

COMMON CORE CURRICULUM MAPS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS


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A Long Journey to Freedom

In this fourth six-week unit of second grade, students read informational text and fictionalized accounts of the African-American journey to freedom.

OVERVIEW

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ESSENTIAL QUESTION



What do you need to remember when you are writing a narrative?

[Standards Checklist](#)

Building on unit three's "building bridges" focus, students recognize the long and multi-faceted effort to break down barriers to racial equality in the United States. By reading the true stories of Henry "Box" Brown, Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, the Greensboro Four, and others, students see the links between historical events. Each student writes a narrative "from a box," (i.e., in the style of *Henry's Freedom Box*). They also write an opinion piece that is published digitally in a class presentation and possibly online.

FOCUS STANDARDS

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These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.2.6:** Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.
- **RI.2.3:** Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.
- **RI.2.9:** Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.
- **W.2.1:** Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic of book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.
- **W.2.3:** Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe action, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- **W.2.6:** With guidance from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](#) (1.5 MB)

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

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- Read informational books about the African-American journey to freedom.
- Write a narrative as if he or she is Henry in *Henry's Freedom Box*.
- Select the correct verb form, particularly of irregular verbs, to show past tense in narrative writing.
- Note links between historical events, including parallel connections and sequential connections.
- Analyze narrative poetry to understand its elements, meaning, and the use of formal and informal English.
- Compare two texts (a biography and an autobiography) on the life of Ruby Bridges.

- Write an opinion piece, citing evidence for the opinion.
- Express an opinion by creating and displaying a Power Point slide
- Record the opinion piece being read aloud to use for a class presentation or on-line web page.

SUGGESTED WORKS

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(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Note: The date or time period that is captured or discussed in each of these works is included in parentheses for your reference.

Stories

- *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (1960) (Carole Boston Weatherford and Jerome Lagarrigue)

Poems

- "Words Like Freedom" (Langston Hughes) (EA)

Stories (Read Aloud)

- *Dear Mr. Rosenwald* (1920) (Carole Boston Weatherford)
- *Finding Lincoln* (1951) (Ann Malaspina and Colin Bootman)
- *The Other Side* (1950s) (Jacqueline Woodson and E.B. Lewis)
- *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (1963) (Angela Johnson and Eric Velasquez)
- *Freedom Summer* (1964) (Deborah Wiles and Jerome Lagarrigue)

Poems (Read Aloud)

- "Rosa" (Rita Dove)
- "Merry-Go-Round" (Langston Hughes) (EA)
- "Harriet Tubman" (Eloise Greenfield)
- "Lincoln" (Nancy Byrd Turner)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Informational Text

- *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* (1849) (Ellen Levine and Kadir Nelson)
- *Rosa Parks* (Rookie Biographies) (1955) (Wil Mara)
- *Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story* (1960) (Ruby Bridges)
- *Martin Luther King and the March on Washington* (1963) (Frances E. Ruffin and Stephen Marchesi) (E)
- *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1963)(Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier)

Informational Text (Read Aloud)

- *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* (c.1820-1913) (Carole Boston Weatherford and Kadir Nelson)
- *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (Russell Freedman) (E)
- *A Picture Book of Jesse Owen* (1935) (David A. Adler and Robert Casilla)
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (1960) (Robert Coles and George Ford) (E)
- *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (1960) (Andrea D. and Brian Pinkney)
- *Birmingham, 1963* (1963) (Carole Boston Weatherford)

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA

Art

- Norman Rockwell, *The Problem We All Live With* (1963)
- *Photographs of Ruby Bridges* (1963)

Film

- Disney, "*Disney's Ruby Bridges*" (1998)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

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Teacher Notes: The books in this unit can be taught in chronological order, beginning in the middle 1800s with the

Underground Railroad, Tubman, and Lincoln; moving to Jesse Owen, and then Rosenwald (1920), Rosa Parks (1955), Ruby Bridges and the Greensboro Sit-In (1960), and, finally, Martin Luther King, Jr.. The connections between historical events (RI.2.3) will be seen as a long journey if each book is linked to the other as related stories.

