

Pre Assessment Instrument: Personal Communication (Addresses LT #1)

*This pre assessment writing activity will be used to gather data about any prior knowledge students may have on the theme of perseverance. The data will be used to guide lessons, especially an initial discussion on perseverance.*

## Persevering Despite Obstacles

1. What does it mean to persevere despite obstacles?
2. What qualities or traits does it take for a person to persevere despite obstacles?
3. How do we learn to persevere despite obstacles in our own lives?

## CHECKLIST FOR PRE-ASSESSMENT: WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Note: Although students' answers will vary, their answers will give me an idea on their prior knowledge and will help me guide the unit including the first lesson on introducing the theme.

Question 1:

Student answers thoughtfully and gives at least two examples of what it means to persevere despite obstacles: \_\_\_\_\_

Question 2:

Student gives at least two examples of qualities of perseverance \_\_\_\_\_

Question 3:

Student answers thoughtfully and gives one example of persevering in their own life: \_\_\_\_\_

## Persevering Despite Obstacles

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2. What qualities or traits does it take for a person to persevere despite obstacles?
3. How do we learn to persevere despite obstacles in our own lives?

### Final Writing Activity

**Directions:** Throughout our literature unit on “Persevering Despite Obstacles,” we have read several biographies of stories of real people who persevered to overcome obstacles. The people we have read about have had many varying stories, with different obstacles, and different goals that they achieved. We have, however, been able to make connections and make generalizations about how they persevered and what qualities they exhibited to allow them to reach their goals and dreams.

**For this assignment:** I want you to think about two of the characters you have read about in your literature circle, or that I have read aloud to you. Although these characters have had very different stories, what qualities or traits of perseverance do these characters have in common? How has perseverance for these two characters looked the same? How has it looked different?

**Writing Directions:** First, give a brief summary of each characters story: their obstacles and what they achieved. Then, thoughtfully and thoroughly discuss at least two ways the characters you have chosen have exhibited similar qualities of perseverance. Finally, tie your writing into the over-arching themes we have explored in this unit as far as “Persevering Despite Obstacles.”

To remind you of the books and characters we have read for this unit, here is the list:

*Harvesting Hope*, The story of Cesar Chavez: A civil rights leader who ignited a cause and improved the lives of thousands of migrant farm workers.

*Rosa*, The story of Rosa Parks: An African-American woman who refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man, an act that sparked a revolution.

*Helen Keller, A Determined Life*, A blind and deaf woman who became the first deaf person to graduate from college, and who fought for the rights of women and minorities and encouraged people with disabilities everywhere.

*Gandhi*, A man who became one of the world’s most influential and well-respected political and social leaders the world has ever known.

*Buzz Aldrin, Reaching for the Moon*, A man who became one of the first men to touch the moon.

*When Marian Sang*, the story of Marian Anderson: one of the country’s historically greatest singers.

## RUBRIC FOR POST ASSESSMENT WRITING ACTIVITY

Category	Meets expectations	Does not meet expectations
1. Makes connections between characters	Two similarities with supporting details	One or less similarity with little or no detail
2. Makes generalizations, connects back to overall theme	Connects back to over arching themes of perseverance in at least two ways (with supporting detail)	Connects back to one or less overarching themes with little or no detail
3. Quality of writing	Writing clearly and effectively portrays similarity of characters. Organized and thoughtful. Revised and polished finished	Writing sample is sloppy, Disorganizes, lacks detail
4. Effort	Very complete work. Shows pride in work and attention to detail.	Lacks attention to detail. Did not clearly follow directions.

Rubric adapted from Amy McManamon and Nicolle Pereilla, "Confronting Change" Themed Lit. Unit, 2004. I changed the first two categories to fit my own theme for this unit, and partially changed #3 and #4 to meet the needs of my assignment.

## Formative Assessment Instrument: Personal Communication (LT# 2)

### Teacher's Evaluation on Individual Contributions to Literature Circle

Note: I will select one literature circle per day, and assess each member of the group individually. I will observe the students and give them immediate feedback. The checkmarks indicate the standards and the zeros indicate a failure to do so.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

#### Student Behaviors

Is an interested and willing listener \_\_\_\_\_

Considers other ideas of group \_\_\_\_\_

Communicates own feeling and beliefs \_\_\_\_\_

Identifies roles of different members of a group \_\_\_\_\_

Contributes new ideas or synthesizes information presented by peers \_\_\_\_\_

Contributes new ideas about the theme \_\_\_\_\_

Encourages others \_\_\_\_\_

## Self-Assessment: Working as a Group Personal Communication (LT # 2)

Use the rubric below to rate how you worked as a group.

