

# Classroom Overview Guide for Unit Study Curriculum Guides (Heroes of History Series)

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## Introduction

This overview guide is designed to help you make the most effective use of the Unit Study Curriculum Guides for the Heroes of History series. Whether you are a schoolteacher or homeschool parent, the Unit Study series can be used in a way that will ideally suit your needs.

Each Unit Study Curriculum Guide is based on a corresponding Heroes of History biography that brings to life a particular time and place where an individual has powerfully impacted American history. Whether you are interested in taking a field trip, having a weekly group discussion, or completing an arts and crafts project, the Unit Study Curriculum Guides are a resource that you will not want to be without!

Full of wonderful ideas and activities, each Unit Study Curriculum Guide

- presents valuable character qualities.
- integrates important Social Studies concepts.
- provides activities for studying the times and places in which the hero lived.
- includes chapter questions, vocabulary exercises, and a variety of Language Arts projects.

The following chart lists Heroes of History biographies with the time period and geographical areas presented in the story, the Social Studies concepts emphasized by each book, and other subject areas supported by related Heroes book.

<b>Biography Title</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Social Studies Concepts</b>	<b>Other Topics</b>
<b><i>The Beginnings of a Nation</i></b>			
<i>Christopher Columbus: Across the Ocean Sea</i>	1451–1506	Exploration of the world; European–Native American relations; islands in the Caribbean Sea; monarchies in Spain, Portugal, and Italy; early mapmaking; early trade routes	Navigation, sea adventures, fifteenth-century religious conflicts, shipbuilding, perseverance
<i>John Smith: A Foothold in the New World</i>	1580–1631	Exploration of the world, the Jamestown colony, European–Native American relations, war, England, early trading practices	Sea adventures, initiative
<i>William Penn: Liberty and Justice for All</i>	1644–1718	The fight for religious freedom, Pennsylvania, colonial times, England	Seventeenth-century religious conflicts and convictions, the Black Plague
<b><i>The Establishment of a Nation</i></b>			
<i>Benjamin Franklin: Live Wire</i>	1706–1790	Diplomacy, American Revolution, colonial times, Declaration of Independence, Boston	Electricity, inventions, printing business, creativity
<i>George Washington: True Patriot</i>	1732–1799	American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, Constitutional Convention, Virginia, the thirteen colonies, the presidency, the French-Indian War	Plantations, surveying, military strategy, leadership
<i>John Adams: Independence Forever</i>	1735–1826	American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, forms of government, Massachusetts	Diplomacy

<b><i>The Exploration of a Nation</i></b>			
<i>Meriwether Lewis: Off the Edge of the Map</i>	1774–1809	Native American Relations, the Louisiana Purchase, the early military, the Corps of Discovery, life on the frontier,	Navigation, courage, botany, animal identification, exploration
<i>Daniel Boone: Frontiersman</i>	1734–1820	Native American relations, Kentucky, life on the frontier, the French-Indian War	Navigation, surveying, exploration
<b><i>The Fracturing of a Nation</i></b>			
<i>Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom</i>	1809–1869	Civil War, slavery, Illinois, the presidency	Eloquence
<i>Harriet Tubman: Freedombound</i>	1820?–1913	Civil War, slavery, Reconstruction, Maryland	Commitment
<i>Clara Barton: Courage Under Fire</i>	1821–1912	Red Cross, Geneva Conventions, Civil War, slavery, Maryland, Virginia, Washington D.C.	Compassion
<b><i>The Growth of a Nation</i></b>			
<i>Theodore Roosevelt: An American Original</i>	1858–1919	Spanish-American War, American foreign relations	Conservation
<i>Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Storybook Life</i>	1867–1957	Homestead Act	Resilience
<i>Douglas MacArthur: What Greater Honor</i>	1880–1964	World War I & II	Military life, loyalty, confidence
<b><i>The Inspiration of a Nation</i></b>			
<i>Thomas Edison: Inspiration and Hard Work</i>	1847–1931	New Jersey, New York	Invention of light bulb and motion pictures, patents, creativity
<i>George Washington Carver: From Slave to Scientist</i>	1864?–1943	Slavery, Reconstruction, Alabama	Plant science, innovation
<i>Orville Wright: The Flyer</i>	1871–1948	North Carolina	Aviation, perseverance
<b><i>The Future of a Nation</i></b>			

<i>Alan Shepard: Higher and Faster</i>	1923–1998	World War II, Korean War	Aeronautics, space travel, military life, discipline
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## Using Heroes of History Books and Unit Studies in Your Classroom

The Unit Study Curriculum Guides allow for great flexibility in working with Heroes of History biographies. Following are some possible options for you to choose from, based on the needs of your students, your budget, and any mandated curriculum that may already be in place at your school.

