



MOUNTAINFILM
FOR STUDENTS

GOLDEN AGE KARATE

DIRECTOR Sindha Agha

DURATION 5 mins

Karate is an interesting sport that combines physical and mental toughness. This short film illustrates how passion can bring someone into a leadership position. Jeff Wall Jr. becomes a teacher at a nursing home and gains respect and love from the elders he teaches. —*Arabella Galbo, age 18*



Standards

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 / Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING & LISTENING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 / Comprehension and Collaboration

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 / Comprehension and Collaboration

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4 / Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5 / Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Themes

 profile, indomitable spirit, karate

Key Vocabulary

 profile, helpfulness, karate, dojo

Filmmaker Interview



SINDHA AGHA

Why did you become a filmmaker and how did you get started?

I grew up in a small town in central Illinois and was extremely restless in that environment, so I turned to writing and then photography as an outlet. My mom was great about taking me to the local video rental store and encouraging me to pick out independent films. When I became particularly obsessed with a film, she'd buy me a copy so I could properly study it. I remember sitting on the floor of my big sister's bedroom with my mom, rewinding scenes of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* over and over to study Ellen Kuras's cinematography. The way Kuras captured an internal world and communicated it through imagery was the most beautiful, special thing.

It took me twelve more years to build up the courage to try to become a filmmaker. On one hand, it makes me sad to think that I lacked the self-confidence, but on the other hand, it makes me appreciate the ways my roundabout path informed how I think about filmmaking. In university, I studied political economy and became passionate about how capitalism infringes upon the rights of humans, animals and the planet. This drew me to activism, and now I bring

that sensibility to my art. My approach to storytelling is centered around these questions: What do I want to teach? Who needs to be heard? Who needs to hear them?

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When you made the film, did you have a specific audience in mind?

Not really — and I tend not to think about this because I think if you try to predict what other people will like, you can make something watered down and impersonal. I focus on making a film that I love watching. If I can watch something 100 times and still find it fun and feel moved by it, then I can feel confident that someone somewhere will share that sentiment with me.

When editing the film, was there anything you wished you could have included in the final cut?

I would have loved to make a whole separate film about Jeffrey's mom, Valerie. She is a truly amazing person and my experience interviewing her left me inspired. It's a good problem to have — finding yourself with too many stories you want to tell. But I knew ultimately this was a film about Jeff, and it was important to stay focused on telling his story. Still, I wanted to find a way to add Valerie's magic to the piece, especially considering that she is such a major influence on Jeff. So we adapted our approach and made Valerie a key narrator to the film, sprinkling her infectious energy throughout the piece.

Is there an action you hope people are inspired to take after seeing this film?

One of my favorite things about Jeff and his mom Valerie was the pure joy they derive from helping others. And that joy is completely contagious — every day I got to hang out and work with them virtually. Jeff and Valerie made my day. They're the type of people who you can't help but want to emulate. Not only because they're truly good people, but because anyone would want to be that happy! I wanted that sense of joy and

delight to come across in the film. I think sometimes we slip into the misguided assumption that helping other people will inherently cost us something — time, money, energy, happiness. But it was

so obvious from getting to know Jeff and Valerie that their acts of generosity towards the senior community invariably enrich their own lives. And I wanted this film to serve as a reminder that we have so much to gain when we show up for one another.

What's the next big adventure or film project on the horizon for you?

I'm stepping more into narrative filmmaking now, which is exciting and terrifying territory for me. But I think that it's important to always be trying something new, something you don't really know how to do. One of my favorite writers, Jenny Offill, says that the worst thing you can do with your art is perform tricks you already know. And I always try to keep that in mind — the best place you can find yourself in is one that's a little bit uncomfortable, where you feel like you're a beginner. Being a beginner is a beautiful thing. That's when your work really comes alive.

What is one piece of advice you can give students that you wish someone had shared with you?

Focus on finding people who make you feel safe and accepted. Community is really important and friendship with other artists is what will motivate, inspire and shelter you during intense storms of self-doubt (they will come!). Don't be competitive with other artists — there is room for everyone. And if you encounter people who make you feel insecure about your art, run the other way and remember that it says everything about them and nothing about you.