- ➤ 1=work needs improvement
- ➤ 2 = good work; contributed thoughtfully; listened carefully
- ➤ 3 = excellent work; offered solutions

In the last column, explain why you assigned the rating for that particular criterion.

<b>Criteria for Assessment</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Explanation for rating</b>
I offered ideas on critically analyzing the text		
I helped others understand important things about the theme		
I listened when others stated their ideas		
I encouraged others to offer ideas		
I was respectful of others in the group		
I had a positive attitude		

## Check list to Evaluate Students' Ability to Self Evaluate

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student writes clearly and concisely

\_\_\_\_\_

Gives at least one reason why they chose rating

\_\_\_\_\_

Thoughtful and reflective in their responses

\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson Outline

### *Week One* (Learning Targets #1 and #2)

#### Focus lessons:

Introducing the theme

Participating in Literature Circles, the responsibility of group members

#### Activities:

-Introducing the theme and discussing how it relates to social studies unit

-Read aloud, *When Marian Sang*

-Whole class discussion on *When Marian Sang*, beginning discussion of talking about how theme relates to book

-Pre Assessment writing activity

-Students have chose in literature circles

-Literature circles form and each group picks out first biography to read

-Literature circles meet to discuss rules and responsibilities of group members

### *Week Two* (Learning Targets #2, 3)

#### Focus Lessons:

Finding specific evidence in text of how character perseveres

#### Activities:

-Whole class discussion on *When Marian Sang* to find specific examples from text on perseverance

-Literature circles meet to begin shared reading and discussion on first chosen text

### *Week Three* (Learning Targets #2, #3)

#### Focus Lessons:

Writing lesson on perspective. I will model a couple paragraphs of good writing from the perspective of another character (Uses example from *When Marian Sang*, writing from the perspective of one of her real sisters, Ethel May)

#### Activities:

-Literature circles finish reading and discussing first biography by mid week

-Students independently work on and complete journal entry from perspective of another real or fictional character from first book

-Teacher evaluation of all five literature circles (One per day)

-Oral feedback by teacher to groups

-Oral reflection by each group on their working as a group

-Formative Assessment of each individual student on their participation in literature circles

### *Week Four* (Learning Targets #1, #4)

#### Focus lessons:

Making connections and making generalizations as a reading strategy (from Routman, R. *Reading Essentials*)

Activities:

- Whole class discussion on making connections
- Literature circles will practice making connections with their first text and *When Marian Sang*
- Literature circles will chose and start reading their second biography

*Week 5* (Learning Targets #1, #4)

Focus lessons:

Writing our own stories of perseverance. I will model the beginnings of some good writing of a time that I persevered despite obstacles

Activities:

- Literature circles finish shared reading and discussing their second biography
- Students independently write autobiography on a time they persevered despite obstacles

*Week 6* (Final week) (Learning targets #1, #2, #4)

Activities:

- Whole class debriefing of unit
- Students fill out self-evaluation
- Post assessment writing activity (same as pre-assessment)
- Post assessment #2, students will compare stories of struggle and perseverance

The lessons outlined above meet the needs of the diverse learners in my class, as they include various types of learning activities. The learning activities include whole class discussions, lots of group work (cooperative learning) as well individual learning. The biographies I have chosen for the unit also cover a range of types of people that I believe will match student interests.

### Introducing the theme

I will begin the first session of the themed literature unit by reading aloud, *When Marian Sang*, by Pam Munoz Ryan. This beautiful and touching picture book biography on Marian Anderson gets to the heart of “Persevering despite Obstacles” and is therefore a good place to start discussion of the theme. Following the read aloud, I will engage students in an introductory discussion of the theme, “Persevering despite obstacles” and how it relates to Marian’s story.

I will introduce the unit by telling students we are beginning a literature unit on the theme of, “Persevering despite Obstacles.” I will connect the literature theme to our social studies unit by discussing with the class how our literature unit relates to our social studies unit on Discovery. I will provide a couple examples, and ask the class for a couple examples of the obstacles the early American colonists faced, and discuss how they overcame obstacles. Next, I will tell students that I have chosen five excellent picture book biographies of incredible people in history who have persevered despite many obstacles. I will next tell students we will be forming literature circles of five students each (with one group of four), per their chose if possible, and that each group will chose two of the five biographies to read in their literature circles over the next five weeks.

Next, students will individually fill out a pre-assessment which asks students to answer the central questions of the unit. Finally, at the end of the our first session together, students will do a short gallery walk of the books to start to get an idea of what their choices are, and I will give a brief explanation of each biography. I will tell students that tomorrow we will begin

forming our literature circles and picking books. I will remind students that although we will try to form groups of people that would like to be together, not everyone will necessarily get their first choice, and I will assure them that any group they end in will be a successful and fun learning experience.

### Concept Development

Throughout the unit, we will as a class fill out a concept web as an ongoing process. After an initial discussion of the theme and introduction to the concept web in the beginning of the unit, we will add on to our concept web throughout the unit. We will check in as a class at the end of every week in order to “add on” to our web. Based on examples from the books students are reading in their literature circles, as well as examples from their own life, the concept web should be full with details and generalizations about the theme by the end of the unit.

In a final session on synthesizing the central questions of the unit, we will decide on a couple of generalizations as a class, based on the web we created by the end of the unit. First we will categorize all the traits on the web and from there, agree on a couple of generalizations based on the categories. Students will demonstrate what they have learned about the themes by the quality of the generalizations they have come up with.

This final session addresses my concept/generalization learning target, as well as two skill learning targets: 1. Students will be able to find evidence in text of how the character persevered to overcome obstacles, and 2. Students will be able to use reading strategies such as making connections and making generalizations to compare similarities of how different characters persevere despite obstacles.

I am guessing our generalizations will be something like the ones I have created as part of my concept/generalization learning target. These include:

- Persevering despite obstacles requires determination, courage, strength of character, quiet confidence and patience.
- We persevere because we believe in social justice, or a hope for a better life, and because we want to make our dreams come true.
- Support from our community, family and friends makes it easier to persevere despite obstacles.
- Every person has challenges in their life and has to persevere in some way to overcome those challenges. Although students will come up with some of their own ideas, I will help guide students’ thinking to come to some of these generalizations by modeling making similar types of generalizations.

Throughout the unit, students will complete various assignments that will demonstrate their understanding of the overall themes and central questions of the unit. A final assignment that students will complete in the last week of the unit, however, will help students to synthesize the “big ideas” from the unit. Here, students will compare qualities of perseverance of two different characters they read about. This assignment will ask students to critically think about what persevering despite obstacles looks like. Students will have concrete examples of perseverance in the stories they read, but are asked to extract those qualities of perseverance in a comparison writing assignment. I will assess their understanding by the quality of their ideas in this exercise.

Finally, filling out a post assessment (same as the pre assessment) where students are asked to directly answer the central questions: 1. What does it mean to persevere despite obstacles? 2. What qualities or traits does it take for a person to persevere despite obstacles? and 3. How do we learn to persevere despite obstacles in our own lives? will allow students to further reflect on and synthesize the big ideas of the unit.

### Artistic Response

As a group, each literature circle will create a story quilt based on one of the books they read. Each student is responsible for completing one square of the quilt. Each student's square should depict something significant (i.e., a scene, object, person, etc) from the book, and should reflect the theme, "Persevering despite Obstacles." Each student's square should also include a "golden line" from the book – a line that captures the essence of the theme, and include color in some way. At the end of the unit, we will gather as a class in a circle, put all of the story quilts in the middle on the floor, and each student will recite the "golden line" from their square. The story quilt will be yet another means of getting students to think about the themes for this unit, but in an artistic way. This learning activity will not only appeal to the more creative, artistic students in my class, but will also allow the more logically thinking students a chance to do art as a means of reflection and expression. (Idea of story quilt from Schlick Noe, K.L., <http://www.litcircles.org>)

### Thematic Book and Resource List

#### **LITERATURE CIRCLE BOOKS**

Krull, K. (2003). *Harvesting Hope, The Story of Cesar Chavez*. Harcourt, Inc.: New York.  
The story of Cesar Chavez: A man who led a protest march across California and improved the rights of thousands of migrant farm workers.  
GENERALIZATION: We persevere because we believe in social justice, or a better life, and because we want to make our dreams come true.

Minor, W. (2005). *Buzz Aldrin: Reaching for the Moon*. Harper Collins Publishers Inc.: New York  
The story of Buzz Aldrin: A man who spent years of hard work and determination to make his dream of getting to the moon come true.  
GENERALIZATION: We persevere because we believe in social justice, or a better life, and because we want to make our dreams come true.

Demi (2001). *Ghandi*. Margaret K. McElderry Books: New York.  
The story of Mohandas Ghandi: A man who became of the world's greatest political and social leaders. His philosophies of nonviolence and peaceful protest were an inspiration to people all over the world.  
GENERALIZATION: Persevering despite obstacles requires people to have determination, courage, strength of character, quiet confidence and patience.

Giovanni, N. (2005). *Rosa*. Henry Holt and Company, LLC: New York.  
The story of Rosa Parks: An African American woman who refused to give her seat on the bus up to a white man and who sparked a revolution for the battle for civil rights.  
GENERALIZATION: Persevering despite obstacles requires people to have determination, courage, strength of character, quiet confidence and patience.

MacLeod, E. (2004). *Helen Keller: A Determined Life*. Kids Can Press Ltd.: Tonawanda, NY.  
The story of Helen Keller: A blind and deaf woman who became the first deaf person to graduate from college, and who fought for the rights of women and minorities and encouraged people with disabilities everywhere.  
GENERALIZATION: Persevering despite obstacles requires people to have determination, courage, strength of character, quiet confidence and patience.

## **READ ALOUD**

Ryan, P.M. (2002). *When Marian Sang*. Scholastic Press: New York.  
The story of Marian Anderson: An African American woman who, despite many obstacles, became one of the country's greatest female singers.  
GENERALIZATION: Persevering despite obstacles requires people to have determination, courage, strength of character, quiet confidence and patience.

## **REFERENCES**

McManamon, A. and Perriella, N. (2004). "Confronting Change," Themed Literature Unit for 4th grade.

Routman, R. (2003). *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need To Teach Reading Well*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

Schlick Noe, K. L. *Literature Circles Resource Center*.  
<http://www.litcircles.org>

Schlick Noe, K. L. *Planning a Themed Literature Unit*.  
<http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/TLU/overview.html>

Schlick Noe, K. L. *Themed Literature Units*. <http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/TLU/TLU.html>  
Washington State Commission on Student Learning. (2004). *Reading: K-10 Grade Level Expectations: A New Level of Specificity*. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: Olympia, WA.

Washington State Commission on Student Learning. (2002). *Essential Academic Learning Requirements in writing and communication*. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: Olympia, WA.

### Communications with Families/Students

Please see attached hard copy of the website I have created. You can also look it up online at <http://www.sarafriend.com>. For those families who do not have access to the internet, I will send a copy of the letter home with their child.

### Community Resources/Collaboration

As part of this unit, I will utilize community resources to enhance students understanding of the theme, “Persevering despite Obstacles.” One way I am planning to do this is by inviting a guest speaker from the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center, here in downtown Seattle. The center has a speaker’s bureau that includes several Holocaust survivors that travel to schools around the area to share their experience. Getting one of these speakers to come speak to my class would be a phenomenal testimonial of what it means to “Persevere despite Obstacles.” I believe having a person that could speak to my students, share their story, and answer questions would be a powerful experience that would make their learning about the theme that much more rich and meaningful.

Additionally, I will have a panel of local high school students come in to tell their stories of perseverance. Having students tell their personal stories of “Persevering despite Obstacles” will also enrich my students understanding of what it means to persevere and I think that they will really be able to relate to stories of members of their own community. My students can look up to older students as a role model and inspiration for perseverance, and it will help them realize that everyone has stories of “Persevering despite Obstacles.”

### Classroom Community

I am very excited about teaching this themed literature unit on “Persevering despite Obstacles.” The nature of this unit is one in which students, from the beginning, come together to form literature circles where they will read and discuss together. There are some independent learning activities, but mainly students are working together to read and to share ideas. I am confident that with these learning activities, students will learn to collaborate in a respectful, encouraging and positive manner. As the teacher, I will also enforce the “Self Manager” concept that is already in place in my classroom in which students take responsibility for their actions to make good decisions.

