



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 7-12

**About the Author:** This unit was created for MediaSmarts by Media Educator, Maureen Baron.

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# Unit Two: Celebrities and World Issues

## Overview

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In this four-day unit, students will examine the role of popular culture celebrities in creating awareness of world issues. Students will debate whether celebrity involvement is important and positive, or whether such involvement brings too much attention to the celebrities themselves, overshadowing the central messages of a campaign, organization, program or issue.

As well, students will examine issues such as:

- Who sets the agenda for the public awareness and perception of the issues?
- How do the media, sponsoring organization and celebrities frame the issues in developing nations?

## Learning Outcomes

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Students will:

- demonstrate critical thinking in considering the impact of celebrity-based campaigns on our views of global development issues
- express and support their opinion on whether celebrity involvement in global development issues is positive
- demonstrate a broadened understanding of global development issues
- express their learning through creation of a media product

## Unit Timeline

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### Day One: Celebrities

#### Activities

- Class discussion and definitions of “developing nation” and “global development” (*optional*, 20 minutes)
- Research on celebrity involvement in development causes (30 minutes)
- Class discussion and definition of “celebrity” (20 minutes)
- Reflection (20 minutes or homework)



**Day Two: Celebrity Causes****Activities**

- a. Modelling activity: comparing celebrity causes (20 minutes)
- b. Research on celebrities and global development causes (30 minutes)
- c. Deconstructing a celebrity involvement media representation piece (25 minutes)
- d. Reflection (20 minutes or homework)

**Day Three: The Other Side****Activities**

- a. Reading and responding to article (50 to 75 minutes)

**Day Four: Development of a Media Campaign****Activities**

- a. Research (30 minutes)
- b. Designing a media campaign (45 minutes)

**Preparation and Materials**

A recommended backgrounder is the article "The issue of celebrities and aid is deceptively complex" (*The Guardian*, December 17, 2010), available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2010/dec/17/celebrity-aid-development-bono-brad-pitt>.

- Have dictionaries, lined paper and art supplies on hand for various activities
- Ensure that you have access to computers with art or Web publishing facilities for the research and media creation activities
- Review the following websites:
  - Charity Navigator <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=949>
  - The Giving Back 30 <http://www.givingback.org/2011%20Giving%20Back%2030>
  - (replace "2011" with the most past year for the most up-to-date results)
- Photocopy or make overheads of the following, as required:
  - celebrity involvement screen captures, from [www.emmylou.net/causes.html](http://www.emmylou.net/causes.html) and <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c56.html>
  - *Celebrity Information Chart* handout
  - *Deconstructing a Media Representation Piece* handout
  - article by Uzodinma Iweala, entitled "Stop Trying To 'Save' Africa," published in *The Washington Post* (July 15, 2007)



## Procedure

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### Day One: Celebrities

#### Definitions of “developing nation” and “global development”

*Note: This activity may be omitted if you have completed Unit One, Beyond Media Messages: Media Portrayal of Global Development.*

Provide students with the following definition of the term “developing nation”:

*A country with a low standard of living, generally indicated by severe poverty, low income and education levels, high birth rate, and poorly developed social, economic, and technological infrastructure.*

—PBS

To make the concept more concrete to students, explain that many people in developing nations lack many of the basic amenities we take for granted, such as plumbing, clean drinking water, education, health care, and reliable electricity or public sanitation. Stress that we use the term “**developing** nation,” and give some examples of nations that have advanced significantly in providing these amenities in different ways (South Korea in economic terms, India in terms of democracy, Bhutan in terms of transition to modernity, etc.). Also touch on the differences between the term “developing nation” and the older term “third world”: what negative stereotypes are associated with the older term?

Discuss with the class what might be meant by the term “global development.” What might be various aspects of global development? (For example food aid, disaster relief, promoting women’s rights, building infrastructure and ensuring access to clean water.) How can countries like Canada be involved in helping the development of less developed nations? What types of people or organizations, other than governments, may be involved in global development? (For example individuals, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and celebrities drawing attention to a cause.)

#### Celebrity involvement in development causes

Ask each student to select a celebrity who is involved in a cause related to global development issues. Oprah, Bono, Angelina Jolie, George Clooney, Princess Diana, Bill Gates and Madonna are examples of celebrities who are or have been involved in organizations helping in developing countries. You may also consult the list of UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors at [www.unicef.org/people/people\\_ambassadors\\_international.html](http://www.unicef.org/people/people_ambassadors_international.html).

Note: Conduct some research to make sure you have current examples for the students. This information can be found at Charity Navigator <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=949> and The Giving Back 30 <http://www.givingback.org/2011%20Giving%20Back%2030> (replace "2011" with the most past year for the most up-to-date results).

Ask students to fill in the first four columns of the *Celebrity Information Chart* handout for the celebrity they have selected.



**Celebrity Information Chart**

	Celebrity's Name	Profession	Achievements	Why I Think She or He Is a Celebrity	Global Development Issue	Celebrity's Involvement
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

Have students move into groups of four or five and share their results. Instruct them to record the other students' findings in their charts. At the end, each student should have results for three to five different celebrities.

**Class discussion: What is a celebrity? Why is a certain person a celebrity?**

Discuss as a class what makes someone a celebrity. Steer the discussion to include the following ideas:

- celebrity status is not always tied to achievement
- people can become celebrities as a result of being famous for bad behaviour as well as for good behaviour

Ask the students, as a class, to consider the celebrities listed in their charts. What do their choices say about the concept of a celebrity, and about our culture? What is most likely to make someone a celebrity? Why do we celebrate the people we do, and what does that say about us?

**Reflection**

Ask the students to write a short response to the class discussion, considering the following points:

- What makes someone a celebrity in our culture?
- Do the students admire the people they consider to be celebrities, enjoy watching their lives, or both?

Do we, as a society, pay too much attention to celebrities? Why or why not?

**Day Two: Celebrity Causes**

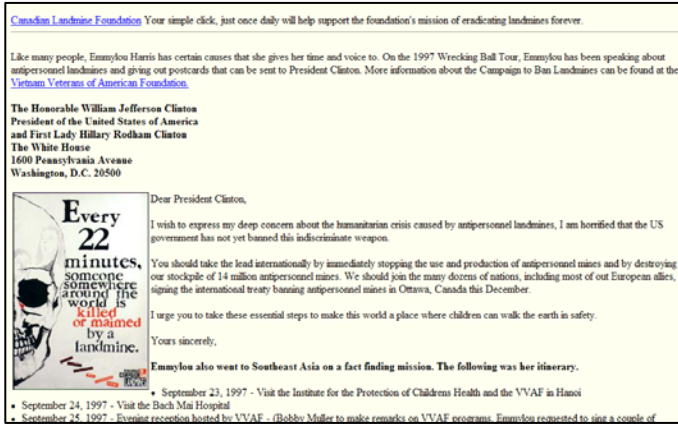
**Modelling activity: comparing celebrity causes**

Distribute or project the following images:

1. Screen capture from Emmylou Harris's website, detailing her involvement in land mine removal ([www.emmylou.net/causes.html](http://www.emmylou.net/causes.html))



- Screen capture from the United Nations Refugee Agency website, detailing Angelina Jolie's involvement in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c56.html>)



Explain that you will be looking at media representation pieces of celebrities involved in development issues; a media representation piece may be an advertisement, infomercial, news report or public service announcement.

Discuss as a class the following questions, comparing these two sites:

- How prominent is the celebrity in the media representation piece?
- How do her actions in the media representation piece reflect, demonstrate and support her commitment to the cause, issue, product, program, agency or organization?
- Who and what is around the celebrity?
- What type of language is used in the text to describe her involvement and the event?
- How is the celebrity represented, visually and through text? What image of her is presented?
- What is the message of the media presentation piece for the general viewing/reading public; for the cause, program or organization; and for the celebrity's fans?



### Individual assignment: celebrities and global development causes

Ask students to use their *Celebrity Information Chart* from Day One and The Celebrity Causes Database (at [www.celebcauses.com/index.htm](http://www.celebcauses.com/index.htm)) to see what cause, program or organization their selected celebrity supports or is involved in.

Ask students to research their celebrity, starting with the official websites (if any) to see how, when and why he or she supports the cause, program or organization. What does she or he actually do? Ask students to add this information to the *Celebrity Information Chart*, using the last two columns.

### Celebrities and global development in the media

Ask students to find a media representation piece about one of the celebrities in their chart who is actively involved with the cause, program or organization. For example, this may be an advertisement, infomercial, news report or public service announcement.

Ask students to deconstruct this media representation using the questions in the handout entitled *Deconstructing a Media Representation Piece*.

