7th & 8th Grades Lesson Plan
Keep Moving Forward-Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things
Calvin Leon Graham

TEACH WREATHS across AMERICA

Wreaths Across America
Lesson Plan

Teacher:	Date:
Grades: 7th & 8th	Lesson: Keep Moving Forward-Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things-Calvin Leon Graham

OBJECTIVES: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.9 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person). **CC**SS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.9 Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.	**STRATEGIES:** ☐ Drawing/Coloring ☐ Writing ☐ Write/Pair/Share ☐ Collaboration ☐ Discussion Questions ☐ Small Groups ☐ Large Group

MATERIALS:	Computer/laptop; internet (with access to YouTube); Smart Board; copies of Write-Pair-Share; copies of Article 1 and Article 2; copies of the Compare and Contrast Activity; copies of the Calvin Leon Graham Word Search Puzzle
Engage: Hook the students	Hand out Write/Pair/Share Activity. Students will have **8 minutes** to Read the passage and answer the questions. At the end of 8 minutes, you will be paired with a partner, you will share your answer with your partner and they will share their response with you.
Explore: Students make sense of a concept through observations.	**Explain:** The "Greatest Generation" refers to a group of Americans born roughly between 1901 and 1927 (or 1901-1924, according to some sources). They are often described as patriotic, driven, and team players. Their experiences during the Depression and World War II fostered a strong sense of duty and a desire to build a better future. The term was popularized by journalist Tom Brokaw in his 1998 book, The Greatest Generation. Hand out copies of the reading activity, Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things-Calvin Leon Graham. Students will read the two articles. Hand out the Compare and Contrast Activity. Allow students time to complete the assignment. Hand out the Calvin Leon Graham Word Search Puzzle. Allow students time to complete the activity.
Explain: Teacher introduces formal vocabulary and language to students.	Medal of Honor intrepidity consent brig Bronze Star conspicuous recipient mandate Battle of Guadalcanal Purple Heart gallantry enlistment mandatory conscription Battle of Santa Cruz
Elaborate: Students apply what they have learned.	6th The student will Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person). 7th The student will analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.
Evaluate: assessment.	Teachers will select which activities to use as formal/informal assessments.
Enrichment/Service-Learning Project	Students will brainstorm an activity to recognize and honor an ordinary person in their community or school that does extraordinary things. Students will create a certificate to award and make the presentation.

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Write-Pair-Share

You will have **8 minutes** to read the following and answer the questions below.

- The Medal of Honor is awarded to service members who distinguish themselves "through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty". The Medal of Honor was established in 1861 for the Navy and Marine Corps, and in 1862 for the Army. The youngest recipient of the Medal of Honor was William "Willie" Johnston, a drummer for the Union Army during the Civil War. Johnston was awarded the Medal of Honor just prior to his 12th birthday. During the American Revolution and the Civil War, it is estimated that between 250,000-420,00 boys under the age of 16 served in the military in some capacity-as musicians, as soldiers, or to carry gear.
- In the years leading up to World War II, regulations regarding enlistment in the military became much more regulated. The laws prohibited and restricted underage enlistment-enlistment age was 18, with parent consent 17. This did not stop younger men from attempting to enlist in the military. They wanted to join for various reasons, such as economic factors, patriotism, and a desire for adventure. Their methods of joining varied from simple to elaborate but were always illegal. For the underaged men who were successful in joining the military, the effects of war left a lasting impression both emotionally and, in some cases, physically. One thing they shared, they were children at war.
- The United States does not currently have mandatory conscription (a draft). While male U.S. citizens between 18 and 25 are required to register with the Selective Service, this registration is not a mandate for military service, but rather a measure to prepare for a potential draft in the future. The last time the U.S. had a draft was in 1973, during the Vietnam War.
- The U.S. has used conscription multiple times throughout its history, including during World War I and World War II, and the Vietnam War.

Questions: A person can enlist in any branch of the US military at age 17, with the consent of their parent or legal guardian. At what age do you think a person should be allowed to enlist in the US military with a parent's or guardian's consent? Why? At what age do you think a person should be allowed to enlist in the US military without a parent's or guardian's consent? Why?

At the end of 8 minutes, you will be paired with a partner, you will read your answers to your partner and they will read their response to you. Write on the back if necessary.

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Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things-Calvin Leon Graham

Calvin Leon Graham (April 3, 1930 – November 6, 1992) was the youngest U.S. serviceman to serve and fight during World War II. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the United States Navy on August 15, 1942, at the age of 12.

