



Noah Wyle, Actor Walking The Talk

Lesson Introduction

Interview Log: Interviewed on September 1, 2023 by David Bender

- ▣ Access *The Thread* episode of Noah Wyle on our [YouTube channel](#) or at [LifeStories.org](#) and download the transcript [here](#)
- ▣ Access his long-form interview on [LifeStories.org](#)

Learning Objectives

Social Studies Focus

- ▣ Explore identity formation as it relates upbringing
- ▣ Examine and discuss the role celebrities play in advocating on behalf of social issues
- ▣ Define “humanitarian”
- ▣ Explore the work of international NGOs working in war zones and with refugees to address humanitarian crises

English Language Arts Focus

- ▣ Examine perspective taking from the point of view of one actor
- ▣ Analyze the structure and purpose of a narrative, identify key themes, and synthesize information from a spoken text
- ▣ Analyze, reflect on, and discuss the title of the episode “Walking the Talk”
- ▣ Explore the idea of purposeful work and a meaningful life
- ▣ Write a rhetorical essay exploring one value that is important in your life

Episode Overview

If you thought you already knew Noah Wyle, you’re in for a surprise. This is a profoundly thoughtful man of depth and integrity, and you will discover that the compassion of his fictional alter ego reflects the values that Noah Wyle brings to the world even when he’s not on camera. His commitment to caregiving took him to Macedonia for Doctors of the World during the war in Kosovo and later to join the board of Human Rights Watch. In this candid and emotional episode of *The Thread*, we reconnect with an old friend who continues to seek and discover new facets of meaning and purpose in his life.



Biography

Noah Wyle is a film, television, and theater actor best known for his leading role as Dr. John Carter in NBC’s *ER* (1994-2009). Though the Hollywood-born star was unknown before his big break in the hit medical drama, he grew up closely connected to medicine: his mother, Marjorie Speer, was an orthopedic head nurse. Wyle was inspired to pursue a career in acting and performed in school plays throughout high school, later studying theater arts at Northwestern University. After graduation, he trained under acting teacher Larry Moss and landed his first role in 1990 at age 17 in *Blind Faith*, followed by *A Few Good Men* in 1992. In 1994, he played the part of Dr. Carter, which earned him nominations for three Golden Globes and five Primetime Emmys. He holds the record for the longest run on a medical television drama. Other notable credits include portraying Steve Jobs in the 1999 docudrama *Pirates of Silicon Valley* and Flynn Carsen in *The Librarian* franchise.



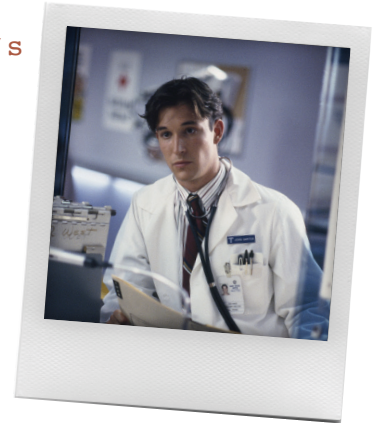
Teaching Tip: First Take

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

▣ **Watch and then read aloud** the opening of Noah Wyle's episode to students:

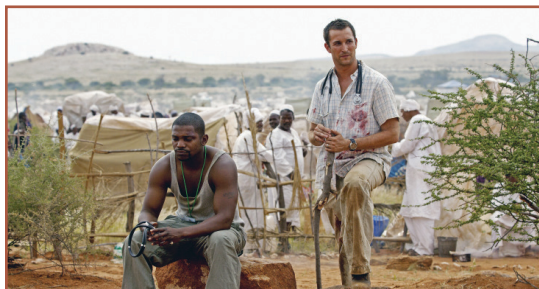
"So that's kind of how I looked at Carter. He's born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and he doesn't feel deserving of it. He's looking at all these other people who are brilliant and smart and don't get half the breaks he has had, and he wants them to like him. He wants them to think he's good and hardworking and talented at his job. And if he can get their approbation and validation, that will be the stamp of credibility that he's looking for to move on and go back to the world that he was born into. And, I resemble that very much in my own life as well. I've sort of sought out fringe elements of society and flirted with them to sort of see whether or not I can handle them if I had been born into them instead of where I was born into."



