

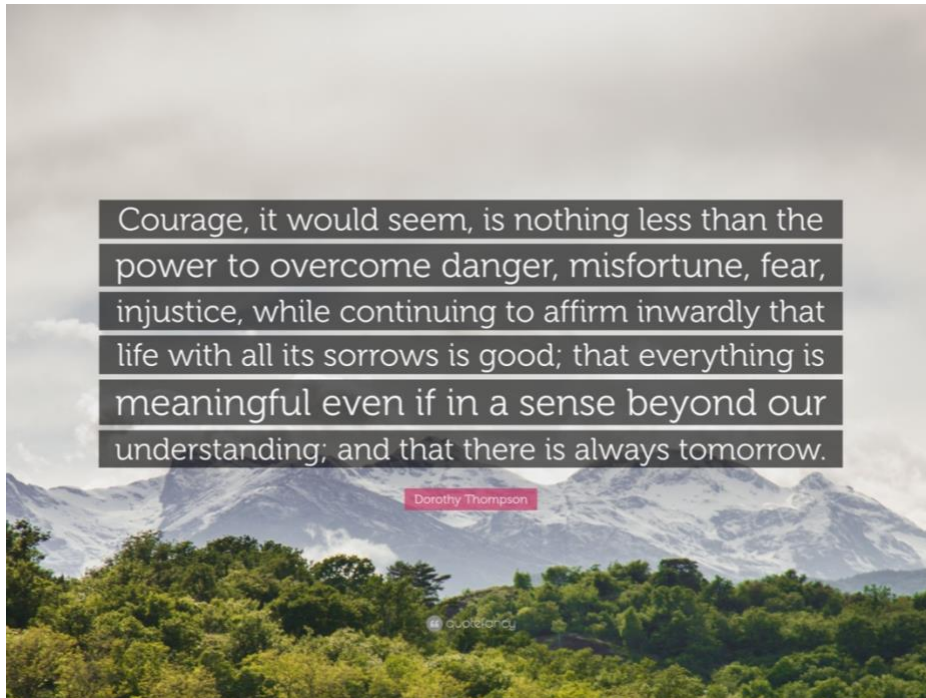
Text Set: Finding the Courage in the Face of Adversity

Anchor Text: *When We Were Alone* by David Alexander Robertson and Julie Flett | Grade 7

Finding the Courage in the Face of Adversity

Multi-genre Text Set

Personal and Philosophical Unit
Saskatchewan English Language Arts
Grade 7



This multi-genre text set will allow middle years' students to examine the theme of courage in depth. Courage is defined as the motivating force that helps one to overcome fear in the pursuit of a moral or socially just outcome. "Life challenges and tests us in many ways. In order to live a happy and rewarding life, we sometimes must give more than we thought we could. Success often requires us to find determination and courage to follow through with our goals. It takes courage to accept ourselves and to be who we really are. It takes courage to make our own choices about the direction life will take. It takes courage to deal with peer pressures, worries, hopes, and relationships. As we grow and mature, we need courage to face the many personal situations that life will provide (Grade 7 English Language Arts Saskatchewan Curriculum, pg.21)."

In a society riddled with oppression, prejudice, racism, sexism, and marginalization of minority groups, courage is one of the most important factors for change. This text set illuminates stories of courage that evoked change. The texts included cover controversial issues and may provoke emotional responses in learners. It is vital that the learning environment allows for conflicting sets of values to be presented and respected, with differences in peoples and their cultures, identities, and world views being celebrated.

The big idea of the text set is "finding the courage in the face of adversity". Through the texts and media in this multi-genre study, students will analyze how courage is present in different stories and used to evoke change. This multi-genre text set centers around a read aloud anchor text, *When We Were Alone* by David Alexander Robertson and Julie Flett, and will use synergistic texts in order to build: students' knowledge of the literary theme of courage, ability to think critically, and deepen their schema and worldview. This text will be the starting point of exploring courage while reflecting on student's own lived experiences. Students will have the opportunity to engage in critical discussions, represent understandings, engage with oral histories, and compare and contrast examples of courage in the texts and media presented.