Article 1

VA/News, "#VETERANOFTHEDAY, September 27, 2022: Calvin Leon Graham"
https://news.va.gov/109249/veteranoftheday-army-calvin-leon-graham/

During World War II, it was not unusual for American boys to lie about their age in order to enlist. For Calvin Leon Graham, it was the opportunity to serve his country during a time of great crisis. However, his merits would be overshadowed by the fact he was the youngest combatant of the Second World War.

Born during the Great Depression in 1930 to a poor Texas family, Graham was the youngest of seven children. Before Pearl Harbor, his mother was widowed and later remarried. His stepfather was abusive, and by the sixth grade, the boy moved out to live in a shoddy house with an older brother. He supported himself by selling newspapers and delivering telegrams. Being constantly around the news gave him insight on what was transpiring around the world. This would be one of his many motivations for enlisting into the military.

At 11, Graham learned that some of his cousins has been killed in action, and it sparked in him a desire to fight. He started shaving, hoping hair would grow faster (it didn't), and he began speaking more deeply. He told a reporter, "In those days, you could join up at 16 with your parent's consent, but they preferred 17." He forged his mother's signature, stole a notary stamp and told his mother he was going to see some relatives. Instead, he dropped out of school and traveled to Houston to enlist.

On Aug. 16, 1942, Graham went to the Houston recruiting office in his older brother's clothing. He was only 12 years old, five-foot-two and 125 pounds. He was not concerned about the forged signature, rather the dentist, calling him a finely tuned lie detector. Graham's trump card was knowing that the dentist had cleared two other underage boys. He was cleared.

Afterwards, Graham completed bootcamp in San Diego before being assigned to the newly forged battleship, USS South Dakota. Under Captain Thomas Leigh Gatch, the South Dakota steamed out of Philadelphia and cleared the Panama Canal. The battleship brimmed with "green boys," cocky, brash and inexperienced recruits who were eager to fight the Japanese Empire.

Graham saw his first real action during the Battle of Santa Cruz on Oct. 26, 1942. Graham, a seaman, was an anti-aircraft gunner upon the battleship and operated one of the 40mm guns. During this famous battle, USS South Dakota was credited with downing 26 Japanese aircraft. After the battle, USS South Dakota unloaded 890 rounds of 5-inch, 4,000 rounds of 40mm, 3,000 rounds of 1.1-inch and 52,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition.

Graham saw combat again with the deadly Battle of Guadalcanal on Nov. 14, 1942. The South Dakota was ambushed by three Japanese warships, taking forty-seven hits. Her radio communications and radar were completely inoperable, and the battleship lost track of the tactical situation. Despite the disarray and a grievous face wound, Graham remained at his station. Another assault burned him severely and threw him down three stories of the superstructure. Despite these horrific injuries, he remained conscious and tended to his comrades.

USS South Dakota barely survived and limped back to New York, later being dubbed Battleship X. Graham received a Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his actions, but his distinctions were short lived. His mother learned of his enlistment and informed the Navy of his true age. He was stripped of his

medals and thrown into a brig for three months. He was released after his sister threatened to go to the press. He was dishonorably discharged but fought tirelessly to have his honors and record restored.
In 1978, President Jimmy Carter personally approved an honorable discharge. Graham's medals were restored except his Purple Heart. President Ronald Regan signed legislation granting Graham further benefits, and two years after his death, his Purple Heart was restored and given to his widow. Graham received the following awards during his service: Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", Purple Heart, Navy Unit Commendation with service star, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two service stars, World War II Victory Medal and National Defense Service Medal.
Graham died in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1992.

