

# Celebrity Causes

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Drafting, Graphic Organizer, Marking the Text, Quickwrite, Rereading, Skimming/Scanning, Think-Pair-Share, Brainstorming, Notetaking, Word Map

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

*Media* is the plural of *medium*, which is a means of expression or communication. **Media channels** are the means of communicating to a specific audience, for example, newspaper readers, television viewers, Internet users, or radio listeners.

- Quickwrite:** Celebrities often champion particular causes, raising money for organizations, raising awareness of issues, and helping in times of disaster. Who are some of your favorite celebrities (athletes, musicians, actors, and so forth), and what causes do they support? How do you know? If you don't know, how can you find out?

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- Think about how celebrities get the word out about their favorite causes. Fill in the graphic organizer. Some parts have been completed for you.

Issue/Cause	Method of Delivering Message	Media Channel	Example
AIDS awareness	Wearing a red ribbon	Television, magazine pictures	A lot of celebrities wear red ribbons during awards ceremonies, like the Oscars. The shows are televised, and the stars' pictures are in magazines.
Supporting people living with cancer	Wearing a yellow bracelet		
	Televised benefit concert; DVD and CD made available for purchase		

Issue/Cause	Method of Delivering Message	Media Channel	Example

3. Read “When Stars Align: Behind the latest barrage of celebrity activism to end poverty in Africa” (page 275). While you are reading, highlight or make notes in the My Notes section about how celebrities take action about issues in the world.
4. **Quickwrite:** Explain your immediate reaction to the ONE campaign, as you understand its goals and the way its leaders have set about achieving them.

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5. The author of this article presents some information about One: The Campaign to Make Poverty History. **Scan** the article to answer the questions below.

<p><b>What is the issue that the One campaign seeks to take action about?</b></p>	
<p><b>What action(s) does the One campaign ask the world to take?</b></p>	
<p><b>What action(s) does the One campaign ask the U. S. to take?</b></p>	
<p><b>What action(s) does the One campaign ask individuals to take?</b></p>	
<p><b>What media channels are used in the One campaign?</b></p>	
<p><b>Are these effective channels for this campaign? Why or why not?</b></p>	

6. Reread the last four paragraphs of the article. What do economists think about the effectiveness of celebrity endorsed campaigns like One? What do they say to support their opinions?

Doug Brandow	Joseph Stiglitz

7. Why do you think the author includes quotes from both of these experts?

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8. **Quickwrite:** Remember that *tone* is the attitude an author has towards his or her subject. Analyze Brian Braiker’s tone and provide support from the article for your response.

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## Notes On Your Discussion of Celebrity Causes

<b>A Point Made by a Classmate</b>	<b>Support He or She Provided</b>	<b>My Opinion</b>

# When Stars Align

Behind the latest barrage of celebrity activism to end poverty in Africa.

by Brian Braiker, with Traci E. Carpenter

Sure they're occasionally prone to phone throwing and couch hopping. Granted, they're famously self-indulgent, famously scandalous and famously ... well, famous. But celebrities—our pet rock stars, our so-bad-it's-good celluloid heroes—maintain that, really, they are nice people. That they do care about the right things. And this week, for one blessed, shimmering moment, they appear to have irrefutable proof.

The celebrities in question are the actors, actresses, singers, rappers and athletes who donated their faces to the One campaign. You may have seen the ad. Sleek with a stylish black-and-white Richard Avedon look, the commercial features a barrage of instantly recognizable pretty faces exhorting us average Joes to help a coalition of humanitarian and faith-based groups “beat extreme poverty.” How? By lending a voice. By sending a letter or making a phone call to representatives in Washington in anticipation of next month's Group of Eight (G8) summit in Scotland of the world's wealthiest nations (and Russia).

“We have the potential to end poverty in our time; we can be that generation,” One spokestar Brad Pitt told Diane Sawyer during a recent 50-minute *Primetime Live* interview shot partially in Africa. “Man, I mean, what is more exciting than that?” Pitt, who plays the titular role in the current thriller *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* alongside Angelina Jolie, who herself does humanitarian work in Sierra Leone, also spent a fair amount of time parrying Sawyer's probes into his personal life (and if you don't know why, he's probably not the guy who will convince you to join the fight against poverty).

The One campaign urges the United States to increase its spending on foreign aid to 1 percent of its budget, and implores rich nations to forgive the billions of dollars African nations owe to international organizations such as the World Bank. Last week, the proverbial stars appeared to have aligned for the literal ones: President George W. Bush signed off on a deal with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to forgive African debt. The White House also plans to announce more aid for Africa next month.

