



## **The Hero in Me: Reinforcing Self-Regulated Learning as We Connect to Literary Heroes**

Curriculum Unit 04.02.03  
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### **Introduction**

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#### **Background**

I teach fourth grade at an urban K-8 priority school in the New Haven Public School District. My class consists of nineteen children ranging from nine to twelve years of age. I have eight girls and eleven boys. Ten children are of Puerto Rican descent while eight are African American and one is biracial. Student reading levels range from first to seventh grade, but the majority of students read at or one level above or below fourth grade level. The bulk of my students have been in my classroom since August, 2004, but I received several new students in October. Later in February, four students moved, to be replaced with four other students who entered in April, 2004. As a result, our classroom dynamic has changed several times throughout the course of the year. Different behaviors, personalities, and academic strengths and weaknesses have emerged at different moments. There has been a constant flow of students in and out of the classroom, so we have had to adapt and learn to accept and relate to new people all year long. Often, social problems and behavioral problems flare up. Some students are equipped with the coping as well as the interpersonal mechanisms to confront and solve these situational difficulties while others lack the foresight and tools to maneuver in troubled waters.

100% of the students in my class qualify for free or reduced lunch, meaning that they come from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, our school has been labeled a Title 1 underperforming school which means that we service a very high population of low-income underachieving students. Along with economic disadvantage comes a great deal of household flux. Some students have single parents, separated parents, numerous siblings, two working parents, or grandparents acting as guardian. They come from a one-income or no-income household, are battling homelessness, have constantly relocated or face various other factors that can necessitate or inhibit school success. As a result of home, work, and family situations, many of my students struggle to focus on their studies. While the majority of them are achieving remarkably well given their circumstances, there is an infrastructure and foundation that their lives as learners and social beings lack. But within each child, there is strength for dealing with adversity that has brought each one to the success achieved thus far. It is my hope that this curriculum unit will emphasize and clarify the heroic behaviors they already possess that can help them both cope and achieve. If such strengths can be identified,

then they can be reinforced and channeled to overcome academic challenges and increase each student's rate of school success.

## **Rationale**

As a fourth grade teacher of nineteen minority, lower-socioeconomic status students in an urban elementary school, I have spent a great deal of time observing nine and ten year olds succeed and fail. Over the course of my six years as a teacher, it has become clear to me that the classroom and the surrounding school environment can facilitate or debilitate student growth and progress. In my opinion, it is the classroom teacher's responsibility to establish a culture and practice that will ensure the relative success of every pupil, considering their individual and group needs. At times, such a task can seem impossible, but the critical shift in my focus occurred when I was introduced to the concept of self-regulated learning.

While I had personally noted that many of my students lacked organization, motivation, and the coping mechanisms necessary to realize their full potential, the discovery of this research forced me to reconsider the way I fulfill my responsibilities as a teacher. Reading studies on developing and supporting independent learning processes, behaviours and strategies in the classroom encouraged me to reflect on my own teaching practice and examine how this research could be applied to my own instructional techniques, classroom structure, and curricular choices. Certainly it is the teacher's responsibility to contribute to a student's success, but now I was a facilitator, as opposed to an instructor. While I have a responsibility to build an empowering environment and teach, it is more my responsibility to highlight student self-efficacy. In order for their diverse needs to truly be met, for them to continue to achieve success outside of the classroom learning environment, they must begin to see how they can meet their own needs with a little teacher help.

This unit is designed as an introduction to developing a self-regulated learning dialogue in the classroom. The concept of self-regulated learning reconfigures the teacher controlled classroom to refocus power on the student as the critical agent in the learning process:

Self-regulated learners are aware when they know a fact or possess a skill and when they do not. Unlike their passive classmates, self-regulated students proactively seek out information when needed and take the necessary steps to master it. When they encounter obstacles such as poor study conditions, confusing teachers, or abstruse text books, they find a way to succeed. Self-regulated learners view acquisition as a systematic and controllable process, and they accept greater responsibility for their achievement outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

To build and foster a classroom of self-regulated learners, these lessons will emphasize the development of independent learning and self-monitoring, attempting to re-define the teacher as a coach or facilitator as opposed to manager or ultimate authority. Through participation in this series of lessons, students should develop a beginning framework and vocabulary they can use to approach academic, social, and other problem-based tasks.

Along with vocabulary, students will begin to acquire a reservoir of concrete examples that reinforce the usefulness of these behaviors in fiction stories and non-fiction texts they read. The ultimate goal of this unit is that students begin to transfer these behaviors from concept to practice. Essentially, the unit will be constructed to slowly scaffold students so that by the end of the unit, they can work to solve a task or problem

with at least one new learning tool, i.e. finding the hero in themselves.

## **Building Teacher Background**

It is important, before starting this unit, to reacquaint oneself or become familiar with some literature on self-regulated learning processes, strategies, and behaviors (an annotated biography for teachers is included at the close of this unit). Barry Zimmerman's "Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: An Overview" provides just that, a historical and somewhat more abstracted discussion of the timeline self-regulated learning research has taken. It is a good introductory read for one who is unfamiliar with the concept in theory or practice. But Judi Randi and Lyn Corno's article, entitled "Teacher Innovations in Self-Regulated Learning", provides a more concrete outline of several strategies teachers can employ in the classroom. It also details their discussions with teachers and students about specific steps required to introduce, teach, reflect on and perpetuate self-regulated learning in students. From their study, I have identified five self-regulated learning strategies that can easily be found in literary and everyday heroes: organization, responsibility, persistence, goal setting, and resourcefulness.<sup>2</sup> While several other strategies do exist, I have chosen these five as they seem to encompass a broad scope of the strategies and when implemented, would cover the extended timeline of a challenging task from beginning to end. They will provide the vocabulary list as well as the thematic focus for the unit.

