

Lesson Fourteen - What's Your Message?

“ I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
– Maya Angelou ”

CREATIVE ACTIVITY - Write the Message of Your Life

Lesson Intention:

As the final lesson in this curriculum, students are encouraged to feel hopeful and enthusiastic about their future. The first half of the curriculum focused on honoring emotions and learning to express them in healthy ways. The second half of the curriculum offered students various methods that they can draw on to feel a greater sense of satisfaction and confidence in their emotional well-being. **Now, as a concluding lesson, students consider the mark they want to make on the world.** Using a story from Mahatma Gandhi, students are invited to answer the question: What's your message?

Learning Goals:

- Develop a hopeful vision for the future.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video \(1\) - Kevin Love](#)
- [Additional Videos \(5\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)

In Preparation for Lesson:

Prior to teaching the lesson, **watch the guest artist video** and create your own message to share with your students.

Have thick markers and blank printer paper available to students.

Featured Video:

Kevin Love shares his message for his life – that he will leave a legacy that future generations can build upon.

Additional Videos:

1. Students share the message of their life in this compilation video.
2. Meaghan Birnie and Clare Kehoe – founders of Morgan’s Message – describe the way they channeled the pain from the loss of their friend Morgan into an organization that focuses on the importance of mental health
3. Barry Dunning, a college basketball player, shares his life message: “to strive to be the best version of himself each day.”
4. Fiona shares a personal mission statement about courage that was inspired by a community service trip.
5. Ashton and Carter Ryan share their messages that describe how they hope to positively impact others in their lives.

Lesson Plan:

Display the ‘welcome slide’ from the Lesson 14 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself and meaningful for your students.

Launching the Lesson:

** Slide 2*

Students are encouraged to feel hopeful and excited about their lives. A method is shared in order to help students think about their core values and ground their future in a sense of meaning and purpose. At the start of the lesson, offer students a wider perspective on the curriculum as a whole, emphasizing the key ideas of expressing emotions when they arise, while also drawing on methods that offer support and add to their sense of well-being. Lead students in a short experiment by asking them to zoom ahead 30 years in the future to envision the contribution that a future version of themselves has made in the world. Play a short video from Kevin Love who describes the contribution he hopes to make in his life.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Today is our final day of thinking about emotions, thoughts, and supportive methods that will be helpful for you when life feels really complicated and hard. We have looked at different ways to express emotions through creativity. We learned more about the way thoughts impact emotions and we practiced methods for questioning those thoughts. We hopefully honed some skills that will help you feel comfortable and confident when you next feel difficult emotions that we all experience. Today, during this final activity, we will talk about how we can feel a sense of purpose and meaning for our lives. Often, when we talk about purpose, we talk about a career or a family. I want to encourage you to think about this in a new way – to think about meaning and purpose from the standpoint of who you want to be in the world, and the way you want to be helpful. Rather than thinking of what you want to be when you grow up, you can consider *how* you want to be when you grow up. You can have a big impact on the world, simply by the way you make other people feel when you interact with them.

**Slide 3*

I want to share a story that will help you start to think about this idea. This story is about Gandhi, the Indian activist who led a nonviolent resistance and inspired civil rights movements around the world. Once, Gandhi was boarding a plane and a reporter yelled to him, “Gandhi, what’s your message?” Gandhi turned around and said, “My life is my message.” This is a new way to think about the impact of your life. I want you to consider what the message of your life might be. For example, my message would be (share your message with students). You will get to write your own message too. But first, let’s watch a short video of Kevin Love describing his message.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Guest Artist Video:

Kevin describes the legacy he wants to leave behind and what he would like the message of his life to be.

Introducing the Creative Activity:

**Slide 3*

Reiterate the question “What’s your message?” and the opportunity it provides to consider the impact students want their lives to have on the world. Lead students in a short activity – imagining themselves 30 years into the future. Prompt students to write their sentence from this perspective. What has become most important to them? What do they stand for? What have they contributed to the world? Encourage students to take a few minutes to write their sentence on a 8×11 sheet of paper.

