BIographies: Courageous, Diverse Role Models for Students

Suggested Grade Level: K – 6

Length of Time: Varies

Goals
- For students to use literature to expand their perception of activities and careers.
- Students will find role models of people who have excelled in their chosen fields.

Objectives (varies by grade level)
- Students will engage in discussions about the lives of prominent people.
- Students will read non-fiction texts for understanding.
- Students will research, write and present reports on the lives of prominent people.

Academic Standards
- CCSS RL 2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (Also RL 1.1, 3.1, 4.1, and 5.1)
- CCSS W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. (Also 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2 and 5.2)
- CCSS SL 3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly. (Also SL 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1)
- Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity – Examine the factors that influence an individual’s personal identity, development, and actions including family, peers, culture, and institutional influences.

Educators’ Notes
Throughout the elementary school years, biography lessons and assignments are a common topic. Books are read aloud by teachers or students are assigned to research historic or prominent individuals.

The following list feature a range of people who have excelled in their fields often overcoming stereotypes of gender or race. Some are well known such as Rosa Parks or Ted Geisel (Dr. Seuss.) Others are not, such as Effa Manley, the first woman inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame because of her role as owner and business manager of the Newark Eagles in the Negro National League. Or, Tomás Rivera, a migrant farmworker who grew up to become a Chancellor at the University of California.
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26 Fairmount Avenue, Tomie dePaola, 2001.
Alice Walker: Author and Social Activist, Stephanie Fitzgerald, , 2008.
Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy’s Parade, Melissa Sweet, (Tony Sarg, puppeteer) 2011.
Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909, Michelle Markel, Balzer and Bray, 2013.
Coretta Scott, Ntozake Shange, 2011.
Diego Rivera: His World and Ours, Duncan Tonatiuh, 2011.
The Dreamer, Pam Muñoz Ryan, 2010. (Based on the life of Pablo Neruda.)
Dzání Yážhí Naazbaa': Little Woman Warrior Who Came Home, Evangeline Parsons Yazzie & Irving Toddy (Illustrator), 2006. (Navajo / English)
Eleanor, Barbara Cooney, 1999.
Elizabeth Started All the Trouble. Doreen Rappaport, 2016.


Fly High! The Story of Bessie Coleman, Louise Borden and Mary Kay Kroeger & Teresa Flavin (Illustrator), 2001.

For the Right to Learn: Malala Yousafzai’s Story, Rebecca Langston-George, 2016

Frederick Douglass: The Lion Who Wrote History, Walter Dean Myers, 2017.


Frida, Jonah Winter and Ana Juan. 2002. In English or Spanish (Frida Kahlo)

Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead Calaveras, Duncan Tonatiuh, 2015.

Game Changers: The Story of Venus and Serena Williams, Lesa Cline-Ransome.2018.


Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude, Jonah Winter, 2009. (Gertrude Stein)

The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin, Julia Finley Mosca. 2017,


Heart on Fire: Susan B. Anthony Votes for President, Ann Malaspina and Steve James.

Here Come the Girl Scouts!: The Amazing All-True Story of Juliette ‘Daisy’ Gordon Low and Her Great Adventure, Shana Corey and Hadley Hooper, 2012.


How Kate Warne Saved President Lincoln: The Story Behind the Nation's First Female Detective. Elizabeth Van Steenwyk, 2016.


I Am Malala, Malala Yousafzai. 2014.

Jose! Born to Dance, Susanna Reich, 2005.
Julia Morgan Built a Castle, Celeste Davidson Mannis, 2006. (Architect)
Jyotirmayee Mohapatra: Advocate for India’s Young Women, Adam Woog, 2006.
The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq, Jeanette Winter, 2005.
March (3 books) John Lewis and Andrew Aydin.
Mary Walker Wears the Pants: The True Story of the Doctor, Reformer, and Civil War Hero, Cheryl Harness, 2013.
Maya Angelou (Little People, Big Dreams), Lisbeth Kaiser, 2016.
Mo’ne Davis: Remember My Name: My Story from First Pitch to Game Changer. Mo’ne Davis and Hilary Beard, 2015.
Mrs. Harkness and the Panda, Alicia Potter. 2012.
My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Christine King Farris and Chris Soentpiet, 2005.


My Name Is Not Isabella: Just How Big Can a Little Girl Dream? Jennifer Fosberry, 2010. (Sally Ride, Annie Oakley, Rosa Parks, Marie Curie, and Elizabeth Blackwell)


Nurse, Soldier, Spy: The Story of Sarah Edmonds, a Civil War Hero, Marissa Moss, 2011.


Pemba Sherpa, Olga Cossi, 2009. (An early woman Sherpa guide)


Phillis’s Big Test, Catherine Clinton, 2008. (Phillis Wheatley)

Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum, Robert A. Parker, 2008.


The Poet King of Tezcoco, Francisco Serrano, 2007. (Nezahualcóyotl)

Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton, Don Tate, 2015.

Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes, Juan Felipe Herrera, 2014.


A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams, Jen Bryant, 2008.
Roller Derby Rivals, Sue Macy, 2014.
Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez/La Historia de Dolores Huerta y Cesar Chavez, Monica Brown and Joe Cepeda.
Sojourner Truth’s Step-Stomp Stride, Andrea Pinkney, 2009.
The Storyteller’s Candle/La velita de los cuentos, Lucía González, 2008. (Pura Belpré)
Tito Puente, Mambo King/Tito Puente, Rey del Mambo, Monica Brown, Rayo, 2013.
Tomás and the Library Lady, Pat Mora and Raul Colon, 2000. (Tomás Rivera)
The Watcher: Jane Goodall’s Life with Chimps, Jeanette Winter, 2011.
We Are One: The Story of Bayard Rustin, Larry Dane Brimner, 2007.
When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson, Pam Muñoz Ryan, 2002.
Zora!: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston, Dennis Brindell Fradin, 2012.

DK Biography A Photographic Story of a Life, Series. (Amelia Earhart, Annie Oakley, Eleanor Roosevelt, Joan of Arc, Marie Curie, and Mother Teresa)
Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World, Kate Pankhurst. 2016.
Lil' Libros Bilingual Biographies, Patty Rodriguez. (Celia Cruz, Selena Gomez, Frida Kahlo, Emiliano Zapata, Cuauhtémoc, Evita)
Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World, Rachel Ignotofsky. 2106.