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

▣ **Next,** as a class, discuss the role of "the opening" in any form of storytelling – an interview, film, play, or song. What is their point of view on why the filmmakers chose this as the opening for the episode? What ideas, topics, or themes may the filmmakers be foreshadowing?

▣ **Last,** have students do a one-minute quick write reflecting on how the opening connects with the episode's title, "Walking The Talk." Then, have students get into pairs and share their thoughts and feelings.



Photos: Actor Noah Wyle as 'Doctor John Carter' during a scene from 'ER', August 4th 1994. (Paul Drinkwater/NBCU Photo Bank via Getty Images) top; "There Are No Angels Here" Episode 20 -- Air Date 05/04/2006 -- Pictured: (l-r) Mekhi Phifer as Doctor Gregory Pratt, Noah Wyle as Doctor John Carter. (David Bloomer/NBCU Photo Bank) lower left; Partial view of the Brazda camp set up by NATO, 06 April 1999, on the road between Blace and the Macedonian capital Skopje, where Kosovar refugees are gathered. (ERIC FEFERBERG / AFP) lower right



Teaching Tip:

The Thread Up Close

Step One: Watch Noah Wyle’s episode “Walking The Talk” here.

Next, have students discuss and debrief the episode using these suggested questions:

- ▣ How does Noah Wyle’s background and upbringing influence his approach to social justice?
- ▣ What are the challenges and rewards of being a celebrity and using this platform to advocate for social change?
- ▣ Do you think actors and celebrities have a responsibility to use their influence for social good? Why or why not?
- ▣ How do personal values inform social justice work?
- ▣ What are the ways Noah Wyle chose to create positive change in his world?

Step Two: After discussing the questions in Step One, have students return to *The Thread* episode and engage in a close read and analysis of his interview using the transcript and video as a reference. 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: Noah Wyle is asked during the interview if he would ever run for elected office. His response is candid and offers a compelling point of view to share in any unit of study about the effectiveness and challenges of running for political office.

“I find the process ultimately compromising in a way that would make me uncomfortable. I find the salesmanship and the self-promotional aspect of it to be distasteful. I see the inefficiency and the infighting and the necessity to fundraise and be reelected take precedence over the issues being really talked about. I’m not interested in power. I’m interested in change and I’m interested in the most effective way to get there. So I don’t see that [elected office] as the most effective way for me to be part of it.”

Connections: *The Thread Up Close*

- ▣ Do you agree or disagree with his point of view?
- ▣ Would you be interested in running for an elected office? Why or why not?
- ▣ What do you think is the most effective way to create political change?
- ▣ If you were given the opportunity to reform the process of running for political office in America, where would you start?
- ▣ What new insight did you learn about (yourself, your community, your world) from his stories or point of view?



Noah Wyle

Activity: Walking the Talk

Actor Noah Wyle tries to “walk the talk” by investing his time and resources in issues and organizations whose mission he believes in passionately. He has chosen to use his public platform as a celebrity and align his values to specific humanitarian work. In this activity, students will spend time reflecting on their core values and explore different ways they may choose to express and act upon these values. Adapted from the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, [this exercise](#) is a jumping-off point for student exploration, discussion, and deeper introspection.

Start by ranking these different values, characteristics, and qualities in order of their importance, from 1 (the most important) to 11 (the least important):

- ▣ _____ artistic skills
- ▣ _____ sense of humor
- ▣ _____ relations with friends/family
- ▣ _____ spontaneity/living life in the moment
- ▣ _____ social skills
- ▣ _____ athletics
- ▣ _____ musical ability/appreciation
- ▣ _____ physical attractiveness
- ▣ _____ creativity
- ▣ _____ social justice
- ▣ _____ business/managerial skills
- ▣ _____ intellectual/academic success
- ▣ _____ romantic relationships
- ▣ _____ religious/spiritual practices

After completing the ranking, explain in writing (one to three paragraphs) why your #1 value or quality is the most important to you. If you are able, include a story when it played an important role in your life. narratives on your chosen dish.



Additional Resources

Here are the organizations mentioned by Noah Wyle:

- ▣ [Doctors of the World](#) - official website
- ▣ [Human Rights Watch](#) - official website
- ▣ [World Wildlife Fund](#) - official website

