



Mini-Research Project: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*
Gwen Romero, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

Students research a topic or issue related to the book. They present their findings in either an informational piece of writing or in a T.E.D.-style talk.

Objectives:

- Engage in research and evaluate sources.
- Practice questioning and note-taking skills.
- Practice informational writing, including drafting and editing.
- Practice public speaking and listening.

Context:

ELA Grades 6 through 12: W2, W4, W6, W7, W9, SL2, SL4, SL5

Materials:

- Assignment Sheet and Research Notes template
- Internet access and word processing program
- Media recording software (Canvas, Google, or cell phone or tablet)

Time Span:

Approximately one week



Procedures:

Days 1 & 2

- Explain that as a final project, each student will complete a mini-research project based on/inspired by the book and class discussions.
- Distribute Assignment Sheet; direct students to review Quick Research and Seminar notes.
- Together, brainstorm sample topics for students to research.
 - Students spend the rest of this class session and at least one more session researching their chosen topics and working on their notes; teacher monitors on-task behaviors and skills through questioning sources and reviewing notes.

Days 3–4+

- Watch the following two T.E.D. Talks with William Kamkwamba:
 - 2007: Question and Answer
https://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_how_i_built_a_windmill
 - 2009: Speech
https://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_how_i_harnessed_the_wind?language=en
- Discuss the structure of each video and Kamkwamba's public speaking style.
- Explain that each version has a script—a draft of the Q&A and a draft of the speech—to give each structure but that Kamkwamba does not rigidly follow those. However, he has practiced what he is saying, clearly a bit more in the second talk than the first.
- Each student then commits to which structure to follow and uses the videos as models.
- Work students through a rough draft, edits, and a polished script—as with any written piece. (Approx. 2 to 3 days.)
 - If you have students record their talks, take class time to demo a couple of media recording options, or you may choose to have students present their talks live.

Final day(s)

Students present their talks.*

*Depending on the class dynamic, I sometimes just have students submit their work to me.

Follow-up and Extensions:

(See additional lessons.)

Expand to a full research project and formal paper.

Expand to formal presentations.

Have students/ groups select another work to read, discuss, and complete follow-up research.

Rationale:

Students need to practice short and long research pieces in addition to developing writing and presentation skills for college and career readiness. By connecting research to topics, they can then build that knowledge base and spark more interest in developing questioning and research skills.

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Your Name:

Mini-Research Project: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*
Assignment Sheet

Complete each of the following tasks:

Task 1: Brainstorm possible topics for your project; you may include class-generated ideas or just your own ideas. Use this space.

Task 2: Choose your topic: _____

Task 3: Which types of sources would be most useful for you to find information for this project? Circle them. Be prepared to explain why you chose these.

encyclopedia

news article

magazine article

journal

textbook

almanac

historical document

documentary

Other? _____

Notes:

This is a short project, so book-length sources will be too much to use effectively. Use the index in any textbook/book source to focus on essential pages/chapters.

Blogs, commentaries, open-post sites are not inherently credible. Only use those written by the source if you are researching a person. Only use blogs that are professional and have appropriately credentialed writers.

Task 4: Research. Complete the following notes for a minimum of two *credible* sources (appropriate credentials) of different types (see list above).

Source 1

Title:

Writer/editor:

Date published/posted/updated/copyright:

Website:

1 to 2 sentence summary:

Essential Notes

Significance of Details



Source 2

Title:

Writer/editor:

Date published/posted/updated/copyright:

Website:

1 to 2 sentence summary:

Essential Notes

Significance of Details

➔ Continue on additional page(s) as needed.

Task 5: Prepare to write about and present your research.

First, identify 5 details/patterns that you realized between the two sources and/or questions that arose that you were able to answer (or not) with your research.

Task 6: Review the two formats for Kamkwamba's presentations about his experience. Commit to which form you will use. Either one should be informative (not an argument or a story); do not merely summarize your sources.

Task 7: In a separate document, compose the script for your presentation (Q&A or speech): draft, edit, polish.

Task 8: Practice your delivery, including a practice recording if applicable.

Task 9: Present/submit.