Article 2

Smithsonian Magazine
"This 12-Year-Old Boy Fought on a World War II Battleship and Became the Nation's Youngest Decorated War Hero: In 1942, young Calvin Graham was decorated for valor in battle, before his worried mother learned of his whereabouts and revealed his secret to the Navy"
Gilbert King; Updated by Sonja Anderson
Updated: April 10, 2024 | Originally Published: December 19, 2012
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/this-12-year-old-boy-fought-on-a-world-war-ii-battleship-and-became-the-nations-youngest-decorated-war-hero-168104583/
With powerful engines, extensive firepower and heavy armor, the newly christened battleship USS *South Dakota* steamed out of Philadelphia in August of 1942, spoiling for a fight. The crew was made up of "green boys"—new recruits who enlisted after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor—who had no qualms about either their destination or the action they were likely to see. Brash and confident, the crew couldn't get through the Panama Canal fast enough, and their captain, Thomas Gatch, made no secret of the grudge he bore against the Japanese. "No ship more eager to fight ever entered the Pacific," one naval historian wrote.
In less than four months, the *South Dakota* would limp back to port in New York for repairs to extensive damage suffered in some of World War II's most ferocious battles at sea. The ship would become one of the most decorated warships in U.S. Navy history and acquire a new moniker to reflect the secrets it carried. The Japanese, it turned out, were convinced the vessel had been destroyed at sea, and the Navy was only too happy to keep the mystery alive—stripping the *South Dakota* of identifying markings and avoiding any mention of it in communications and even sailors' diaries. When newspapers later reported on the ship's remarkable accomplishments in the Pacific Theater, they referred to it simply as "*Battleship X*."
That the vessel was not resting at the bottom of the Pacific was not the only secret *Battleship X* carried through day after day of hellish war at sea. Aboard was a gunner from Texas who would soon become the nation's youngest decorated war hero. Calvin Graham, the fresh-faced seaman who had set off for battle from the Philadelphia Navy Yard in the summer of 1942, was only 12 years old.
When Graham hatched a plan to lie about his age and join the Navy, he was an 11-year-old sixth grader in Crockett, Texas. One of seven children living at home with an abusive stepfather, he and an older brother moved into a cheap rooming house, and Calvin supported himself by selling newspapers and delivering telegrams on weekends and after school. Even though he moved out, his

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mother would occasionally visit—sometimes only to sign his report cards at the end of a semester. Being around newspapers afforded the boy the opportunity to keep up on events overseas, as his country was at war.

"I didn't like Hitler to start with," Graham later told a reporter. When he learned that some of his cousins had died in battles, he knew what he wanted to do with his life. He wanted to fight. "In those days, you could join up at 16 with your parents' consent, but they preferred 17," Graham later said. But he had no intention of waiting five more years. He began to shave at age 11, hoping it would somehow make him look older when he met with military recruiters. Then he lined up with some buddies (who forged his mother's signature and stole a notary stamp from a local hotel) and waited to enlist.

At 5 feet 2 inches and just 125 pounds, Graham dressed in an older brother's clothes and fedora and practiced "talking deep." What worried him most was not that an enlistment officer would spot the forged signature. It was the dentist who would peer into the mouths of potential recruits. "I knew he'd know how young I was by my teeth," Graham recalled. He lined up behind a couple of guys he knew who were already 14 or 15, and "when the dentist kept saying I was 12, I said I was 17." At last, Graham played his ace, telling the dentist that he knew for a fact that the boys in front of him weren't 17 yet, and the dentist had let them through. "Finally," Graham recalled, "he said he didn't have time to mess with me, and he let me go." Graham maintained that the Navy knew he and the others in line that day were underage, "but we were losing the war then, so they took six of us."

t wasn't uncommon for boys to lie about their age in order to serve. Ray Jackson, who joined the Marines at 16 during World War II, founded the group Veterans of Underage Military Service in 1991, and it listed more than 1,200 active members, including 26 women. "Some of these guys came from large families, and there wasn't enough food to go around, and this was a way out," Jackson told a reporter. "Others just had family problems and wanted to get away."

Graham told his mother he was going to visit relatives. Instead, he dropped out of the seventh grade and shipped off to San Diego for basic training. There, he said, the drill instructors were aware of the underage recruits and often made them run extra miles and lug heavier packs. After three weeks of bootcamp, Graham was assigned to the Navy's Pacific Fleet and sent to Pearl Harbor, where he joined the crew of the *South Dakota*.

Marine Henry Buecker recalled meeting Graham aboard the *South Dakota* during their journey to the South Pacific. "Calvin asked me: 'Can you keep a secret? I'm 15,'" Buecker later told the *Chicago Tribune*. "After that, he took me as his best friend. I didn't find out he was only 12 until 35 years later."

By the time the *South Dakota* reached its destination, the ship had become part of a task force alongside the legendary carrier USS *Enterprise* (the "*Big E*"). In early October 1942, the two ships, along with their escorting cruisers and destroyers, engaged in fierce fighting in the battle for Guadalcanal. After the ships reached the Santa Cruz Islands on October 26, the Japanese quickly set their sights on the carrier and launched an air attack that easily penetrated the *Enterprise*'s own air patrol. The carrier USS *Hornet* was repeatedly torpedoed and sank off Santa Cruz, but the *South Dakota* managed to protect *Enterprise*, destroying 26 enemy planes with a barrage from its antiaircraft guns.