- Where does the media representation appear – for example a mainstream news outlet, entertainment news outlet, sports news outlet, tabloid, TV, magazine, E-zine?
- Is the celebrity visible?
- Is this candid or staged?
- What is the celebrity actually doing?
- How do his/her actions reflect, demonstrate, and/or support his/her commitment to the cause, program or organization?
- Who and what is around the celebrity?
- When did this event happen – time of year, near another event in the celebrity's life such as an award show or the premiere of a movie or a championship win?
- What type of language is used to describe the celebrity's involvement and the event?
- How is the celebrity dressed / accessorized so as to reflect the correct posture and tone for the event?
- How is the celebrity represented, visually and through text? What image of the celebrity is presented?
- What is the message of the media presentation for:
  - the general viewing / reading public
  - the cause, program or organization
  - the celebrity's fans?

### Reflection

Ask the students to write a short summary of their deconstruction, considering the following points:

- Where was the attention of the reader/viewer directed?
- What did the student learn about the cause from the media representation piece?



- Overall, was the piece more about the cause or about the celebrity?
- Did the media representation piece change the student's view of the cause or the celebrity?

### Day Three: The Other Side

Ask students to read the article by Uzodinma Iweala, entitled "Stop Trying To 'Save' Africa," which was published in *The Washington Post*. Have them answer the following questions, included in the handout:

1. How does the author describe "the West's new image of itself"?
2. How does the author see Africans being portrayed in Western media images of Africa?
3. How does the author suggest media images of Africa affect our views of the continent and its people?
4. According to the author, how does the news media present a biased view in its coverage of events in Africa?
5. Why does the author say "Africa doesn't want to be saved?"
6. The author suggests that we rarely see images of African leaders active in helping their countries. What other images are missing from our perceptions of Africa and developing nations in general? (Include at least three missing images.)
7. Consider the images you listed in Question Six. Why do you think these images are missing from media representations and our ideas of Africa and developing nations in general?

### Day Four: Development of Media Campaign

#### Research

Ask students to select and research a specific cause, program or organization related to a global development issue that they would like to support. Students must specify why they have chosen this cause, program or organization.

#### Designing a media campaign

Instruct students to design a media campaign to publicize and build support for the issue they have chosen. Have them include the following steps:

- choosing a medium for the campaign (TV, print, online, etc.)
- identifying possible audiences for the media campaign
- selecting an audience
- deciding whether to use a celebrity in the campaign and, if so, selecting the celebrity
- deciding what kinds of images they will use in promoting the campaign

#### Evaluation

Instruct students to produce a written overview of the media campaign. Tell them to:

- include a list of suggested media products
- prepare a mock-up of one media product (a print ad, Web page, Facebook page, podcast, broadcast ad, etc.)
- write a short piece in which they justify the choices they made in their overview and media product

### Celebrity Information Chart

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	Celebrity's Name	Profession	Achievement	Why I Think She or He is a Celebrity?	Global Development Issue	Celebrity's Involvement
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						



## Deconstructing a Media Representation Piece

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1. When looking at the media representation piece, consider the following questions:
2. Where does the media representation appear? (Answers may include a mainstream news outlet, entertainment news outlet, sports news outlet, tabloid, TV, magazine or e-zine.)
3. Is the celebrity visible?
4. Is this candid or staged?
5. What is the celebrity actually doing?
6. How do the celebrity's actions reflect, demonstrate and/or support his or her commitment to the cause, program or organization?
7. Who and what is around the celebrity?
8. When did this event happen? (For example, at what time of year or was it near another event in the celebrity's life, such as an awards show, the premiere of a movie or a championship win?)
9. What type of language is used to describe the celebrity's involvement and the event?
10. How is the celebrity dressed/accessorized so as to reflect the correct posture and tone for the event?
11. How is he or she represented visually and through text? What image of the celebrity is presented?
12. What is the message of the media representation piece for:
  - the general viewing/reading public
  - the cause, program or organization
  - the celebrity's fans?

## Stop Trying To “Save” Africa

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By Uzodinma Iweala. Published in the *Washington Post*, July 15, 2007.

Last fall, shortly after I returned from [Nigeria](#), I was accosted by a perky blond college student whose blue eyes seemed to match the “African” beads around her wrists.

“Save Darfur!” she shouted from behind a table covered with pamphlets urging students to TAKE ACTION NOW! STOP GENOCIDE IN DARFUR!

My aversion to college kids jumping onto fashionable social causes nearly caused me to walk on, but her next shout stopped me.

“Don't you want to help us save Africa?” she yelled.

It seems that these days, wracked by guilt at the humanitarian crisis it has created in the Middle East, the West has turned to Africa for redemption. Idealistic college students, celebrities such as Bob Geldof and politicians such as Tony Blair have all made bringing light to the dark continent their mission. They fly in for internships and fact-finding missions or to pick out children to adopt in much the same way my friends and I in New York take the subway to the pound to adopt stray dogs.

