Marvelous Cornelius:
_b*Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans*
Text Set & Curriculum Guide
By: Jessica Leonard

“In New Orleans,
there lived a man who saw the streets
as his calling,
and he swept them clean.
He danced up one avenue and down another
and everyone danced along –
The old ladies whistled and whirled.
The old men hooted and hollered.
The barbers, bead twirlers, and beignet
bakers bounded behind that one-man parade.

But then came the rising Mississippi –
and a storm bigger than anyone had
seen before.

Phil Bildner and John Parra tell the
inspiring story of a humble man, and the heroic
difference he made in the aftermath of
Hurricane Katrina.”
Marvelous Cornelius - Author’s Note

In the years following Hurricane Katrina, I visited New Orleans many times to help in the cleanup and recovery. Often, I chaperoned groups of teen volunteers. When I did, those trips always evolved into incredibly uplifting and life-affirming experiences.

They always became about the people.

One person that I met was Katy Reckdahl, a reporter for the Times-Picayune. While Katrina was lashing the Gulf Coast in August of 2005, Katy was giving birth to her son, Hector, at Tuoro Infirmary in New Orleans’s Garden District.

After meeting Katy, I read some of her archived articles, including one titled, “Talking Trash.” It was a feature about Cornelius Washington, a sanitation worker in the French Quarter who sang, danced and performed tricks – “a wizard of trash cans.”

I had to learn about him.

Sadly, Cornelius passed away not long after Hurricane Katrina. But with Katy’s help, I located his mother, Ms. Mary Wiley. Ms. Mary still lived in the tiny town of Waterproof, Louisiana, where she’d raised Cornelius.

Ms. Mary and I spoke on the phone several times. She sent me a letter, too, a handwritten letter filled with memories of Cornelius. Whenever I read it, it was as if the Cornelius I’d seen in video clips – the baldheaded man with the big hoop earring and the New Orleans drawl – was reading to me.

Cornelius’s story has the flavor of folktales and folk heroes like John Henry, and by incorporating repetition, alliteration, and exaggeration, I have tried to honor those qualities in the telling. Still, it must be said that while Cornelius was certainly a showman, he may not have twirled lids like tops or clapped them like cymbals. He had signals and calls, but they weren’t the exact ones described here. The garbage bags he threw into his hopper probably didn’t land in perfect pyramids. Nor did the destruction following Katrina rise as high as the steeple atop St. Louis Cathedral. And though he was celebrated and beloved in his neighborhoods, he was not called Marvelous Cornelius.

But he deserves to be.

On so many levels, Cornelius symbolizes what the city of New Orleans is all about – the energy, the spirit, the magic, the people. That’s what brought all those volunteers to the Crescent City, and inside each one was a little bit of Marvelous Cornelius.

By: Phil Bildner
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Why *Marvelous Cornelius*?

*Marvelous Cornelius* is a story based off of the life and work of a sanitation worker in New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Despite the destruction that Hurricane Katrina caused, Cornelius never gave up. His enthusiastic and positive attitude affected not only his work, but was an inspiration to the people of New Orleans and those who traveled from around the country to help with the cleanup. *Marvelous Cornelius* is a story about resilience and never giving up in the face of adversity.

In January 2017, Hollins University will be putting on a play about *Marvelous Cornelius* for students in Roanoke City Public Schools. This text set is designed to guide teachers as they introduce their students to *Marvelous Cornelius* and the topic of resilience.

What is a Text Set?

A text set is a collection of books and other classroom resources that all have a common theme or topic and cover a range of reading levels. Text sets are designed so that any student in a class or school can choose a book that matches their reading level and contains similar content to other books within the set. Using text sets in the classroom allows all of the students in a class to cover the same topic, but at their own level.

How to Use This Text Set

This text set was designed to accompany the play based on the book *Marvelous Cornelius* that Hollins University students will be putting on for Roanoke City Public Schools in January 2017. All of the texts within the set share a theme of resilience, which is the core of what *Marvelous Cornelius* teaches its readers. The books in this set are broken up into the following reading levels: Emergent (PP – 1.0), Beginner (1.0 – 2.0), Transitional (2.1 – 3.0), Intermediate (3.1 – 4.0), and Specialized (4.1 – 6.0). The reading level number associated with each book does not represent a grade level, but corresponds with the above reading levels because in most classrooms, there will be a large range of levels represented. The books are also labeled by the following colors:

- Emergent (PP – 1.0) – Yellow
- Beginner (1.0 – 2.0) – Green
- Transitional (2.1 – 3.0) – Blue
- Intermediate (3.1 – 4.0) – Purple
- Specialized (4.1 – 6.0) – Red

In addition to a short description of each book, there is also a curriculum guide that can provide teachers with activities, questions, and topics to discuss while using this text set. At the end of the guide, there are vocabulary and comprehension worksheets that can accompany any of the books. There is also a list and description of 16 activities that teach students about resilience, working together, and persistence.
Text Set Book List

Reading Level: Emergent – PP – 1.0

1. *Little Owl Lost* by Chris Haughton
   Reading Level: 0.2
   ISBN: 978-0763667504