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Outcomes from the Saskatchewan ELA Curriculum:

Finding the Courage ELA Grade 7

Context: Personal and Philosophical

Timeline: Approximately Two Weeks

Aligning with the Saskatchewan English Curriculum, this text set will allow for “students to extend their language skills and strategies and become competent and confident users of all six language arts strands through many opportunities to view and represent, listen and speak, and read and write in meaningful contexts. If students are to become lifelong learners, develop a sense of self and connection to others, and become engaged citizens and achieve the Cross-curricular Competencies and the outcomes for English language arts, students require meaningful, authentic contexts for learning. Students need many opportunities to explore questions and concerns about themselves and about the world (Grade 7 English Language Arts Saskatchewan Curriculum, pg.12).”

This text set will form part of the *Personal and Philosophical* unit of study. “A personal and philosophical focus or context gives students opportunities to explore their identity and their self-concept (Grade 7 English Language Arts Saskatchewan Curriculum, pg.12).” This text set will focus on the essential questions outlined below which will help students gain a deeper understanding of the importance of finding the courage when faced with adversity. The texts and media chosen for this text set provide a variety of perspectives that illustrate the importance of finding the courage to find our voice and stand up when faced with oppression. This “big idea” is one that will continue to impact students beyond the classroom as they become responsible, engaged citizens. This text set avoids the stereotypical narrative of courage linked to a fictional hero and their boisterous acts, instead it illuminates the quiet courage that is necessary to enact change in the world. The learning incited by this text set will encourage students to reflect on their own personal experiences and feelings, the world around them, and develop their own ideas, values, and belief systems.

Finding the Courage in the Face of Adversity – Questions for Deeper Understanding

These questions will be posted for the duration of this study.

- When have you needed courage in your life?
- What character traits does a courageous person demonstrate?
- What kinds of changes currently exist because of the actions of courageous people?
- How might it feel to live through a conflict that disrupts your way of life?
- What are the causes and consequences of prejudice and injustice?
- How can literature serve as a vehicle for social change?
- When should an individual take a stand against what he/she believes to be an injustice? What are the most effective ways to do this?

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ELA Grade 7 Outcomes for this text set are highlighted in blue:

Comprehend and Respond (CR). Students will extend their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a range of contemporary and traditional grade-level texts from First Nations, Métis, and other cultures in a variety of forms (oral, print, and other texts) for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment.

CR7.1 View, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of texts that address identity (e.g., Thinking of Oneself), social responsibility (e.g., Participating and Giving our Personal Best), and efficacy (e.g., Doing our Part for the Planet Earth).

CR7.2 Select and use appropriate strategies to construct meaning before (e.g., formulating questions), during (e.g., recognizing organizational structure), and after (e.g., making judgements supported by evidence) viewing, listening, and reading.

CR7.3 Use pragmatic (e.g., author's purpose and point of view), textual (e.g., how author organized text), syntactic (e.g., main and subordinate ideas), semantic/lexical/morphological (e.g., figurative language and specific word meanings by their context, common affixes and allusions), graphophonic (e.g., word patterns), and other cues (e.g., non-verbal cues, headings, charts and diagrams) to construct and confirm meaning when viewing, listening, and reading.

CR7.4 View and demonstrate comprehension and interpretation of visual and multimedia texts with specific features (e.g., circle graphs) and complex ideas including the visual components of media such as magazines, newspapers, websites, reference books, graphic novels, broadcast media, videos and promotional materials.

CR7.5 Listen critically to understand and analyze oral information and ideas from a wide range of texts (e.g., complex instructions, oral explanations and reports, opinions or viewpoints, messages presented in the media).

CR7.6 Read and demonstrate comprehension and interpretation of grade-appropriate texts including traditional and contemporary prose fiction, poetry, and plays from First Nations, Métis, and other cultures including thoughtful and critical response to content and craft.

CR7.7 Read independently and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of specialized information texts including nonfiction books, grade level instructional materials, reports, reference materials, instructions, advertising and promotional materials, and websites.

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Compose and Create (CC). Students will extend their abilities to speak, write, and use other forms of representation to explore and present thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences.

CC7.1 Create various visual, oral, written, and multimedia (including digital) texts that explore identity (e.g., Exploring Thoughts, Feelings, and Ideas), social responsibility (e.g., Taking Action), and efficacy (e.g., Building a Better World).

CC7.2 Create and present a teacher-guided inquiry project related to a topic, theme, or issue studies in English language arts.

