Activity: Developing a Character

Materials needed: Pictures of interesting people, preferably within a context. Some sample pictures are linked here, but pictures can be found in magazines and in photography and history texts.

Description: Tell students that when authors write books or screenplay writers write movies, they need to make their characters come alive. This means they create entire lives for their characters; they give them friends, families, childhoods, hobbies, work, likes and dislikes, habits, styles of dressing, and other things that may not be important to the story, but help the character become a "real person."

In this activity, the students will create a character and breathe life into him or her.

Assign each pair or group a photo of a person. Using the simple present tense, students are to imagine a life for this person. As a variation on this activity, use a limited number of pictures so that at least two groups have the same picture. Afterwards, you can compare the different "lives" each group created for the same picture.

Example:

This *is Angie. She's 26 years old and single. She lives in New York City. She lives in an apartment, and she has a roommate. Angie works in a kitchen store, but she doesn't like her job. She wants to be a rock star. Every Saturday, she sings with a band. She is a good singer. She sometimes colors her hair orange. Angie has a boyfriend, Ryan. He is a lawyer. He wants to marry her, but she doesn't want to get married right now. She wants to be famous. She has a little brother. Her brother lives with her parents. Angie calls him a lot. Sometimes, she takes her brother out for lunch.*

Completed work can be displayed together with the picture, or students can read/present to the class.

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People pictures:

http://www.open-eyes.net/index.php?showimage=149
http://www.open-eyes.net/index.php?showimage=47
http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us/prints/pr21436.jpg
http://www.newseagles.com/portfolio/portrait-01.html (lots of people under "portraits")
http://www.pbase.com/chris67/130_interesting_people (collection of people pics)
http://kereszt.hajdok.hu/?image=crw_9531
http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us/reference/rc17760.jpg
http://www.pbase.com/chris67/image/45353666
http://kereszt.hajdok.hu/?image=crw_5171
http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2173/1223/1600/DSC06134.0.jpg
http://www.pbase.com/chris67/image/39943400
http://www.flickr.com/photos/24698274@N00/420522095/