While I have noted several other articles to develop teacher background of the research and literature of self-regulated learning, a thorough reading of targeted articles to fulfill one's own purposes will serve as sufficient foundation for conducting this introductory unit. Over time, as student self-regulation increases or plateaus, reading for specific tools or to deepen practical knowledge of the classroom practices that reinforce and encourage use of such behaviors over an increased period of time will prove useful. Lyn Corno's article entitled "Working Toward Foresight and Follow-through" provides a concise discussion of the differences between motivation and volition; the two drives that serve as impetus and continuance of our work, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Given that this project focuses on improving students' actual work process, as opposed to the product, such a discussion of volition and the reason for its absence in many learners provides needed information to understand situational challenges that could inhibit or erase it. I would finally recommend a quick scan of Scott Paris and Richard Newman's "Developmental Aspects of Self-Regulated Learning," as it points to the potential pitfalls of self-regulated learning strategy instruction. The article warns teachers of the dangers of speeding up the instructional process or falling into the trap of teaching toward the student work product as opposed to truly praising the process of learning and the journey children take to find what they are looking for. It offers some practical advice that will ensure long-term results as opposed to the cursorily obedient implementation of self-regulated learning strategies to please the teacher.<sup>4</sup>

## **Objectives**

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### **Building Aspects of Character**

The New Haven and Connecticut State Curriculum standards emphasize the school's role in building aspects of character. Specifically, the Connecticut State Framework lists responsibility, integrity, effort, persistence, intellectual curiosity, respect, and citizenship as specific areas for focused instruction. This unit will articulate and practice the notions of responsibility and persistence as they are two of the five self-regulated learning

strategies listed and taught. Simultaneously, lessons and class discussion will touch upon the effort required to start, work through and complete a task, self-respect that comes as a result of achieving self-set goals, and the integrity most heroes demonstrate as they work, problem-solve, and succeed.

## **Reading and Responding**

Connecticut state teaching standards for reading and language arts are structured around reading to interpret text and responding to literature through writing, discussion, drama, and other forms of expression. In response to these guidelines and the goals of the unit, there will be a strong emphasis placed on deepening textual understanding by making connections between texts studied and students' knowledge of the world, themselves, and other texts.

Initially, we will discuss how we solve problems so students can begin to define, in their own words, character traits that will be connected to organization, responsibility, persistence, goal-setting, and resourcefulness. This vocabulary will be recorded and referenced throughout the duration of the unit and hopefully permeate their vocabulary long after the unit has concluded. Such vocabulary will be used to define heroes and their actions in various textual contexts, current events, our daily lives, and ourselves.

During the course of the unit, this vocabulary will be deepened through the study of multiple texts in multiple genres that carry similar messages about confronting and overcoming challenges to attain a goal. Students will be asked to express their personal feelings and reactions to characters and events, but such expressions will be substantiated by textual evidence whether paraphrased or quoted. Hopefully, at the conclusion of the unit, after discussion, response, reflection, and thought, students will be able to articulate the power books can wield to shape their thoughts and lives. As they connect to the literary heroes of Little Red Riding Hood, Pippi Longstocking, the Baudelaire orphans, Cameron Thompson, Roberto Clemente, and Harriet Tubman, they will see each character's strengths and weaknesses in themselves and resolve to learn from their experiences.

## **Strategies**

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### **Building from Student Background**

The unit will begin with a pre-assessment, asking the students to compose a journal about all the ways they solve problems with a person and all the ways they confront a math problem they initially perceive as difficult. They will be asked to describe how they feel and what they can do or what they see others do or experience. This will provide a basis for a whole group introductory discussion on "problem-solving", rooted in their initial understanding of how they solve and watch others solve everyday problems. From this discussion, lists of strategies can begin to take shape and initial self-regulated learning/heroic trait vocabulary can emerge. This will ensure that the concepts come from student background knowledge and experience, as opposed to being directly introduced without meaningful context. This discussion will also provide a concrete set of examples for students to connect to as they begin to listen to and read unit texts. As the unit's goal is to develop these character traits in students, this strategy of building on known concepts and broadening their perhaps limited definitions will promote student retention and implementation of the strategies in daily life and learning challenges. Such emphasis on what students know and can connect to should be stressed in dialogue and action throughout the unit's duration.

The list of strategies will eventually take the shape of a large matrix style graphic organizer (see attached model), linking new words to “student definitions” and dictionary definitions, so the known is graphically represented next to its alternative name and formal definition. This matrix will slowly evolve throughout the course of the unit, connecting this prior knowledge to new student observations of the character traits in life, texts read, and themselves. The class will add to the organizer under teacher direction, but it will also be a constantly evolving representation as post-its will be available for students to attach with observations of the specified traits in other texts, situations, or themselves. The teacher will also encourage the class to record learning moments when they implemented one or more of the strategies or observed someone implementing one of the strategies in classroom learning challenges or to solve a social problem. The matrix will stand as a graphic reminder of the concrete connection between text and life, what we know and what we’re learning, as well as intellectual and social problem-solving.

## **Making Connections**

The New Haven fourth grade curriculum stresses the use of meta-cognition, i.e. the awareness and discussion of one’s own strategy use when reading or experiencing a text. Nancy Boyles, a professor at Southern Connecticut State University, has devised a set of six strategies students are trained to use when reading and thinking: guessing, connecting, picturing, wondering, noticing, and figuring out. This unit will enrich student understanding of making connections and figuring out as they not only connect texts to their own lives, but also examine a number of texts of various genres that share heroic characters who employ similar strategies to solve their problems.

### *Reading and Discussing Connections*

The use of both fiction and non-fiction texts responds to a district-wide focus on expository text comprehension, (an area of weakness on the Connecticut State Mastery Test) and bridges my students’ world back to the real-world application of such heroic traits. I have also included several different genres of fiction including a fairy tale (Little Red Riding Hood/Little Red Cap), a tall tale (Pippi to the Rescue), a children’s urban contemporary detective novel (The Spray Paint Mystery), and a dark comic serial novel (A Series of Unfortunate Events: “The Bad Beginning”) to provide a diverse set of heroes and heroines.