2. *Fox on a Box* by Phil Roxbee Cox
   Reading Level: 0.8
   ISBN: 978-0794515034

Reading Level: Beginner – 1.0 – 2.0

3. *Fancy Nancy Spectacular Spectacles* by Jane O'Connor
   Reading Level: 1.1
   ISBN: 978-0061882647

4. *Ron's Big Mission* by Rose Blue and Corinne J. Nadeu
   Reading Level: 1.2
   ISBN: 978-0525478492

5. *Blackout* by John Rocco
   Reading Level: 1.4
   ISBN: 978-1423121909

6. *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle
   Reading Level: 1.7
   ISBN: 978-0399229190

7. *Mama Zooms* by Jane Cowen-Fletcher
   Reading Level: 1.9
   ISBN: 978-0590457750

8. *Harriet and the Roller Coaster* by Nancy Carlson
   Reading Level: 2.0
   ISBN: 978-1575052021

Reading Level: Transitional – 2.1 – 3.0

9. *The Great Migration: Journey to the North* by Eloise Greenfield
   Reading Level: 2.2
   ISBN: 978-0061259210
10. *How Smudge Came* by Nan Gregory  
   Reading Level: 2.5  
   ISBN: 978-0802775221

11. *Spinky Sulks* by William Steig  
   Reading Level: 3.0  
   ISBN: 978-0312672461

**Reading Level: Intermediate – 3.1 – 4.0**

12. *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams  
   Reading Level: 3.3  
   ISBN: 978-0688040741

13. *Dancing with Katya* by Dori Chaconas  
   Reading Level: 3.4  
   ISBN: 978-1561453764

14. *Badger’s Bad Mood* by Hiawyn Oram and Susan Varley  
   Reading Level: 3.6  
   ISBN: 978-0590189200

15. *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan* by Mary Williams  
   Reading Level: 3.7  
   ISBN: 978-1584302322

16. *One Hen* by Katie Smith Milway  
   Reading Level: 3.7  
   ISBN: 978-1554530281

**Reading Level: Specialized – 4.1 – 6.0**

17. *The Name of the Tree: A Bantu Folktale* retold by Celia Barker Lottridge  
   Reading Level: 5.0  
   ISBN: 978-0888990976

18. *Wangari’s Tree of Peace* by Jeanette Winter  
   Reading Level: 5.1  
   ISBN: 978-0152065454

19. *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes  
   Reading Level: 5.4  
   ISBN: 978-0688147327
20. *Ruby’s Wish* by Shirin Yim Bridges
   Reading Level: 7
   ISBN: 978-1452145693
Curriculum Guide

1. *Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans* by Phil Bildner
   Reading Level: 4.2
   ISBN: 978-1452125787

Book Description:
In New Orleans, there lived a man who saw the streets as his calling, and he swept them clean. He danced up one avenue and down another and everyone danced along. The old ladies whistled and whirled. The old men hooted and hollered. The barbers, bead twirlers, and beignet bakers bounded behind that one-man parade. But then came the rising Mississippi—and a storm greater than anyone had seen before. In this heartwarming book about a real garbage man, Phil Bildner and John Parra tell the inspiring story of a humble man and the heroic difference he made in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Instructional Goals:
- To help students define and understand what it means to be resilient and have a good attitude in the face of adversity.
- To recognize the elements of a “tall tale.”

Pre-Reading:
- Review the following quote by Martin Luther King and ask students what they think it means:
  “Even if it’s called your lot to be a street sweeper, go out and sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Handel and Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.’” - Martin Luther King Jr.
- Ask the students what they know about Hurricane Katrina.
- Describe a tall tale.

While Reading:
- Ask the students to write down words that they do not already know to be discussed after reading.
- The illustrator uses many symbols throughout the book. Help students identify the symbols and what they stand for.

After Reading:
- Ask the students to define resilience in their own words.
- Go over the unfamiliar vocabulary that students wrote down during the reading.
- Ask how Cornelius’ attitude helped New Orleans after the hurricane. How did his attitude help encourage other people?
● Why did they call Cornelius “Marvelous Cornelius?”
● What does the author mean by saying that Cornelius’ “spirit and will were waterproof?”
● What lessons can we learn from Marvelous Cornelius?
● How does the author use exaggeration to make a point about the character of Marvelous Cornelius?

Activity
● Using the “Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy” and the “Concept Definition Map” worksheets at the end of this guide, have students work together to fill in a concept definition map for any vocabulary words from the book that they are unfamiliar with.

2. Little Owl Lost by Chris Haughton
Reading Level: 0.2
ISBN: 978-0763667504

Book Description:
Uh-oh! Little Owl has fallen from his nest and landed with a whump on the ground. Now he is lost, and his mommy is nowhere to be seen! With the earnest help of his new friend Squirrel, Little Owl goes in search of animals that fit his description of Mommy Owl. But while some are big (like a bear) or have pointy ears (like a bunny) or prominent eyes (like a frog), none of them have all the features that make up his mommy. Where could she be? A cast of adorable forest critters in neon-bright hues will engage little readers right up to the story’s comforting, gently wry conclusion.