This is the West's new image of itself: a sexy, politically active generation whose preferred means of spreading the word are magazine spreads with celebrities pictured in the foreground, forlorn Africans in the back. Never mind that the stars sent to bring succor to the natives often are, willingly, as emaciated as those they want to help.

Perhaps most interesting is the language used to describe the Africa being saved. For example, the Keep a Child Alive (<http://www.keepachildalive.org/>) / “I am African” ([http://www.keepachildalive.org/i\\_am\\_african/i\\_am\\_african.html](http://www.keepachildalive.org/i_am_african/i_am_african.html)) ad campaign features portraits of primarily white, Western celebrities with painted “tribal markings” on their faces above “I AM AFRICAN” in bold letters. Below, smaller print says, “help us stop the dying.”

Such campaigns, however well intentioned, promote the stereotype of Africa as a black hole of disease and death. News reports constantly focus on the continent's corrupt leaders, warlords, “tribal” conflicts, child laborers, and women disfigured by abuse and genital mutilation. These descriptions run under headlines like “Can Bono Save Africa?” or “Will Brangelina Save Africa?” The relationship between the West and Africa is no longer based on openly racist beliefs, but such articles are reminiscent of reports from the heyday of European colonialism, when missionaries were sent to Africa to introduce us to education, Jesus Christ and “civilization.”

There is no African, myself included, who does not appreciate the help of the wider world, but we do question whether aid is genuine or given in the spirit of affirming one's cultural superiority. My mood is dampened every time I attend a benefit whose host runs through a litany of African disasters before presenting a (usually) wealthy, white person, who often proceeds to list the things he or she has done for the poor, starving Africans. Every time a well-meaning college student speaks of villagers dancing because they were so grateful for her help, I cringe. Every time a Hollywood director shoots a film about Africa that features a Western protagonist, I shake my head — because Africans, real people though we may be, are used as props in the West's fantasy of itself. And not only do such depictions tend to ignore the West's prominent role in creating many of the unfortunate situations on the continent, they also ignore the incredible work Africans have done and continue to do to fix those problems.

Why do the media frequently refer to African countries as having been “granted independence from their colonial masters,” as opposed to having fought and shed blood for their freedom? Why do Angelina Jolie and Bono receive overwhelming attention for their work in Africa while Nwankwo Kanu or Dikembe Mutombo, Africans both, are hardly ever mentioned? How is it that a former mid-level U.S. diplomat receives more attention for his cowboy antics in Sudan than do the numerous African Union countries that have sent food and troops and spent countless hours trying to negotiate a settlement among all parties in that crisis?

Two years ago I worked in a camp for internally displaced people in Nigeria, survivors of an uprising that killed about 1,000 people and displaced 200,000. True to form, the Western media reported on the violence but not on the humanitarian work the state and local governments — without much international help — did for the survivors. Social workers spent their time and in many cases their own salaries to care for their compatriots. These are the people saving Africa, and others like them across the continent get no credit for their work.

Last month the Group of Eight industrialized nations and a host of celebrities met in Germany to discuss, among other things, how to save Africa. Before the next such summit, I hope people will realize Africa doesn't want to be saved. Africa wants the world to acknowledge that through fair partnerships with other members of the global community, we ourselves are capable of unprecedented growth.

*Uzodinma Iweala is the author of Beasts of No Nation, a novel about child soldiers.*

### Discussion Questions

1. How does the author describe “the West's new image of itself”?
2. How does the author see Africans being portrayed in Western media images of Africa?
3. In the author's view, how do media images of Africa affect our views of the continent and its people?
4. According to the author, how do the news media present a biased view in their coverage of events in Africa?
5. Why does the author say that “Africa doesn't want to be saved”?
6. The author suggests that we rarely see images of African leaders active in helping their countries. What other images are missing from our perceptions of Africa and developing nations in general? (Include at least three missing images.)
7. Consider the images you listed in response to Question 6. Why do you think these images are missing from media representations, and from our ideas of Africa and developing nations in general?

## Celebrity Involvement Screen Capture One

[Canadian Landmine Foundation](#) Your simple click, just once daily will help support the foundation's mission of eradicating landmines forever.

Like many people, Emmylou Harris has certain causes that she gives her time and voice to. On the 1997 Wrecking Ball Tour, Emmylou has been speaking about antipersonnel landmines and giving out postcards that can be sent to President Clinton. More information about the Campaign to Ban Landmines can be found at the [Vietnam Veterans of American Foundation](#).