The unit begins with a twist on an old children’s favorite, as the class reads Little Red Cap, the Grimm version of Little Red Riding Hood. In this selection, the children will be familiar with the story, so the differences and perhaps the concepts of self-regulated learning will be more readily detectable. Basic comprehension won’t be a goal as most already understand the plot line. This version provides an excellent example of a child who, with the help of an elder, some organization, and persistence, defeats her enemy the second time she faces him. The theme of her “second chance” opens up a discussion about challenges and problem solving over a period of time, as opposed to the illusion of instant perfection that plagues young children’s self-perceptions.

From Little Red Cap we segue into the tale of Pippi to the Rescue, where more themes are illustrated through a dynamic fictional heroine who bears strong resemblance to a child, but displays many mature strategic thinking patterns due to her life spent raising herself. The tale holds detailed examples of organization as Pippi plans her rescue route. She persists in spite of the nay-saying crowd, and displays a strong sense of responsibility as she saves the two burning boys as the irresponsible crowd looks on. She sets a goal, goes about planning her procedure, implements her plan, and works until the boys are saved. It’s a great example in a fictive setting sure to hold young attention spans and focus strategic discussion afterwards.

To maintain focus and have a daily reminder of our fictional literary heroes and heroines, the teacher can

choose to read the chapters of *The Bad Beginning* aloud on a daily basis. This dark tale of three unlucky orphans is a humorous account of their strength in spite of adverse circumstances. They must constantly think their way out of dilemmas and all rewards seem almost impossible to attain. Nevertheless, as a group, they band together, determined to escape and triumph over their evil guardian, Count Olaf, using their self-regulated learning behaviors. They persist in spite of atrocious living conditions, organize when preparing meals and cleaning on demand, set the unified goal to get out of each awful situation, seek out the resources of books and knowledgeable adults when they need help or don't understand something, and take tremendous responsibility for the care and well-being of each other at all times. The daily reflection on the orphans' metacognitive processes will reinforce the unit's goals and serve as a read aloud - a crucial component of a balanced literacy program which ensures that all students are exposed to several different types of reading often if not daily.

The final fiction title, *The Spray Paint Mystery*, is a simple chapter book in an urban setting where two elementary school students, a girl and a boy, set out to solve the mystery of who graffitied their school yard. This is an accessible tale where each self-regulated learning tool is displayed in various events. Cameron and Tarann persistently pursue clues regardless of all the pressure to fail from adults and peers. They organize their evidence, feel responsible for what has happened, set the goal of solving the crime and set incremental goals to move toward success. Both protagonists constantly monitor their progress and fully utilize outside resources at school, home, and the community. Each child can have the opportunity to witness self-regulated learning in various characters, and such an array will also increase the chances of personal connection to different personality types and life experiences my students bring to the reading.

The same holds for the non-fiction texts I selected to include in this unit's reading. *We'll Never Forget You*, Roberto Clemente and *Wanted Dead or Alive: The True Story of Harriet Tubman* provide both a hero and a heroine from two different time periods in US history. While both are biographical in nature and tell their stories along the timeline of the protagonist's life, the style of writing and nature of the struggles faced are distinct. Roberto Clemente's story offers some history of our school's namesake, which will pique student curiosity. But Roberto is also a more contemporary black Puerto Rican hero who, from meager circumstances, became one of the greatest major league players of his time. Students will connect to his family life, responsibility he acquired and sacrifices he made moving to the US, persistence in working to achieve his dreams, overcoming both language and color barriers, homesickness, and sabotage. His struggles, in some way, parallel student struggles more closely than the obstacles Harriet Tubman conquered.

Her story, *Wanted Dead or Alive*, is told more lyrically, creating a poetic sketch of episodes in her life and providing a strong textual focus on difficulties she faced with persistence - fighting not only for her own freedom, but for the collective freedom of those she rescued. The account offers several harrowing events where she persisted in trying and dangerous situations, planned rescues in advance, relied on outside and human resources, and set various goals to rescue people in small groups, traveling together house to house, taking the struggle one day at a time. Students will have to make more abstract personal connections to her heroic self-regulation, but such abstract connections will enrich their critical interpretation of texts and the types of connections that can be made between a contemporary existence and a more historical one.

### *Demonstrating Connections*

Throughout the unit, I have distributed several opportunities for students to read, discuss and write about their connections to the characters and the themes presented in texts we read together. To seal this understanding and perhaps more literally articulate the notion of connecting to literature, I have embedded



activities that encourage graphic, physical, and emotional connections to the characters and their experience as self-regulated heroes. For example, the class matrix presents a graphic map, displaying the parallels to be drawn from students to characters and back to classroom practice. Students will read, observe, contribute and record experiences that traverse text, history, fiction and non-fiction, the classroom, intellectual and social learning. Such parallels will be visually displayed, side-by-side, to clearly articulate the “connections” between student and character self-regulating behaviors.

Reader’s theatre allows students the opportunity to take an excerpt of expository or narrative text and write between the lines. Students must, quite explicitly, place themselves in the mind of the protagonist and supporting characters, to write a dialogue that supports and extends the themes presented in the text. Repositioning students in the character’s scenario reinforces pre-existing connections and may allow them to see more, relate more, and retain more understanding of the heroic traits to be learned from the hero.

Role play also encourages an emotional connection between actor and role, deepening appreciation for the character and internalizing learning more viscerally. Role play is a concrete forum to demonstrate learning which will aid in student retention of concepts studied while accommodating social and artistic learners who make connections more intuitively than mathematical or auditory learners. Role play will prompt student-student discussion of self-regulated learning behaviors, develop ways of physically demonstrating them, clarify misunderstandings, and perhaps elaborate or extend current learning to include other self-regulated traits or previously unseen connections.

## **Transfer**

To ensure that this unit’s goals have been achieved, it is crucial to add, not only a post-assessment component, but an opportunity for students to transfer their understanding from text, social life, and academic discussion to actual practice in academic content specific tasks. If the end goal is to develop and reinforce self-regulated learning strategies, then such strategies must not only be noted, they must also be employed, reinforced, and validated. To this end, students will be asked to approach a challenging math problem. They will be encouraged to employ strategies they previously utilized as well as new ones they may have discovered in their study of text heroes. Their reflection in writing and discussion will begin to promote concept transfer and provide feedback to the instructor regarding the students’ level of understanding and use of the new strategies.