Instructional Goals:
● To understand the importance of helping others in difficult times.

Pre-Reading:
● Based off the title of the book, ask students what they think is going to happen in the story.

While Reading Activities:
● Discuss the illustrations and ask students why the squirrel thinks that the different animals may be the owl’s mother.

After Reading:
● Why did the squirrel and frog help the little owl?
● Why did the mother owl give them cookies?
● How did the animals work together to solve little owl’s problem?
● How does this story relate to Marvelous Cornelius? What themes do both books share?

Activity
Find the “Freeze Tag” game located in the back of this guide under the “16 Activities That Promote Conversations About Resilience” section. This activity teaches students how to work together and help each other like the animals helped Little Owl find his mother.

3. *Fox on a Box* by Phil Roxbee Cox
   Reading Level: 0.8
   ISBN: 978-0794515034

   **Book Description:**
   A Small Fox in search of food does not give up when he meets challenges along the way.

   **Instructional Goals:**
   - To reflect on the idea that with persistence and perseverance, we can achieve our goals.
   - To recognize the use of rhyme in the story.

   **Pre-Reading:**
   - Ask the students what they already know about foxes. What do they eat?

   **While Reading Activities:**
   - Ask the students what they think will happen each time the fox comes up with a new plan to get food.
   - Have the students point out the use of rhyming in the story.
   - Ask why the pup and cat stop the fox from stealing the pies.

   **After Reading:**
   - How did the fox use the box to try and get food?
   - Why does the box say “prize” on it?
   - In the end, did the fox achieve his goal?

   **Activity**
   - Using one of the “simple” story map worksheets found at the back of this guide, work together as a class to fill in the blocks with key points about the story.

4. *Fancy Nancy Spectacular Spectacles* by Jane O'Connor
   Reading Level: 1.1
   ISBN: 978-0061882647

   **Book Description:**
   Nancy loves Bree’s new glasses. She thinks they look spectacular. (That’s fancy for great.) They look so spectacular that Nancy wants a pair herself!
Instructional Goals:
● To understand the importance of friendship and acceptance of new things.
● To learn the meaning of Fancy Nancy’s fancy words listed on page 32.

Pre-Reading:
● Based on the cover, ask the students what they think is going to happen.
● What do they think the word spectacular means?

While Reading Activities:
● Ask the students what they think is going to happen at Bree’s eye doctor appointment.
● Ask the students if they have ever been to an eye doctor. If so, what happened at the appointment?
● Why does Nancy also want glasses?
● What emotion does Nancy display when she says “It’s not fair!” on page 28?

After Reading:
● What lesson does Nancy learn?
● What lesson does the reader learn about glasses?

Activity
● Find the “Catch the Ball with the Towel” game located in the back of this guide under the “16 Activities That Promote Conversations About Resilience” section. This activity teaches students how to work together and solve problems. Relate this to how Nancy solves her problem of wanting glasses.

5. *Ron’s Big Mission* by Rose Blue and Corinne J. Nadeu
Reading Level: 1.2
ISBN: 978-0525478492

Book Description:
Ron loves going to the Lake City Public Library to look through all the books on airplanes and space. He is ready to take out books by himself. But for Ron, in this segregated world of South Carolina in the 1950s, getting your own library card is not just a small rite of passage – it is a first courageous mission. Here is an inspiring story, based on Ron McNair’s life, of how a young boy, future scientist and shuttle astronaut, desegregated his library through the power of peaceful resistance.

Instructional Goals:
● To understand the importance of persistence and resilience.

Pre-Reading:
● Briefly discuss segregation.
● Based on the cover, ask the students what they think Ron’s big mission is going to be?
While Reading Activities:
- Ask the students to predict what Ron is going to do. Why is he in such a rush?
- Why doesn’t he give up when the librarian tells him he cannot check out the books?
- When the police tell him?

After Reading:
- Discuss peaceful resistance and how it relates to the story. How did it help Ron achieve his goal?
- Why did Mrs. Scott give Ron a library card?
- Read the author’s note. How did Ron’s persistence help him follow his passion?
- How does this book relate to Marvelous Cornelius? Describe adversity and how it relates to each situation. What did each character do to fix the problem?

Activity
- Using one of the “complex” story map worksheets found at the back of this guide, have students work in small groups or pairs to fill in the blocks with key points about the story.

6. *Blackout* by John Rocco
Reading Level: 1.4
ISBN: 978-1423121909

Book Description:
It was a normal summer night in the city. Hot, noisy, busy. And then…the lights went out, and everything changed. But That’s not necessarily a bad thing, because not everyone likes normal.

Instructional Goals:
- To understand the importance of making the best out of a bad situation.

Pre-Reading:
- Ask the students what they think “blackout” means.
- Based on the cover, what is this story about?
- Ask the students to describe how the character on the first page is feeling.

While Reading Activities:
- How does the character feel after the lights go out? Scared? Excited?
- Ask the students what they have done when their lights have gone out.
- How do the illustrations on the pages that say, “The city was dark and quiet…and still” differ from the illustrations on the pages that say, “It started out as a normal summer night. The city was loud and hot?”

