



What Makes an Impressive Survivor?

Read-alouds of picture books and/or novels

Critical Question

What Makes an Impressive Survivor?

OVERVIEW

In this critical challenge students decode texts making connections between text and self and text and world by searching for the most impressive survivor in a variety of books and/or novels. The critical challenge begins with students considering the criteria for an impressive survivor. They then participate in shared readings and read-alouds of picture books and/or novels. Students will make judgments and draw conclusions about ideas in texts by determining the criteria for what makes an "impressive survivor". They will then use these criteria to help them judge which of the given characters is the most impressive survivor. The flexibility of this challenge allows teachers to adapt the activities to suit a wide variety of texts and/or students.

TYPE OF CRITICAL CHALLENGE

Judge the Better or the Best

OBJECTIVES

Broad understanding:

- *English Curriculum:* Students will make meaningful connections between themselves, what they encounter in texts, and the world around them.
- *Content Specific:* We all have different qualities which make us more or less able to survive in stressful situations.

REQUISITE TOOLS*Background knowledge*

- knowledge of how differently people can handle stressful survival situations
- exposure through readalouds and shared reading to a variety of characters dealing with various survival challenges

Criteria for judgment

- criteria for judging impressiveness of a "survivor" (i.e. physical attributes that help overcome obstacles, reasoning skills that help overcome obstacles, emotional strength that helps overcome obstacles)

Critical thinking vocabulary

- concept
- criteria
- evaluation
- evidence
- justify
- reasoned judgment

Thinking strategies

- data charts

Habits of mind

- critically minded (willing to evaluate information when it is important to do so)
- open minded
- attention to detail

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES*Connect to students' previous knowledge*

- Invite students to independently and quietly think of someone they consider to be a "survivor". The person might be a fictional character or someone they know or have heard about.
- Ask students to share their thinking with a partner and to explain why they consider that person a survivor. Randomly call on several pairs to share what they discussed.

Share objectives with students

- Explain to students that they will be making a judgment about what makes an impressive survivor by examining a number of fictional characters and comparing their attributes to determine who is the most impressive.

Model the task

- Choose a story (T.V. show, movie, fairy tale, etc.) with which students will be familiar. Alternatively, show a short clip of a movie or read aloud a short story to provide a foundation for discussion.
- Invite students to identify the characteristics needed by a character in the story to solve a problem and survive.

Build criteria for judgment

- Ask students to imagine other situations that would require a person to have specific characteristics to survive. What additional attributes might be needed?
- Invite students to share the attributes they have identified and list them on the board. As a class, collectively sort attributes into broad categories (e.g. physical attributes, intellectual attributes, emotional attributes, social skills). Finally, turn these categories into statements that indicate criteria for an impressive survivor (e.g. He or she has the necessary physical attributes needed to overcome obstacles.) Alternatively, the process of arriving at criteria could be done through a placemat activity in which students brainstorm characteristics individually in their section of the placemat first. Then, they could use a round-robin to sort characteristics into broad categories (e.g. physical attributes, intellectual attributes, emotional attributes, social skills) and write these

in the middle of their placemat. Finally, you might record their ideas on the board and collectively decide which the class will focus on for their challenge.

- Consider encouraging students to rank order which attributes they feel are most important in order to face any obstacle that might come one's way.

Examine candidates for Most Impressive Survivor

- Use read-alouds and/or shared reading to continue the above process. Students will collect information about characters from the stories, and will record evidence of each attribute in a data chart such as the one below:

"CLAIM TO GREATNESS" CHART

(Note: If students have ranked these criteria according to those they deem most essential, that might be reflected in the order in which they appear in the chart.)

Criteria for Survival	Character 1	Character 2	Character 3
Physical Attributes			
Intellectual Attributes			
Emotional Attributes			

- Invite students to use the chart in which they collected data about each character to decide who is the most impressive survivor.
- Based on their preliminary decision, ask students to participate in an Inside/Outside Circles activity in which they have the opportunity to share their decision with a number of partners, hear their partners' decisions and reconsider their ideas before making a final decision

Make a judgment about the most impressive survivor

- Invite students to use the chart in which they collected data about each character and the discussions they had during the Inside/Outside Circles activity to decide who is the most impressive survivor. Ask students to individually fill in the "And the winner is..." planner. [see p. 158, Early Contact and Settlement in New France] to justify and explain their decision.

Communicating their judgment

- Explain to students that they will communicate their judgment in a clear and convincing way. Some options for assessment methods might include:
 - Write a persuasive essay
 - Plan and create a poster advertising your chosen survivor, highlighting his/her most impressive qualities.
 - Give a speech, in role: "You" are the most impressive survivor.
 - Write a letter to convince someone that your chosen survivor is the most impressive

POSSIBLE DIFFERENTIATION

- Reduce number of characters students are asked to consider when choosing "The Most Impressive Survivor".
- Allow students to present the reasons for their choice of most impressive survivor orally

LIST OF SOME SUGGESTED BOOKS

FICTION

Chapter Books

Danger at Mason's Island: An Angela and Emmie Adventure, by Tom Schwarzkopf
Hatchet, by Gary Paulsen
Shadow Children: Among the Hidden, by Margaret Peterson Haddix
Maniac Magee, by Jerry Spinelli
Crispin: The Cross of Lead, by Carol Avi
Island of the Blue Dolphins, by Scott O'Dell
Before the Lark by Irene Bennett Brown
I am Lavina Cumming by Susan Lowell
The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis
The Cay by Theodore Taylor
Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George

Picture Books

Paper Bag Princess, by Robert N. Munsch
Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China by Ed Young
A Ride on the Red Mare's Back by Ursula K. LeGuin

NON FICTION

Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman.by Kathleen Krull
Lost Star: The Story of Amelia Earhart by Patricia Lauber
Shipwreck At The Bottom Of The World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance, by Jennifer Armstrong