Students will also apply their new strategies in learning to play a new game like dominoes, scruples, or chess (any new game with written directions will do). Such a situation provides numerous junctures for self-regulated learning strategies to comprehend the game’s directions, but also to negotiate the social challenges of working with a group and competing against a team. Post-game reflection and comparing and contrasting the physical education experience with the math experience will build on prior knowledge, increase understanding of the broad application of such strategies and again, provide feedback on transfer of the self-regulated learning tools.

At the start of the unit, a “problem box” will be introduced for students to anonymously submit slips detailing academic or social problems they have confronted, are having difficulty with, or see in others. The class will review some of these problems on a daily basis for group trouble-shooting, application of old and new self-regulated learning strategies, and on-going feedback for the teacher to assess student ownership and use of such tools. The problem box will also create a venue for problems of all types to collapse into one another, hopefully transferring the strategies from one forum to many, seeing their academic and social utility. It’s also a safe place for students to rehearse, revise, reconfigure and reflect on their understanding of the concepts.

Non-threatening components such as this one often create a space for students who would otherwise fear contributing. The teacher can also use this problem box as a way to introduce opportunities that have not arisen naturally to extend student consideration of the multiple contexts for strategy function.

## Lessons

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### Lesson Pacing Calendar

#### *Day 1 Pre-assessment Journal*

Ask students to journal and discuss social and academic problems. How do you feel when you encounter a personal problem with friends, family, or people at school? What do you do when you have such a problem? What do they see others do when they encounter such problems? How do people deal with problems? If students require a concrete example, ask: How would you deal with a friend who is mad at you? After a few minutes of journaling about personal problems, ask students to then reflect on academic problems. What do you do when you get a math problem for homework, or in class, that looks really hard? What do you see other people do in such a situation? How do you feel when you come up against a problem that seems too hard for you at first? Following approximately seven minutes of journal time, discuss through a whip around, or brainstorm. Jot student answers onto a board or chart paper to track initial responses for the class. It would be interesting to compare this chart to a chart created in the post-assessment. Such journals should serve to record individual student preconceptions about problems and solutions in academic and non-academic situations.

#### *Day 1 Little Red Cap Read Aloud*

What do you know about the story of Little Red Riding Hood? Read to find out what Little Red Cap's main problems are and how she solves them. Read the Grimm's Fairy Tale aloud to students. At varying intervals, pause and ask essential questions to monitor comprehension and remind them of the question. Upon completing the story read aloud, ask students to reflect and share the answers. What were her main problems? How did she solve them? You should be guiding students toward pinpointing the resources of her grandmother's help, her persistence in conquering the wolf and confronting him the second time, as opposed to giving up, taking responsibility and getting to her grandmother's house even though she would have preferred to play in the woods, etc. All these instances are textual examples of persistence, responsibility, and resourcefulness, three of the five self-regulated learning concepts this unit seeks to introduce. Such examples will be labeled as such the following day when the matrix is introduced, but for now, they should be recorded/shared in "kid-speak" for later reference (chart paper or the board could be used). You could ask students what they would have done in Little Red Cap's shoes. Were there any other ways she could have solved this problem or conquered the wolf? Why didn't she give up after she got out alive? How did grandmother help her? Why did grandmother help her? What might have happened if grandmother had not assisted her the second time?

#### *Day 1 Problem Box Introduction (Recurring Daily Activity)*

Display and give a very brief description of the problem box as a place where students can insert anonymous problems we are having with people, school, work, family, teachers, etc.. There are no rules other than



anonymity and appropriate language. It is not a blame box, rather another source for help. We can help each other solve our problems, just as Little Red Cap's grandmother helped her solve the problem of the wolf. We're not alone when we confront problems. There are many resources, i.e., peers and teachers, that we can utilize. The problem box can be a shoe box covered in butcher paper, decorated, etc. There should be a library pocket with index cards or scrap paper attached to the side for students to fill out with a problem. Students should know that problems will be reviewed a few times a week. Assure them that the class will check tomorrow for any problems people have left to solve.

#### *Day 2 Pippi Longstocking Silent Read or Read Aloud*

Today students will take a look at Pippi to the Rescue to pinpoint the two missing self-regulated learning strategies and other examples of the three listed in Little Red Cap. As a class or in buddy pairs, depending on student reading level, class discipline, or the number of book copies available, read to find out what the main problem is that Pippi must confront. How does Pippi solve the problem? What does she do? What strategies does she use? How would you have solved the problem differently? What other strategies could she have used? Does she use any strategies in common with Little Red Cap? If so, what are they? Record children's examples on the same paper used for the previous day's discussion so it can be reviewed or referred to in the future.

#### Day 3 Vocabulary Matrix Lesson and Practice (Dictionary Race)

Students will work together to find definitions for the five self-regulated learning strategies, convert dictionary definitions into personal definitions, identify real examples of such strategies, and pinpoint literary examples in Pippi and Little Red Cap. Example follows.

#### Day 4 Bingo Vocabulary Review

With a standard bingo board or on a piece of paper with a 3x3 table (drawn or printed), students will fill in the table with the five vocabulary words, randomly, choosing four to repeat at random to fill the rest of the boxes up to nine. The teacher will read definitions and sentence examples, mentioning literary moments that could be defined with one of the terms. Students will mark the box of the term they recognize and shout BINGO when they've marked 3 terms in a row diagonally, horizontally, or vertically. The teacher can modify the game by stating opposites or allowing the winner to come up and offer up their own definitions or examples of the terms.