After Reading:
● What did the residents of the city do to make the best of a bad situation?
● How did this solve the little boy’s problem?

Activity
● Using the “Semantic Gradient” handout found at the back of this guide, create a semantic gradient using the words “blackout” and “light.” Instructions from ReadingRockets.org:
  o Select a pair of polar opposite words.
  o Generate at least five synonyms for each of the opposite words.
  o Arrange the words in a way that makes a bridge from one opposite word to the other. Continuums can be done horizontal or vertical, in a ladder-like fashion.
  o Have students discuss their rationale for placing certain words in certain locations. Encourage a conversation about the subtle differences among the words.

7. *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle
   Reading Level: 1.7
   ISBN: 978-0399229190

Book Description:
Early one morning a little spider spins her web on a fence post. One by one, the animals of the nearby farm try to distract her, yet the busy little spider keeps diligently at her work. When she is done, she is able to show everyone that not only is her creation quite beautiful, it is also quite useful!

Instructional Goals:
● To understand the importance of persistence.

Pre-Reading:
● Ask the students what they know about spiders and where they live.

While Reading Activities:
● Ask why the students think the spider is not answering.
● Why is the spider weaving the web?

After Reading:
● Why was it important for the spider to keep working on the web?
● What does this story teach us about persistence and hard work?

Activity
● Using the “Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy” and the “Concept Definition Map” worksheets at the end of this guide, have students work together to fill in a concept definition map for any vocabulary words from the book that they are unfamiliar with.
8. *Mama Zooms* by Jane Cowen-Fletcher
Reading Level: 1.9
ISBN: 978-0590457750

**Book Description:**
Mama’s got a zooming machine…and she zooms me everywhere.

**Instructional Goals:**
- To identify the themes of resilience and determination.

**Pre-Reading:**
- Based on the cover, ask the students what they think this book is about.
- What do they think “Mama zooms” means?

**While Reading Activities:**
- Ask the students what they think a zooming machine is?
- Point to the pictures and show the class the wheelchair.
- Why does the little boy wear different costumes?

**After Reading:**
- What does this story tell us about mama and the little boy?
- How does the little boy view mama’s wheelchair?
- How does mama view her wheelchair?
- What does this teach us about resilience?

**Activity**
- Using one of the “simple” story map worksheets found at the back of this guide, work together as a class to fill in the blocks with key points about the story.

9. *Harriet and the Roller Coaster* by Nancy Carlson
Reading Level: 2.0
ISBN: 978-1575052021

**Book Description:**
For days George has been taunting Harriet about the roller coaster at the amusement park. “It’s so big, you can’t see the top…It goes so fast, you might fall out…You’ll be too scared to ride on it.”

“I am not scared,” Harriet told him. But that night she didn’t sleep very well, and the next morning, when it was time to go, she felt a little sick. Children are certain to recognize Harriet’s terror and cheer her spunk. And while she conquers her fear, Harriet will conquer her readers’ hearts as well.

**Instructional Goals:**
To recognize how Harriet faces her fears.

Pre-Reading:
- Ask the students if they have been on a roller coaster before. Was it fun? Scary?
- Ask the students to discuss a time they had to face their fears. How did it make them feel?

While Reading Activities:
- Ask how the students think Harriet feels while trying to sleep the night before the field trip. Have they ever felt that way?
- Are they surprised by George and Harriet’s reactions to the ride?

After Reading:
- How do you think Harriet overcame her fears?
- Why is it sometimes important to face your fears?
- How does this story relate to the idea of resilience?

Activity:
- Using the “Sum It Up” worksheet and instructions found at the end of this guide, ask students to sum up this story in 20 words or less using key words from the book.

10. The Great Migration: Journey to the North by Eloise Greenfield
Reading Level: 2.2
ISBN: 978-0061259210

Book Description:
Award-winning collaborators Eloise Greenfield and Jan Spivey Gilchrist poignantly illuminate the experiences of families like their own, who left their homes in search of better lives. They were part of the Great Migration.

Instructional Goals:
- To understand what the “Great Migration” was.
- To relate the poems in this book to the idea of resilience as seen in Marvelous Cornelius.

Pre-Reading:
- Read aloud the information about the “Great Migration” on the first page.
- Discuss how poetry and art convey meaning.

While Reading Activities:
- Ask the students to pay particular attention to the artwork and how the artwork tells stories.
- Point out symbols and maps used throughout the artwork.
After Reading:
● Ask the students if any of them have had to make a big move? How did it make them feel?
● What obstacles did these families face? How did they overcome the obstacles?
● Ask the students what emotions they think the people in the poems were feeling. What about the people in the artwork?
● How do the poems throughout this collection show resilience? How do they relate to Marvelous Cornelius?

Activity:
● Have the students work together to list-group-label important concepts from this book.
Instructions from ReadingRockets.org:
  o Select a main concept in a reading selection.
  o List: Have students brainstorm all the words they think relate to the topic.
    ▪ Visually display student responses.
    ▪ At this point do not critique student responses. Some words may not reflect the main concept, but hopefully students will realize this as they begin grouping the words in the next step.
  o Group: Divide your class into small groups. Each group will work to cluster the class list of words into subcategories. As groups of words emerge, challenge your students to explain their reasoning for placing words together or discarding them.
  o Label: Invite students to suggest a title or label for the groups of words they have formed. These labels should relate to their reasoning for the grouping.

