



Katie Couric, Journalist

From Tragedies to Triumphs

Lesson Introduction

Interview Log: Interviewed on June 12, 2022 by Nancy Steiner

- Access *The Thread* episode of Katie Couric on our [YouTube channel](#) or at [LifeStories.org](https://www.lifestories.org) and download the transcript [here](#)
- Access her long-form interview on [LifeStories.org](https://www.lifestories.org) and download the transcript [here](#)

Learning Objectives

Social Studies Focus

- Define second-wave feminism
- Examine gender stereotypes, misogyny, and sexism in the workplace
- Understand the role of journalism in a democracy

English Language Arts Focus

- Inspire students who aspire to work in journalism
- Explore the emotions of compassion, empathy, loss and grief alongside the capacities of resilience and courage
- Examine perspective taking from the point of view of one journalist
- Explore the idea of purposeful work and a meaningful life
- Use Katie Couric's episode as evidence to write a rhetorical argument, commentary, or synthesis essay

Episode Overview

Katie Couric touches on her competitive nature from childhood and explores her experience as a trailblazing woman in journalism as the first female anchor of a network evening newscast. She opens up about the loss of her first husband to colon cancer and the impact of his illness and death on her life perspective.



Biography

TV host and journalist Katie Couric anchored *The CBS Evening News* from 2006 through 2011. She previously was the host of the NBC morning program *The Today Show* from 1991 through 2006. Katie Couric worked for CNN and ABC early in her career, also reporting in Miami and Washington, D.C. She joined NBC News in 1989 and *The Today Show* in 1990, becoming permanent co-anchor in 1991. With her optimistic attitude and no-holds-barred interviewing style, Katie Couric boosted the show's sagging ratings and became one of morning TV's most popular personalities. Her first husband, Jay Monahan, died in 1998 of colon cancer, and in 1999 Couric co-founded a non-profit organization for cancer research and education.



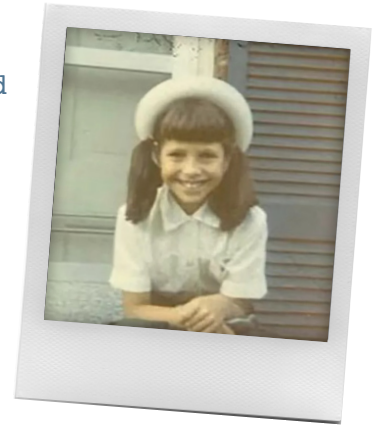
Teaching Tip: First Take

A **First Take** is a warm-up writing or conversation exercise created uniquely for *The Thread* that strengthens media literacy skills. Like an opening song in a musical, the first stanza of a poem, or even the first impression one person makes on another, the First Take asks students to reflect and share their initial thoughts and feelings about the episode's opening.

Suggested Steps

- ▣ **Read** the opening of Katie Couric's episode aloud to students:

"I've always been very competitive, whether it was being the fastest runner in my elementary school. I think I ran the 50 yard dash in 62. But who's counting? I ran for office when I was in elementary school. I beat Stephen Russell by 11 votes. But who's counting? So I think I've always had this very competitive drive and I think to be successful, especially in the media, you have to be competitive."



- ▣ **Ask and Discuss:** What do you learn about Katie Couric from these opening sentences? What insights can you infer?

- ▣ **Next**, have students do a one-minute quick write reflecting on what he shared or have students get into pairs and share their thoughts and feelings.

- ▣ **Last**, as a class discuss the reasons they think the filmmakers choose this opening for the episode?





Teaching Tip:

THE THREAD Up Close

After watching the interview, have students debrief Couric's life story with these suggested questions:

- ▣ How do you understand the title "From Tragedies to Triumphs" after watching this episode?
- ▣ What is something new that you learned about America from this episode?
- ▣ What is something new you learned about being a journalist from Katie Couric?
- ▣ What influences shaped Katie Couric's formative years?
- ▣ If you were interviewing Katie Couric, what would you like to ask her?

After discussing, have students return to *The Thread* episode and engage students in a close read and analysis of her interview using the video and transcript. Depending on the lesson, question, or theme you are aligning *The Thread* with, have students annotate the transcript, select passages that reflect the assignment, and explain their reasoning in class.

Here is an example of *A Thread* connection: If you are exploring the changes in American culture for women, here is one excerpt that could illustrate this shift:

"I thought it was really important to take on the job as a solo news anchor because it was a first, and I didn't want people to think that [it] was only the domain of men and that a woman could do that job with confidence and competence. And so I thought it was high time we had someone in that role that wasn't wearing a blazer and tie."

Connections

- ▣ How would you describe Katie Couric's character?
- ▣ What did you learn about overcoming life's challenges from her stories?
- ▣ What new insights did you gain about (yourself, your community, your world) from the challenges she has faced in her life as well as her tremendous success?



Photos: Katie Couric as a child in her living room. (Katie Couric Facebook) left



Activity: From Tragedies to Triumphs

Katie Couric's episode ends with her saying two profound statements: "We are all terminal" and "I think my loss has absolutely affirmed my positive outlook." This sentiment affirms the title of this interview "From Tragedies to Triumphs."

Have students get in small groups and discuss these prompts:

- ▣ How can loss contribute to a positive outlook?
- ▣ How can grief and loss be a transformative experience?



Additional Resources

- ▣ [Katie Couric Media](#)
- ▣ Read her recent book, [Going There](#)

Learn more about the organizations Katie Couric has been instrumental in leading and supporting:

- ▣ [Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health](#)
- ▣ [Stand Up to Cancer](#)
- ▣ [The National Colorectal Research Alliance](#)

