

### ■ Lesson 1

## A Survey of Amazing Americans

With your group, log on to the Library of Congress's Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>) website and spend some time exploring the biographies of the famous Americans featured here.

As a group, answer the following questions:

- How many people are on the list?
- How many men? How many women?
- How many were born in the 1600s? 1700s? 1800s? 1900s?
- How many are still living?
- How many of the Amazing Americans would you say belong in each category below?
  - African-Americans
  - Artists
  - Entertainers
  - Freedom Fighters (people who worked for freedom or equal rights)
  - Humanitarians (people who worked to help others)
  - Inventors / Industrialists
  - Military Heroes
  - Native Americans
  - Presidents and Other Politicians
  - Writers
- What categories would you say are missing from Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>)?

Now gather together as a class and discuss the kind of people the Library of Congress considers Amazing Americans.

You probably noticed that the individuals profiled on Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>) are quite different from one another. How do you think the creators of this website decided whom to include? How did they

decide what information and graphics to use? Who would you like to see added to this list in the future? What information and graphics would you include?

This WebQuest challenges you to make recommendations to the Librarian of Congress about some Americans to add to Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>). Your letter to the Librarian of Congress, which your teacher will send by e-mail via the website, will:

- Recommend the inclusion of an American of interest to young people your age.
- Contain a specific proposal for an online presentation (information and graphics) you believe will be of interest to young people.
- Include an explanation of why the subject you chose is an Amazing American.
- Include graphics you have made or graphics from U.S. government websites available through EDSITEment.

## ■ Lesson 2

### What Makes an Amazing American?

Your teacher will assign your group one to three Amazing Americans to read about. In a few sentences, explain why you think the Library of Congress chose each person. In your group, make a list of the criteria you think the Library of Congress uses to pick Amazing Americans.

Now gather together as a class and agree on the criteria you believe the Library of Congress uses in selecting people to nominate for Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>). These are the criteria you will use.

## ■ Lesson 3

### Looking Closely at Amazing Americans

Your next challenge: Work with your group to find as many of the following graphic and text examples within Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>) as you can, without ever using two examples from the same person's profile!

## **Graphics**

- A historic cartoon
- A photo of an individual's childhood home
- A digital version of a document (newspaper, a written statement)
- A historical drawing
- Something written in the handwriting of an individual being profiled
- A map
- Media: a sound clip or video
- A photo of someone other than an individual being profiled
- A photo of an individual being profiled
- A portrait of an individual being profiled
- A poster
- Sheet music
- Your idea: one more graphics feature not listed here

## **Text**

- Dates and place of birth and death
- A story about an individual's childhood
- A "hook" (something unique to an individual that is used to get the reader's attention)
- A question at the end of one page that is answered at the beginning of the next page
- A quiz question
- Information on how an individual's career started
- Information on how an individual's talents or good deeds became recognized
- A story about a setback or failure in an individual's life
- The story of an individual's greatest achievement
- Your idea: one more text feature not listed here

As a class, discuss the features of the [Meet Amazing Americans](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa) (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>) profiles. Make a summary of the features the Library of Congress likes to include in its biographies.

## **Lesson 4**

### **Brainstorming Amazing Americans**

As a class, hold a brainstorming session. How many famous individuals can you list who might be considered Amazing Americans?

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

Spend some time as a class analyzing your list. How many people did you brainstorm? How many men? women? African Americans? And so on.... Can you think of others who are not included on the list?

## ■ Lesson 5

### Your Own Amazing American

The time has come to make your nomination. Work with your group to select the famous person you want to nominate as an Amazing American. Who do you think deserves to be included? Your teacher will tell you how much time you have to decide.

## ■ Lesson 6

### The Profile of an Amazing American

Using resources on the Web, you will now put together an article on your Amazing American nominee. The following elements are required (your teacher will tell you when each is due):

- Date and place of birth and death
- A “hook” (something unique about the individual that is used to get the reader’s attention)
- The story of the individual’s greatest achievement

Your teacher will tell you how many of the following you must complete and what the due dates are:

- A story about the individual’s childhood
- A question at the end of one page that is answered at the beginning of the next page
- A quiz question
- Information on how the individual’s career started
- Information on how the individual’s talents or good deeds became recognized
- A story about a setback or failure in the individual’s life
- Your idea: one more text feature not listed here

Keep your piece interesting by thinking of it as a summary of a person’s greatest achievements and then including a few stories (known as anecdotes) about him/her. Most of the Meet Amazing Americans (<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa>)

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

profiles contain about three stories from the life of the subject. Coming up with a “hook” will help you organize your article. What really surprised you about the life of this individual?

