



Life Stories Presents



# Teaching *The* *Thread*

A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS





**“I don’t know why storytelling is such an intrinsic part of the human experience. But if we lose it, I think we essentially lose our humanity.”**

**– JASON ALEXANDER,  
ACTOR**





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# Introduction



We tell stories for many reasons. Some stories present witness accounts of historical events; others recall moments of personal challenge and change. Some are intended to educate; others entertain. No matter their subject and approach, stories always gain meaning and resonance when shared with others.

*The Thread* is a documentary-style series exploring what it means to live a purpose-driven life through conversations with the multi-faceted people who have helped shape our society. TEACHING THE THREAD supports educators using this documentary series in secondary classrooms, youth leadership programs, and other informal educational settings. Inspiring people from the arts, government, media, and more share childhood memories; describe relationships with parents, family, and friends; talk about the role of faith and religion in their lives; recall their discovery of purposeful work and weave it together with their stories of life's challenges and successes. By capturing their stories, we introduce them into the public consciousness. By teaching with them, we present learning opportunities that can prepare students to navigate and embrace the complexities of the modern world while discovering new passions and purpose in their lives

# Learning Objectives and Frameworks

This diversity of stories in *The Thread* can strengthen social and emotional learning, expand the scope of traditional subject matter in Social Studies and English/Language Art, and inspire new units of study.



## Learning Objectives

- ▣ **Invite** a journey of self-exploration and perspective-taking
- ▣ **Spark** intellectual inquiry through emotional engagement
- ▣ **Expand** one's worldview by listening to diverse and divergent perspectives
- ▣ **Foster** civic conversations by learning from thought leaders who participate in democracy
- ▣ **Strengthen** media literacy by analyzing point of view, authorship, and filmmaking techniques
- ▣ **Enrich** students' lives by giving them the opportunity to learn from others' life lessons
- ▣ **Create** connection for students through sharing others' experiences



## Frameworks

*The Thread* supports Social and Emotional Learning and supports standards in Social Studies and English Language Arts instruction.

### FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING:

The [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#) defines SEL as “the process through which young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”

The CASEL [Framework and Competencies](#), or the CASEL 5 standards, include **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making**. These five broad areas articulate what students should master for academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers. *The Thread* supports all CASEL 5 standards. With accessible and engaging personal narratives about resilience, human frailty, courage, meaning, struggle, and more, *The Thread* nurtures different developmental stages and goals of a student’s SEL development and can also be used to establish broader norms to sustain a safe and positive school-wide culture.

### MEDIA LITERACY:

The [National Association of Media Literacy](#) (NAMLE) defines [media literacy](#) as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication. *The Thread* offers opportunities for classrooms to exercise the skills of analyzing point of view, authorship, and filmmaking techniques using engaging storytelling.

### SOCIAL STUDIES:

*The Thread* contributes to effective social studies instruction by animating the ideas, people, places, and events that contribute to our vibrant democracy. Through first-person documentary storytelling, students gain insights to our world and the human condition; expand their understanding of democracy by learning from the cultural, political, and movement leaders who witnessed and made history and demonstrate its application today.

The series and educational resources support the four dimensions of the [C3 Inquiry Arc](#) – developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking action. The series can be also incorporated as a compelling Featured Resource within the [Inquiry Design Model](#) and the [IDM Blueprint](#).







## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA):

***The Thread*** offers a unique collection of narratives for students to reflect and learn from. For example, episodes give students evidence and commentary for an argument or inspire new ideas for creative storytelling. With the transcripts readily available, ELA educators can incorporate ***The Thread*** as a featured resource when assembling text sets as well as to support student learning in several ways:

- Support units on Identities and Perspectives, Voice and Agency, Coming of Age, Freedom of Thought, Speech, and Expression, Power and Corruption, the American Dream, Genocide
- Inspire writing by learning from the life stories of other writers – authors, poets, cartoonists, filmmakers, and journalists
- Provide different representations of peoples, backgrounds, traditions, ethnicities, and customs through media texts
- Diversify a text set with canonical or contemporary literature
- Use as evidence to support a claim in the three essays required in AP Lang: rhetorical analysis, argument, and synthesis



# Episode Lesson Overview

The Episode Lessons supports educators using *The Thread* in schools and other educational settings. With the series traversing a broad spectrum of life stories and experiences, the videos and educational resources are easily adaptable as a multidisciplinary resource. This learning journey through storytelling can expand the scope of your traditional subject matter and help students gain new perspectives on themselves and their world.