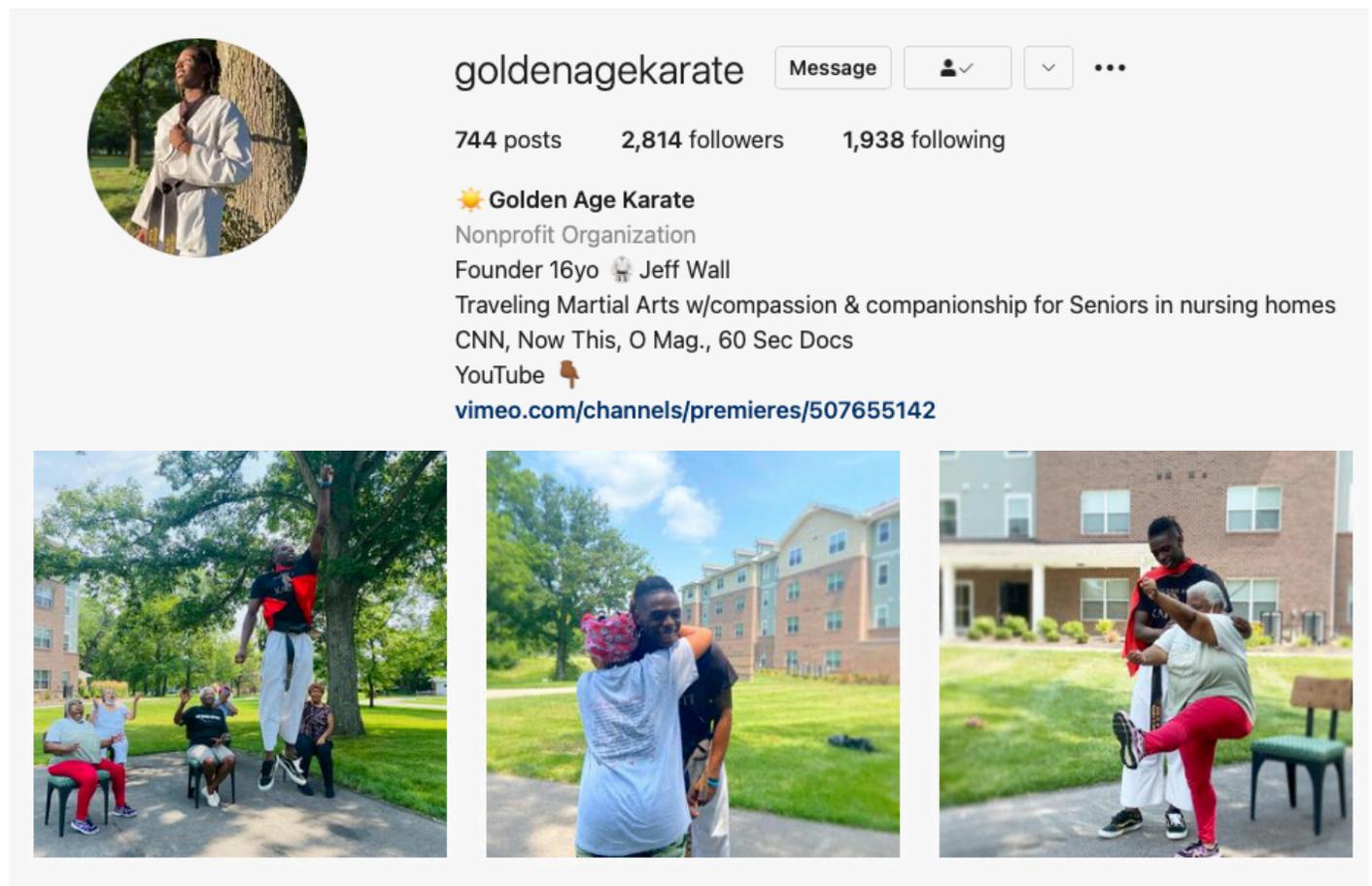
Pre-Screening Activity

Middle/High School

Golden Age Karate is about Jeff Walls Jr. and his passion for karate and helping senior citizens. This article from CNN's Ashley Vaughn, titled "[This teenage martial artist creates videos to help superhero seniors stay active while in quarantine](#)" profiles Jeff's incredible spirit and is a good primer for the film and activity to follow.

You could either jigsaw the article (have students read certain sections), have the students buddy-read, or read through as a whole class. Another pre-film activity (since the article includes links to his Instagram and has pictures from his Instagram in the article) is to scroll through the article and focus on the pictures, while asking the class:

“What story do these pictures tell us about Jeff?”



goldenagekarate Message   

744 posts 2,814 followers 1,938 following

🌞 Golden Age Karate
Nonprofit Organization
Founder 16yo 🧑🏻 Jeff Wall
Traveling Martial Arts w/compassion & companionship for Seniors in nursing homes
CNN, Now This, O Mag., 60 Sec Docs
YouTube 📌
vimeo.com/channels/premieres/507655142



Discussion Guide

GENERAL/OPEN PROMPTS

1. Jeff responded to the pandemic, by creating his own YouTube channel to keep in touch with his senior citizen students. How did you respond to the pandemic? How did you and your family get creative with keeping in touch with people you love?

EXPLORING SELF

1. At the start of the film, Jeff Wall Jr. states “when I am in a match, time slows down.” Can you think of an activity that you enjoy, in which time seems to slow down? Why do you think that time appears to slow down when we are engaged in an activity we love?
2. Jeff Wall Jr. appears to have an innate ability to help others (at the start of the film, his mother, Valerie shares that he was always eager to help others in school by protecting everyone). Do you think that helpfulness is something we are born with, or something that can be learned? How do we measure one’s helpfulness and eagerness to help others?
3. Jeff describes being in awe of the 95-year-old lady doing push-ups. What do you hope to be able to do when you are 95-years-old?

EXPLORING THE WORLD

1. Jeff is passionate about karate and its respect for elders. Do you think the United States is respectful of its elders? Why or why not? Do you think that this is something Jeff learned from karate?