#### *Day 4 The Bad Beginning Read Aloud*

Following the BINGO warm-up, the teacher can introduce a new read-aloud book that will carry throughout the unit. Passing the book around, students can make predictions about the story's beginning, time and place, the tone, etc. The teacher should read the back of the book to pique student interest because the author speaks directly to the reader, advising them to put the book away if they don't want to read a dreadful tale. Upon piquing reader interest, the teacher can read

#### Alternating Days 5-14 Vocabulary Warm-ups

Charades can be played with the terms cut up in a bowl and students taking turns acting out instances that

will inspire others to guess the strategy being defined. Find Someone Who is a paper game where the teacher passes out a list of the words entitled Find Someone who... Each word is nestled in a sentence like, "Find someone who can tell you how they are responsible at home." Beneath this statement is a space for a child to write and sign their name. Such activities follow for each of the vocabulary words. The sheet is distributed to the class and students are allowed to mill around for approximately five minutes to find someone who can help them complete the tasks around each word and sign their paper. Definitions are reviewed at the end. (Taboo, Opposites, and Pictionary are other warm-ups that can be alternated.)

#### Days 5-14 Spray Paint Mystery Reading Unit

Students can read each day to find examples of self-regulated learning strategies in *The Spray Paint Mystery*. Each day students should be equipped with five post-its that are labeled with the strategies. The goal for each day should be to comprehend the chapter and read to see what strategies Cameron and Tarann are using to solve their problem. Are you finding new strategies? What are they? Students and the teacher can record examples of various strategies in the class matrix after discussions. A book assessment could be used to pinpoint an example of each of the strategies at the end of the book. Daily assessment can entail reviewing student understanding through questions. (What was the main problem of this chapter? How was it solved? Who were the important characters who drove this chapter's plot? What new things did you learn about Cameron and Tarann? Why do you think the author introduced \_\_\_\_\_ a new character? How do you predict this book will end? Why? What do you think of the story so far? If you were in Cameron or Tarann's situation, what would you do next? What mistakes have they made? How would you fix them?) The teacher should also review the examples students labeled with their post-its to assess understanding of the strategies. Reading can take place independently as well as in a small group or in buddy pairs. The matrix should slowly begin to hold situational examples for each strategy under the column headed SPRAY PAINT EXAMPLES

#### Days 15-20 *Wanted Dead or Alive: The True Story of Harriet Tubman* Reading Unit

Readers will now be transitioning to expository text, but the transition will be gradual as this book is a fictionalized account of Harriet Tubman's story. There will still be a strong protagonist for the students to follow through challenges that she will confront on her way to freedom. The unit could be introduced by discussing what students know about slavery, Harriet Tubman, and the Underground Railroad. How was slavery a problem in the United States? What would you have done to gain your freedom? What sorts of things do you predict Harriet will do? How might she persist, use resources, set goals, be responsible or organize? Take 6-7 days to read this book with the students and allow them to do some reading on their own for homework. Discussions can focus around each era in Harriet's life. What challenges was she facing? What strategies is she using? Do you have any suggestions for her? What strategies might she use now or what other approaches could she have taken to this problem? How do you suppose she is feeling as a slave, as an outlaw, as a daughter, sister, and freedom fighter? Questions can even be direct, i.e. what resources has she used? What or who has she organized to far? What does Harriet have to persist in the face of? Post-its could be used to identify examples. Student comments and examples should be noted on the matrix under the column headed HARRIET TUBMAN EXAMPLES. Other activities students could engage in may include writing a letter to Harriet, writing a letter from Harriet to her siblings or her parents whom she couldn't talk to, choosing a section of the book to develop into a reader's theatre piece, prediction logs, revisiting a KWL chart that was started with what we know about Harriet, slavery, and the Underground Railroad, recording what we have learned, etc.

#### Days 21-22 *Reader's Theatre for Wanted Dead or Alive*

This activity would put students in the roles of main and supporting characters in the story and serves as a wonderful celebration at the completion of a book, or helps to clarify misunderstandings when a difficult chapter has been read and discussed. If the activity has never been performed, the teacher should present his/her own adaptation of one of the chapters in play form. The class can compare and contrast the structure and dialogue. Then, students or the teacher can select a chapter to adapt into a student dialogue. Students use the pre-existing narrative of the chapter as a rough sketch to write their own dialogue around the events. The writing takes a day and rehearsals take another day. After rehearsals, students can share their theatrical adaptations and discuss different interpretations or revisit all the chapters of the book through different group plays. Either way, it allows for good writing practice, reading fluency, and text-extensions, and provides a dramatic medium for performance assessment. Students should be encouraged to work in groups, and students who would prefer not to perform or would rather just read with expression should be allowed to do so for the group.

#### *Days 23-35 We'll Never Forget You Roberto Clemente Reading Unit*

Roberto Clemente is the final hero studied in this unit. All texts can be considered, compared, and contrasted to this one during reading and discussion. Students should be encouraged to make connections from their own lives as several may come from circumstances similar to Clemente's. In addition, any readings on Jackie Robinson or knowledge about the world of baseball both today and in the past can be connected to this text as it's studied. Students can use their matrices to record examples of Clemente's persistence, goal-setting, organization, responsibility, and resourcefulness. Post-its can be used to identify self-regulated learning strategies Roberto implements. Students may also learn a lot from recording main events on a timeline as the book's structure is quite linear and key dates are incorporated into each chapter.

#### *Day 36 Connection Dolls*

At the close of reading *We'll Never Forget You Roberto Clemente*, students can make a string of five paper dolls. The dolls should be large enough for the students to write a few sentences on both sides. Each doll's head should be labeled with a strategy on either side. To culminate the literary portion of the unit, students can connect their own strategy use to each of the characters' strategy uses, or students could connect different protagonists to one another. Connections are made by noting a quote or paraphrasing an example of that strategy's use in the book, a character, or themselves on one side of the doll and then doing the same for another character or themselves on the opposite side. Students who would prefer to illustrate some of their examples should be encouraged to do so, so long as they can give an oral explanation of their drawings and explain the connection. Symbolic sketches could be substituted for detailed drawings as well. Dolls should be shared and displayed so students can connect their own understanding to that of others.