### Using Multiple Titles from Each Time Period

Teachers who use the Heroes of History biographies and Unit Studies as the foundation of their American history curriculum often buy several copies of each title in a time period and assign or let students choose which book they would like to read. For example, if your class was studying the Civil War period (The Fracturing of a Nation), you might assign one third of your students to read *Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom*, another third to read *Harriet Tubman: Freedombound*, and the last third to read *Clara Barton: Courage Under Fire*. As students read about this period in history from the perspectives of a former slave, a Civil War nurse, and a president—and share their findings with their classmates through discussions and projects—the entire class will gain a richer perspective on the Civil War time period.

Purchasing multiple titles can also work well for a class of varying ability levels. For example, although the Heroes of History books are all written at the same reading level, you could assign a group of lower readers to one of the titles, middle readers to another, and higher readers to the third book. As you work with the group of lower readers, you could provide more support by doing more pre-teaching of vocabulary and important concepts, reading aloud many of the chapters before students are expected to read them alone, working together to complete the chapter questions, and giving more support and guidance on the culminating project. Higher readers could work independently and complete a complex project, allowing lower level readers more time to finish their book. By varying the level of support or complexity of the project assigned, all students should be able to master the same concepts and make valuable contributions to the group study.

### Using a Single Title from Each Time Period

You may choose to use the Heroes of History books and Unit Studies as a supplement to your American history curriculum by selecting a single title from each time period and reading it chronologically throughout the school year. As students read the books and complete a variety of related projects, they will gain insight beyond the events of history. They will also learn about the lives of individuals who shaped the time periods of the European exploration of the continent, the American Revolution, the expansion of the country, the Civil War, Reconstruction and the economic growth of the nation, and World Wars I and II.

## Using Heroes Biographies to Enhance Other Classroom Themes

Many teachers choose books and studies to support a theme their class is already studying or to match student interests. For example, if your class is studying electricity as part of a science unit, you might have students read *Benjamin Franklin: Live Wire* or *Thomas Edison: Inspiration and Hard Work*. Both books and corresponding Unit Studies would add greater depth to the class study. Alternatively, if you know that an individual student has an interest in aviation, you could assign *Orville Wright: The Flyer* to that student.

## Curriculum Timeline

If you are using the books as supplemental materials, you have great flexibility. However, if you are using the books as a key component of your Social Studies curriculum, you might find it helpful to map which books will be read and the amount of time that students will need to complete the books. This will ensure that the whole of American history is covered by the end of the school year.

The following chart outlines two learning tracks. The *one year track* assumes that each book will take about six weeks to complete, giving time for thorough reading and discussion of each chapter and completion of related projects and a culminating event. Of course, you have the flexibility to complete the track more quickly or slowly. The *two year track* allows three months for the completion of each book and might be a better alternative if you are a teacher who will remain with your students for a second year and want a more in-depth study of history and geography.

<b><i>One Year Track</i></b> <b>Months and Section</b>	<b>Biography Title</b>	<b><i>Two Year Track</i></b> <b>Months and Section</b>
September to mid-October The Beginnings of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Christopher Columbus: Across the Ocean Sea</i> <i>John Smith: A Foothold in the New World</i> <i>William Penn: Liberty and Justice for All</i>	Year 1: September through November The Beginnings of a Nation
Mid-October through November The Establishment of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Benjamin Franklin: Live Wire</i> <i>George Washington: True Patriot</i> <i>John Adams: Independence Forever</i>	Year 1: December through February The Establishment of a Nation
December to mid-January The Exploration of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Meriwether Lewis: Off the Edge of the Map</i> <i>Daniel Boone: Frontiersman</i>	Year 1: March through May The Exploration of a Nation
Mid-January through February The Fracturing of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom</i> <i>Harriet Tubman: Freedombound</i>	Year 2: September through November The Fracturing of a Nation