## Each Episode Lesson includes:

- ❑ **Episode:** Name, occupation, title of interview
- ❑ **Interview Log:** Date, place, and name of interviewer
- ❑ **Biography:** Brief background of the interviewee
- ❑ **Episode Overview:** Overview of the scope of *The Thread* episode
- ❑ **Learning Objectives:** Relevant ELA and SS topics and themes discussed in the episode
- ❑ **Teaching Tips:** Two lesson activities for deeper engagement (First Take, *The Thread* Up Close)
- ❑ **Connections:** Discussion and writing prompts to deepen engagement and understanding
- ❑ **Activity:** Suggested engagement exercise connected to the topics and themes from the episode
- ❑ **Additional Resources:** For expanding student learning on the ideas, people, and events shared





# Warm-Up Activities

*The Thread* is a documentary-style interview series that showcases the art of the interview. A compelling and engaging interview is the result of the interviewer’s preparation and skill, a team of professionals who support the technical and creative execution such as framing, lighting, audio, editing, all leading to the broadcast of the interview.

To prepare students to engage deeply with these episodes, use this two-day lesson as a “warm-up” before diving into *The Thread*. This lesson also offers an extra layer of media literacy preparation for students conducting research using first-person interviews.

▣ **Length:** Two, 50 minute class periods

▣ **Materials** Ability to stream a short radio interview, pens/paper, shared online classroom space and/or copies of PDF handouts of Day Two materials

## INTRODUCTION: THE ART OF THE INTERVIEW

 **Discuss as a class or in small groups.**

- ▣ What is an interview? What makes it different from testimony or oral history?
- ▣ Why conduct an interview? What are the many purposes an interview can serve?
- ▣ What is the most challenging part of producing an artful interview?
- ▣ Ask students if they can recall an interview they have read, listened to, watched, conducted, or been part of. Who was it with? Why was it memorable?

## STUDENT EXERCISE

 **Practicing The Art of the Interview**

1. **Listen** to this nine-minute radio piece from NPR, [“The Art of the Interview.”](#) and have students take notes on tips to prepare for and conduct their own interviews.
2. **Organize** students into pairs and have them choose who will be the interviewer and interviewee. Explain that they will switch positions so each will have a turn in both roles.
3. **Remind** students that this exercise aims to practice the skills of asking thoughtful questions and listening to a colleague without interrupting (as the interviewer). Coach interviewees to be thoughtful in providing answers that they feel safe to share, that tell a story, and are longer than one or two words. It may feel difficult for them to tell a personal story to a classmate they don’t know, but they should try to think of this as an opportunity to tell new stories and narratives about themselves.
4. Since a good interview is based on research and knowing the interviewee’s background, we offer a few general questions that model the types of questions asked during *The Thread* and which make this series unique. These are only suggestions, and students are not required to ask them all. We encourage students to ask any new question that may arise based on the story shared.



- ▣ What do you enjoy doing in your free time? How did you learn about this activity?
  - ▣ Tell me a story that, in retrospect, taught you an important life lesson.
  - ▣ What motivates you?
  - ▣ What is something you regret or wish you could do over?
  - ▣ Who is someone you look up to?
  - ▣ What are some of your goals?
5. Each interview will be five minutes long. Share with students that you will keep time and give them a one-minute transition alert before switching roles.
  6. Take a moment to debrief the experience. Which role did they enjoy? What role was most challenging?