CC7.3 Select and use the appropriate strategies to communicate meaning before (e.g., planning and organizing ideas to fit format), during (e.g., using transition words), and after (e.g., revising to eliminate unnecessary repetition) speaking, writing and other representing activities.

CC7.4 Use pragmatic (e.g., use language that demonstrates respect for others), textual (e.g., use common organizational patterns within texts), syntactical (e.g., ensure agreement of subjects, verbs and pronouns), semantic/lexical/morphological (e.g., avoid overused and misused words), graphophonic (e.g., enunciate clearly), and other cues (e.g., use appropriate gestures and facial expression) to construct and to communicate meaning.

CC7.5 Create and present a variety of representations including visual and multimedia presentations such as displays, illustrations, and videos, and enhance communication with appropriate graphic organizers, charts, circle graphs, timelines, maps, and sound effects.

CC7.6 Use oral language to interact purposefully and appropriately with others in pairs, small groups, and large group situations (e.g., contributing to sustaining dialogue, expressing support for others and their viewpoints, discussing and analyzing ideas and opinions, completing a variety of tasks, and contributing to group consensus building).

CC7.7 Use oral language to effectively express information and ideas of some complexity in formal and informal situations (e.g., a procedural description based on personal experience, a demonstration, a persuasive speech, a dramatization).

CC7.8 Write to describe a person; to narrate an imaginary incident or story; to explain and inform in a news story; a factual account, and a business letter; to persuade in a letter and in interpretation of a text).

CC7.9 Experiment with a variety of text forms (e.g., meeting, presentation to adults, descriptive poem, opinion piece, a review, front page of a newspaper, short script) and techniques (e.g., dialogue, figurative language).

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Cross-Curricular Connections:

This text set will support cross-curricular connections, specifically, in the subjects of social studies, health, and career education. Social studies support students to become active and responsible citizens through teaching controversial issues, centering multicultural content, perspectives, and resources, and focusing on inquiry. This text set intertwines themes of culture, power and authority, dynamic relationships, and interactions. The theme of courage in the face of adversity aligns well with the health curriculums focus on change and growth as well as connections to community. Finally, this text set includes the Treaty Education outcome of Spirit and Intent of Treaties which recognizes that there is an interconnectedness between thoughts and actions which is based on the implied and explicit intention of those actions. The spirit and intent of Treaties serve as guiding principles for all that we do, say, think, and feel.

[USC7.1](#) - Establish and use strategies to commit to and act upon personal standards (see grade 6) for various aspects of daily living over which an individual has control.

[USC7.4](#) - Demonstrate a personalized and coherent understanding of the importance of nurturing harmony in relationships (with self, others, and the environment), and apply effective strategies to re/establish harmony when conflict arises.

[USC7.7](#) - Investigate and express an understanding of possible discrepancies in morals (e.g., beliefs, ethics, virtues, understanding of right/wrong) that may determine and/or affect the commitment to the well-being of self, family, community, and the environment.

[CG7.2](#) - Develop and demonstrate the behaviours and understandings needed for building healthy relationships (i.e., emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical).

[SI7](#): Examine Oral Tradition as a valid way of preserving accounts of what transpired and what was intended by entering into treaty.

Background of the Text Set: *When We Were Alone* is Worth Knowing

When We Were Alone is a story about a difficult time in history, and, ultimately, one of empowerment and strength.

“When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother’s garden, she begins to notice things about her grandmother that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long braided hair and wear beautifully colored clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school when everything was taken away.” *When We Were Alone* discusses themes of Indigenous Peoples, residential schools, culture, family, and injustice. Courage is demonstrated through quiet rebellion, making voices heard, and sharing stories and experiences.

“I wanted to make sure the history that I was discussing in this book was something that was digestible and appropriate for younger readers. It was also about capturing the right tone and rhythm — this was something that I worked really hard at.” – David Robertson

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Key Content of Text Set – Why Each Text is Worth Knowing	
<p>ANCHOR TEXT Read Aloud: <i>When We Were Alone</i> by David Alexander Robertson and Julie Flett</p>	<p>Synopsis of Text: <i>When We Were Alone</i> is a children’s book that discusses Canada’s residential school history through the inquiry of a little girl with her grandmother. The little girl’s curiosity allows her to learn more about her grandmother’s experiences, and their shared histories. The author, David Robertson, states “The book is based on universal experiences of children at these schools — including attempts to change their hair, clothing, language and familial connections — and I felt these were things kids could really empathize with.” The story begins with Nókóm and Nósisim working together in the flower garden. Nósisim inquires why Nókóm wears such bright colours. This questions initiates Nókóm explaining her experience in the residential school system. Nókóm shared her experiences about clothing, hair, braids, Cree language, and being separated from her family. However, when Nókóm and her friends were alone, they would be courageous and rebel. They would roll around in the leaves and become colourful again, they would braid grass into their short hair, they would whisper words in Cree, and they would find their siblings and hold hands to be together. The way Nókóm chooses to live her life is a direct result of her experiences at her school. Ultimately, this is a story of strength, courage, and empowerment. <i>When We Were Alone</i> has created an accessible way to begin the difficult discussion about Canada’s residential school system, and address the deep theme of oppression continually present in history which remains today. Learners will engage with this text and construct meaning by critically reflecting on their own experiences and other examples in society; some of which will be presented in the included texts. This text also allows learners to begin thinking about point of view in literature.</p>
<p>POEM Related Text 2: Read Aloud “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou</p>	<p>Synopsis, highlighting related learning: “Still I Rise” is “an assertion of the dignity and resilience of marginalized people in the face of oppression.” Maya Angelou voices her defiance to be broken by prejudice and hatred, and instead courageously rises above it. The poem can be applied to any marginalized voice or perspective, and celebrates the overcoming of obstacles. Learners will use the poem to deepen their understanding of poetic devices including metaphors, similes, meter, and build their vocabulary. Symbols and motifs can also be found throughout the poem and used as learning opportunities for students. This poem can be</p>

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	<p>used as a catalyst to discuss influential people. Maya Angelou is a celebrated poet, civil rights activist, college professor and screen writer.</p> <p>https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46446/still-i-rise</p>
<p>GRAPHIC COLLECTION/ BIOGRAPHIES Related Text 1: <i>Noisemakers: 25 Women who Raised Their Voices & Changed the World: a Graphic Collection</i> by Kazoo Magazine</p>	<p>Synopsis, highlighting related learning: <i>Noisemakers</i> is a graphic novel containing a collection of biographies of influential women represented through comic strips. This collection of literature and art offers readers engaging, digestible pieces of history while illuminating the 25 women’s contributions to society. This text provides readers an opportunity to see the possibilities of life when we have courage and perseverance and are not afraid to use our voices. Each woman presented brings an inspiring story of determination while showcasing a variety of career path and life outcomes; showing that nothing is ever off limits. The anthology is separated into six chapters which are grow, tinker, play, create rally, and explore. Some of the women featured in this anthology include Raye Montague, Frida Kahlo, Nellie Bly, and Maya Angelou.</p>
<p>ARTICLE Related Text 3: “What Students Are Saying About Race and Racism in America” by Nicole Daniels</p>	<p>Synopsis, highlighting related learning: This New York Times article highlights 36 student’s different perspectives and opinions about racism in the United States, the legacy of slavery and the fight for racial justice. This article allows learners to make text-to-world comparisons and connect the anchor text <i>When We Were Alone</i>. Student reflections allow for a deeper understanding of their own identities and begin to discover where they fall in society. This article will also get learners to begin thinking critically about their own views and values, challenging their own bias and opinions.</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/learning/what-students-are-saying-about-race-and-racism-in-america.html</p>
<p>FILM Related Media 4: <i>The Help</i> film based on the novel by Kathryn Stockett</p>	<p>Synopsis, highlighting related learning: The film, <i>The Help</i>, takes place in the 1960s during the civil rights movement. An aspiring author, Sutter, decides to interview the Black women of her town who have spent their lives taking care of privileged, rich, white families. These interviews are compiled into a book that centers the maids’ point of view and illustrates the hardships they go through on a daily basis. “<i>The Help</i> illustrates that even in terrible circumstances of injustice, women can rise up and overcome this, becoming strong female leaders in their communities. The power of female relationships and courage are dominant themes in this novel.” This film is based on the 2009 novel written by Kathryn Stockett.</p>

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How the Texts Work Synergistically – Connection to Theme & Anchor Text	
<p>“Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<p>Connection to Theme and Anchor Text</p> <p>“Still I Rise” relates to <i>When We Were Alone</i> as it contains the theme of courage, specifically in the face of adversity. The adversity faced in these two pieces of literature include those of racism and oppression. Each text provokes deep feelings within the reader. These feelings may include outrage, empathy, sadness, or frustration. I believe the provocation of such feelings is one of the main purposes that the authors were aiming for when creating their individual pieces of literature. After engaging with these two pieces of literature, students should begin reflecting on what character traits does a courageous person demonstrate, and when they have needed courage in their own lives. “Still I Rise” will lead into the next text, <i>Noisemakers</i>, as Maya Angelou is featured with her own comic strip bibliography in the graphic novel.</p>
<p><i>Noisemakers: 25 Women who Raised Their Voices & Changed the World: a Graphic Collection</i> by Kazoo Magazine</p>	<p>Connection to Theme and Anchor Text</p> <p><i>Noisemakers</i> illustrates how courage is not one singular thing, instead it varies with the adversity being overcome. This graphic novel connects with <i>When We Were Alone</i> as it discusses females choosing to use their voices and actions to persevere despite what is being placed in their way. In <i>When We Were Alone</i>, Nókóm chose to live courageously, both at her residential school, and in her current life. Both Nókóm’s experience, and the stories presented in <i>Noisemakers</i> illustrate that our actions matter, no matter how big or how small. After engaging with this text, students should begin question what kinds of changes currently exist because of the actions of courageous people.</p>
<p>“What Students Are Saying About Race and Racism in America” by Nicole Daniels</p>	<p>Connection to Theme and Anchor Text</p> <p>The New York Time’s Article, “What Students Are Saying About Race and Racism in America”, ties in the theme of courage while interweaving the complexities of race and prevalence of racism that continues today. It takes courage to share our opinions and experiences, especially when our experiences are not those of the dominant culture. The 36 students who are highlighted in the article displayed major courage by participating in the article and candidly sharing their thoughts. The idea that sharing our experiences can be a courageous act can be observed in <i>When We Were Alone</i>. Nókóm lives loudly and spiritedly, despite what she has been through, and she chooses to share her experiences with her granddaughter allowing for their relationship to grow. After engaging with this article, students should begin to understand the causes and</p>

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	consequences of prejudice and injustice, and how to be courageous and take a stand against injustice.
<i>The Help</i> film based on the novel by Kathryn Stockett	Connection to Theme and Anchor Text Race is at the center of this film, <i>The Help</i> , and countless acts of courage in the face of adversity are exhibited throughout the plot. This film illustrates the concept that having our voices heard is a courageous act. This film provides an additional view that providing the microphone for marginalized voices to be heard is necessary and important. This idea can be related to all of the included texts in this text set. Often an author's importance may be overlooked when we are focused on consuming a text and finding its purpose. However, for this specific literary theme it is important for students to begin inquiring what role do the authors play in getting the messages out into the world? And how can literature serve as a vehicle for social change?

Teaching Points for Each Text	
ANCHOR TEXT Read Aloud: <i>When We Were Alone</i> by David Alexander Robertson and Julie Flett	Description of Task: Prior to reading <i>When We Were Alone</i> , students will engage in a class discussion. Students will discuss: What do you think the title means? How do you think you may relate to this story, or not relate? What do you know about courage? What do you know about residential schools? As a class, a read aloud will be completed, followed by a literature circle, discussing the deeper meaning of the text and reflecting on the initial discussion questions. Students will reflect on their own lives, comparing and contrasting their own experiences with elements from the story. They will strive to make a text-to-self connection by thinking of a time when they needed courage. Students will be tasked with completing an interview or learning an oral history with a family or community member. They will focus on the theme of courage and overcoming obstacles.
POEM Related Text 2: Read Aloud "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou	Description of Task: As a class, a read aloud will be completed. Students will have to identify the poetic devices present throughout the poem. In groups, students will identify examples of imagery and symbols used in each stanza, explaining what they believe is being represented. Students will then compare the poem to <i>When We Were Alone</i> by creating a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Nókóm's experiences with that of Maya Angelou's.

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	This poem will act as a catalyst to discuss influential women in the graphic novel <i>Noisemakers</i> .
GRAPHIC COLLECTION/BIOGRAPHIES Related Text 1: <i>Noisemakers: 25 Women who Raised Their Voices & Changed the World: a Graphic Collection</i> by Kazoo Magazine	Description of Task: In groups, students will engage with the text. Each group will be assigned a different chapter from the graphic novel. The chapters include grow, tinker, play, create, rally, and explore. Students will have to choose one of the influential women presented in their chapter and write a paragraph on the similarities and differences between themselves, the chosen individual, and Nókóm from <i>When We Were Alone</i> . Students will then create a comic strip (like the ones found in <i>Noisemakers</i>) for Nókóm or the individual that the student chose to interview.
ARTICLE Related Text 3: “What Students Are Saying About Race and Racism in America” by Nicole Daniels	Description of Task: Students will engage with the article independently. Utilizing the ideas present by New York Times , students will reflect on their own identities and attempt to describe themselves in 10 words or less. They will then respond to the article by writing a reflection. Students should be encouraged to focus on comments that challenged beliefs they hold, relate to them based on their lived experiences, makes them think about something they have heard or witnessed, resonates with how they see the world, or prompts another question or further inquiry. Students will be reminded that it takes courage to share our experiences and have our voices heard.
FILM Related Media 4: <i>The Help</i> film based on the novel by Kathryn Stockett	Description of Task: Students will watch the film as a class. While viewing, they will be tasked with determining the theme, analyzing the plot, identifying character archetypes, and examining how literary devices are present and effect how the movie progresses. After organizing their thoughts, students will have to connect the film with any of the previous texts presented. In groups, they will share their analysis and thoughts.
Culminating Task	
Text Type Options: Narrative, Oral Transcript/Interview, Opinion, Illustration	Description of Task In <i>The Help</i> , Sutter created a novel by bridging Black women’s experiences through interviews. In “What Students Are Saying About Race and Racism in America” student’s perspectives and opinions were centered and combined to create an impactful article. <i>Noisemakers</i> illuminated 25 different bibliographies of influential women through comic strips and art. Using this concept of connecting and uniting stories, students will create a class anthology. Students will bring together their ideas,

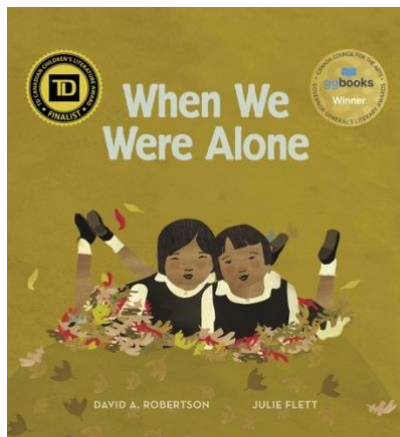
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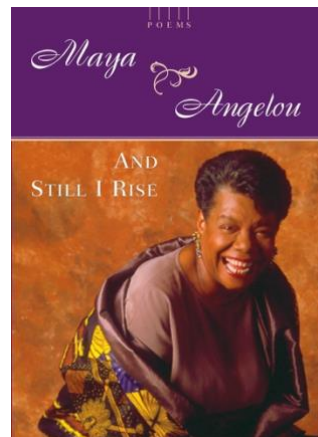
perspectives, experiences, and voices. The main objective is to complete a written or illustrated response explaining a story of courage and overcoming obstacles. Students will remember that uniting our voices creates a sense of community, and sharing our voices takes courage.

Students will have the options to:

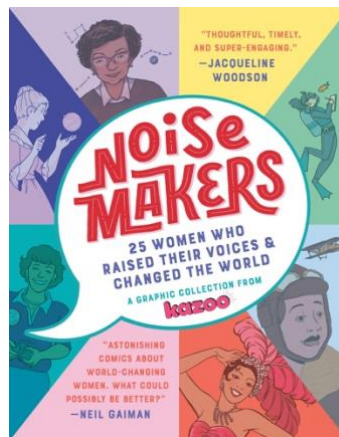
- Write a narrative of their own personal experience(s) or opinion(s)
- Create an interview transcript of a oral history/experience shared by a friend/family member
- Create an illustration or comic strip representing their own personal experience



When We Were Alone



“Still I Rise”



Noisemakers



“What Students Are Saying About Race and Racism in America”



The Help