EXPLORING FILMMAKING

1. The director, Sindha Agha, chose to tell Jeff’s story through a mixed media film experience, incorporating pictures, illustrations, and annotations. Why do you think she chose to incorporate these elements into her storytelling? Do you think this helped to tell Jeff’s story?

EXPLORING SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Jeff and his mother Valerie share that the seniors start to feel better both mentally and physically after participating in karate. Do you think that being taught to move your body is a human right?

SENSE OF WONDER

1. Jeff shares that his karate classes help the seniors to feel more confident “in stepping outside the house.” Why do you think there is a link between exercise and one’s ability to feel more confident?
2. Why do you think it is important to tell people’s stories?

Activity

Middle/High School

Sindha Agha's film is incredibly multimodal and vibrant in her choice to show Jeff's story using photos, film, and illustrations paired with narrations. On top of showcasing Jeff's passion for karate and helping others, *Golden Age Karate* is a beautiful profile of a person.

For this activity, students will create a profile of another student (or themselves!) to showcase things they may have not known about each other. The goal of the project is to conduct an interview, choose a focus, select a medium to tell the story, and share the profile of another student that is five minutes or less.

This activity can be completed several ways - in pairs, in a group, or solo. Keep in mind every student's access to tools during the creation of this project. For example, if one student has a top-of-the-line iPhone, and another only has access to a Chromebook, the final product they will be able to produce will vary tremendously. Therefore, as a teacher, you may choose to have students illustrate or take pictures on their Chromebook, or coordinate with a librarian to check out cameras or computers. Typically, our students are the best problem-solvers (and incredibly tech-savvy!) so they may have a solution we have not thought of!

What questions do the students feel would be good to ask when creating a profile of each other's story?

In preparation, ask students to come up with a list of questions to use in their interviews. What questions do the students feel would be good to ask when creating a profile of each other's story? *The New York Times'* Learning Network has a list of questions that might be helpful in generating your own list of questions as a class, titled "[Over 1,000 Writing Prompts for Students.](#)" The list of questions is broken up into categories such as technology, arts and entertainment, school and career, identity and family, school life and leisure time, and science and health. After the students have generated a list of questions, give students the option to break up into groups, pairs, or complete the interview independently.

Students should complete the interviews before telling the person's (or their own) story. Once students have completed the interview, ask them to think about the process of interviewing. Were there one or two questions that really highlighted the interviewee? In considering *Golden Age Karate*, Sindha Agha chose to showcase Jeff's love of karate and his respect for elders, specifically by telling the story of him teaching karate to his grandparents and the senior citizens at the nursing home. By focusing her film on this, Agha was able to keep her film to under five minutes, but still convey Jeff's kindness and humanity. What do the students feel should be the focus of their interview?

If there is time, have students re-watch the film *Golden Age Karate* and discuss what mediums helped or enhanced the telling of Jeff's story. What tools would the students want to use in the making of their own profile? Do they want to use illustrations? Do they want to take pictures? Do they feel that making a short film would be best? What medium would they like to use in their profile creation?

Activity

Middle/High School (cont.)

To help guide student's thinking (and your own!) feel free to use or adjust the planning sheet below.

PROFILE PLANNING

Focus questions (*Thinking about your interview, what questions really highlighted the interviewee? What topics did the person get excited to talk about?*)

Will your profile include a narrator? How will you tell this person's story?

What ideas do you have for the beginning or the end of the profile?

How do you want to tell this person's story? Are there any specific mediums you want to use? Do you want to mix two (or more) mediums?

If it helps, sketch or write a rough outline of your profile below.

This profile activity is based off of a lesson from *The New York Times*' Learning Network, titled "[Making a Podcast That Matters: A Guide with Examples from 23 Students.](#)" There is a ton of overlap between the medium of podcasts and films, specifically with narration and telling a person's story. Another option would be to have students create a podcast or recording of the interview, and edit for flow and clarity. Included in this lesson is a concise [rubric created by The New York Times](#) for their student podcast contest. This rubric could be adapted for the creation of this profile. In addition, if your students are interested in listening to quality storytelling made by students, there are examples throughout the lesson on topics such as teen-pregnancy, March for our Lives, and one titled "[My Incarcerated Family](#)" by Samantha Zazueta.

RECOMMENDED EXTENTIONS

There are thousands of online tutorials for at-home karate lessons. If your class is interested, or if you want to incorporate a karate-themed-brain-break, there are endless [tutorials on YouTube](#) to fit your classroom's needs. Jeff's YouTube channel has some charismatic and lovely tutorials as well!

Sindha Agha, the director of the film *Golden Age Karate* is an "Emmy-nominated director, writer and visual artist known for her viral, vibrant work." Her film and op-doc for *The New York Times*, titled "[How to Be Alone When You're Really Bad at It](#)" (from May 2020) pairs a beautiful essay and film in response to going through a break-up during quarantine.

Zendesk, a customer service software company, commissioned the film *Golden Age Karate* as part of a series to "showcase people out there, who despite the challenges, really know how to help." Their "[Stories of helpful people](#)" tab on their website, has five short stories, films, and photo essays showcasing other good samaritans, such as Jeff Wall.

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