (5) tapestry of New York City. We hear from immigrants, artists, businesspeople, and everyone in between. The stories are often ____ (6) and unfiltered, giving us a unique perspective on the struggles and triumphs of ordinary people.

One of the most ____ (7) things about "Humans of New York" is how it has evolved over the years. What started as a simple photo blog has become a platform for social change. Stanton has used his platform to raise awareness and funds for ____ (8) causes, including education, healthcare, and human rights. His work has inspired countless people around the world to take action and make a difference in their communities.

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But at its core, "Humans of New York" is still about the people. It reminds us that no matter where we come from or what our circumstances may be, we all have a story to tell. It encourages us to listen to one another, to empathize with each other's struggles, and to celebrate each other's triumphs.

In a world that can often feel divided and disconnected, "Humans of New York" serves as a powerful reminder of our shared humanity. It reminds us that we are all in this together, and that by sharing our stories, we can create a more _____(9) and understanding world.

What do you think of this project?

4

Listening

Exercise 4: Watch the video about the author of HONY and answer the questions.

1. What do the most meaningful and impactful stories tend to revolve around?
2. How many portraits has the speaker taken of people in New York City?
3. What does the speaker look for in people when taking their photograph?
4. What does the speaker do if someone contacts them after a photo has been posted and asks for it to be removed?
5. How has Humans of New York evolved over time?
6. What tone does Humans of New York have compared to other places on the internet?



5

Speaking

Exercise 5: Scroll through the HONY website and choose a story that caught your attention for some reason. Share it with the group and explain why you chose this story.



6

Home project

Imagine you were interviewed by HONY, what would you talk about in your interview? Prepare a project with your portrait and a story you would like to share. You can answer the same questions as the heroes of the blog (choose a question from the list, from the website or invent your own).

- What was the happiest moment of your life?
- Do you remember the saddest moment of your life?
- What is your greatest struggle right now?
- What would you say about your perception in particular has changed the most from the age of 21?
- Who are you?



Correct answers and teaching tips

Exercise 1: Read the quotes. What cities could match these descriptions?

Created in the “Find Quotes” tool

The quotes are actually about New York.

Exercise 2: Match the words with their definitions.

Created in the “Word-definition matching” tool

Correct answers:

1. compassionate
2. remarkable
3. vibrant
4. captivating
5. various
6. raw
7. candid
8. thought-provoking
9. heartwarming

Exercise 3: Read the article and complete it with the words above.

The text was created in the “Create a text” tool -> Descriptive article -> Advanced
The exercise was created in the “Fill in the gap” tool

Correct answers:

1. captivating
2. candid
3. heartwarming
4. thought-provoking
5. vibrant
6. raw
7. remarkable
8. various
9. compassionate

Exercise 4: Watch the video about the author of HONY and answer the questions.

Created in the “YouTube video with questions” tool -> Open questions

Correct answers:

1. The most meaningful and impactful stories tend to revolve around a certain emotion, such as extreme anger, fear, sadness, or happiness.
2. The speaker has taken over 5000 portraits of people around New York City.
3. The speaker looks for people who are willing to tell a story and have a conversation with him/her.
4. If someone contacts the speaker before a photo has been posted and asks for it to be removed, the speaker never posts it. If someone contacts the speaker after a photo has been posted and asks for it to be removed, the speaker always removes it.
5. Humans of New York has evolved to become much more about storytelling in addition to photography.
6. Humans of New York has a very supportive, celebratory tone compared to other places on the internet.

Supplement

Video transcript

Created in the "Video transcript" tool

What I'm looking for is a story, always looking for a story. You'll find that the stories in people's lives, the ones that are the most meaningful and impactful and interesting, tend to revolve around a certain emotion, whether that be extreme anger, extreme fear, extreme sadness, extreme happiness.

"Can I get one with you looking here? Yeah, just like that."

I've taken over 5,000 portraits of people around New York City, and I find out a little bit about everyone I photograph.

Do you remember the saddest moment of your life? What is your greatest struggle right now? What would you say about your perception in particular has changed the most from the age of 21?

I was traveling around the different cities just doing photography, and I was naming my collections of photos just on my personal Facebook page after my first impressions of the city. Philadelphia was "Bricks and Flags". Pittsburgh was "Yellow Steel Bridges". And then I got to New York, and I just remember my first impression was all the people. And so I just named it "Humans of New York".

Now that Humans of New York has become much more about storytelling in addition to the photography, I look for people that I'm able to talk to.

"The saddest moment of my life, when my father left me. Him and my mom were never married. She was the other woman."

Somebody's willingness to let me photograph them and willingness to tell me a story has nothing to do with the words I say. It all has to do with the energy I'm giving off. I'm not trying to get this quote to pair with this photograph. It might start like that, but then the moment I start talking to the person, that drops away. And it's just two people having a conversation.

"Who are you? Average New Yorker."

"I'm a Vietnam-era veteran. United States Army, field artillery operations and intelligence. Staff Sergeant E6. Battalion chemical, biological, radiological warfare."

"Hold on. I've got to write this down."

You know, I feel very protective and very thankful to the people who allow me to take their photographs. If somebody does not have a pleasant experience, if they contact me before I put my picture up and say I changed my mind, I never post. And if they contact me after I put up the photo and said I changed my mind, I always remove it.

"I like that. Is there anything that you just told me that you don't want me to share? You can share everything. I like your story. Let's look at your picture, see if we did... Yeah, it's a great shot, man. It's kind of epic. My man. Thank you so much. That's a great story. Your picture will be up in like the next two or three days. What's the name of the website? Humans of New York."

As compared to other places on the internet, I think Humans of New York has a very, very kind of warm-hearted, very supportive, celebratory tone to it.

"Hi. Can I ask you for a quick... Yeah, sure. All right. All right. You taking... and then tell me your name. Edward. Edward. Okay. All right. Ready? Hey, Rachel. This is Brandon from Humans of New York. I'm here with my man, Edward, and we just want to say happy birthday. Yeah. All right. Thank you. No problem. Have a great day. Thanks, Edward."

One thing that always kind of makes me smile is when people write to me and say, oh, all the time now I'm walking by and I say, oh, that's such a honeymoment, or that's a dahoney picture.