## GRAMMAR & USAGE

A pronoun takes the place of a noun or another pronoun, called its **antecedent**. In the first two sentences, the writer uses the pronoun *they*. You might wonder who *they* are. The antecedent, *celebrities*, is mentioned in the third sentence. The writer keeps you wondering to hold your attention.

However, when you use pronouns in your writing, make sure you have clearly stated the nouns to which your pronouns refer. As you read, look for other examples of antecedents.

## My Notes

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## GRAMMAR & USAGE

Punctuation helps to clarify meaning in sentences.

Mark the text to signal the varied punctuation on these pages. Discuss the effect of the punctuation used to convey and enhance meaning.

**Hyphens** are used with compound adjectives, such as *left-leaning* and *time-honored*.

**Ellipsis points (...)** are used to show when words are omitted.

A **colon** may be used to introduce a second clause that explains or expands on the first.

A **semicolon** separates the clauses in a compound sentence.

**Brackets** are most often used to clarify the meaning of quoted material.

**Parentheses** set off comments or additional information in a sentence.

“I’d like to think we helped give a sense of urgency” to the issue, One spokesman Seth Amgott tells NEWSWEEK. The campaign may be an unprecedented coalition of left-leaning Hollywood types and Red State faith groups, but it’s the stars that we’re shown. “Brad Pitt was on television for 50 minutes last week talking about AIDS orphans and children out of school in Africa. That’s approximately equal to the total amount of time broadcast networks devoted in their newscasts to Africa last year ... If hunchbacks and second-grade spelling bee champions were who our society listened to, we would use hunchbacks and spelling bee champions.”

The “urgency” supplied not just by Brad but also by Bono, George Clooney, Jewel, Jamie Foxx and others may or may not have tipped the scales for the Bush administration, but the One campaign reports that 121,000 people signed the Web site’s petition after the *Primetime* spot, a substantial addition to the 800,000 signatures they had amassed in the entire year before the broadcast. Tens of thousands more are expected to attend the affiliated series of free Live 8 concerts organized by Bob Geldof on July 2. The former Boomtown Rat drew some criticism for organizing events where uber-rich headliners proselytize on poverty. Damon Albarn, a white Britpop singer, sniffed rhetorically to the BBC, “Why is the bill so damn Anglo-Saxon?” These critiques were perhaps easily shrugged off by Geldof, but they raise again a broader question as old as Hollywood itself: just who do these stars think they are?

It’s not hard to understand why they may feel a teeny bit entitled: this country has an insatiable demand for them. Even as advertising revenues have stagnated at traditional newspapers and magazines, gossip rags are thicker than ever. *Us Weekly’s* ad pages are up nearly 25 percent in the last year; at *Star Magazine*, ads are up almost 17 percent, and in *Touch Weekly’s* ads have risen nearly 22 percent, according to a recent *New York Times* report. A choice candid celebrity snapshot can fetch a photographer upward of three quarters of a million dollars. We wake up to stars on the morning talk shows, we read about stars in the papers during our commute, we spend weekends with stars at the movies. We want to sleep with them, dress like them, be them even as we delight in the schadenfreude of their pratfalls, their late-night run-ins with the law, their cellulite exposed (look ma, they’re just like us!).



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## My Notes

It may be finer than fine. But does high-wattage star power make activism more effective? A 2003 USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll found that 87 percent of Americans claimed there was no celebrity who could cause them to change their position on the Iraq war. Some causes may be more popular than others, though, so celebs would do best to pick their battles carefully. “If I’m a celebrity, and I embrace 30 products or 20 causes, my image starts to get diluted and my credibility goes out the window,” says Michael Kamins, a marketing professor at the University of Southern California’s Marshall School of Business. Sounds like sage cautionary advice for perennially crusading stars like Sean Penn, who has taken more hits from critics than he ever administered to pushy photographers in the ‘80s.

But for celebrities who play it right, says Kamins, “Consumers like to identify with what they stand for ... [but] it works better for the young who are more susceptible to the identification process.” Brad Pitt movies like *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* may stand for bombs, bullets and brash beauty more than they do for leaving the world a better place, but it appears the One campaign is reaching an audience of more than just young fans. And there are probably worse things Pitt can do with his fame than get people thinking about poverty and AIDS in Africa. Like make another sequel to *Ocean’s Eleven*.