## DAY TWO

1. Organize the class into small groups of four.
2. Assign students one of four roles.
  - ▣ **Researcher, Handout:** Preparation - Researching Your Interviewee with David Bender
  - ▣ **Questioner, Handout:** Preparation - Developing Interview Questions with Teddy Kunhardt
  - ▣ **Listener, Handout:** The Interview - The Art of Active Listening with Karin Shiel
  - ▣ **Editor/Producer, Handout:** Post Interview - Editing and Production with Nga Thi Nguyen and Tyler Christie
3. Next, using this script as a model, explain the assignment:

*As a group, you get to choose a person from history or alive today that you would want to interview. It cannot be a fictitious person. Each group has 2 minutes to choose this person. Once chosen, your job is to make sure they cover all the bases and are prepared to conduct the interview. You each have been assigned a key role in the interview process and will have a corresponding handout to do a close reading. Each handout is an actual Q&A's with one of the interviewers from the YouTube documentary-interview series *The Thread*. Their work is to underline/highlight the most important advice that pertains to their role and to summarize this to their group.*

4. After all roles have shared, have students come to consensus using the following prompts and ask them to choose a group spokesperson to share out to the larger class:
  - ▣ Who did you choose to interview? Why?
  - ▣ What are two new things they learned about the art of the interview?
  - ▣ What do they think are the most important parts of the interview?
  - ▣ What is one question they still have about the art of the interview?
4. End the lesson by asking students to share why they think interviews are important and what they feel they learn from an interview that is different than a book or other accounts.



## HANDOUT PREPARATION

As both the executive producer and host of my segments, my role includes collaborating with the Kunhardts and producer Matthew Henderson on identifying potential guests; determining the best avenue(s) to reach them; writing letters and making phone calls to schedule a date (often the hardest part); preparation for and research about the subject; and, finally, having the conversation itself.



## HANDOUT

### PREPARATION - RESEARCHING YOUR INTERVIEWEE WITH DAVID BENDER

Research is the foundation for a compelling interview and the first step in preparing for an artful interview. Assembling accurate and verifiable background from credible sources is necessary to develop compelling questions and directing the overall arc of your interview session even when a curve-ball answer may arise.

The research process, like many aspects of learning, is unique to an individual but there are best practices to model, skills to teach, and competencies to practice in preparing to conduct and film an interview. For this warm-up exercise we asked **David Bender**, one of the skilled interviewers for *The Thread*, to reflect on his research process when preparing for any interview.

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#### Describe what you do for *The Thread*.

As both the executive producer and host of my segments, my role includes collaborating with the George, Teddy, and Peter Kunhardt and producer Matthew Henderson on identifying potential guests; determining the best avenue(s) to reach them; writing letters and making phone calls to schedule a date (often the hardest part); preparation for and research about the subject; and, finally, having the conversation itself.

#### In *The Thread*, you are one of the primary interviewers for the series. How do you begin the research process for an interview? What questions do you ask yourself when you start a new project?

I actually prefer the term “conversation” to “interview.” “Interviews” suggest a question followed by an answer, followed by another question and another answer. That format becomes rote quickly, especially for high profile people. No two conversations are ever alike, but the preparation is always the same. I immerse myself in the life history of every guest, especially their childhood years as well as their adult career and body of work. If there is any one question I ask myself before a conversation, it’s probably, “What is something this person has a passion for but is rarely asked about?” For example, with the legendary civil rights activist Dolores Huerta, who was 94 years old when we spoke, I’d learned from my research that as a young girl she had aspired to become a dancer. So I asked about the importance of music to her life. She lit up and the years seemed to melt away when she spoke about the joy that music and dance still gives her.

#### What skills do you rely on when you conduct research and prepare for an interview?

As with any good conversation, I try to find a common frame of reference or shared experience. That can be almost anything -- the arts, politics, sports -- that sparks a connection.

#### How is *The Thread* different from other interviews you have been part of over the years?

I’ve been having these kinds of conversations professionally for more than thirty years. It’s been my privilege to have spoken with two U.S. presidents and five Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. *The Thread* is a wonderful continuation of that work. What’s particularly gratifying about *The Thread* is that the focus is on what gives a life meaning and purpose. *The Thread*’s mission of highlighting peace and social justice connects strongly with me, so these are conversations that I love having. And, as I said before, no two conversations are the same, so I’m always surprised



### How is *The Thread* different from other interviews you have been part of over the years?

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### What are your most trusted and reliable sources for research?