If you come across an interesting graphic while searching for information, make sure you can easily locate it again. You can bookmark the page on which it appears, download the graphic onto a disk, or write down the URL (website address) of the page on which the graphic appears.

Select graphics that help make your article more interesting. Review the kinds of graphics you found in Lesson 3. Select graphics that go along well with your anecdotes.

**(Note:** All graphics must be original or come from government sites — .gov — among the EDSITEment resources.)

## ■ **Mini-Lesson**

### **Downloading Text and Graphics**

You can save a file you find on the Web to your hard drive or to a disk. The exact steps may depend on which application you use and the kind of computer you have. The following instructions apply to both Netscape and Internet Explorer Web browsers.

#### **Windows PC:**

##### *Text*

- Highlight a block of text using your mouse.
- From the EDIT menu on the tool bar, select “Copy” (or hit CTRL-C on your keyboard).
- Open a blank document in a word processing program.
- From the EDIT menu on the tool bar, select “Paste” (or hit CTRL-V on your keyboard).
- Save the file in an appropriate location, and give it a name that will help you find it easily.

##### *Graphics*

- With the cursor arrow on the image, click the right-hand button on the mouse.
- From the menu, select “Save this Image As...”
- Save the file in an appropriate location (you can give the file a new name, if you like).

## Macintosh:

### *Text*

- Highlight a block of text using your mouse.
- From the EDIT menu on the tool bar, select “Copy” (or hit the Command/Apple key + C on your keyboard).
- Open a blank document in a word processing program.
- From the EDIT menu on the tool bar, select “Paste” (or hit the Command/Apple key + V on your keyboard).
- Save the file in an appropriate location, and give it a name that will help you find it easily.

### *Graphics*

- Click and drag an image to your desktop, or click the mouse on the desired image and hold it until a pop-up menu appears.
- Save the file in an appropriate location (you can give the file a new name, if you like).

## ■ Mini-Lesson

### **Using the Search Function on Websites**

Some EDSITEment resources have search functions that you might not be familiar with. Here are instructions for using the search functions on two such websites:

#### American Memory Project (Library of Congress) (<http://memory.loc.gov/>)

- From the home page, select “Search.”
- Note the choices on the Search Page. For example, on the right-hand side of the page, you can limit the search to photos and prints by clicking on “Photos and Prints.”
- Try searching for Sheet Music. Use the term “Abraham Lincoln.”
- Now try searching for your Amazing American.

#### The Digital Classroom (National Archives and Records Administration)

##### (<http://www.nara.gov/education/>)

- From the home page, select “NAIL” (bottom left-hand corner).
- Next, choose “Search for Archival Holdings.”
- Select “NAIL Digital Copies Search.”
- Try entering a search term in different ways. Click “Submit Search” to find out quickly if there are any entries; click “Display Results” to see the results.  
(**Note:** This can be slow at times, because thumbnails of graphics are displayed.)
- Try searching for your Amazing American.

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

## ■ **Lesson 7**

### **An Amazing Cover Letter**

As a group, compose a cover letter to introduce yourselves, make your nomination, and describe how you selected your nominee. Attach your profile. Remember, only your teacher can send your letter and profile.

## ■ **Lesson 8**

### **The Amazing Americans Nominations Ceremony**

The time is nearing for announcing the class's nominations and sharing the information and graphics you chose. Your teacher will tell you when the Amazing Americans Nominations Ceremony will be held and who will be invited to attend.

You are required to:

- Briefly introduce your nominee and highlight the portions of his/her life about which you have written.
- Distribute some copies of what you are going to send to the Librarian of Congress.
- Argue for the inclusion of your nominee in a "Hall of Amazing Americans."
- Be prepared to answer questions about your nominee and the materials you have developed.
- Clearly demonstrate the contributions of all your group members.

## ■ **Lesson 9**

### **Amazing Americans in Hyperspace**

It's time for your teacher to send the letters and profiles to the Librarian of Congress at [americaslibrary@loc.gov](mailto:americaslibrary@loc.gov)!

## ■ Lesson 10

### A Class of Amazing Americans

It took a lot of work to put together the proposals and presentations you completed. Your whole class must consist of some Amazing Americans! As a class, discuss the Amazing Americans you selected. Whom did you learn about that was new to you? Did you learn something new about any familiar people? What personal qualities does it appear to take to become an Amazing American? Did you find some individuals to be more amazing than others?

Brainstorm a list of the tasks you completed and the skills required to complete them. Help your teacher understand what could have made this assignment easier for you, so the activity can be even better for the next class.