Mid-January through February The Fracturing of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom</i> <i>Harriet Tubman: Freedombound</i> <i>Clara Barton: Courage Under Fire</i>	Year 2: September through November The Fracturing of a Nation
March to mid-April The Growth of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Theodore Roosevelt: An American Original</i> <i>Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Storybook Life</i> <i>Douglas MacArthur: What Greater Honor</i>	Year 2: December through February The Growth of a Nation
Mid-April through May The Inspiration of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Thomas Edison: Inspiration and Hard Work</i> <i>George Washington Carver: From Slave to Scientist</i> <i>Orville Wright: The Flyer</i>	Year 2: March through May The Inspiration of a Nation
June The Future of a Nation	Students read the following title: <i>Alan Shepard: Higher and Faster</i>	Year 2: June The Future of a Nation

## Adaptations for the Teacher's Role

The Unit Study Curriculum Guides allow you to decide how much involvement you want to have with your students' study of the Heroes of History character. Depending on the needs of your students, you may choose to guide each part of the reading and study, or you may allow students to work more independently on some or all sections.

### Teacher-Directed Study

Here are some ways to use the Heroes of History Unit Studies if you have plenty of time.

- **Key Quotes.** Display selected quotes and lead a class discussion about their meaning and relevance to the character of study.
- **Display Corner.** Before reading a Heroes of History biography, collect Display Corner items and present them to students. This will help create context for the time and places in which the hero lived. You can also create a classroom display of the items, with students contributing any additional items they may have.
- **Chapter Questions.** Have students answer the questions listed for each chapter and then use the answer key in the back to correct the first four questions. You will need to grade the last two questions on your own since answers will vary. After having students answer the chapter questions, lead a class discussion about the chapter, using the questions as discussion starters.

- **Student Explorations.** Based on students' various learning styles and ability levels, assign or give students options for a project from this chapter. Give class time for students to complete their projects, provide the necessary materials, and offer assistance along the way.
- **Community Links.** Using ideas from this section, schedule a guest speaker or field trip for your class.
- **Social Studies.** Using the maps and timeline provided in this section, have students map the locations listed in the book and record the list of events on the timeline. You may choose to do this together as a class, or you can copy a map and timeline for each student to do individually. Use the list of terms to play one of the suggested games as a class.
- **Related Themes.** This section may be helpful to reference as you plan future units of study.
- **Culminating Event.** Use the suggestions in this chapter (or come up with your own) to organize an event that wraps up your study of the Heroes of History character and allows students to share their completed projects.
- **Books and Resources.** Use this resource list to collect as many books, articles, and movies as you find helpful for your class's study of the Heroes of History character. These can be available for students to use as resources for their projects or as independent reading.

## Student-Directed Study

If you are a teacher with minimal time, or whose students need minimal direction, the Unit Study Curriculum Guides will help you to create a meaningful program. Each section of the guide can be easily adapted to allow students to work independently.

- **Key Quotes.** Have students independently memorize and illustrate the meaning of one of the quotes.
- **Display Corner.** Assign students to locate some of the listed items at home or the library. Have them present the item in class and explain its significance to the character being studied.
- **Chapter Questions.** Have students answer the first four questions listed for each chapter and then check their own answers using the answer key in the back of the guide. You may choose not to assign either of the last two questions in each chapter or just assign one, since they will require your time for grading.
- **Student Explorations.** Based on students' various learning styles and ability levels, assign or allow students to choose a project from this chapter. Ask students to complete their projects as homework and assign a due date for projects to be turned in.

- **Community Links.** Using ideas from the Unit Study Curriculum Guides, schedule a guest speaker to visit the classroom or set up a field trip.
- **Social Studies.** Copy the maps and timelines from this section. Have students use an atlas and Heroes of History book to mark the listed locations on the map and record the events on the timeline. As students finish, have them partner with another student to check their work.
- **Related Themes.** This section may be helpful to reference as you plan future units of study.
- **Culminating Event.** If you have an advanced student, he or she might be able to direct a team of students to organize this event. Alternatively, for a simpler culminating event, you may choose to ignore the suggestions for food, clothing, and music and make this a time for students only to share their completed projects.
- **Books and Resources.** Students can independently review this list and check out resources they need.

## Working with Students of Varying Ability Levels and Learning Styles

Many chapters in the Unit Studies are set up to allow for students of varying ability levels or learning styles. Here are some ways you can adapt activities:

- **Key Quotes**
  - Assign less complex quotes to lower level students and discuss their meaning and relationship to the Heroes character. Higher level students may memorize several of the quotes or provide an in-depth explanation of their larger meaning.
  - Allow students to show their understanding of the quote in the way that best suits them. Some students may demonstrate a quote's meaning through an illustration or skit; others may choose to do so orally or by writing a paragraph.
- **Chapter Questions**
  - Questions for each chapter are arranged from simpler to more complex. Assign lower level students to work on the first three questions independently. Check answers together and complete the last three questions as a group. Higher level students may be able to complete all of the questions independently.
  - For some chapters, consider letting students demonstrate their understanding in a different way, perhaps by reenacting the chapter through drama, giving an oral summary, or mapping a timeline of events.
- **Student Explorations**
  - Projects in each section are arranged from simpler to more complex. Assign projects based on your knowledge of students' learning styles and ability levels or create lists of projects suited for various levels (for example, one list of simpler writing, hands-on, media, and arts and crafts projects; one list of more complex projects), and allow students to

choose their own project. You can also have a higher and lower level student work together to complete a project, making sure that each of them has a meaningful part in the final product.

- **Culminating Event**

- Assign the roles that students will take in this event based on their strengths. For example, some students will be better suited for selecting and coordinating the music, while others will take great enjoyment in creating flyers to advertise the event.

- **Books and Resources**

- Each resource in this section provides the age level and explains whom it would be appropriate for. Use this information to select specific books for students or to offer an alternative biography of the character for lower level students to read.

## Teaching Social Studies with Unit Study Curriculum Guides

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is the largest association in the United States devoted solely to the content area of social studies. Regarding the place of social studies in the school program, NCSS states, “Social studies provides coordinated, systematic study, drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world” (<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/>).

Given the diversity of lives and experiences covered by the Heroes of History biographies, the series lends itself very naturally to the study of social studies. All titles can also be used as jumping-off points for further study in one of the other disciplines encompassed by or naturally integrated with social studies. For example, if your class was reading *John Adams: Independence Forever*, the book could serve as an excellent introduction to further study of political science and the American form of government. If your class was reading *Benjamin Franklin: A Useful Life*, you might choose to devote a week to teaching science to study ocean currents, since Franklin was instrumental in charting the Gulf Stream.

### Key Social Studies Concepts

Following is a list of general themes or concepts that a quality social studies program should include. Unit Study Curriculum Guide examples are provided after each concept listed, demonstrating how naturally these themes are incorporated into every Heroes of History book and Unit Study.

- **Culture and Cultural Diversity**
  - Example: “Using the book *In Their Footsteps*, locate a site in your community that is significant to black history and make a mini-documentary about it.” (From *Harriet Tubman Unit Study*, suggested Student Explorations project)
- **Time, Continuity, and Change** (the ways human beings view themselves in and over time)
  - Example: “Plot these important events from history and Abraham Lincoln’s life on the timeline above.” (From *Abraham Lincoln Unit Study*, suggested Social Studies activity)
- **People, Places, and Environment**
  - Example: “Draw a journey map for George Washington Carver, showing the chronological order of the places he lived and the dates of his stay in each location. Explore how some of the place names have changed since the time of the story, and give reasons for such changes.” (From *George Washington Carver Unit Study*, suggested Social Studies activity)
- **Individual Development and Identity**
  - Example: “Read *The Adams Chronicles: Four Generations of Greatness*. How did John’s character and legacy contribute to the success of his son, John Quincy Adams?” (From *John Adams Unit Study*, suggested additional reading from Books and Resources section and possible discussion question)
- **Individuals, Groups, and Institutions** (and the interactions between them)
  - Example: “Discuss the meaning of the following quote by Clara Barton: ‘An institution or reform movement that is not selfish must originate in the recognition of some evil that is adding to the sum of human suffering, or diminishing the sum of happiness.’” (From *Clara Barton Unit Study*, suggested Key Quotes assignment)
- **Power, Authority, and Governance** (how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance)
  - Example: “Do you think a government benefits its people by supporting certain religions and repressing others? Explain your answer.” (From *William Penn Unit Study*, Chapter Question)
- **Production, Distribution, and Consumption** (how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services)
  - Example: “Visit a local power plant to find out how electricity is distributed in your community. Many traditional power plants have been shut down or are under security restrictions, but some have turned into museums and are open for tours. Speak with your local chamber of commerce or go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and search for ‘power plant,’ ‘electricity company,’ ‘museum,’ and the name of your city to find possible sites to visit.” (From *Thomas Edison Unit Study*, suggested Community Links field trip)