11. How Smudge Came by Nan Gregory
Reading Level: 2.5
ISBN: 978-0802775221

Book Description:
Cindy knows the street is no place for a puppy. Into her bag he goes. Dogs aren’t allowed at the home where she lives, so Cindy hides her pet in her room. The next day, she bundles him in her apron when she leaves for her job as a cleaning woman at the Hospice, where one of the patients, who is nearly blind, sees the puppy as a smudge. Oh, how nice it is to hold the puppy! If only Cindy could keep him. But rules are rules. What will she do?

The answer comes in a surprise ending that turns out to be the perfect solution for Cindy and her new best friend, Smudge.

Instructional Goals:
● To identify the importance of helping others and of being resilient.
Pre-Reading:

- Ask the students why they think the puppy is called Smudge.
- Describe what a group home and hospice are.

While Reading Activities:

- Why do you think Cindy hides the puppy?
- Why do you think Cindy lives in a house with lots of other people and Mrs. Watson?
- What do you think will happen to Smudge at the SPCA?
- How do you think Cindy feels when she finds out that Smudge was adopted from the SPCA?
- Why is the hospice the perfect place for a puppy?

After Reading:

- Ask the students why they think that the hospice decided to adopt Smudge.
- How is Cindy resilient? What challenges does she face in life?

Activity

- Using one of the “complex” story map worksheets found at the back of this guide, have students work in small groups or pairs to fill in the blocks with key points about the story.

12. *Spinky Sulks* by William Steig

Reading Level: 3.0
ISBN: 978-0312672461

Book Description:

Spinky’s awful family! They don’t love him, they don’t understand him, and nothing any of them can say or do will convince him otherwise. Not his mother’s kisses and crullers, not his father’s reasonable lecture, not the visits of sister, brother, grandma, and friends. “The world was against him, so he was against the world, and that included all living things – except, of course, the animals.” What can Spinky possibly do but lie in his hammock “like a pile of laundry,” with a blinding case of the sulks? And what can his loving, patient family do to help him out of it?

Instructional Goals:

- To identify how the characters in the story help each other and why this is important.

Pre-Reading:

- Based on the cover and title, what kind of mood do the students think Spinky is in?
- Can the students name a time that they were in a bad mood?

While Reading Activities:

- How are Spinky’s family trying to help?
- What can they do to help Spinky be in a good mood?
- What does his mother mean when she says Spinky is sensitive?
- What is pride?
- Why did Spinky decide to hold a feast for his family?

After Reading:
- What does this story tell us about helping others?
- Why did the whole family chip in to cheer Spinky up?
- What can the family do in the future to help avoid hurting Spinky’s feelings?
- What does this story tell us about teamwork?

Activity
- Find the “Pass the Hula Hoop” game located in the back of this guide under the “16 Activities That Promote Conversations About Resilience” section. This activity teaches students how to work under pressure and together to achieve a goal. Relate how working together in this activity was similar to how the residents in Blackout worked together to make the best of a bad situation.

13. A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams
Reading Level: 3.3
ISBN: 978-0688040741

Book Description:
Daughter, mother, and grandmother all share the dream of saving enough coins in the jar to buy a new chair – a wonderful, beautiful, fat, soft armchair – to replace the one that burned up, along with everything else, in the terrible fire.

Instructional Goals:
- To identify the aspects of resilience and determination in the story.

Pre-Reading:
- Analyze the art work on the cover. What does the image show?
- Ask if anyone in the class has ever saved their money for a long time to buy something special.

While Reading Activities:
- Ask the students what they think the little girl is saving her money for.
- What do the colors in the story represent? What about the dark colors when the girl tells the story about their house burning down?
- Why do the neighbors bring them things? What does this tell us about community?

After Reading:
- What obstacles did this family have to overcome?
- How did they achieve their goal of buying a new chair?
- What does the chair represent to the family?
● Ask the class to list examples of people helping each other in the book.
● How does this story represent resilience?

Activity:
● Find the “Hit the Beach Ball” game located in the back of this guide under the “16 Activities That Promote Conversations About Resilience” section. This activity teaches students skills for problem solving and working together. How does this relate to *A Chair for My Mother*?

14. **Dancing with Katya** by Dori Chaconas
Reading Level: 3.4
ISBN: 978-1561453764

**Book Description:**
“Anna, will I ever be able to dance again?” Katya asked.

“You will,” I answered.

But I didn’t know how such skinny, crooked legs could learn to dance when they couldn’t even walk. I wondered if her “pioneer spirit,” as Papa called it, would be strong enough to make that happen…

**Instructional Goals:**
● To identify the elements of resilience and determination in this story.

**Pre-Reading:**
● Ask the students what it means to overcome obstacles. Has anyone in the class had to overcome an obstacle? If so, how did they do it?

