

Victor Junior High School English Department

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Making a Difference in the World: A Long Walk to Water



In this unit, students will read and listen to [A Long Walk to Water](#) to understand the power struggles between and within political and religious groups. Students will carefully and closely read a variety of primary and secondary sources with an emphasis on how culture, time and place play a role in personal and groups struggles, and influence and determine survival under extreme circumstances. They will also see how geography and climate adversely affect even the most basic needs for sustenance - water. In doing so, they will see how even an ordinary citizen can have a positive, powerful and lasting effect on the world.

Using Our Voices to Make a Difference: The Role of the Classics

In this unit, the students will define what makes a classic through the lens of Mark Twain and Thomas Jefferson and will read and listen to [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#). Students often question why we read certain pieces of literature. To them some works are dated, and seem to have little value. Why then are they forced to endure page after page of stories written so long ago? This unit helps students see common themes that transcend time and; therefore, are always classic and worth studying. In providing a shared literary experience we are able to examine the timelessness of the human condition.

Making a Difference in Our School: Examining Hierarchies in Literature

In this unit, students will read and listen to [The Outsiders](#) to understand the power struggles between and within socio-economic groups. Students will carefully and closely read a variety of primary and secondary sources with an emphasis on how hierarchy plays a role in societies, and how status in a group can affect change.



The Cost & Rewards of Making a Difference: Frederick Douglass & the Civil War in Literature

In this unit, students will read excerpts from the [Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass](#), as well as [Nightjohn](#), and [Bull Run](#) to understand the personal, physical, and societal costs to the individual seeking to make a difference as well as assess the rewards to both the individual and society. Students will examine the United States as factions work to divide the new nation and will research perspectives from both side of the argument. After completing this research students will create a fictional character who will walk with historical characters and authentic events and places to create a variety of narratives (informational and literary) that chronicles the life of their character.

Shaped by Place – A Grade 7 Unit about Differences, Settings and Character

This “mini-unit” supports grade 7 students in looking deeply at the interactions between the physical, temporal, social, and psychological dimensions of setting and the choices and motivations of characters. The unit hooks students by asking them to examine the differences in teenager’s lives, based on the 2009 Census Data collection called “A Child’s Day,” which allows them to analyze the physical, social, and psychological dimensions of setting on actual teenager’s lives. Following inquiry-based activities in which students dig deep into data tables to answer questions about teenager’s lives across the country; students collaborate to draw conclusions about how different aspects of American teenager’s lives differ based on the “settings” in which they live. They represent these conclusions through words and graphics in a “poster session.” Then they transfer their understanding of how setting influences real people’s lives to literature. They collaborate to examine how setting influences characters and their choices while closely reading “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi,” “All Summer in a Day,” and “The Monkey’s Paw” (in that order specifically, to build a staircase of complexity). As an assessment of their understanding, students independently read an excerpt TBD and develop a constructed response in which they analyze how a character is shaped by the environment in which he lives. If there is time to expand this unit or as an additional “challenge” tasks, students could also write short stories in which the interplay between setting and character is pivotal in the story’s development.



Unit 1—Establishing Identity Through Struggle and Change

Central Text: [Sleeping Freshman Never Lie](#)

- Is it through struggles that people are transformed?
- How do you develop your identity?
- Is change a requirement for progress?

Unit 3 — Bullies, Bystanders and Heroes

Central Text: [The Berlin Boxing Club](#) and [The Diary of Anne Frank](#)

Research Project: Taking a Stand in History

- Is it through struggles that people are transformed?
- What choices must people face when confronted with injustice?
- Why do some people stand by while others stand up?
- How do racism, prejudice, and violence affect society and the individual?

Unit 2 —Survival and Transformation

Central Text: [The Call of the Wild](#)

As we explore Jack London’s classic novel of survival we will look at three guiding questions.

- Is it through struggles that people are transformed?
- What are the characteristics that lead to survival?
- How important is it to understand and abide by the rules of your situation whether in civilization or the wild?

Unit 4 — The Power of Words

Texts: Variety of Poems and Poets

- Students will read, analyze and write poetry.
- Is it through struggles that people are transformed?How do you develop ideas, emotions, and images in writing?
- What is the power of words?
- How do literary devices impact the reader?



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Unit 3—Bullies, Bystanders, and Heroes

Central Text: [The Book Thief](#)

Is it through struggles that people are transformed?What choices must people face when confronted with injustice?

- Why do some people stand by while others stand up?
- How do racism, prejudice, and violence affect society and the individual?

Unit 2—National History Day

This is our research unit that offers the option of academic competition. Students enter the competition in one of the following areas:

- Exhibit
- Documentary
- Performance
- Website
- Historical Paper

Unit 4—Language and Poetry of the Past Classics

Central Text: [A Midsummer Night’s Dream](#)

- Why does Shakespeare’s work hold such universal appeal?
- What motivates people to control another’s life or actions?
- It is possible to control another’s actions?