- **Science, Technology, and Society** (and the relationships between them)
  - Example: “Display photographs of each of the Wright model flyers from 1899, 1900, 1902, and 1903 (available at [www.wright-brothers.org](http://www.wright-brothers.org) in the ‘Aviation Hanger’) and current newspaper articles about recent advances in aviation technology.” (From *Orville Wright Unit Study*, suggested Display Corner item)
- **Global Connections and the Interdependence of the World**
  - Example: “Upon Douglas’s departure from Japan, a newspaper wrote, ‘What he gave us was not material aid and democratic reform alone, but a new way of life, the freedom and dignity of the individual.’ Describe the ways that Douglas brought new life to Japan.” (From *Douglas MacArthur Unit Study*, Chapter Question)
- **Civic Ideals and Practices** (the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic)
  - Example: “Prior to the expedition, Thomas Jefferson expressed his ideals for the way Native Americans and white people would interact as pioneers moved westward. How did Jefferson’s ideals contrast with what Meriwether Lewis encountered? How did future relations between Native Americans and the United States contrast with Jefferson’s ideals?” (From *Meriwether Lewis Unit Study*, suggested Student Exploration essay question)

## Key Social Studies Themes

The following chart groups Heroes of History characters into specific themes.

Theme	Relevant Heroes of History Characters
Culture and Cultural Diversity	Christopher Columbus, John Smith, William Penn, Meriwether Lewis, Daniel Boone, Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver
Time, Continuity, and Change	All characters
People, Place, and Environment	Christopher Columbus, Meriwether Lewis, Daniel Boone, Harriet Tubman, Laura Ingalls Wilder
Individual Development and Identity	All characters
Individuals, Groups, and Institutions	William Penn, John Adams, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Clara Barton, George Washington Carver, Theodore Roosevelt, Douglas MacArthur
Power, Authority, and Governance	John Smith, William Penn, George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt
Production, Distribution, and Consumption	Christopher Columbus, Orville Wright, Thomas Edison, George Washington Carver
Science, Technology, and Society	Benjamin Franklin, George Washington Carver, Thomas Edison, Orville Wright, Alan Shepard
Global Connections and the Interdependence of the World	Christopher Columbus, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Clara Barton, Theodore Roosevelt, Orville Wright, Douglas MacArthur, Alan Shepard

Civic Ideals and Practices	William Penn, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Clara Barton, George Washington Carver, Douglas MacArthur
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By using the chart to select the books your students will read, you can ensure that they will gain experience with each of the themes. If you don't plan to have your students read the entire chronology and are choosing a few books as supplemental reading, you can select titles based on themes you feel are most important to study and discuss.

## Key Social Studies Skills

(Material in this section is adapted from *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, produced by the National Council for the Social Studies, the largest association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. You can read more from this document or order a full copy here: [http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/.](http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/))

In addition to the integrated study of the above concepts, the National Council for the Social Studies suggests that social studies programs allow students to practice and grow in the following areas:

- **Acquiring information and using data.** The program should increase the student's ability to read, study, search for information, use social science technical vocabulary and methods, and use computers and other electronic media.
- **Developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories.** The program should increase the student's ability to use the writing process and to classify, interpret, analyze, summarize, evaluate, and present information in well-reasoned ways.
- **Constructing new knowledge.** The social studies program should increase the student's ability to comprehend unfamiliar categories of information, establish cause/effect relationships, determine the validity of information and arguments, and develop a new story, model, narrative, picture, or chart that adds to the student's understanding of an event, idea, or persons.
- **Participating in groups.** The program should increase the student's ability to express and advocate reasoned personal convictions within groups, participate in negotiating conflicts and differences or maintain an individual position because of its ethical basis, work individually and in groups, and accept and fulfill responsibilities associated with citizenship in a democratic republic.