**While Reading Activities:**
● Ask the students how they think Anna feels when her sister becomes ill.
● Anna hears the doctor whisper the word “crippled.” What do they think this means and how will it affect Katy’s life?
● What does Anna’s dad mean when he says that Katy has a “pioneer spirit?”
● How does Katy feel when she finds out she has to go to a new doctor?
● Why does Anna keep a brave face when Katy tells her she is scared?
● Is there anything Anna can do to help relieve Katy’s sadness?

**After Reading:**
● How did the relationship between Anna and Katy help them both deal with such a difficult time?
● Read the author and illustrator’s notes in the back of the book and discuss them with the class. How did the people in both of these true stories overcome obstacles?
How were both Katy and Anna resilient?

Activity:

- Using the “Think Aloud Checklist” found at the back of this guide, lead the students in a think aloud activity for this book. Instructions from ReadingRockets.org:
  - Begin by modeling this strategy. Model your thinking as you read. Do this at points in the text that may be confusing for students (new vocabulary, unusual sentence construction).
  - Introduce the assigned text and discuss the purpose of the Think-Aloud strategy. Develop the set of questions to support thinking aloud (see examples below).
    - What do I know about this topic?
    - What do I think I will learn about this topic?
    - Do I understand what I just read?
    - Do I have a clear picture in my head about this information?
    - What more can I do to understand this?
    - What were the most important points in this reading?
    - What new information did I learn?
    - How does it fit in with what I already know?
  - Give students opportunities to practice the technique, and offer structured feedback to students.
  - Read the selected passage aloud as the students read the same text silently. At certain points stop and think aloud the answers to some of the pre-selected questions.
  - Demonstrate how good readers monitor their understanding by rereading a sentence, reading ahead to clarify, and/or looking for context clues. Students then learn to offer answers to the questions as the teacher leads the think-aloud.

15. *Badger’s Bad Mood* – by Hiawyn Oram and Susan Varley

Reading Level: 3.6
ISBN: 978-0590189200

Book Description:
Sometimes it just happens. A bad mood that maybe comes on for no reason at all, but won’t go away. When Badger gets blue, his friends try everything from ginger ale to doctor’s visits, to stern advice: “This won’t do at all,” says Squirrel. “Leave me be,” Badger snaps.

Leave it to loyal, lovable Mole to figure out what his best friend needs, and to cure everyone’s flagging spirits by staging the most wonderful awards ceremony the forest has ever seen. Here is
a classic story with perfect emotional pitch that says simply and beautifully how we all need to be
told, now and then, how much we’re loved. And appreciated.

Instructional Goals:
● To understand the importance of being kind to others and of working together to solve
problems.

Pre-Reading:
● Ask the class what they think is happening in the picture on the cover. How does badger
look? How do the other animals look?
● Ask if the students have helped a friend or family member get out of a bad mood. If so,
how?

While Reading Activities:
● Why does Mole stick around even though Badger is still in a bad mood?
● Who do the students think is going to win an award?

After Reading:
● How did Mole solve the problem of Badger’s bad mood?
● Why did Badger win so many awards? What does it tell Badger about what his friends
think of him?
● How did the animals try and work together to help their friend Badger?

Activity:
● Find the “Hitchhiker” game located in the back of this guide under the “16 Activities
That Promote Conversations About Resilience” section. This activity teaches students
about different emotions.

16. Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan by Mary Williams
Reading Level: 3.7
ISBN: 978-1584302322

Book Description:
Eight-year-old Garang is tending cattle far from his family’s home in southern Sudan when war
comes to the village. Frightened but unharmed, he returns to find everything has been destroyed.

Soon Garang meets up with other boys whose villages have been attacked. Before long they
become a moving band of thousands, walking hundreds of miles seeking safety – first in Ethiopia
and then in Kenya. Along the way the boys face numerous hardships and dangers, but their fate
and mutual support help keep the hope of finding a new home alive in their hearts.
Based on heartbreaking yet inspirational true events in the lives of the Lost Boys of Sudan, *Brothers in Hope* is a story of remarkable and enduring courage, and an amazing testament to the unyielding power of the human spirit.

**Instructional Goals:**
- To identify and contemplate the idea of being resilient in the face of adversity.

**Pre-Reading:**
- Ask the students if they’ve heard of the Lost Boys of Sudan.
- Read the Author's Note. Ask the class how they think they would feel in this situation. Why do they think that the Lost Boys were smiling and full of hope when coming to the United States?

**While Reading Activities:**
- While reading, have the class review the illustrations and discuss what life in Sudan was like for Garang before the war.
- Ask the class what it means to be brave. How is Garang showing his bravery in this story?
- Why are education and his books so important to Garang?

**After Reading:**
- How did the boys help each other? What did they do to lift each other’s spirit?
- What obstacles did they have to overcome?
- How does Garang help Chuti?
- Why is it important that Garang share his story with the world?
- How does this story relate to the idea of resilience?
- Read the Afterword and ask the class what they think about it. Why did the United States allow some of the boys to come here? What challenges did they have to overcome when they first arrived in the United States? What things do people in the United States take for granted that people in other countries may not have access to?

**Activity:**
- Using one of the “complex” story map worksheets found at the back of this guide, have students work in small groups or pairs to fill in the blocks with key points about the story.

