



Famous Failures

Students learn about examples of people who persevered despite failure and were later successful, then consider how they can learn and grow from failure experiences.

Essential Question

How can I develop the expertise and mindsets I need to accomplish my most important goals, despite the challenges I face along the way?

Guiding Questions

How can failure be a learning experience? What kinds of failures have other successful people encountered and overcome?

Objectives

- Students will learn about highly successful people who experienced failure before attaining their present success.
- Students will learn to consider failure and setbacks as steps on the way to achieving their goals.

Advance Preparation

- Practice running through the lesson slideshow.
- Become familiar with the HuffPost blog "[21 Famous Failures Who Refused to Give Up](#)"; decide whether to select a subset of examples and create a print version of their stories (see below).

Materials/Resources

- Lesson slideshow
- (Optional; see below) Electronic devices and Internet access for students
- White board, smart board, or chart paper

Student Materials

- Half sheets of paper for Do Now and Exit Ticket
- "Famous Failure" activity sheet
- "Moving On from Failure" personal reflection sheet

For more information, email marcy@jhu.edu

Vocabulary

- No new vocabulary

Do Now

5 min.

Slide 1: As students enter the classroom, they draw a picture or write down ten words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the word “failure.”

Introduction (Framing/Overview)

5 min.

1. Student Dedication (30-60 seconds)
2. Invite students to share their drawings or thoughts in response to the Do Now (slide 3).
3. Show slide 4 and review the agenda with students.
 - They will watch a short video and reflect on its message.
 - With their partners, they will learn about a famous person’s early failure.
 - They will reflect on an opportunity they personally have (or have had) to learn from failure.
 - They will share together as a class some of the ways this unit has challenged and encouraged them.

Activity 1: Video Inspiration

5 min.

4. Show the short video (“Thank You, Mom,” slide 5) found at the following site:

Media Interaction

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ult4t-1NoQ&list=PLvzOwE5lWqhQaMdlA9uIB9OxPPkchIr-6&index=2>

Click through to invite students to discuss the following questions:

Whole Class Discussion

- What questions, thoughts, and ideas went through your mind as you watched the video?
- What do you think was the main point the creators of the video were trying to convey?

Make sure students understand that the point of the video is that everyone—even Olympian athletes—struggles on the way to success. It’s important to have people to support and encourage you when you face setbacks!

Activity 2: Partner Exploration

8 Min.

5. Slide 6: Students partner read the biography of ONE person in the list at the website “21 Famous Failures Who Refused to Give Up” **Partner Reading**
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/21-famous-failures-who-refused-to-give-up_b_57da2245e4b04fa361d991ba.

(NOTE: If students have personal devices, they can easily find the site by googling “HuffPost 21 Failures.” However, if students don’t have personal devices or internet access, or if you are concerned about the clutter and advertisements on the site, you can cut and paste the text into a document for them to read. You can also narrow the selection of people featured, for example, by offering students 10 or 12 “famous failures” from which to choose rather than all 21.)

6. Working with their partners, students discuss the following questions and complete the “Famous Failures” activity sheet: **Think-Pair-Share**
- What do you think this person felt when experiencing failure?
 - What would people have missed if this person had given up after failing?
 - What do you think kept this person going to keep on trying?

Then have partner groups report to the whole class what they learned. **Whole Class Report**

Activity 3: Individual Reflection

9 min.

7. Slide 7: Call students’ attention to the “Moving On from Failure” personal reflection sheet. Direct them to think about a failure they’ve experienced, whether recent or a while ago (this can be a setback in any area of life—academics, sports, friendship, personal discipline, etc.). They should respond to each of the questions in writing. **Personal Reflection**

Closure

3 min.

8. (Slide 8) Invite students (all of them, or as many as are willing or there is time for) to share the most important idea or lesson they are taking with them from this unit on Confronting Challenges. List these on the board or chart paper if possible.

Extensions

Manage time by modifying the number of students who share during the closing activity.

Famous Failures

Choose ONE example from the Huffington Post blog “21 Famous Failures Who Refused to Give Up.” Working with a partner, discuss and answer the questions below.

Our “Famous Failure” (name of person) _____

1. What do you think this person felt when experiencing failure?

2. What would people have missed if this person had given up after failing?

3. What do you think kept this person going to keep on trying?

Student Activity Sheet: Moving On from Failure

Think about a time when you made a huge mistake or failed miserably at something. **Describe** that time in several sentences. Discuss **what happened** (including important background details) and **how it made you feel**.

What are some **lessons** you can learn from this failure? (Consider how these may include one or more of the following: new ways of doing things, things to avoid, people to consult, ways of thinking, etc.)

What would help you to keep on trying in the future, in spite of this failure? (Who can you call on for help?)