

**OVERVIEW**

Michael Josephson's Gabriel Award-winning commentaries air daily on radio stations across the country and around the world on American Forces Radio. The purpose of these commentaries — and of all the work of the nonprofit, nonpartisan Josephson Institute — is to emphasize the importance of character and ethical living.

This lesson helps develop writing skills at the same time as encouraging students to think and respond to the thought-provoking commentaries using technology as the medium.

**MATERIALS**

- Access to computers
- Sample Commentary
- Editing Tips Handout

**ACTIVITY**

1. Introduce the students to Michael Josephson's essays by reading the Sample Commentary to the class.
2. Ask them their reactions. Discuss the message of the commentary as a class.
3. Tell them they're going to begin weekly assignments requiring them to post their reaction to a Commentary online.
4. Show the students the Commentary blog. Demonstrate how to post a response if necessary.
5. Explain that they must thoroughly edit their responses. They will learn the difference between language used for casual texting and more formal language used for posting blog responses.
6. Distribute the Editing Tips Handout to the class. Go over each point. Give examples where necessary.
7. Explain that they should refer to the handout when posting their responses. Part of their grade will be dependent on their editing.
8. The Commentary blog is updated every Thursday. Read the guidelines for submission and monitor the activity as necessary.

The commentary blog can be found here:

<http://charactercounts.org/michael/>

While you're there, sign up for a free weekly e-newsletter!

# SAMPLE COMMENTARY

## TAKING MY GRANDDADDY'S QUARTER

During a seminar for teachers, I asked participants to share experiences that shaped their values. A Southern lady shared this story:

More than 50 years ago, when I was five, I was at my granddaddy's house in a dress and white gloves. He told me I could go into the kitchen and get a cookie. Next to the cookie jar was a stack of quarters. I knew I shouldn't have, but I took one.

I must have looked guilty when I returned because my granddaddy looked at me funny and asked me to show him my white gloves. I had the quarter in my right hand so I held out my left.

"Show me the other hand," he said. When he saw the quarter, he looked at me sadly.

He hugged me and said, "Darlin', you can have anything in the world I have, but it breaks my heart that you'd ever steal it."

I'll never forget the shame, and I never stole anything again.

Her grandfather understood this was a teachable moment and didn't shy away from his duty to provide unambiguous moral guidance. And he did so in a manner that made the experience a permanent marker in his granddaughter's life.

Without harsh words or punishment, he established high standards and expectations and taught her that, because of his love for her, he was a stakeholder in her choices and that he was hurt when she let him down.

An informed healthy conscience is a built-in punishment/reward system that makes us proud when we do things right and ashamed at our moral missteps. But such a conscience doesn't develop by accident.

This is Michael Josephson reminding you that character counts.

<http://charactercounts.org/michael/>

# EDITING TIPS HANDOUT

1. Before you hit the “submit” button, ask yourself: “Does this really represent what I want to say?”
2. Have you addressed the issue discussed in the Commentary?  
Make sure you stay on topic.
3. Check your spelling. Typos are easily made and can’t be corrected once you submit.
4. Look carefully at your sentences. Does each one begin with a capital letter and end with a period?
5. Is your comment written in the style of a text message? It shouldn’t be. Comments should not look like text messages with abbreviations and acronyms. BYKT.
6. You don’t have to pay per character. Find words that express your opinion in the clearest way and use them!
7. Don’t use your comment to attack, intimidate, or harm others. You don’t have to agree with anything you read, but express your disagreement respectfully.
8. Read the Commentary you are responding to more than once. Too often readers post comments when they’re overcome with emotion, and their first reaction isn’t the one they really want posted online.
9. Use CAPS sparingly for emphasis only. Writing your entire message in caps is annoying to read and makes it look like you got your finger stuck on the caps key. OR THAT YOU ARE ALWAYS SHOUTING.
10. Once you’ve checked your spelling, grammar, and style and feel happy that what you’ve written represents you as a sane commentator, hit the “submit” button and you’re published!

BYKT - But You Knew That. (Of course you did.)