

## **Who-o-o's Johnny? Who Are You?**

(A Character Development lesson suggested for students grades 4-7)



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### **Objectives**

Students will:

1. recognize Johnny Carson as a native Nebraskan and entertainment celebrity.
2. understand that, just like Johnny Carson, each student's character can be described in many ways.
3. compare and contrast being "a character" with developing fine qualities of character.
4. reflect upon and verbally share their own efforts to be noticed in a positive way.
5. gather examples of "generosity" from their own lives.
6. create a word art project demonstrating qualities of character for which they wish to be known.

### **Vocabulary**

1. **Native** – belonging to a locality or country by birth
2. **Character (2 definitions)**
  - a. a person very different from others
  - b. a person's pattern of behavior; personality and reputation
3. **Celebrity** – a famous or well-publicized person
4. **Supportive** – providing encouragement and additional help
5. **Philanthropy** – the desire to help mankind as indicated by acts of kindness

### **Supplies Needed**

Computer and Projector  
9x12 in. white art paper  
pencils  
Markers, crayons, colored pencils

**Note:** Power point slides (pwpt) are numbered and indicated throughout the lesson plan that follows.

### Introduction (pwpt 1)

This lesson will teach you about a well-known Nebraskan, as well as help you understand yourself in a different way.

#### A. (pwpt 2) 2 photos of Johnny Carson

1. **Ask: Who is this man?** Accept all possible answers.
2. If no one names Johnny, provide his name.
3. **Ask: Who's Johnny Carson?** Accept all correct responses
4. Teacher displays photo of himself/herself or another person known to the students.

**Ask:** Who is this person? Dig deeper beyond simple name.

Examples: a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

My baseball coach or my dance instructor

The father of 3 children

A husband, a grandfather

A Nebraska football fanatic

5. In small groups of 3-5, students ask each other "Who are you?" Each child responds with full name plus a fact unknown to the majority of the group.

**(pwpt 3) Main Idea:** Johnny Carson was a "home-grown" – or "native" Nebraskan. He can be an example in many ways as a student matures into a person of fine character.

1. (pwpt 4) Johnny's background much like yours
2. Family, home address, schools
3. (pwpt 5) Family anecdotes  
Johnny was often humorous but also displayed a serious nature and was kind.
4. (with a smile) **Say:** Johnny Carson was a **character** from quite a young age.

**Ask: What does it mean to be a character?**

Unusual different than others a little odd at times Unforgettable  
make people smile OR roll their eyes OR both

**Ask: Is anyone in this room a character?**

With kindness share examples.

5. (pwpt 6) Johnny Carson was a character throughout his life, BUT he developed fine qualities of personal character. Seriously, Johnny faithfully practiced card tricks and magic tricks. As a funny man, Johnny used a co-worker at a radio station as his record player!

**B. (pwpt 7) Being “a character” may not always be positive.**

1. Being unusual or different can turn people off.
2. A “character” can be lonely. **Ask Why?**
  - a. Think and act differently – makes others uncomfortable
  - b. Unusual interests
  - c. May get into trouble at school, church, other activities
  - d. A character may have trouble focusing because their brain simply works differently. Sees the world in different ways.
  - e. Parents may tell you to stay away from “a character” as a result.
3. Teacher- encourage unique qualities in students
  - a. Be your own person
  - b. Have good friends but beware of those who attempt to control you
  - c. NEVER – harmful
    - Mean
    - Self-centered

**C. Johnny Carson loved to make people laugh. He focused on this his entire life.**

1. Told jokes, joked about himself **NEVER** harmful to other person.
  - a. (pwpt 8) Magic tricks his 1<sup>st</sup> performing passion
  - b. Sent for a kit
  - c. Always practicing
  - d. Performed around Norfolk – even on the back end of a moving truck
  - e. Determined – and became very good
  - f. Performed in Navy for the Secretary of the Navy
  - g. 1<sup>st</sup> job on the radio – humor again helped him out

2. (pwpt 9) People began talking about Johnny.
  - a. His humor – he was very very funny
  - b. Nice to work with
  - c. Very quiet in his personal life
  - d. **Johnny’s character doesn’t take over his character. What does this mean?**  
Accept student responses.
  
3. Johnny worked very hard to develop his skills.
  - a. Long hours
  - b. Started at the bottom and rose to the top
  - c. Did things to be noticed in a positive, memorable way

**(pwpt 10) Share in small groups:**

**How are you working hard to be noticed in a positive way?**

- Ideas may include:
- \*exceptional or improved school work
  - \*spelling or geography bee finalist
  - \*music lessons use talents
  - \*good member of a team
  - \*responsible for chores and for yourself
  - \*think of others before yourself
  - \*help without being asked or told

4. Noticed in a positive way for his humor, Johnny Carson became well-known in the entertainment world. He became a **celebrity**.

**(Pwpt 11)** What’s happening in the photo?

**D. (pwpt 12)** Johnny Carson became a celebrity for 3 main reasons.

1. He was a funny man
  - a. Original
  - b. **Did not copy** someone else
  - c. His humor did not hurt people’s feelings or reputation
  - d. He found humor in everyday life that everyone could understand.
  - e. He followed the news. He was funny but up on current events

2. He was **supportive** of young comics just beginning careers
  - a. Invited them to be on his TV show
  - b. Talked with them. Gave advice and suggestions.

3. Generous contributions

- a. His **philanthropy** helped many projects across USA.  
**Understand definition of philanthropy – kindness and \$\$**

**Say: Johnny's philanthropy spoke volumes.**

**Ask: How can philanthropy speak?** Accept student responses

- b. **(pwpt 13-19)** Nebraska greatly benefited from Johnny's generosity.  
Photos in order: Johnny Carson Theatre, Norfolk; Carson Cancer Center, Norfolk; Elkhorn Valley Museum, Norfolk, where Emmys on display; Norfolk Arts Center; Lifelong Learning Center, Norfolk; Norfolk Library Foundation (book spine- this was a smaller contribution from this list of beneficiaries); Norfolk Senior Center
- c. Often anonymous – goal was to help others, not draw attention to himself.

**E.** In small groups, share how you show generosity to others.

\*bring items to school for the less fortunate

\*chapel offerings

\*help someone with school work even when you'd rather do something else

\*assist a neighbor without payment and maybe without being asked

\*babysit for free

\*practice a skill with someone to help them learn; math facts;  
throw a baseball; tie shoe;

\*traffic signs for bike riders

- F. In summary, Johnny Carson
1. was raised in a typical family in a typical Nebraska community
  2. Johnny was unique – different from others
  3. Johnny practiced and worked hard **for years** to develop his skills
  4. Johnny became a man of fine character qualities
    - a. Humble
    - b. Kind
    - c. Generous
- G. (pwpt 20) At your age (8, 9, 10, 11, 12...) you are already working on your personal qualities to develop your character. Character goes beyond what you look like. Character develops from within. May include honesty, generosity, kindness, self-control, patience, helpfulness, empathy, etc. Remember: qualities of character are not things you do well. Qualities of character reflect a relationship with other people.

### A Final Project

1. Have students consider the end of their own life many years in the future.
2. What qualities of character would they hope to have in an obituary?
3. Remember: qualities of character are not things you do well. Qualities of character reflect a relationship with other people.

*Those teaching this lesson might write their own example to show students.*