Within each Heroes of History Unit Study, many opportunities to practice skills are already integrated into the chapter activities. Consider the following examples:

- **Key Quotes.** Either individually or in groups, students can research the context of a selected quote, interpret its meaning, make a case for its relevance to the character under study, and present findings to the class.
- **Display Corner.** Either individually or in a group, students can research the context of an item included in the display, make a case for its significance to the character of study, and present findings to a larger group.

- **Chapter Questions.** After students complete their responses to the questions, a class discussion of the chapter gives them an opportunity to explain their reasoning and allow opportunities for debate and construction of new ideas.
- **Student Explorations.** Most project options in the this section require students to analyze and synthesize information and insights gained from the book and demonstrate understanding of its themes. For example, if students choose a writing activity, they will gain practice in going through the writing process, asserting an opinion or developing a relevant narrative, demonstrating their mastery of related technical vocabulary, all while consulting the Heroes of History biography and citing outside resources.
- **Social Studies.** The activities in this chapter require students to search the book and outside resources to find geographical features and complete a timeline, learn technical terms related to the character of study, and apply their new geography knowledge to conceptual questions. (You may also want to consider purchasing the *Heroes of History Maps of the United States* workbook. This will give students opportunities to research and gain additional information about the relevant state including its major industries and natural resources, its rank in population and total area, and much more. Learning these additional facts about the state of interest will give students a more complete understanding of the area from which the Heroes of History character came as well as the development of the state since the time of the character’s residence there.)
- **Books and Resources.** Either individually or with a partner, students who read one of the additional biographies listed in this section can compare information in the two books and contrast author perspectives on the character.

## Teaching Language Arts with Unit Study Curriculum Guides

In addition to providing material for the teaching of social studies concepts and skills, the Heroes of History biographies and Unit Study Curriculum Guides can support the teaching of language arts skills and strategies for students of varying ability levels.

The Chapter Questions section offers the most natural place for students to practice and demonstrate language arts skills. Students will be asked to interpret vocabulary, search the text for answers, make inferences, and connect the text to their own life. After students have completed the questions for each chapter, you may also wish to have them answer additional teacher-created questions in a separate journal, giving them regular practice in using some of these essential skills and strategies. This could be as simple as using one of the sample questions below as a template to create a question appropriate to the book being read.

The Student Explorations section also offers opportunities for students to practice language arts skills. A variety of writing options are available, which ask students to demonstrate their ability to compare and contrast, express an opinion, sequence events, and understand theme. In order to produce a quality piece of writing, students will gain practice with going through the writing process and consulting

and citing outside resources. Many of the other sections (Hands-On, Arts and Crafts, Media) also require students to synthesize the information acquired from the book.

The Books and Resources listings can also contribute to increasing students' abilities with language arts skills. By reading one of the additional books listed in this section, students have opportunities to make connections between the texts and compare and contrast author purposes and themes for each book. In addition, watching educational movies or reviewing websites will require students to employ important media literacy skills as they learn to distinguish between helpful, relevant information and that which has more "fluff" than substance.

## Essential Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies

(Material in this section is adapted from Washington State Grade Level Expectations for Reading: <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/ReadingAssessment.aspx>; California Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/engmain.asp>; Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html>.)

Reading and responding to the Heroes of History biographies will help students to grow in their comprehension level and an array of reading skills. Whether they pick up skills more independently or depend on explicit instruction, all students should master the following skills and strategies essential for growth in reading comprehension. Sample questions for practice with these skills are provided in the list below.