#### *Day 37 Transfer Activity*

At the end of this unit, after all or a good portion of the pieces have been read, the work of transferring begins, or continues given the level of engagement students have demonstrated thus far. This activity would ask the students to bear the self-regulated learning strategies in mind while figuring out how to play a new game. The work would start with discussion of how one could organize before learning, what kind of responsibility students must take in learning a new game, how they might have to persist, what types of goals can be set individually or as a group, and what resources will be available to them. After this has been discussed and made clear student to student and teacher to students, directions to a board game or a familiar playground game can be handed out (availability of games, directions, and environmental constraints would determine the selection here). In smaller groups, students should be encouraged to implement the strategies

to figure out what the game is, how to play it, gather what's needed, and begin playing. After games have begun and concluded, a discussion can take place about what strategies were implemented, how students utilized specific strategies, what new strategies they may have discovered, and students could even compare these challenges and their accomplishments to those of the literary heroes they've been reading about. Students should discuss how the strategies improved the results or which strategies were more difficult to implement, etc.

### *Day 38 Post-assessment Task and Journal*

Ask students to journal and discuss social and academic problems again. How do you feel when you encounter a personal problem with friends, family, or people at school? What do you do when you have such a problem? What do you see others do when they encounter such problems? How do people deal with problems? If students require a concrete example, ask: Now, how would you deal with a friend who is mad at you?

After this journal, students will be presented with a difficult math word problem that is within their academic reach, but may require strategy implementation and appear challenging. A multiple step problem would be ideal for such a task. Students will be asked to solve the problem, keeping their heroic learning strategies in mind.

After the problem's completion, ask students to then reflect on this and other academic problems in writing. What did you do when you saw this math problem? What did you see other people do in such a situation? How did you feel when you came up against it and it seemed too hard for you at first? Following approximately five to seven minutes of journal time, discuss through a whip around, or brainstorm. Jot student answers onto a board or chart paper to track new post-unit responses for the class. This chart can be compared to the chart created after the pre-assessment. Such journals should serve to record individual student preconceptions about problems and solutions in academic and non-academic situations. Actual internalization of the strategies will be present in varying degrees. A teacher can use this to tailor instruction, i.e. re-teach, or emphasize certain strategies students appear to use less or not at all. Future readings that highlight weaker strategies could be chosen for lessons. A student who lacks one strategy could be paired with another student who appears to demonstrate more understanding of that strategy. Such an assessment should also take the whole unit into consideration. Some students may demonstrate strategy use and be able to discuss it in greater depth than their writing expresses.

## **Sample Lessons**

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### **Vocabulary Matrix Lesson and Practice (Dictionary Race)**

#### *Goals*

Students will be introduced to self-regulated learning vocabulary. Students will gain an understanding of the abstract vocabulary of these concepts through concrete examples from real life and literature.

#### *Objective*

Students will define five self-regulated learning strategies. Students will identify concrete examples of self-

regulated learning tools in their lives and/or in *Little Red Cap* or *Pippi to the Rescue*.

### *Materials*

Matrix, dictionaries (one for every child or one per pair), vocabulary, noted student literary examples from previous text conversations, large 4'x4' butcher paper chart with eight columns and nine rows - one is a heading row, list of five self-regulated strategies in the first column, headed STRATEGIES

### *Hook*

Teacher begins by displaying a blank matrix and stating, "I have a problem. I have a list of five huge words, but I don't know what they mean. Does anyone have any suggestions for strategies I might use to solve this problem? How would you solve this problem, if you came across a word that you didn't understand?" (Take student suggestions of self-regulated strategies they may already know, i.e. ask a friend, use a dictionary, look for the word you know (root word) inside the word, etc.) Does anyone know what these words mean? Take student answers. The teacher lists predictions and student definitions to be tested with the dictionary meaning. We're going to play a game using one of our resources to find the meaning of these five words. (If necessary, review dictionary search guidelines and search for the first word together.) Students race in teams to be able to come up with and record the word's definition on the matrix.

### *Direct Instruction*

When we have dictionary definitions of words, it's important to be able to put them in our own words, so we understand them and try to find examples in our life or experiences that will help us remember them. If I looked up the word organization and read the dictionary definition to myself, I would put it into my own words by saying, "making a plan or putting things in order". That's what organization is to me, based on this definition. Then I would try to think of an example in my life when I organized things. When I moved into my apartment, I organized my dishes in the cupboards, so I could find them quickly when I want to eat or cook with them. (Record both personal definition and the life example on the matrix under separate columns headed MY MEANING and MY LIFE EXAMPLE)

### *Checking for Understanding*

Now, can anyone think of any examples in *Little Red Cap*, *The Bad Beginning*, or *Pippi to the Rescue* when one of our heroines or heroes used organization to solve a problem? (Record student examples in the next respective columns headed with the story titles LITTLE RED CAP, PIPPI TO THE RESCUE or THE BAD BEGINNING).

### *Guided Practice*

Go through the steps of direct instruction to review "responsibility" with the students. Check at each step as a class and share. Race to find the definition, share the best one, and record the dictionary definition. Then, students alone or in partners can think of a way to word the definition. Share those different meanings and record one. Then, have students brainstorm examples of responsibility from their lives, share them, and record them. Find examples of responsibility in the stories, share, and record them.

### *Independent Practice*

If students are at an independent level of practice after guided practice, allow them to race for the rest of the definitions, share and record them without direct teacher assistance. If they are not prepared, repeat guided practice with the strategy “persistence”. Some students may require a partner or would prefer to work independently. Allow such modifications to be made. A small group may be pulled if they do not understand and need more direct teacher assistance. Such a group should be pulled and work with the teacher leading or a knowledgeable student at a separate table. At the end of this lesson, the matrix should be completed with the definitions, personal meanings, real life examples, and textual examples for organization, responsibility, persistence, goal setting and resourcefulness.

### Assessment

Teacher observation of this activity and student matrices will provide evidence of student understanding of the five strategies, as well as their ability to identify clear examples in everyday life and/or literature.

### **Reader’s Theatre**

#### *Goals*

Students will gain a deeper appreciation for a historical character’s struggles. Students will make a personal connection to a text. Students will internalize self-regulated learning strategies by vicariously experiencing a character’s problematic circumstances.