Example of What You Could Say:

“In the video, Kevin shared what he wants the message of his life to be by answering the question “What’s your sentence?” Now it’s your turn to do this.

We will start by doing a short experiment together to see if there is a sentence that can help inspire and guide you in your life. I want you to fast-forward 30 years in your mind. Imagine this version of yourself – how old are you now? You’re still you, but it’s you in the future. From the perspective of this older version of you, I want you to think about the life you led for the past 30 years. What do you hope you contributed to the world? Whom have you helped? Whom have you impacted? What did you stand for? Take just a moment to think about this. (Pause for a few seconds and let students imagine this version of themselves in the future). Okay, from this perspective, from the perspective of “future you” think of just one single sentence that will explain the way you lived your life or the impact you had on people around you over the past 30 years. Here are a few examples that can guide you. A doctor or therapist might say: “She helped people heal.” A painter might say “He found beauty everywhere he went.” Or maybe your sentence isn’t tied to a profession, maybe it simply describes the way you live your life. “She always looked for the good in people.” Or “She was generous with time and money.” Have fun with this and use your imagination. Write your sentence on the blank sheet of paper that I handed out. We’ll come together again to share our sentences in a few minutes.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

Students share their messages in a brief discussion. Students reflect on the way it felt to envision their future. Did anyone develop a new plan for their lives that differed significantly than the way they usually think about their future? As always, it is the student's choice if they would like to share their sentence with the class. After a quick discussion, there are two options to create a group art project as the culminating portion of this lesson: the sentences the students wrote will be combined to form a group montage or group video of each of their messages.

One option is to invite students to take pictures holding up their sheet of paper with their message written on it. These should be close up photos where the sentence is clearly legible. Students can break up in pairs and then email their photos either to the teacher, or to one student who has volunteered to compile the photos in a PowerPoint presentation (or another app of preference) and choose music to accompany the PowerPoint. Play the PowerPoint video for the class so that everyone can view each other's messages as a group. If a student does not want to be photographed, they can simply hold up their message.

Another option is to videotape the students holding up their messages. Invite students to form a line and take turns walking past the camera as you record them. Choose a simple background like a blackboard or a white board. Students should pause for a few seconds to show their sign, but they can also be a little silly as they exit. Be sure they stand still long enough to be able to read their sign. Next, set the video to music and play this video for the class.

The intention is that because this activity is brief, that there will be time to compile all of the students' messages, and at the end of this lesson, the class is viewing the video or slideshow together as a culminating moment.

Example of What You Could Say:

"I would like to know, how did the process of thinking 30 years into the future feel for you? Did anyone develop a new plan for their lives that differed significantly than the way you usually think about your future?"

Instead of sharing what we wrote individually, we are going to do something a bit different because this is the last lesson in our curriculum. We are going to compile all of our messages into a group project and then watch it together." (Describe to students the way you have chosen to have them compile their messages. After they have shared their messages, as the video or slideshow is being created, students will have time to complete a brief reflection on the curriculum.)

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Lesson Closure:

Play the video or PowerPoint for the students. Encourage students to reflect on all the work they have done learning to be vulnerable and understanding that everyone is going through something you can't see.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Let's watch the presentation/video of your messages. (Play the compiled messages.) This is the completion of our time focusing on Kevin Love's social emotional learning curriculum. I want you to take a moment right now to reflect on all of the work you have done: (Please use specific examples of how you feel you have grown as a teacher or counselor as you've done this work, and how appreciative you feel of the students for their willingness to be vulnerable in sharing their stories and expressing their emotions. Please also incorporate the message that you will continue to be available to your students as a trusted adult and resource in their lives.)"

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Supplemental Information:

If you or your students would like to learn more about the ideas in this lesson, additional resources and third party links are included below.

1. [In this short clip](#), Oprah Winfrey shares her answer to the question: "What's Your Sentence."