- **Understand theme/main idea and supporting details**
  - What was the main idea or key concept of this chapter?
  - What is the lesson or theme of this story?
- **Summarize with evidence from the reading**
  - Tell what happened in this chapter in 20 words or less.
  - Tell the five most important events from this chapter in order.
- **Make inferences or predictions based on the reading**
  - (Before reading) What do you think will happen in this chapter? Use evidence from the previous chapters to support your prediction.
  - (When an idea or cause is not clear) Why do you think [the character] did [an action]? Support your answer with evidence from the book.
- **Interpret vocabulary important to the meaning of the literary text**
  - What does [vocabulary word] mean? What words or phrases around this word helped you to figure out its meaning?
  - Use [vocabulary word] in a sentence. Include words or phrases in your sentence that will give clues about the word's meaning.

- **Sequence events or steps from the reading**
  - Describe the events of this chapter, using sequence words (first, next, then, finally).
  - Tell the steps that [the character] took to accomplish [an event].
- **Compare and contrast elements within and between texts**
  - How is [character/idea #1] like [character/idea #2]? How are they different?
  - How was the [event/character/idea] in this story similar to the [event/character/idea] in another story?
- **Make connections within and between texts** (cause & effect)
  - What was the cause of [event]?
  - How did [character/event/idea] affect [another character/event/idea]?
- **Analyze the author's purpose**
  - Why do you think the author wrote this book? To inform? Entertain? Persuade? Explain your answer.
  - Why do you think the author wrote the chapter in this style?
- **Understand literary elements** (genres; story elements such as plot, character, setting; stylistic devices; problem/resolution)
  - What was the problem in this chapter and how was it solved?
  - What kind of person is [character]? What actions or words from the book show you this person's character?
- **Extend information beyond text**—apply information, give a response to reading, express insight gained from reading
  - What lesson do you think [character] learned? How do you think he will act differently in this situation next time?
  - Do you agree with [character's] actions? Why or why not?

## Effective Instructional Methods

(Material in this section is adapted from *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH Pub. No. 00-4754, April 2000. If you are interested in reading the full report of the National Reading Panel, you can find it here: <http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/Publications/publications.htm>.)

In 2000 the National Reading Panel (NRP)—a Congress-commissioned team of researchers, teachers, parents, and administrators—concluded a two-year synthesis of reading research from the past forty years. The research indicated that teaching a variety of reading comprehension strategies led to increased learning strategies, specific transfers of learning, increased retention and understanding of new passages, and general improvements in comprehension.

As in other academic subjects, the goal of instruction is to help students move toward mastering reading skills and internalizing strategies. There are multitudes of structures and formats for teaching reading comprehension, but some are more effective than others. The NRP report outlined what the committee found to be the most effective methods for teaching reading. According to the report, the

following eight kinds of instruction appear to help students the most to gain comprehension skills and strategies. Links to outside Web pages with more detailed information are provided.

1. **Comprehension monitoring**—teaching the reader how to be aware of his or her level of understanding during reading and procedures to deal with problems in understanding as they arise.

[http://content.scholastic.com/content/collateral\\_resources/pdf/r/reading\\_bestpractices\\_comprehension\\_flowchartofbehavior.pdf](http://content.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/r/reading_bestpractices_comprehension_flowchartofbehavior.pdf)

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/reading/bestpractices/comprehension/stopaskfixchecklist.pdf>

<http://www.readingquest.org/premises2.html>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d96.html>

2. **Cooperative learning**—having readers work together to learn strategies in the context of reading.

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/tps.html>

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/carousel.html>

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/3mp.html>

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/rt.html>

3. **Graphic and semantic organizers**—teaching the reader to organize graphically (write or draw) the ideas found in the text.

[http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hme/k\\_5/graphorg/](http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hme/k_5/graphorg/)

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>

[http://edhelper.com/teachers/graphic\\_organizers.htm](http://edhelper.com/teachers/graphic_organizers.htm)

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/graphic.html>

4. **Story structure**—teaching the reader to ask and answer who, what, where, when, and why questions about the plot and mapping out the time line, characters, and events in stories. (Each of these websites has links to organizers called “Story Map” or “Story Elements” that will help your students to organize the elements listed previously.)

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/storymaps.html>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/storymap/>

5. **Question answering**—having the reader answers questions posed by you and giving feedback on the correctness.

