



# WORK IT, GIRL: BECOME A LEADER LIKE MICHELLE OBAMA - TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Ages: 8 to 12 (Grades: 3 to 7)

64 Pages

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## Learning Objective

Michelle Obama grew up in a close-knit family that was not wealthy, yet rich in love and affection. Their faith in her helped define her faith in her own abilities – and what abilities! Her love of learning combined with determination helped her excel in school and get into Princeton and Harvard. Her willingness to embrace and learn from challenges strengthened her sense of self and helped her become a role model for millions of people as First Lady of the United States! The book features ten key lessons Michelle learned throughout life that will help students realize that belief in themselves, honesty, and optimism can help them become leaders too, no matter what their background.

## Essential Questions in This Unit

1. What makes Michelle Obama famous?
2. What was Michelle's early life like?
3. Which of her family members had the biggest influence on Michelle?
4. How did Michelle reframe negative situations to her advantage?
5. Why was Michelle uneasy about her husband running for President of the United States?
6. What qualities does Michelle possess that make her such a successful leader?



## Classroom Discussion Topics

1. When young Michelle explains to a university advisor that she wants to go to Princeton, she is told, “I’m not sure...you’re Princeton material.” (p. 13) Ask the class why they think the university advisor told her that. Have any of the students ever been told they couldn’t do something they wanted to? How did they react to that situation? Ask them if they think anyone else knows them better than they know themselves, and why.
2. Michelle’s Aunt Robbie and her father, Fraser, were extremely important to her. Ask the class how they think those family members affected Michelle’s sense of self. Ask if they have family members or others who are important in their lives in a similar way, and to briefly explain their importance.
3. As a young graduate just starting out in her job, the book explains that, “All [Michelle] wanted was for her loved ones to see she was an adult with absolutely no problems.” Ask the class why they think that was important to her. Can they list any reasons why that might not be the healthiest way to think?
4. In her job with Public Allies, Michelle needed to find young people who showed promise to make real change in the world. In describing her philosophy, the book states “Potential could not be bought or sold.” (p. 36) What do the students think that phrase means? Do they agree with it? Can they list ways to identify and encourage potential in others?

## Student Activities

1. Pages 14-15 include images of Michelle with phrases of what she likes or admires about herself. Have the class identify and write down qualities about themselves that are positive or admirable, even if they might not seem “cool.” You can post these lists in the classroom or have students take them home and hang them where they can see them regularly.
2. Ask the class to consider the illustration on pages 22-23. What is happening? Using that illustration as inspiration, have the class make their own drawing of who they are now, and a shadow of who or what they hope to become.



3. On page 30, Michelle starts writing in a journal. Ask the students to try journaling for a week. Afterwards, ask them to describe their experiences. Did they find the exercise helpful in any way? Were any aspects of this project difficult or challenging? Do they think they will keep journaling?
4. As First Lady of the United States, Michelle made many inspiring public speeches. Have the class consider what qualities make an effective speech. Using those qualities as a guideline, ask them to write their own speeches. You can select topics that are important to Michelle, such as the positive effects of exercise and healthy food for kids, the ways in which challenges can actually be opportunities, the importance of looking beyond wealth and privilege when trying to understand people, etc., or any other topics that are important to your students. Set up a podium area in the classroom, and let the students speak!