Standing on the bridge, Captain Gatch watched as a 500-pound bomb struck the *South Dakota's* main gun turret. The explosion injured 50 men, including the captain, and killed one. The ship's armor was so thick, many of the crew were unaware they'd been hit. But word quickly spread that Gatch had been knocked unconscious. Quick-thinking quartermasters managed to save the captain's life—his jugular vein had been severed, and the ligaments in his arms suffered permanent

damage—but some onboard were aghast that he didn't hit the deck when he saw the bomb coming. "I consider it beneath the dignity of a captain of an American battleship to flop for a Japanese bomb," Gatch later said.

The ship's young crew continued to fire at anything in the air, including American bombers that were low on fuel and trying to land on the *Enterprise*. The *South Dakota* was quickly getting a reputation for being wild-eyed and quick to shoot, and Navy pilots were warned not to fly anywhere near it. At Pearl Harbor, the ship was fully repaired, and Gatch returned to his post wearing a sling and bandages. In November 1942, Japanese naval forces began shelling an American airfield on Guadalcanal Island. Steaming south with the *Enterprise*, Task Force 64, with the *South Dakota* and the USS *Washington*, took four American destroyers on a night search for the enemy near Savo Island. There, on November 14, Japanese ships opened fire, sinking or heavily damaging the American destroyers in a four- day engagement that became known as the Second Naval Battle of Guadalcanal.

Later that evening, the *South Dakota* encountered eight Japanese destroyers; with deadly accurate 16-inch guns, the *South Dakota* set fire to three of them. "They never knew what sank 'em," Gatch would recall. One Japanese ship set its searchlights on the *South Dakota*, and the ship took 42 enemy hits, temporarily losing power. Graham was manning his gun when shrapnel tore through his jaw and mouth; another hit knocked him down, and he fell through three stories of superstructure. Still, the 12-year-old made it to his feet, dazed and bleeding, and helped pull other crew members to safety while others were thrown by the force of the explosions, their bodies aflame, into the Pacific. "I took belts off the dead and made tourniquets for the living and gave them cigarettes and encouraged them all night," Graham later said. "It was a long night. It aged me." The shrapnel had knocked out his front teeth, and he had flash burns from the hot guns, but he was "fixed up with salve and a couple of stitches," he recalled. "I didn't do any complaining, because half the ship was dead. It was a while before they worked on my mouth." In fact, the ship had casualties of 38 men killed and 60 wounded.

Regaining power, and after afflicting heavy damage to the Japanese ships, the *South Dakota* rapidly disappeared in the smoke. Gatch would later remark of his "green" men, "Not one of the ship's company flinched from his post or showed the least disaffection." With the Japanese Imperial Navy under the impression that it had sunk the *South Dakota*, the legend of *Battleship X* was born.

In mid-December, the damaged ship returned to the Brooklyn Navy Yard for major repairs, where Gatch and his crew were profiled for their heroic deeds in the Pacific. Calvin Graham received a Bronze Star for distinguishing himself in combat, as well as a Purple Heart for his injuries. But he couldn't bask in glory with his fellow crewmen while their ship was being repaired. Graham's mother, reportedly having recognized her son in newsreel footage, had written the Navy and revealed the gunner's true age.

Graham returned to Texas and was thrown in a brig in Corpus Christi, Texas, for almost three months.

Battleship X returned to the Pacific and continued to shoot Japanese planes out of the sky. Graham, meanwhile, managed to get a message out to his sister Pearl, who complained to the newspapers that the Navy was mistreating the "Baby Vet." The Navy eventually ordered Graham's release, but not before stripping him of his medals for lying about his age and revoking his disability benefits. He was simply tossed from jail with a suit and a few dollars in his pocket—and no honorable discharge.

Back in Houston, though, Graham was treated like a celebrity. Reporters were eager to write his story, and when the war film *Bombardier* premiered at a local theater, the film's star, Pat O'Brien, invited Graham onstage to be saluted by the audience. The attention quickly faded. At age 13,

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Graham tried to return to school, but he couldn't keep pace with students his age and quickly dropped out. He married at age 14, became a father the following year, and found work as a welder in a Houston shipyard. Neither his job nor his marriage lasted long. At 17 years old and divorced, and with no service record, Graham was about to be drafted when he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He soon broke his back in a fall, for which he received a 20 percent service-connected disability. The only work he could find after that was selling magazine subscriptions.