**The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton**  
**President of the United States of America**  
**and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
**The White House**  
**1600 Pennsylvania Avenue**  
**Washington, D.C. 20500**



Dear President Clinton,

I wish to express my deep concern about the humanitarian crisis caused by antipersonnel landmines, I am horrified that the US government has not yet banned this indiscriminate weapon.

You should take the lead internationally by immediately stopping the use and production of antipersonnel mines and by destroying our stockpile of 14 million antipersonnel mines. We should join the many dozens of nations, including most of our European allies, signing the international treaty banning antipersonnel mines in Ottawa, Canada this December.

I urge you to take these essential steps to make this world a place where children can walk the earth in safety.

Yours sincerely,

**Emmylou also went to Southeast Asia on a fact finding mission. The following was her itinerary.**

- September 23, 1997 - Visit the Institute for the Protection of Children's Health and the VVAF in Hanoi
- September 24, 1997 - Visit the Bach Mai Hospital
- September 25, 1997 - Evening reception hosted by VVAF - (Bobby Muller to make remarks on VVAF programs, Emmylou requested to sing a couple of



## Celebrity Involvement Screen Capture Two

**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

Home > About Us > UNHCR People > Angelina Jolie

### Angelina Jolie

A Special Envoy for Refugee Issues

After years of dedicated service to UNHCR and the cause of refugees, Angelina Jolie in April 2012 was appointed as Special Envoy of UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres. In her new and expanded role, she will be focusing on major crises resulting in mass population displacements; undertaking advocacy and representing UNHCR and Guterres at the diplomatic level; and engaging with decision-makers on global displacement issues. Through this work, she will help contribute to the vital process of finding solutions for people displaced by conflict.

Jolie previously represented UNHCR as a Goodwill Ambassador, and in this role she conducted more than 40 field visits around the world, becoming well-versed in the phenomenon of forced displacement and a tireless advocate on their behalf.

**Angelina Jolie Fact Sheet**  
An unflagging determination to give a voice to refugees and internally displaced people.

**Angelina Jolie's Journals & Books**  
Read more about Jolie's personal impressions and reflections during her field missions as

**Angelina Jolie Activities for Refugees**

Angelina Jolie in the news.

- Angelina Jolie visits Ecuador on first mission as UNHCR Special Envoy
- Angelina Jolie appointed as Special Envoy of High Commissioner Guterres
- Angelina Jolie appointed special envoy of UNHCR chief
- An unexpected meeting with Angelina Jolie brings joy a year later
- Angelina Jolie appeals to governments to step up life-saving efforts in the Horn of Africa

more documents

**UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie visits Ecuador**



## Evaluation Rubric

	<b>Below Level 1</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>
<b>Knowledge/ Understanding</b>	Fails to show a broadened understanding of global development	Shows a beginning broadened understanding of global	Shows a developing broadened understanding of global	Shows a competent broadened understanding of global	Shows a confident broadened understanding of global
<b>Thinking/ Inquiry</b>	Fails to show an ability to think critically in considering the impact of celebrity-based campaigns on our views of global development issues	Shows a beginning ability to think critically in considering the impact of celebrity-based campaigns on our views of global development issues	Shows a developing ability to think critically in considering the impact of celebrity-based campaigns on our views of global development issues	Shows a competent ability to think critically in considering the impact of celebrity-based campaigns on our views of global development issues	Shows a confident ability to think critically in considering the impact of celebrity-based campaigns on our views of global development issues
<b>Communication</b>	Fails to express and support an opinion on whether celebrity involvement is positive to global development issues	Shows a beginning ability to express and support an opinion on whether celebrity involvement is positive to global development	Shows a developing ability to express and support an opinion on whether celebrity involvement is positive to global development	Shows a competent ability to express and support an opinion on whether celebrity involvement is positive to global development	Shows a confident ability to express and support an opinion on whether celebrity involvement is positive to global development
<b>Application</b>	Fails to show learning through creation of a media product on the different aspects of celebrity involvement and media representation of global development issues	Shows a beginning demonstration of learning through creation of a media product on the different aspects of celebrity involvement and media representation of global	Shows a developing demonstration of learning through creation of a media product on the different aspects of celebrity involvement and media representation of global	Shows a competent demonstration of learning through creation of a media product on the different aspects of celebrity involvement and media representation of global	Shows a confident demonstration of learning through creation of a media product on the different aspects of celebrity involvement and media representation of global