Language

As you have the students read the literature of this unit, look for words that might lend themselves to a discussion of affixes and roots. Teach the students that by knowing the root word, you can approximate the meaning of another word that they may not know. For example, if the children have learned the meaning of “prejudice” and then come across the word “prejudicial,” they may have an idea of its meaning, especially if they see “prejudicial” in context as they read. Encourage students to use dictionaries to determine accurate meanings and to check spelling while writing. (L.2.4b, L.2.4c)

Class Discussion / Literature / Informational

A focus question for this unit is “What would you do to be free?” Ask students to write down their answer to that question. *Henry’s Freedom Box* (Ellen Levine) is a true story of a slave’s journey to freedom. Henry was willing to face danger in order to experience freedom. As you discuss the book, be sure to discuss the characters, setting, plot, and message of the book. Students may enjoy listening to the author read the story, noting the way she changes her voice with the different characters. (RL.2.6, RI.2.3, SL.2.2)

Narrative Writing

After reading about Henry’s journey to freedom (in *Henry’s Freedom Box*), introduce this narrative prompt: “Write a story as if you are in the box headed for freedom. Begin your story as you get into the box and end the story as the box is opened at your destination. Be sure to describe the action in the story, your thoughts, and feelings. Use words to show time order and end with a strong wrap-up.” To help the students with thoughts and feelings, you may want to have them journal after spending several minutes in a well-ventilated, open box. (W.2.3)

Language Activity

Revise the “stories from inside a box” (see Narrative Writing activity) by focusing on action words. Discuss the present tense and past tense of verbs, focusing particularly on irregular verbs such as “I hide, I hid” and “I sit, I sat.” (L.2.1d)

Class Discussion / Poetry

The poems about Harriet Tubman (“Harriet Tubman,” Eloise Greenfield) and Abraham Lincoln (“Lincoln,” Nancy Byrd Turner) are narrative poems that tell a story. Use these questions to discuss the poems:

- How are the poems similar and how are they different?
- What poetic elements do you hear/see in the poetry (e.g., alliteration, repetition, regular beats, and rhyme)?
- What is the message of each poem? Are they similar or different?
- Which of the poems uses formal English and which one uses more informal English? (L.2.3a, RL.2.4)

Class Discussion / Informational Text

Read aloud the two supplied texts about Ruby Bridges (*Ruby Bridges Goes to School* and *The Story of Ruby Bridges*). Before reading, explain that one of the books is an autobiography (*Ruby Bridges Goes to School: A True Story*) that Bridges wrote about her own experiences. Explain that the other book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, is biographical, which means that an author wrote the book about Bridges’s life. When you finish reading each book aloud, have the students choose the most important parts of the story. Then, have them compare how the books are similar and how they are different. (There are several other opportunities to do this compare/contrast activity, or assessment, with the Greensboro Sit-In and Martin Luther King, Jr. texts.) (RI.2.3, RI.2.9, SL.2.3)

Class Discussion / Art Appreciation

While the class is focused on Ruby Bridges, show the students some photographs of Bridges and the Norman Rockwell painting, “The Problem We All Live With,” which was painted after a photograph of her. Use these questions to discuss the title and the painting:

- Do you think it is a good name for the painting? Why or why not?
- Knowing the story of Ruby Bridges, what details from her character can you see in the painting? (Note: You should look for adjectives and character vocabulary in the conversation.) (L.2.5b, L.2.6, SL.2.3)

Opinion Writing

Give the students this prompt: “Choose one of the people studied in this unit who you think is the greatest hero in this long journey to freedom. Draw a detailed picture of the person. Write an opinion piece introducing the person and giving strong reasons why you chose her or him. Give two or three reasons why the person was chosen, using words like “because” and “also.” Use as many details as you can and close your piece with a strong statement.” (W.2.3)

Writing / Media

Students can publish their opinion pieces by scanning the drawing and putting it into a Power Point slide. Opinion pieces should be recorded and played as the drawing is projected. These slides and recordings could be posted on a web page to be viewed by friends and relatives. Arrange the Power Point slides chronologically to reinforce the linking of ideas in this long journey to freedom. (W.2.6, SL.2.5)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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- [Inside and Outside: Paradox of the Box](#) (LearnNC) (RL.2.3)
Note: This lesson includes *Henry's Freedom Box*, highlighting the idea of symbol and introducing paradox .
- [Ellen Levine Reads Henry Freedom's Box](#) (Scholastic, Author Interviews) (RL.2.6)
Note: In this video, the author reads the story and gives an interview.
- [A Class of One](#) (PBS, an interview with Ruby Bridges Hall, 1997) (SL.2.2)
- [Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech](#) (American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches) (SL.2.3)

TERMINOLOGY

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- action
- autobiography
- biography
- conclusion
- feelings
- linking words
- narrative
- opinion piece
- reasons
- record
- scan
- thoughts
- time order words

MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

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This unit teaches:

- **Art:** Photography, Norman Rockwell
- **Geography:** Southern states and Canada
- **History:** Slavery (e.g., Lincoln and Tubman), Civil Rights Movement (e.g. Ruby Bridges and Martin Luther King, Jr.)

This unit could be extended to teach:

- **History:** Civil War (e.g., slavery, states' rights), Civil Rights (e.g., Susan B. Anthony)

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