#### *Objective*

Students will compose a theatrical script adapted from a chapter in a book. Students will demonstrate understanding of the character’s problem and strategies to solve it in their reading or performance of the script.

#### *Materials*

Teacher sample of a Reader’s Theatre script, copies of *Wanted Dead or Alive!* for each student or their group, and writing paper for each group

#### *Hook*

Teacher chooses students to assist her in a dramatic reading of their scripts for a chapter in the book. Teacher and students perform the reading with flare and in character.

#### *Direct Instruction*

Teacher distributes a copy of her script and asks class to turn to the chapter they adapted into a written dialogue. As a class, observations are made about the similarities and differences between the script and the chapter.

#### *Checking for Understanding*

The teacher asks students to examine another chapter and offer examples of dialogue that could be written to begin the scene.



### *Guided Practice*

As a class, everyone offers dialogic suggestions. Together, the beginning of a script for another chapter is composed in a guided writing mini-lesson. The teacher could use the overhead projector or a blackboard for this composition, so all can see how the process of contribution can be collaborative and productive.

### *Independent Practice*

The teacher then opens the forum up to students to create groups (or the teacher could have created pre-assigned groups), select a chapter to adapt, compose a script and begin rehearsal.

### *Checking for Understanding*

The teacher should circulate during composition to troubleshoot. It will also be helpful to collect group scripts at the end of the lesson to ensure students are prepared for the following day's performance.

### *Assessment*

At the end of the lesson and after some practice the next day, groups can perform their scripts with or without paper, props and costumes. Participation, fluency, and understanding of the character's traits can be assessed in student performances.

## **Personal Paper Doll Connections**

### *Goals*

Students will understand the personal connections they have with literary heroes and the connections between fictional and historical heroes. Students will internalize the self-regulated learning strategies as they identify personal examples in their life, the lives of others, and persist in completing this multi-step project.

### *Objective*

Students will make personal connections between themselves and heroes they have read about over the course of the unit. Students will identify their own self-regulated learning strategies and examples of those in another character.

### *Materials*

Large 11"x14" construction paper, scissors, teacher example of a precut string of five paper dolls, doll frame for each student, copies of books read in the unit, student and class matrices, markers, crayons, and colored pencils.

### *Hook*

Guess who! Teacher pretends to be or acts out a scene where a character all the students are familiar with displays one of the heroic traits (self-regulated learning strategies) the students have been studying. Students try to guess who the character is first. Now, guess what! Students try to guess which heroic trait was being displayed. Teacher describes an instance from her own life when she displayed the same trait and states that she is a heroine too and feels a strong connection to that character.

### *Direct Instruction*

Teacher opens up the forum to students, asking which character they are most connected to or most identify with. Students begin to share examples and teacher segues to show them how they will share this with the class today. Teacher displays her example of the dolls with each doll's head labeled with a different heroic trait and shows how she recorded quotes, pictures, and explained events in the book when the character displayed those traits. The teacher then flips the dolls over to show her own heroism and shares these examples from her life. Teacher asks students what resources they may use to identify these examples. Students should point to the books, matrices, and peers as informational sources.

### *Checking for Understanding*

Give students one minute to prepare for a "Whip Around" to answer the question, "Which character do you identify most with? Why?" (Whip Around is a quick way to get individual responses from everyone. Each person states the character and one reason why in one sentence, quickly, as the teacher points to each student, quickly and student attention follows each speaker. Whip Around must be quick to work well. It helps students get ideas and the teacher can gauge understanding.)

### *Guided Practice*

Teacher guides students step-by-step through the process of cutting out the paper dolls and labeling the heads on each side. As a class, each child chooses one heroic trait they recognize in the character and themselves to record and the teacher asks students to share these examples.

### *Independent Practice*

Students complete the dolls on their own or with partners who have selected the same hero.

### *Assessment*

Dolls are shared and displayed in the classroom for all to see and learn from. The teacher can gauge the accuracy and depth of student connections as well as understanding of each trait/strategy.

## **Teacher Bibliography**

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Corno, L. (1995). Working toward foresight and follow-through. *Mid-western Educational Researcher* , 8(1) , 2-10.

Lyn Corno discusses the situational limitations preventing the majority of people from developing foresight and follow-through, but provides observational research-based anecdotes about instances in which foresight and follow-through have taken shape in spite of limited resources or contextual challenges. This is an inspiring piece for the urban educator and those interested in challenging assumptions of race, class, and socioeconomic status as limitations to progress. Given that it was initially written as an address, it is brief and dramatic in its illustration of her points.

Paris, S.G. & Newman, R.S. (1990). Developmental aspects of self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist* , 25(1) , 87-102.

Here Paris and Newman discuss how students' beliefs develop over time, how they are formed, distorted, reassessed and deconstructed. The article calls for teachers to increase student participation, responsibility, and collaboration in the hopes of breaking down passive, fearful, and apathetic self-perceptions and scaffolding students toward understanding the process of work as opposed to the final product. It leaves one with the understanding that in order to change student beliefs, new strategies must be taught, modeled, and observed over time. No real change and strength can be developed overnight.

Perry, N. (1998). Young children's self-regulated learning and contexts that support it. *Journal of Educational Psychology* , 90(4) , 715-729.

This is a very technical and detailed report on Perry's research into classrooms where self-regulated learning was taught. Perry offers a strong argument for metacognitive instruction at an early age and evidence comes from her study of second grade classroom teachers and students. While the technical discussion and tables can be skimmed, her comparison and contrast of four classrooms and portfolio assessment are informative for the classroom teacher interested in implementing such forums. Specific notes of each teacher's strengths and weaknesses could help a beginning teacher or seasoned professional avoid pitfalls that can undermine a teacher in the early phases of self-regulated learning instruction.

Perry, N.E., VandeKamp, K.O., Mercer, L.K., & Nordby, C.J. (2002). Investigating teacher-student interactions that foster self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 37(1), 5-15.