Students should also be excited and interested in the learning as the unit is almost a completely active and engaging one where students are reading and discussing together. The focus, then, is on student learning rather than teacher-led, direct instruction. Every student will have the opportunity to be a part of the learning process because the learning is almost entirely cooperative, instead of individual. The students, then, will gain a sense of belonging in a community of learners. Because the learning is mainly self-directed, students will develop a sense of pride and ownership of their part in the group and in the learning. Students will also develop greater confidence in their abilities as a self-directed learner and will gain a greater voice in the classroom as each and every student has the chance to actively speak up and contribute.

The learning activities of this unit allow for the inclusion of diverse perspectives as every student has a chance to voice their opinions. My classroom is not extremely ethnically diverse, but I do have a handful of minority students that, by the cooperative work, will be encouraged to contribute their thoughts on the topic. Finally, the books I have chosen for this unit include

multicultural and diverse perspectives as they highlight stories of men, women, African Americans, Indian and Latino characters. Although these stories do not cover a complete gamut of people in regards to multiculturalism, they give a fairly broad scope of perspectives that my students can relate to.

### Unit Overview/Critique

I believe that the themed literature unit, “Persevering despite Obstacles” I have created will be a highly engaging and interesting learning experience for my students. Through whole class discussions, literature circles, a number of independent writing activities, and an artistic response piece, students will have a range of learning opportunities and experiences in exploring the theme and central questions of the unit. Students will be exposed to a number of highly inspiring, well written and beautifully illustrated picture book biographies that serve as incredible examples of “Persevering despite Obstacles.” While students will gain a love of literature and practice their reading skills, they will also learn to share ideas and critically think about the themes of each book through their participation in literature circles. The literature circles will help to make the learning active and engaging as students collaborate with their peers in sharing ideas. Together, as a class, we will expand on and reflect on themes as we go through the unit. Students will also get a chance to write their own stories of perseverance, an activity I think will be meaningful and powerful as students make connections with the theme to their own lives.

I think the only weakness of this unit is that, in the essence of time, students only get to read two out of five biographies in their literature circles, and so do not get the full experience of stories. The unit is already a five week unit, and extending it several more weeks would be too lengthy. I could, however, supplement the unit by showing a couple of video biographies, an activity that wouldn’t take more than a couple of class periods. That being said, I believe students will get a deep understanding of “Persevering despite Obstacles,” a lesson I hope will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

December 2007

Dear Families of Room 206,

When we return from winter break, we will be embarking on a new and exciting themed literature unit based on the theme, “Persevering despite Obstacles. The unit is based on our social studies unit on Discovery, in that the early American colonists faced many hardships but persevered in order to succeed. During this five week unit, students will form literature circles of about five students each. Each group will read two out of the five picture book biographies I have chosen for this unit. The biographies include stories on Ghandi, Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, Buzz Aldrin, and Helen Keller – all of whom have amazing stories on “Persevering despite obstacles.” Throughout the unit, we will be exploring the central questions of:

4. What does it mean to persevere despite obstacles?
5. What qualities or traits does it take for a person to persevere despite obstacles?
6. How do we learn to persevere despite obstacles in our own lives?

In exploring these questions, we will have whole class discussions, small group discussions (in literature circles), an artistic expression project, and some independent writing activities including an autobiography of students’ own personal stories of perseverance. In addition, I will be assessing and giving feedback on how well students are working in, and contributing to their literature circles. Finally, students will do a self-evaluation at the end of the unit where they can reflect on how well they think they worked in their literature circles.

You can help support you child during our literature unit at home by making quiet time for reading at night. This will help them stayed motivated about reading. In addition, being an adult role model for reading will also motivate your child as a reader and lover of literature. Finally, exploring the theme of “Persevering despite obstacles” through discussions at home will further deepen your child’s understanding of the theme, as they can relate to it by personal stories.

For more information in support of this unit, the following websites are excellent sources:

<http://www.litcircles.org>, <http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/web/TLU/TLU.html>, and <http://www.readwritethink.org>

I am really looking forward to our literature unit. Please call or email me with any questions or concerns you may have. You can reach me at 206-930-4482 and email me at [hallals@seattleu.edu](mailto:hallals@seattleu.edu). And of course, your child is always welcome to talk to me about any concerns or question they should ever have. Thank you for your endless support!

Sincerely,

Sara Friend (Teacher intern to Mr. L.)