When President Jimmy Carter was elected in 1976, Graham began writing letters, hoping that Carter, "an old Navy man," might be sympathetic. All Graham had wanted was an honorable discharge, so he could get help with his medical and dental expenses. "I had already given up fighting" for the discharge, Graham said at the time. "But then they came along with this discharge program for deserters. I know they had their reasons for doing what they did, but I figure I sure deserved more than they did."

In 1977, Texas Senators Lloyd Bentsen and John Tower introduced a bill to give Graham his discharge, and in 1978, Carter announced it had been approved and that Graham's medals would be restored, with the exception of the Purple Heart. Ten years later, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation approving disability benefits for Graham.

At the age of 12, Graham broke the law to serve his country, at a time when the U.S. military might well be accused of having a "Don't ask, don't tell" policy with regard to underage enlistees. For fear of losing their benefits or their honorable discharges, many "Baby Vets" never came forward to claim the nation's gratitude. It wasn't until 1994, two years after Graham died, that the military relented and returned his last medal—his Purple Heart—to his family.

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COMPARE/CONTRAST

Directions: Answer the following questions after reading both articles**.**

1. Identify 5 things the articles have in common?
   -
   -
   -
   -
   -
2. Does Article 1 contain details that are not present in Article 2? If so, specify what they are.
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3. Does Article 2 contain details that are not present in Article 1? If so, specify what they are.

4. What is the focus of each article?

5. Is it possible to determine an author's perspective on a topic based on their language use? Does the language each author uses reveal anything about their point of view on the topic? If so, what does it reveal?

6. Calvin Leon Graham is a product of the Greatest Generation. What did he do that makes him an ordinary person, that did extraordinary things?

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Word Search Puzzle-Calvin Leon Graham

B	R	O	N	Z	E	S	T	A	R	Q	A	P	U
G	A	L	L	A	N	T	R	Y	Z	W	W	U	S
S	M	E	D	A	L	O	F	H	O	N	O	R	S
X	A	E	R	F	I	V	T	G	B	Y	R	P	S
H	N	D	N	U	S	J	M	I	K	O	L	L	O
L	D	C	P	Q	T	P	W	O	E	I	D	E	U
R	A	S	E	A	M	A	N	U	T	Y	W	H	T
A	T	L	S	K	E	D	J	G	H	Z	A	E	H
M	E	X	C	O	N	S	E	N	T	N	R	A	D
C	B	W	A	D	T	E	G	R	U	P	I	R	A
B	A	T	T	L	E	S	H	I	P	X	I	T	K
R	E	C	I	P	I	E	N	T	H	B	T	T	O
I	N	T	R	E	P	I	D	I	T	Y	S	S	T
G	C	O	N	S	P	I	C	U	O	U	S	J	A

Medal of Honor	intrepidity	consent	brig	Bronze Star
conspicuous	recipient	mandate	enlistment	USS South Dakota
World War II	Purple Heart	gallantry	Battleship X	seaman

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Answer Key

Word Search Puzzle-Calvin Leon Graham

B	R	O	N	Z	E	S	T	A	R	Q	A	P	U
G	A	L	L	A	N	T	R	Y	Z	W	W	U	S
S	M	E	D	A	L	O	F	H	O	N	O	R	S
X	A	E	R	F	I	V	T	G	B	Y	R	P	S
H	N	D	N	U	S	J	M	I	K	O	L	L	O
L	D	C	P	Q	T	P	W	O	E	I	D	E	U
R	A	S	E	A	M	A	N	U	T	Y	W	H	T
A	T	L	S	K	E	D	J	G	H	Z	A	E	H
M	E	X	C	O	N	S	E	N	T	N	R	A	D
C	B	W	A	D	T	E	G	R	U	P	I	R	A
B	A	T	T	L	E	S	H	I	P	X	I	T	K
R	E	C	I	P	I	E	N	T	H	B	T	T	O
I	N	T	R	E	P	I	D	I	T	Y	S	S	T
G	C	O	N	S	P	I	C	U	O	U	S	J	A

Medal of Honor	intrepidity	consent	brig	Bronze Star
conspicuous	recipient	mandate	enlistment	USS South Dakota
World War II	Purple Heart	gallantry	Battleship X	seaman