**17. One Hen by Katie Smith Milway**

**Reading Level:** 3.7  
**ISBN:** 978-1554530281

**Book Description:**
Inspired by true events, One Hen tells the story of Kojo, a boy from Ghana who turns a small loan into a thriving farm and a livelihood for many.
After his father died, Kojo had to quit school to help his mother collect firewood to sell at the market. When his mother receives a loan from some village families, she gives a little money to her son. With this tiny loan, Kojo buys a hen.

A year later, Kojo has built up a flock of 25 hens. With his earnings Kojo is able to return to school. Soon Kojo's farm grows to become the largest in the region.

Kojo's story is inspired by the life of Kwabena Darko, who as a boy started a tiny poultry farm just like Kojo's, which later grew to be the largest in Ghana, and one of the largest in west Africa. Kwabena also started a trust that gives out small loans to people who cannot get a loan from a bank.

One Hen shows what happens when a little help makes a big difference. The final pages of One Hen explain the microloan system and include a list of relevant organizations for children to explore.

One Hen is part of CitizenKid: A collection of books that inform children about the world and inspire them to be better global citizens.

Instructional Goals:
- To recognize the themes of resilience, determination, and hard work.

Pre-Reading:
- This book takes place in a village in Ghana. Ask the students what they can tell about life in Ghana based on the illustrations on the front cover.
- Ask the students to write down any words they are unfamiliar with to be reviewed after the reading.

While Reading Activities:
- Throughout the reading, refer to the illustrations and look for symbols.
- What do the students think Kojo is going to use the leftover coins for?
- What do they think Kojo is going to do after he finishes school?

After Reading:
- What obstacles did Kojo and his mother have to overcome?
- How did the community work together to help each other? What does it mean to be a community?
- What rewards did Kojo receive from raising the chickens?
- What lessons can we learn from Kojo and the people in his village?
- In the United States, all children get to go to school, but this is not true in some other parts of the world. Kojo had to work very hard to get to go to school. Why is school so important? How did going to school help Kojo reach his goals?
● When he owns his own farm, how does Kojo help his community?
● What does this story teach us about hard work and determination?
● Read the class the section titled “A Real Kojo” at the end of the book.
● Refer to the glossary at the back of the book to help the students with any words they did not understand.

Activity:
● Using the “Think Aloud Checklist” found at the back of this guide, lead the students in a think aloud activity for this book. Instructions from ReadingRockets.org:
  o Begin by modeling this strategy. Model your thinking as you read. Do this at points in the text that may be confusing for students (new vocabulary, unusual sentence construction).
  o Introduce the assigned text and discuss the purpose of the Think-Aloud strategy. Develop the set of questions to support thinking aloud (see examples below).
    ▪ What do I know about this topic?
    ▪ What do I think I will learn about this topic?
    ▪ Do I understand what I just read?
    ▪ Do I have a clear picture in my head about this information?
    ▪ What more can I do to understand this?
    ▪ What were the most important points in this reading?
    ▪ What new information did I learn?
    ▪ How does it fit in with what I already know?
  o Give students opportunities to practice the technique, and offer structured feedback to students.
  o Read the selected passage aloud as the students read the same text silently. At certain points stop and think aloud the answers to some of the pre-selected questions.
  o Demonstrate how good readers monitor their understanding by rereading a sentence, reading ahead to clarify, and/or looking for context clues. Students then learn to offer answers to the questions as the teacher leads the think-aloud.

18. The Name of the Tree: A Bantu Folktale retold by Celia Barker Lottridge
Reading Level: 5.0
ISBN: 978-0888990976

Book Description:
When a drought spreads through the land of the short grass, the animals set out across the great flat plain in search of food. A single tall tree, its fruit as red as pomegranates, as yellow as
bananas, as green as melons, as purple as plums, and as orange as mangos, becomes their only hope for survival. But its branches are high, and to reach them, the wise old tortoise explains, one must know the name of the tree. Only King Lion can tell it to them.

The gazelle – the fastest animal – and the elephant – the animal with the best memory – go, in turn, to the king, who gives them the name of the tree. Neither remembers it all the way back. Only the young tortoise, humble and determined, succeeds in learning the name from the king and remembering it when he returns to the other animals, and they are all saved.

In this Bantu folktale, retold in lively fashion by Celia Barker Lottridge, a professional storyteller, it is the animal who tries the hardest rather than the one endowed with the greatest talents who proves himself the hero. The arid African landscape, the tree and its luscious fruit, and the drama played out among animals large and small are brought to vivid life in striking illustrations by Ian Wallace.

Instructional Goals:
- To recognize the elements of determination.

Pre-Reading:
- Describe what a folktale is.

While Reading Activities:
- Ask how the students think the animals can get to the fruit at the top of the tree.
- Ask if the students think the gazelle will remember the name of the tree.
- Who do they think the animals will send now?
- Will the tortoise have better luck? If yes, why? If no, why not?

After Reading:
- Why was the tortoise the only animal able to remember the name of the tree?
- Why did the other animals doubt the tortoise would be able to remember it?
- What did the other animals learn about underestimating the tortoise?
- What is the theme of this story?