I'm old school. I have a library of over a thousand books and as long as my memory keeps working, I can usually find a book on the shelf that helps me prepare. I do use Wikipedia, but I always find a second source to corroborate any information I find there. It's important to click on the numbered citations in Wikipedia. You'd be surprised at how much more you'll find when you drill down on Wikipedia sources.

### If you were to give advice to a student interested in journalism or interviewing for film or television, what advice would you give?

Start by taking Frank Langella's advice to always remain curious. And if you don't find people interesting, it's not a career to pursue. When you enjoy people, they know it. When you are interested in them, they respond. When you really do your homework, they respect you for it.

### What do you love about your work?

Making someone laugh! I know a conversation is a success when there's laughter. It means that the person is having a good time and that's my measure of any good conversation.

One of my favorite experiences was making former Vice President Al Gore laugh during a live phone conversation on my radio program. It was 2006 and many people were asking him to consider running again for president. He had ruled it out repeatedly, but I felt obliged to bring it up, as so many of my callers had asked me about it. "Mr. Vice President, I know you've said that you wouldn't consider seeking the presidency again, but my listeners..." Before I could finish, I heard an audible sigh from Gore. It was the same sound he'd made multiple times into an open microphone during his first debate against then-Governor George W. Bush in the 2000 general election campaign. The "sighs" had then become the main story about the debate. Before the term was even invented, they became a meme that painted Gore -- fairly or unfairly -- as an elitist who viewed his opponent with condescension. When I heard that same sound in my headphones, I stopped mid-sentence and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Vice President. Did you just sigh into an open microphone?"

There was a brief pause and then I heard Gore laughing heartily on the other end. I started laughing too and took a friendly jab, "Haven't you learned *anything* about doing that?" Still laughing, the former Vice President said, "I guess I haven't."

That's why I love my work.

## HANDOUT

### PREPARATION - DEVELOPING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH TEDDY KUNHARDT

Asking thoughtful open-ended questions can yield compelling and extraordinary interview conversations. Some of the most significant interviews unfold as the result of the tone, clarity, and open-endedness of questions asked.

Once you feel you have a strong body of research about your interviewee, you can take the next step in – developing interview questions. Imagine sitting across from one of the interviewees in *The Thread* with a robust set of questions you have thoughtfully prepared. These questions provide you with a general blueprint of where you want the conversation to go, and this journey of discovery is steered by thoughtful questions.

For this warm-up exercise we asked **Teddy Kunhardt**, another one of the skilled interviewers for *The Thread*, to reflect on his process of writing interview questions and some of the tips of the trade he relies on regularly before stepping into any interview.

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#### **What is your point of view on the first question of any interview? Is it the most important?**

The first few questions are usually low stakes questions designed to build chemistry and trust with the subject. It takes time to build this trust. The most important questions come once a bond has been created. The amount of camera gear, lighting equipment and crew size can be intimidating, so the first few questions are deliberately designed to break that nervous tension.

#### **What skills do you rely on when writing questions?**

The strength of the questions come from the strength of the research. I read everything I can get my hands on and underline passages I find interesting and shed light into the individual. I then type out all my underlines into a word document. Finally, I turn many of those underlined passages into questions. It is a slow process. In order to write good questions, one needs to know as much as you can about the individual so when they go down an unexpected path when the camera is rolling, you are not surprised. The skill with the questions comes during the interview, knowing which questions to ask next and which ones to avoid. I try to plan my questions out in an order that logically flows but that path is often diverted, so I need to listen carefully, stay flexible and organized.

#### **How would you describe a good interview question?**

I'm less concerned with any single question, but the scope of questions that allows the person to weave together a story about how they have moved through life. And this usually always goes back to their childhood. Questions that evoke and provoke emotions are what I define as good interview questions.

#### **What is your favorite question to ask?**

Do you fear death? I find out a lot about people by their thoughts on their own mortality.

