

the ARTICLE (for instructors)

The Tallest Basketball Player Ever

It seems that Kenny George can't go anywhere nowadays without someone asking for an autograph or a picture, in part because of his athletic proWess on the college basketball court. In only twenty minutes of play time per game, he averages 12.4 points, 8.8 rebounds, and 4.6 blocks. But people gawk at him because he also happens to be the tallest basketball player ever. At 7 feet 7 inches (234 centimeters) and 360 pounds (163 kilograms), he really stands out in any crowd.

Although most would consider it very cool to slam dunk without any leap whatsoever, George faces a number of not so cool difficulties. For starters, unable to get behind the steering wheel of a car, he's never learned to drive. Moreover, whenever the team goes on a road trip, the bus company has to remove two seats so George can comfortably sit. He also sits on the floor of many of his classes because the desks don't fit.

Kenny George suffers from gigantism, a condition in which the pituitary gland secretes too much growth hormone. The pro-wrestler Andre the Giant is likely the most notable athlete in recent years affected by this condition. Gigantism has made the twenty-two year old George extremely self-conscious, and he hates conducting interviews. The questions inevitably turn to his health, size, and condition. (Knee problems required him to sit out much of his sophomore year.) His teammates have become quite protective of him, however, and they tell people to back off and give their friend some room.

Along with a passion for basketball, graphic design and animation vie for George's attention. He has wished he weren't so tall, and he eventually hopes for a career in comics or animation. Yet a stint in pro-basketball trumps these plans, and George wants to play for the NBA first.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in red typeface may be vocabulary unfamiliar to the students.

the ARTICLE (for students)

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Notes:

STEP ONE

Brainstorm: Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "basketball" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

STEP TWO

Rank It!: Imagine that before you were born, you could have picked your future life. Which kind of life would you have wanted? Rank the choices in order, from most to least desirable. Remember to support your decisions!

a.	You're seven feet tall and play pro-basketball.
b.	You're a famous writer, but also happen to be an alcoholic.
c.	Your start-up Internet company is worth billions of dollars, but no one really likes you.
d.	You're a great jazz musician, but die at the age of forty.
e.	You're a supermodel, and you have no privacy to even walk down the street or go to a restaurant.

STEP THREE

The Article: Read the article, and work with a partner to understand it. Lastly, summarize in your own words.

STEP FOUR

Discuss: Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	What was your general impression after reading this article?
b.	In addition to the problems listed in the article, what other difficulties do you think Kenny faces?
c.	How would you feel if you were Kenny? Please explain.
d.	Do you think Kenny faces discrimination of any kind? How about ridicule?
e.	If you were able to interview Kenny George, what three questions would you ask?
f.	If you saw a very unusual or different person on the train or in a restaurant, what would you do?

STEP FIVE

Role Play: Form a group of three, with one student playing the role of Kenny George. The other two students will play the role of reporters. The reporters should interview Kenny about his condition and the difficulties he faces. The student in Kenny's role should imagine the answers. After five minutes of conversation, discuss how the questions made the answerer and the askers feel. Did the questions help understand Kenny's life?

Question 1:
Question 2:
Question 3: