

# How Does Photography Define Celebrity?

Grade Level 9-12

## NCTE and IRA Standards for the English Language Arts

(For use with “Photography Changes What We Want–Photography Changes Our Desire for Celebrity and Glamour” <http://click.si.edu/Story.aspx?story=41>)

**Standards (from NCTE <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm> and IRA [http://www.reading.org/resources/issues/reports/learning\\_standards.html](http://www.reading.org/resources/issues/reports/learning_standards.html))**

- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

### Objectives

- Students will read the essay “Photography Changes Our Desire for Celebrity and Glamour,” by Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery curator Amy Henderson.
- Students will view photographs of celebrities.
- Students will explore how photography plays a central role in creating and spreading celebrity status.
- Students will identify the various places where images of celebrities are encountered (television, magazines, movie posters, etc.).
- Students will categorize images of celebrities based on different criteria.
- Students will explore and write about the concept of celebrity.
- Students will determine how they wish to be defined. They may submit their work to the Smithsonian Photography Initiative (SPI).
- Students will use viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media/photographs (from McREL [http://www.frankwbaker.com/mcrel\\_photography.htm](http://www.frankwbaker.com/mcrel_photography.htm)).

### Time

One or two 50-minute class periods

## Materials

- Computers with Internet access or handouts of “Photography Changes Our Desire for Celebrity and Glamour”
- Writing journals and pencils or pens
- 8 ½” x 11” copy (number to be determined by teacher) of the lead image of Veronica Lake from the Henderson essay on *click! photography changes everything*
- Four sets of 8 ½” x 11” copies of images 1–5, 12, 14–16, and 18
- Copies of magazines or cutouts of photographs/advertisements from magazines that are appropriate for your students
- Digital camera(s), or cell phone cameras if your school allows their use

## Additional Teacher Resources

Teachers may find it useful to read the following to deepen their background knowledge and concept of celebrity:

Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York, Vintage Books, 1992. First published by New York: Harper, 1964. ISBN-10: 0679741801 ISBN-13: 978-0679741800

Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997. First published by New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. ISBN-10: 0679776303 ISBN-13: 978-0679776307

Gamson, Joshua. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. ISBN-10: 0520083539 ISBN-13: 978-0520083530

## Lesson

Warm-Up: Discussion Questions

The discussion can revolve around the age-old questions: *What do you want to be when you grow up?* and *How do you want to be remembered?* Or you might pose these questions:

- *What is celebrity? Is there a difference between fame and celebrity? What makes someone worth celebrating, emulating, or remembering?*
- *What are the popular-culture standards for celebrity?*
- *Do celebrities influence what you value?*
- *Has a celebrity endorsement of a product ever influenced you to buy a specific item? If so, did the product live up to your expectations? Why or why not?*
- *Are celebrities always in control of their own image? Explain your thinking.*
- *The artist Andy Warhol once said, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." What is the difference between a celebrity and someone who is experiencing their 15 minutes of fame? Is fame longer lasting than celebrity?*

### **Student Activity: Photo Analysis**

- Direct the students to “Photography Changes Our Desire for Celebrity and Glamour” on the website *click! photography changes everything* or distribute handouts of the essay.
- Give students time to read the essay and to examine the Veronica Lake and the related images (specifically, photographs 1–5, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 18).
- As they examine the images, ask students to record in their writing journals any words that come to mind.
- Divide the class into four groups and give each group a set of photocopies of the images.
- Give the students time to classify the images into the following categories: Glamour Shots, Heroes and Heroines, and Product Marketing. The students may decide that the images belong in more than one category, but should explain their decisions. They may also use classroom computers to do quick research to learn more about the celebrities.
- Have students compare the words they recorded in their journals for the images. Each group should select one word that best defines the subject of each photograph.
- Ask that each group select a reporter to share with the class their categorization decisions and the reasons for them and the one word they chose to describe each image. It may be helpful to let students tape their photocopies (in their category groupings) to a wall so that their classmates can better understand each group’s decision-making process.
- Distribute the magazines or magazine cutouts to each group. Each group should receive at least two of these images.
- Ask students to add their two magazine images to their Glamour Shots, Heroes and Heroines, or Product Marketing groupings. They can use their writing journals to record similarities and differences between the modern images and the exhibit images. Have each group complete the Photo Analysis Worksheet for the two magazine images.
- Consider letting the students take their own “glamour shots” in the classroom with a digital or cell phone camera.

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## Photo Analysis Worksheet

Student Name:	Modern Image #1	Modern Image #2
Who is depicted in the photograph? What makes that person a celebrity?		
What is the purpose of the photograph? What is the photograph's unspoken message?		
What level of control do you think the person in the photograph had over the way her/his image is presented? How can you tell?		
What words come to mind when viewing this photograph?		
Would you change anything about the image if you were the photographer? If so, what? Why?		
Would you change anything about the photograph if you were the subject of the photograph? If so, what? Why?		

**Assessment**

Have students write a short essay/extended constructed response (100-150 words) in response to these questions:

- *What role does photography play in creating our desire for glamour and celebrity?*
- *Are still photographs as powerful as moving images for the purpose of establishing someone as a celebrity?*
- Tell students that their responses will be graded for both content and conventions (grammar, punctuation, usage, capitalization, and spelling).
- With their consent, send the students' photographs, labels, and essays to the Smithsonian Photography Initiative for use the development of future educational programs. Please mail submissions to Smithsonian Photography Initiative/PO Box 37012, MRC-518/Washington, DC 20013-7012.