#### **Are there questions you avoid?**

We do not believe in 'gotcha' questions. We will ask questions about hard subjects but if the interviewee doesn't want to discuss a subject, we move on. I do not avoid writing any questions, but as an interviewer I need to read the room during the interview and be ready to be ready to skip questions.



**What is the hardest part about writing interview questions?**

Time. It takes weeks to do proper research. As I mentioned above, the strength of the research dictates the strength of the questions. I physically carve out time on my schedule to dedicate to research/question writing. The day-to-day busy work gets in the way but by carving out this time, it gives me the space to fully immerse myself. I also try and schedule this time in the morning, when I am the sharpest.

**If you were to give advice to a student interested in journalism or interviewing for film or television, what advice would you give?**

Over research. Try to stick to chronology. Do not “wing it” without written questions. Write and re-write and re-write your questions. Be overprepared. You should know the person you are interviewing so well that very little will surprise you.

**What question have you always wanted to ask in an interview, but never asked?**

Nothing immediately comes to mind - I have no filter, which can get me in trouble.

## HANDOUT

### THE INTERVIEW: THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING WITH KARIN SHIEL

With research under your belt and thoughtful questions to stand as guideposts, you are ready for the next step – the interview. Every good interviewer knows that the ability to be an active listener is a rare and valuable skill that requires work and time. Active listening goes beyond simply hearing words; it's about being fully present, engaging with the speaker, understanding their perspective, showing genuine interest in what they have to say through verbal and non-verbal cues, asking relevant and responsive questions, and not being afraid to ask for clarification when you are uncertain.

For this warm-up exercise we asked filmmaker and independent producer **Karin Shiel**, who interviewed Chip Conley for Season Two of *The Thread*, how she thinks about her role in an interview. Because of her extensive work behind the scenes observing and crafting stories, and because she is just a fantastic listener, Shiel models and practices active listening with tremendous insight and care – something we can all learn from.

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#### What do you think is the difference between listening and hearing?

Listening is active, it takes intention. Hearing is passive - it happens whether you want it or not. Listening takes effort, concentration and focus, and is always appreciated by the speaker.

#### What advice can you give people who want to be better listeners?

*Get out of your own head.* Try to think less about yourself and how you sound or whether you're prepared for the next question. Instead, really focus on the person you're talking to and what they're saying. You'll be surprised what can come up if you let go of your own thoughts about yourself - it's freeing! And the person will likely be able to feel it when you do that.

*Don't be afraid of a little silence.* A pause after someone stops talking can give them a chance to think about what they just said and maybe elaborate or offer something new. It also gives you a moment to compose your next question since (hopefully) you weren't thinking about that while you were listening! Too much pause can be hard if you're doing a live, unedited interview but it can be helpful to create a little space in the conversation.

*Observe.* How is this question or answer making the person feel? What is their answer making you more curious about? Feel free to pivot from your prepared questions if something comes up in their answer that you think could be a good topic to explore further.

#### What active listening skills are you exercising when conducting an interview?

Meditation is a practice that I find helps strengthen my ability to keep my mind from wandering and keeps me present in the moment, well beyond the moments when I'm actually meditating; that's really helpful in an interview. Also body language can help: using eye contact or other silent gestures if I sense that the person might want some encouragement or acknowledgement of what they're saying.



How would you complete these sentences: (Karen's answers are underlined)

When I see an interviewer look at their notes when the interviewee is talking during an interview, I know they are not listening.

I feel heard and appreciated when someone is really listening to me.

I know I am being a good listener when I am deeply focused on what the person is saying.

I know I am being heard when someone is looking me in the eye and responds with something relevant to what I was saying.

The [Harvard Business Review](#) defines active listening as “when you not only hear what someone is saying, but also attune to their thoughts and feelings. It turns a conversation into an active, non-competitive, two-way interaction.” **How do you define active listening?**

Active listening is a deep focus on what a person is saying and feeling, and taking action to assure that they know they're being heard.

