



WORK IT, GIRL: RUN THE SHOW LIKE CEO OPRAH WINFREY - TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Learning Objective

Growing up poor in the deep south, Oprah Winfrey was lucky that her grandmother, Hattie May, supported her love of learning and skill at public speaking. This encouragement bolstered confidence in Oprah that, someday, she might be able to achieve something great. Achieve, she did. Never letting adversity stop her, Oprah grew to become host of the highest-rated TV talk show in history, an actress, a producer, and the CEO of a media empire. This engaging addition to the Work It, Girl series shares Oprah's story, one that will inspire students to view challenges not as detriments, but rather opportunities to learn. The book features ten essential lessons from Oprah's life that emphasize the values of hard work, boldness, and intention. Complete with striking paper cut style illustrations, this book encourages students to dream big, take chances, and make their dreams come true!

Essential Questions in This Unit

1. Why is Oprah Winfrey famous?
2. What challenges did Oprah face in her childhood?
3. Who encouraged Oprah as a young girl?
4. How did Oprah react when she experienced rejection?
5. What personality traits did Oprah possess that helped her become so successful?
6. Even though her talk show is over, how does Oprah continue to reach and inspire people?



Classroom Discussion Topics

1. On page 26-27 Oprah says, “Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don’t fight them. Just find a new way to stand.” Ask the students what they think she meant by this. Have any of them had to overcome a major challenge? How did they deal with it? What qualities did Oprah display in the book that helped her overcome her own challenges?
2. When she was young, Oprah was very poor. When she grew up and went to the home of her producer, Arlene Weiner, she “determined then that’s what really rich is: being able to have six trees in your yard” (p. 28). Ask the class why they think Oprah thought having six trees makes a person rich. Have them consider and explain their own definitions of what it means to be “rich.”
3. As described in the book: “Instead of saying ‘I don’t care what you say, it’s my show,’ Oprah started inviting people with different views to come and talk to her” (p. 41). Ask the class why they think it was important to Oprah to hear different views. Have students describe the ways it can be helpful to consider other points of view.
4. After Oprah’s show became successful, she started having celebrities as guests. Ask the class why, then, they think “it was actually the regular people like you and me that her audience loved hearing about and listening to the most?” (p. 44).

Student Activities

1. Of all of Oprah’s many skills, two of the most important were being a good communicator and a good listener. However, these skills aren’t always easy to master. Have the class split into groups of five to play a blind drawing game wherein a team of four has to instruct the fifth member to draw an item. They can only describe it, they can’t say what it is! You can pre-make some pieces of paper with things like “octopus” or “pizza” on them and have five ideas ready per group. The students then take turns until each person on the team has had a chance to be the artist. Come back together as a group to discuss why Oprah’s communication and listening skills are so important. What challenges did the students discover when it came to trying to convey ideas? What about the challenges they faced as an artist, trying to understand what others were communicating? Why is listening to even the smallest details so important?



2. In the book, Oprah enjoys speaking in public and never feels nervous about it. Arrange a public speaking exercise in class. Choose a story and ask students who are comfortable with it to stand up and read a paragraph aloud in front of the class. You can set up a podium to make things more formal. After the exercise, ask these students about their experiences. Were they nervous to speak, or were they confident? Ask the group why they think it's so easy for Oprah to speak publicly without being nervous. What are some techniques the students who spoke used to feel comfortable?
3. Put on your own talk show! Ask the class to consider the various elements of a talk show like Oprah's. You need a producer, camera people, show guests, an audience, and, of course, a host! What will the show theme be? Who will be the guests? What questions will the host ask? Will there be commercial breaks? Once these details are finalized, create a mock studio in the classroom and let the students go!
4. As a young girl, Oprah was nurtured and encouraged by her grandmother, Hattie May. Ask the students to think about their own families and friends. Has anyone helped them in a special way? Ask them to write a description of the person: how has this person helped, encouraged, inspired, or influenced them? What lasting influences do they hope this person will have? They can even illustrate their work with a paper cut portrait!