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/qar.html>

<http://www.officeport.com/edu/blooms.htm>  
<http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/researchskills/dalton.htm>  
[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=227](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=227)

6. **Question generation**—teaching the reader to ask himself or herself what, when, where, why, what will happen, how, and who questions.
7. **Summarization**—teaching the reader to identify and write the main or most important ideas that unite the other ideas or meanings of the text into a coherent whole.

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/summarize.html>  
[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=277](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=277)

8. **Multiple-strategy teaching**—teaching the reader to use multiple strategies together as they naturally come up in the text.

## Essential Writing Skills and Strategies

(Material in this section is adapted from Washington State’s Assessment of Student Learning Writing Checklist. You can find the complete document at <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/WritingAssessment.aspx>.)

### *Writing for a variety of purposes*

During the course of the Unit Study, students will have options to write in a variety of forms. It is important that students gain experience in each of these genres of writing and that they learn to appropriately adjust their style depending on the purpose of their writing and their intended audience. For example, within the task of letter writing, a student might take two very different tones depending on who would be reading the letter. Whereas a letter to a friend might use personal, informal language, a letter to a museum would likely be more formal and businesslike. In another instance, a student might be writing to a single audience (the teacher), but the form of the writing would change depending on whether the task was answering chapter questions or completing an informational report.

The Heroes of History Unit Studies gives student writers opportunities to:

- **Inform** (reports, newspaper articles)
- **Persuade** (essays, advertisements, brochures)
- **Tell a story** (fictional stories, accounts of a real event)
- **Respond to literature** (chapter questions, poetry)
- **Summarize**
- **Entertain** (poetry, humorous stories)
- **Communicate** (letters, emails, journal entries)

### *Going through the writing process*

For chapter questions and other shorter assignments, students may simply think through the question, reference the Heroes of History text, and write their response in an organized and coherent manner. More extensive tasks may also require that they reference and cite outside sources and/or go through the entire writing process, as listed below:

- Prewriting: Students generate ideas and make a plan for how they will organize their writing.
- Rough Draft(s): Students get their ideas down on paper in a rough draft. When they finish a draft, you or a peer give encouragement and suggestions for improvement.
- Revising and editing: Students improve the content, style, and organization of the paper, based on feedback.
- Editing: Students correct any spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors, based on feedback.
- Publishing or final draft: Students write a final copy of the paper to share with an audience.
- Evaluation: Students reflect on their writing process, consider teacher and peer feedback, and adjusts writing process in the future as necessary.

### *Considering the traits of good writing*

It takes many subtle elements to produce a good piece of writing. Authors we admire are able to weave these elements together seamlessly. As with reading comprehension, some students naturally pick up these skills and easily produce engaging, organized pieces of writing. For most students, however, it takes many years of instruction and practice to gain some level of mastery and control over these essential writing skills. For students just learning to write, the task can be overwhelming. As they write, they must consider the content of their message, the appropriateness of the style in which they are writing, the grammatical correctness of their writing, and organize all of this in a clear and logical manner. Below is a list of elements that are a part of all good writing along with some guiding questions:

- **Content**
  - Did I answer the question that was given?
  - Did I stay focused on my main ideas?
  - Did I give enough specific details and examples to support my ideas?
  - Did I include information that is interesting and necessary for my reader to know?
- **Organization**
  - Does my writing have an opening/introduction, middle, and a conclusion?
  - Is my writing organized into paragraphs?
  - Did I use words that help show how my ideas are connected (for example, *first*, *another reason*, *in contrast*)?
- **Style**
  - Did I show that I care about this topic?

- Did I use language that fits my audience and purpose (formal vs. informal, narrative vs. informational)?
- Did I use a variety of sentences types (some short, some long, beginning with different words)?
- Did I use a variety of interesting words?
  
- **Writing conventions**
  - Did I follow the rules of correct English usage (correct pronoun for subject, subject-verb agreement)?
  - Did I spell all of the words correctly?
  - Did I use correct capitalization and punctuation (periods, commas, quotation marks, colons)?
  - Did I write complete sentences?

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to public school educator Lorna Robinson, MA, for her contribution to this overview guide.