# HANDOUT

## EDITING AND PRODUCTION FOR AUDIENCES WITH NGA THI NGUYEN and TYLER CHRISTIE

After the interview is filmed, there are many options for using the content. For the documentary interview series *The Thread*, Nga Thi Nguyen (Producer) and Tyler Christie (Editor) share their role in editing a full-length interview down into 30 minute segments and get it prepared for broadcast on the [Life Stories Learning channel](#).

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### How do you describe your work?

*Nga:* As a producer at LifeStories, I juggle a ton of different tasks. I watch interviews and create compelling profile pieces, dig up archival images to jazz up our videos, and team up with editors to get to the heart of each story. Working with assistant editors and other producers, we make videos that inspire, educate, and entertain. Every day is a new adventure and a chance to bring stories to life and share them with the world. It's like being in a never-ending, super fun group project.

*Tyler:* As a documentary editor, it's my job to work with the director and producer to craft the version of the story that the audience will see. Starting with the raw footage and an idea, I shape it into a cohesive narrative, using additional tools like music, archival footage, graphics, and narration to enhance the effectiveness of the footage. It requires creativity and logic, and an understanding of storytelling.

### How did you learn to do what you do?

*Nga:* I studied post-production and television in college, but the real learning came from diving into the job. I've done it all, from reality TV and documentaries to competition shows. Every gig, whether at a tiny production company or a big corporation, has been a fantastic learning experience. I've worked on studio sets, in the field on the run, followed celebrity families, filmed their lives, and even documented skateboarding legends on month-long road trips. All of it has shaped me and taught me so much!

*Tyler:* I learned by doing and by observing. I developed an interest in filmmaking and editing around the age of 10, and never let it go. While I never went to film school, I have been editing for most of my life, teaching myself and learning as I go. I'm still learning more every day.

### Where do you begin or what questions do you ask yourself when you start a new project?

*Nga:* I dive deep into researching each person's life and accomplishments, creating a historical brief for everyone. I listen to their interviews multiple times, allowing the story to naturally take shape within the larger archive of interviews. I've worn out two pairs of AirPods in the process! This thorough (and headphone-intensive) approach helps me uncover unique insights and weave them into a compelling narrative.

*Tyler:* Before starting work on a project, it's important to know what the end goal is, because that frames how you view the footage. What does the director want to accomplish? What emotions do they want to convey? What is the root of the story they are trying to tell? I always begin by watching the footage. The first watch is the most important because it's the most honest. As the editor, you're going to see the footage hundreds of times before the project is finished, so the first time you see it is the closest you'll get to experiencing it in the same way that the audience will experience it. I like to take notes during my first watch - I write down if something makes me laugh or surprises me or excites me or jumps out at me in any way. Those initial reactions are helpful to remember throughout the editing process.

### **What skills do you think are the most important to learn to do your job successfully?**

*Nga:* Good communication and writing skills are super important, but it's also about trusting your gut and being open with your team. I think having fun is essential too. The path isn't always straightforward, and that's okay. I encourage off-topic chats, checking out each other's TV show or book recommendations, and just stepping out of our comfort zones. It's all part of the creative journey. It's cheesy but true!

*Tyler:* Technical skills are essential to know. You need to know how to use the software. The industry standards are Avid Media Composer and Adobe Premiere, and to a lesser degree DaVinci Resolve and Final Cut Pro. Eventually you'll probably need to know them all, but it doesn't really matter which one you learn first. In addition, it's helpful to have an understanding of other artforms such as music, graphic design, photography, etc. Filmmaking is really a combination of many different artforms, and while you are not ultimately responsible for making music, creating the graphics, or capturing the footage as the editor, you are responsible for tying all of it together.

### **In your opinion, what qualities and skills do all good editors/post-production managers need?**

*Nga:* Listening, patience, and problem-solving are top of the list. I also believe in giving team members the freedom to explore and create what matters to them. This approach not only sparks creativity but also empowers everyone to do their best work. Plus, being able to read emotions and show empathy is key. It creates a supportive environment where everyone feels understood and valued, making our collaborative efforts even more inspiring and fun.