Activity:
- Using the “Sum It Up” worksheet and instructions found at the end of this guide, ask students to sum up this story in 20 words or less using key words from the book.

19. *Wangari’s Tree of Peace* by Jeanette Winter
Reading Level: 5.1
ISBN: 978-0152065454

Book Description:
As a young girl in Kenya, Wangari is surrounded by trees. But when she gets older, she sees the
trees being cut down. Wangari is afraid that soon all the forests will be destroyed. So she decides
to plant nine seedlings. And as they grow, so do her plans…

This true story of Wangari Maatha, environmentalist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, is a
shining example of how one woman’s passion, vision, and determination can inspire great
change.

Instructional Goals:
● To recognize the elements of resilience and determination.

Pre-Reading:
● What can the reader tell about the story based on the cover?

While Reading Activities:
● While reading, ask the students what they can tell about where Wangari lives based on
  the illustrations. Which animals depend on the trees?
● Ask the students what they think has happened to the trees.
● What can Wangari do to solve the problem?

After Reading:
● Why does Wangari call the seeds “seeds of hope?”
● How has Wangari inspired other women?
● How was Wangari able to stay brave when the government men came to arrest her?
● Read the Author’s Note at the end discuss Wangari’s impact on Kenya and the world.
● What does Wangari teach us about resilience and fighting for what we believe in?

Activity:
● Find the “Hand Squeeze” game located in the back of this guide under the “16 Activities
  That Promote Conversations About Resilience” section. This game teaches students how
to solve problems in groups, take turns, and share ideas. Relate this game to how the
women in Wangari’s Tree of Peace worked together to solve a problem.

20. Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
Reading Level: 5.4
ISBN: 978-0688147327

Book Description:
Written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes, the nationally bestselling and celebrated creator
of Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, Owen, and Kitten's First Full Moon, Chrysanthemum is a funny
and honest school story about teasing, self-esteem, and acceptance to share all year round.
Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect—until her first day of school. "You're named after a flower!" teases Victoria. "Let's smell her," says Jo. Chrysanthemum wilts. What will it take to make her blossom again?

**Instructional Goals:**
- To understand the importance of respecting the feelings of others.

**Pre-Reading:**
- Ask the students if they have heard of Chrysanthemum before? If not, explain that it is a type of flower.

**While Reading Activities:**
- Why are the students laughing at Chrysanthemum’s name? How do you think this made Chrysanthemum feel?
- How does Chrysanthemum feel after Mrs. Twinkle tells the class her name is Delphinium and that she loves the name Chrysanthemum?

**After Reading:**
- What is the theme of this story?
- Even though Chrysanthemum doesn’t like going to school because the other kids make fun of her name, she still goes every day. Do you think that Chrysanthemum is showing resilience? Why or why not?

**Activity:**
- Have the students work together to list-group-label important concepts from this book.

Instructions from ReadingRockets.org:
  - Select a main concept in a reading selection.
  - List: Have students brainstorm all the words they think relate to the topic.
    - Visually display student responses.
    - At this point, do not critique student responses. Some words may not reflect the main concept, but hopefully students will realize this as they begin grouping the words in the next step.
  - Group: Divide your class into small groups. Each group will work to cluster the class list of words into subcategories. As groups of words emerge, challenge your students to explain their reasoning for placing words together or discarding them.
  - Label: Invite students to suggest a title or label for the groups of words they have formed. These labels should relate to their reasoning for the grouping.

21. *Ruby's Wish* by Shirin Yim Bridges
Reading Level: 7
ISBN: 978-1452145693
Book Description:
If you walk down a certain road in a certain city in old China, past the pet market with it’s yellow-and-green ricebirds in their bamboo cages and the goldfish in their porcelain bowls, you will find a little girl named Ruby. Ruby is unlike most girls of her time. Instead of getting married, Ruby is determined to attend university when she grows up, just like the boys in her family.

Inspired by the life of the author’s grandmother and paired with evocative watercolor paintings, *Ruby’s Wish* is an engaging portrait of a determined young girl and a family who rewards her independent spirit.

Instructional Goals:
- To recognize the themes of resilience and determination.

Pre-Reading:
- Ask the students to write down any words they are unfamiliar with.
- Ask the students to pay attention to the illustrations throughout the story.
- Ask the students what they think the color red represents.

While Reading:
- Ask the students if they know what calligraphy is. Have any of the students ever drawn calligraphy?
- Why does Ruby think it is bad luck to be born a girl?
- Why do you think Ruby says the boys are better cared for?
- What do you think is in the red packet from her grandfather?

After Reading:
- What do the illustrations tell us about life in China during this time period? How is it different than life for children in the United States today?
- How did Ruby get her wish? What qualities did Ruby show in this story?
- Do you think that Ruby showed determination? What about honesty?
- Do you think Ruby would have been able to go to school if she hadn’t told her grandfather about her wish?

Activity
- Using the “Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy” and the “Concept Definition Map” worksheets at the end of this guide, have students work together to fill in a concept definition map for any vocabulary words from the book that they are unfamiliar with.