Close observation of young children's strategic reading and writing behaviors illuminate their similarities to older students and provide insight into the early instruction and careful monitoring of young learners through running record and discussion. Evidence supports early instruction in self-regulated learning strategies and provides situational anecdotes of teacher supports.

Randi, J. & Corno, L. (2000) Teacher innovations in self-regulated learning. In Boekaerts, M., Pintrich, P.R., & Zeidner, M.(Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp.651-685). New York: Academic Press.

This chapter in a much greater handbook provides an interesting overview of applied self-regulated learning strategies for teachers to read when preparing to teach self-regulated learning strategies in the classroom. It provides a discussion of curriculum imbedded strategies and contrasts teacher innovation to outside research. Most importantly, it contains a detailed model of a journey lesson where SRL strategies are introduced, discussed and applied. Science and reading are also mentioned in relation to SRL strategy application.

Zimmerman, B.J. (1990). Self-Regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist* , 25(1), 3-17.

This overview is a historical and somewhat more abstracted discussion of the timeline self-regulated learning research has taken. It is a good introductory read for one who is unfamiliar with the concept in theory or practice.

## Student Bibliography

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Engel, Trudie. *We'll Never Forget You, Roberto Clemente* . Scholastic, New York, 1996.

In large print with short chapters and black and white photographs of the real Roberto Clemente, Trudie Engel tells the history of one of the North America's greatest professional baseball players. The story begins with his humble boyhood roots in Puerto Rico and ends with his children posthumously honoring his name. The young Roberto Clemente teaches all children about the labors and fruits

of persistence, resourcefulness, goal setting, responsibility, and organization, tools he implements from a very young age.

Grimm, Wilhelm & Jacob. *Grimm's Fairy Tales: Little Red Cap* . Hamlyn, New York, 1961.

This version of the classic *Little Red Riding Hood* has an alternative ending to the young girl getting gobbled up. Instead, she is saved and has a second opportunity to confront a beguiling wolf and, with the resources of her grandmother's tutelage and a clever plan, entraps the wolf to his demise as opposed to ending the victim. The twist allows for comparison and provides a lesson in planning, resourcefulness, and the value of approaching a task a second time after making even fatal mistakes.

Lindgren, Astrid. *Pippi to the Rescue* . Viking, New York, 2000.

This book is an adaptation of one chapter, "Pippi Acts as a Lifesaver", in Astrid Lindgren's ever popular chapter book entitled, *Pippi Longstocking* . The single story books are more digestible for the young audience with a shorter attention span. Still Pippi Longstocking plays the same loveable and courageous heroine who, in the face of a timid crowd and befuddled firefighters, comes to the rescue of two young boys trapped in a burning building. It provides a detailed sequencing of an elaborate and creative plan, which makes it perfect to instruct students on pre-planning, organization, and courage in the face of a seemingly impossible task. Who would have thought that a little girl could be more proactive than a town or group of men?

McGovern, Ann. *Wanted Dead or Alive: The True Story of Harriet Tubman* . Scholastic, New York, 1965.

This second edition of the original *Runaway Slave* provides a powerful retelling of Harriet Tubman's story. Without fixating on dates and typical historical narrative timeline crutches, it takes students through a series of harrowing events in her life from childhood through adulthood and her work on the Underground Railroad. Moments of lyricism, interesting dialogue, and eerie blue rubbing style illustrations make it a unique tool for instructing students about the life of a true American heroine. Her dedication and ingenuity are the hallmarks of this children's title.

Medearis, Angela Shelf. *The Spray Paint Mystery* . Scholastic, New York, 1996.

*The Spray Paint Mystery* is a contemporary urban fiction in which a young school boy, Cameron, and his friend Tarann take on the role of police detectives in the hopes of solving a schoolyard crime. Together they slowly gather evidence to nab the culprit who graffitied their school walls. Be prepared for the surprise ending. Their dedication and work toward a common goal, despite setbacks, makes this an excellent choice for teaching students to persevere, set goals, and how to modify strategy when confronted with obstacles.

Snicket, Lemony. *A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* . Harper Collins, New York, 1999.

The *Bad Beginning* is the first in a serial of macabre and humorous adventures. In this romp, the Baudelaire orphans confront their first string of misfortunes. After losing their parents in the first chapter, they must learn to live with and escape their wicked uncle Count Olaf who, in addition to being their guardian, wants to steal their fortune by any means necessary, even if that means attempting to marry the oldest Baudelaire orphan, Violet. Together, the brother and two sisters, devise plan after plan, to some and often to no avail. Such struggle makes it a smart choice for self-regulated learning instruction.

## Appendix of Standards

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### National Language Arts Standards Alignment

#### *Standard 2*

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

#### *Standard 3*

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

#### *Standard 4*

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

#### *Standard 5*

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

#### *Standard 12*

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

### Connecticut Language Arts Standards Alignment

#### *Reading and Responding*

Students will use appropriate strategies before, during, and after reading in order to construct meaning.

Students will describe, interpret, reflect on and analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and enjoyment.

Students will select and apply strategies to facilitate word recognition and extend vocabulary development.

Student will communicate with others to create interpretations and evaluations of written, oral and visual texts.

#### *Exploring and Responding to Literature*

Students will recognize how literary devices and conventions capture the reader.

Students will explore multiple responses to literature.

Students will recognize and appreciate that contemporary and classical literature has shaped human thought.

Students will recognize that readers and writers are influenced by individual, social, cultural and historical contexts.

### *Communicating With Others*

Students will use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.

### *English Language Conventions*

Students will use language appropriate to purpose, audience and task.

## Notes

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1. Zimmerman, B.J. (1990). Self-Regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist* , 25(1), 3-17.
2. Randi, J. & Corno, L. (2000). Teacher innovations in self-regulated learning. In P. Pintrich, M. Boekaerts, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* , 651-685. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
3. Corno, L. (1995). Working toward foresight and follow-through. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 8(1), 2-10.
4. Paris, S.G. & Newman, R.S. (1990). Developmental aspects of self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist* , 25, 87-102.

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