*Tyler:* Patience: Editing is slow and sometimes tedious. Believe in the vision and trust the process.

Communication: Editing is collaborative. You need to be able to understand what the other people on your team are trying to convey and you also need to be able to effectively communicate your own opinions.

Open-mindedness: A big part of the editing process is problem solving. You need to think outside the box and not be afraid to try ideas. Sometimes someone will offer me a suggestion that I think will never work. More often than not, it works. Never say no to an idea and never be afraid to suggest an idea, no matter how wild it may seem. Even if the original idea doesn't work, it may spark other ideas that do work. It's also important to remove your ego from the process. No one is keeping a tally of who had more good ideas, everyone is working together with the same shared goal in mind.

### **What is your advice to a student interested in editing and producing films?**

*Nga:* My biggest advice? Just dive in and start anywhere! Embrace the learning process, even the boring parts. I binge-watch tons of content on YouTube and streaming platforms for fun, it helps me figure out what I like. I also love exploring Substack newsletters and other content streams. Finding your own style in fashion, home life, and art shapes how you express yourself through editing and production. I enjoy catching a movie in the theater during the day, visiting art exhibits, or simply taking a walk outside for inspiration. So, dive in, explore, and let your unique tastes guide your creativity!

*Tyler:* Make things. Technology is so accessible today, you can make a film on a smartphone. The best way to learn is by doing. Take photos, listen to music, follow whatever creative outlet motivates you - they all will help inform your editing.

Watch things. I mean really watch things. When you watch a film or a TV show or a documentary, pay attention to the editing. Why are they showing what they're showing? What impact does the pacing have on the emotion of the scene? Are the cuts jarring or invisible? What are they not showing us? Why did they cut \*here\* and not \*here\*? All of these things are considered during the editing process, and every cut is intentional.



### What do you love about your work?

**Nga:** I love working with my teammates and forming meaningful friendships along the way. We have book club talks, share pictures of our families and what we cook, and our Zooms and Slack channels are always playful and fun. Seeing others enjoy what I create is incredibly rewarding. There's something magical about knowing people are entertained by something I've made. It's like sharing a good laugh with friends – it just feels great!

**Tyler:** I love the balance between collaboration and individual work. The overall process is collaborative, but the individual act of editing is very personal - it's just you and the footage. Having that balance is important to me because I think I would get either overwhelmed or bored if it was all one or the other. I also love having something to show for all of my hard work at the end of a project. Editing is a long process, and often it presents problems that you need to solve, but when it's all said and done, you have a full piece that you can be proud of and other people can enjoy.

### What is the most challenging part and also your favorite part of working on *The Thread*?

**Nga:** Working on the Thread can be challenging because you never know who will be interviewed next or how familiar you might be with them due to differences in age or exposure. This often means extensive research upfront, which can feel tedious initially. If I am being honest, it's not my favorite part sometimes! Additionally, the interviews are often very lengthy, providing a lot of raw material to sift through and reorganize. However, the rewarding part comes when a story feels emotional and relatable. While a 30-minute interview might seem long, recording someone for 3 hours and then condensing that content is much more challenging than one might expect.

**Tyler:** The most challenging part about working on *The Thread* is condensing a 2-3 hour interview into a 30 minute interview without losing any of the heart. All of the interviews are very well done and are fascinating from start to finish, so you really don't want to cut anything out. My favorite part of working on *The Thread* is part of the same token – I get to watch these incredible interviews with inspiring people, some of whom I knew nothing about beforehand. I also get to work with a really passionate and professional team, which always helps to make any project a good experience.

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*Nga Thi Nguyen is a producer living in Brooklyn by way of Florida. With a career that spans documentaries, reality TV, and branded content, she has done it all—from fieldwork to post-production edits. When not crafting compelling stories, you'll find her swimming all summer long or singing along to Taylor Swift.*

*Tyler Christie is an Emmy-nominated editor based in New York. He has primarily worked in non-fiction, both on documentaries and television series, as well as scripted short films and music videos. If he weren't an editor, he'd probably be a farmer.*

# The Thread



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