### **Extension 1: Create a Classroom Magazine of Glamour Shots**

- Have each student choose an existing product that he or she would like to “endorse” in a glamour shot. This can be done in partner pairs or small groups. The glamour shots can feature individual students or the pairs/small groups.
- Give students time to draw sketches of the way they want to compose their glamour shot photograph. Remind them that they need to incorporate the product into the composition of the photograph in a way that they think will make the product desirable to anyone who views the photograph. They should consider lighting, backdrop, clothing, and makeup choices.
- Let students take turns using a digital camera to take the glamour shots.
- Print the photographs and ask students to write captions for their own shots.
- Organize the glamour shots into a classroom booklet. Behind each print of a photograph add one or two blank sheets of paper for comments.
- Give each student a chance to write comments about each photograph. The comments need to address the following:

*What product is being promoted/marketed?*

*Does the composition and styling of the photograph make the product seem desirable? In what ways?*

*If you were the photographer, what changes would you make to this photograph? Why?*

*If you were the manufacturer of the product used in the photograph, what changes would you make to this photograph? Why?*

### **Extension 2: The Changing Face of Celebrity Culture**

Until about 1920, Americans considered presidents and generals to be celebrities and role models. Later, the sports and entertainment industries produced the next generations of American celebrities<sup>1</sup> Write a 150-200 word essay about why our culture moved towards sports and entertainment figures as celebrities. *What role has photography played in this transition?*

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), pp 110-14.

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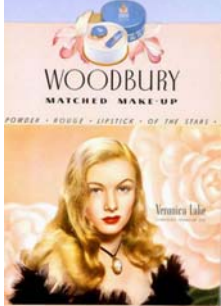
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## Photographs

(<http://click.si.edu/Story.aspx?story=41>)

images Lead image, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 18


Lead image	
URL	<a href="http://www.click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=2674&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://www.click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=2674&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Veronica Lake</i>
Photographer	Unidentified creator
Year	c. 1945
Museum/Research Center	National Portrait Gallery
Image #	Image No. S/NPG.89.23

Photograph #1	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=1249&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=1249&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Esther Williams</i>
Photographer	Nickolas Muray
Year	1940s
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center
Collection	Photographic History Collection
Image #	7919


Photograph #2	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4272&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4272&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>First Lady of the Land, First Lady of the Air</i> (Eleanor Roosevelt knitting on an airplane).
Photographer	Unidentified photographer
Year	Prior to 1945
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center
Collection	Sandra and Gary Baden Collection of Celebrity Endorsements in Advertising
Image #	01061101.tif (AC Scan)


Photograph #3	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4271&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4271&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>The Best on Earth. / The Best on Mars.</i> (Reproductions of two photographs of Michael Jordan and Spike Lee, each with a basketball, advertising Air Jordan shoes.)
Photographer	Unidentified photographer
Year	c. 1985
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center
Collection	Nike Advertising Oral History & Documentation Project
Image #	03044801.tif (AC Scan)


Photograph #4	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4274&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4274&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>In 60 seconds, Dorothy Lamour learns how to buy a better mattress.</i> (Advertisement with seven reproduction photographs for Beautyrest mattresses.)
Photographer	Unidentified photographer
Year	1947
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Archives Center
Collection	Simmons Company Records
Image #	00073101.tif (AC Scan)


Photograph #5	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4294&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4294&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. is Young...[sic] Entrancing.....Beautiful...as the world expects her to be.</i> (Title is caption of advertisement. Pond's Extract Co., advertiser.)
Photographer	Unidentified photographer
Year	1929
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Archives Center
Collection	Sandra and Gary Baden Collection of Celebrity Endorsements in Advertising
Image #	03061140 (Scan no.)

Photograph #12	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4219&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=4219&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Miss America with Kansas City Office Staff of Lever Brothers Co.</i> (Jean Bartel, Miss America 1943, during her reign.)
Photographer	Anderson
Year	1943
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Archives Center
Collection	Miss America (Jean Bartel) Photographs
Image #	AC0902-0000001.tif (AC Scan)

Photograph #14	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=948&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=948&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Nat Mathis Spraying Hair of Woman with Afro-Sheen</i> (This image features barber and motivational speaker Nathaniel Mathis at work on a young woman's Afro hairstyle.)
Photographer	Harris & Ewing
Year	c. 1970
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Archives Center
Collection	Nathaniel Mathis Collection of Barbering and Beauty Culture, c. 1970-1998
Image #	00064103

Photograph #15	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=800&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=800&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Greta Garbo</i>
Photographer	Clarence Sinclair Bull
Year	1939
Museum/Research Center	National Portrait Gallery
Copyright	© Estate of Clarence Sinclair Bull
Image #	NPG.91.210

Photograph #16	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=561&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=561&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Marion Florsheim poses with Dog and Fairchild 24W Airplane</i> (Well-dressed pilot Marion Florsheim poses with an Afghan hound beside the nose of a Fairchild 24W airplane, probably somewhere on Long Island, New York).
Photographer	Hans Groenoff
Year	1930s
Museum/Research Center	National Air and Space Museum, National Air and Space Museum Archives
Collection	Hans Groenoff Collection
Image #	HGC-838-B

Photograph #18	
URL	<a href="http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=3087&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story">http://click.si.edu/Image.aspx?image=3087&amp;story=41&amp;back=Story</a>
Title/Subject	<i>Mbombio, Chief Mogendo's principal wife</i>
Photographer	Eliot Elisofon
Year	1970
Museum/Research Center	National Museum of African Art, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives
Collection	Eliot Elisofon Field Photographs
Image #	EEPA EECL 3033