

## This Week's Focus: Creating Interview Questions

In 2010, Brandon Stanton created [Humans of New York](#), a photoblog and book of street portraits and interviews collected on the streets of New York City. His formula is simple: Find someone you don't know, ask them questions, record what they say, repeat.

Stanton has said he's always looking for people to say something he's never heard before. Almost always, he says, that's some sort of story or anecdote. [Here's a video](#) of Stanton explaining his process.

### THE LESSON: CRAFTING QUESTIONS

Getting great storytelling quotes requires reporters to have great open-ended questions. Here are a couple of story-starter questions for students to try:

- Tell me about a time when ...
- What's it like to ... ?

Watch the video linked above and check out the HONY website. Then, in small groups, have students develop several additional questions they might use to get the kinds of storytelling quotes Stanton gets. Compile those questions in a Google Doc and share it for others to use.

### FIND IT AT JEA.ORG Interviewing Practice

#### Description

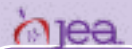
This lesson reinforces the basic interviewing process. It may be used as a routine assignment for advanced students on any interviewing assignment or for students who need additional practice. Students will conduct basic research and develop questions for a one-on-one interview. Students will take notes and transcribe their interview in preparation for publication. This lesson may be extended into a feature-writing assignment or for an alternative format such as a profile box or used as part of a video feature.

#### Objectives

- Students will find a source with a potential story angle to interview.
- Students will develop a list of questions that cover the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story.
- Students will conduct an interview using a combination of prepared questions with follow-up questions while listening with interest and establishing a conversational tone.

#### The link

The link to the full lesson is [HERE](#). NOTE: This lesson is available free to **everyone** during the dates listed at the top of this page. Want to have access all the time? If you're not a member yet, consider joining JEA today for access to all of the resources.



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## Time for a Team-Builder

### Self-Portraits

Early each year, I distribute index cards and crayons/colored pencils. Everyone draws and colors a self-portrait (head and shoulders ideally) and puts their name on the back. When everyone's finished, they pass the index cards to me, and we put them under the document camera to look at them on the board. We try to guess whose self-portrait we're looking at. They're usually pretty fun and goofy. It also gives me a sense of who some of the better artists in class are. Afterward, I post all of the portraits on the wall under the heading "Meet the Newspaper Staff." Later in the year, as we have grown comfortable with one another, I re-introduce the activity as a team-builder. Again, I distribute index cards and ask everyone to write their name on the back. Then I shuffle them and pass them out randomly. Every student must draw an image (sometimes a portrait, sometimes an object or symbol) that represents the person whose card they have. We then use the document camera to guess who.

### THE JEA FACE BEHIND THE LESSON

*Jim Woehrle, CJE, Focus adviser  
& English teacher, Midland  
(Michigan) HS*



## Style Time STATE NAMES

All state names should be spelled out in the body of a story. Put a comma between the city and the state name and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence.

*He traveled from Nashville, Tennessee, to his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

State abbreviations are only used in datelines, political party affiliations and in lists, agate or tables. The names of eight states are never abbreviated in datelines or text:

*Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, Utah*