Lesson Plan

Courageous Characters

Book: *Courage in Sports*
Series: Sports Build Character
Level: Beacon

Objective

To help students practice crafting fictional stories, using techniques such as dialogue and descriptive details to reveal the thoughts and feelings of a fictional character.

Supplies

- *Courage in Sports* book
- Whiteboard
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Read through the *Courage in Sports* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Then divide the students into four groups, writing the name of each group and the page numbers they will study on the whiteboard:

Group 1: Jackie Robinson (pp. 9–11)
Group 2: Terry Fox (pp. 13–15)
Group 3: Kerri Strug (pp. 16–19)
Group 4: Lionel Messi (pp. 20–21)

Write the following questions on the whiteboard, too:

1. What problem did this athlete face?
2. What courageous action did the athlete take to confront this problem?
3. What was the result of the athlete's action?

Activity

Chapter 2 ("Courage in Action") gives several examples of professional athletes showing courage. Each athlete faced a problem. Despite this problem, each athlete chose to make a courageous action. Today, the students will take a closer look at an athlete's actions and his or her results.

Split the students into the four groups. Students in each group should read the section of Chapter 2 that describes the athlete they have been assigned. Students should discuss the

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answers to the three questions on the whiteboard. Then they should choose one spokesperson to share their answers with the class. Groups should identify the following things:

Group 1: Jackie Robinson (pp. 9–11)

1. Problem: Robinson faced discrimination when he joined the Dodgers in 1947. Some fans insulted him, and some teammates did not want him on the team. He had to stay in different hotels and eat meals alone.
2. Action: Robinson did not give up. He continued to work hard for the team.
3. Result: Robinson became one of the greatest baseball players ever.

Group 2: Terry Fox (pp. 13–15)

1. Problem: Fox got cancer while he was in college and had to have his leg amputated. This ended his basketball career.
2. Action: Fox went through treatment, worked hard in physical therapy, and even worked to raise money for others who had cancer.
3. Result: Even though Fox had to stop running, he met his fundraising goal. And the Terry Fox Foundation has since raised more than $65 million for cancer research.

Group 3: Kerri Strug (pp. 16–19)

1. Problem: In the 1996 Summer Olympics, the US gymnastics team needed Strug to score high on the vault so the team would win. But Strug fell on her first attempt and got hurt.
2. Action: Despite her injury, Strug showed courage and made the second jump.
3. Result: Strug landed the second attempt and helped her team win a gold medal, even though she had to be carried to the medal stand.

Group 4: Lionel Messi (pp. 20–21)

1. Problem: As a boy, Messi had an illness that kept him from growing. He needed treatment that would give him a shot every night, but his family couldn't afford the treatment.
2. Action: When he was 13, Messi joined FC Barcelona in Spain so the team could pay for treatment, even though it meant leaving his family in Argentina.
3. Result: The treatment worked, and Messi started growing again. He eventually became one of the best soccer players in the world.

Next, have the students turn to Chapter 3 ("Courage and You"). This chapter gives several other examples of situations in which people can show courage. Ask students to list some of them and write their answers on the whiteboard. Answers should include some of the following:

- facing a tough opponent (p. 23)
- being injured (p. 23)
- having the crowd be against you (p. 23)
- helping people who are bullied (p. 24)
- asking for help when you need it (p. 24)
- going to the dentist or doctor (p. 25)

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Finally, ask students to write a short fictional story in which a character chooses to show courage. Students can refer to the situations on the whiteboard and the stories from Chapter 2 for ideas, but each student should create his or her own character.

Each student's character should face a problem. The character must decide how to act. Students should use dialogue and descriptions of the character's thoughts and actions to show how the character responds to this situation. Students should be sure to end the story with the problem being resolved.

Give the students some time to work on writing their stories. When they are finished, have students share their stories with a partner. Then collect the stories at the end of the activity.

Evaluation

Give students up to 20 points for their stories, using the following rubric:

- 5 points for beginning with a problem, showing the character's choice, and providing a sense of closure
- 5 points for using dialogue and descriptions to show what the character is thinking and feeling
- 5 points for organizing the story's events in a clear order
- 5 points for using correct spelling and grammar

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' writing standards, grades 3 and 4 (W 3.3; W 4.3).

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