The march to equality in the United States and the rest of the world has been a journey of courage, character, pride and perseverance.

Each of these traits is important, but perseverance may be the most important of all for achieving change over time.

Perseverance is not giving up when trying to achieve a goal. It is the commitment to keep doing something until the end, even if it’s hard. It’s the steadfastness to keep trying, despite difficulties or delays.

This year’s Ford Freedom Award Program celebrates “The Power of Perseverance” by telling the stories of people from the past and present who made a difference in their lives or their communities by persevering.

They are people like Nelson Mandela, this year’s Ford Freedom Award Honoree, who endured 27 years in prison before toppling South Africa’s apartheid system and giving his black countrymen control of their government.

They are people like Myrlie Evers-Williams, this year’s Ford Freedom Award Scholar, who worked more than 30 years to achieve the conviction of the killer of her husband, the civil rights leader Medgar Evers.

They are people like Lt. Col. (Ret.) Alexander Jefferson, this year’s Ford Freedom Special Award winner, who earned the right to fly as a Tuskegee Airman and served his nation as both a pilot and a prisoner of war.

To tell the stories of Mandela, Evers-Williams, Jefferson and other heroes, Ford Motor Company Fund has collaborated with Michigan K.I.D.S. and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History to produce this year’s Newspapers in Education supplement “The Power of Perseverance: Journeys of Justice & Achievement.”

This Teacher Guide is designed to extend the lessons of the student NIE supplement through use of the Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, their e-Editions and their news websites. It contains suggested activities for using the newspapers or the news websites, as well as several 8.5 by 11 inch activity sheets that may be printed out or photocopied for students. It is designed to be used for extended learning outside the classroom, as homework, or as a summer literacy and writing program. Each activity is accompanied by a description of the new national Common Core State Standards it is designed to support.
A HISTORY OF PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance plays an important role in every person’s life, but it has been especially important to African Americans. From the beginning, it enabled people to survive slave ships, endure the abuses of slavery and escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad. It helped them overcome segregation and Jim Crow laws, gain the right to vote and advance in business, politics or careers. It has made the difference between failure or success, subservience or equality, discrimination or dignity. The activities in Unit 1 examine how perseverance not only enabled African Americans to endure but to prevail in American life.

1. Perseverance in the News

Perseverance is the commitment to keep doing something until the end and the steadfastness to keep trying. Throughout history, perseverance has helped African Americans, and all Americans, succeed and achieve. Ask students to use the newspaper to find an example of someone who has become successful today. Have them closely read the story and note how perseverance helped the person become a success. Direct them to use their notes and additional research to write a paragraph summarizing the ways perseverance helped the person succeed.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Reading closely what a text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking.

2. Change for the Better *

Nelson Mandela inspired the world with his lifelong perseverance to end South Africa’s apartheid policy of racial discrimination. In the United States and around the world, people are working every day to win rights, correct problems or change things for the better. Have students search the newspaper to find a story about a person or group of people working for change. With the “Change for the Better” activity sheet, have them detail what the person or group has accomplished so far, what challenges remain and how perseverance has been important to the effort.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task.

3. Quest for Justice *

Myrlie Evers-Williams worked more than 30 years to get justice for the assassination of her husband, the civil rights activist Medgar Evers. It took three trials to convict the admitted racist who killed Evers and later bragged about it. In the United States, people seek justice for wrongs that have been committed through the criminal and civil court systems. In criminal cases punishments are sought for people who break the law, and in civil cases people file lawsuits to correct wrongs or collect cash damages. Have students read a story in the newspaper or online about a court case that seeks to correct a problem that has continued for a long time. With the “Quest for Justice” activity sheet, ask them to outline the positions of each party involved in the case. Ask them to write how they think perseverance has been a factor for each party in the case.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

4. Career Perseverance

Perseverance was very important to the military career of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Alexander Jefferson. He wanted to be a military pilot, but was blocked by policies of the U.S. Army until he was given the opportunity as a Tuskegee Airman and Red Tail pilot. Ask students to use the ads and stories in the newspaper to find a career that requires perseverance for success or training. Challenge them to think creatively and draw a series of comic strips showing how perseverance is needed for training or performance in the career.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Using drawings or visual displays when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or points.

5. Inspiration to Persevere

Nelson Mandela, Myrlie Evers-Williams and Alexander Jefferson have inspired others by their achievements and perseverance. Have students search the newspaper for someone they find inspiring for their perseverance. From what they read in the paper, other resources or personal knowledge, have them write a personal letter to the person, explaining why they find him or her inspiring. Ask them to include how they might use the example of the person’s perseverance to inspire someone in their own life. Share and discuss letters as a class.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Producing clear and coherent writing appropriate to the task; engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.

*includes activity sheet
CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

Perseverance is dedication to a cause, the doggedness to keep working and the staying power to carry on. Nelson Mandela inspired the world with his lifelong perseverance to end South Africa’s apartheid policy of racial discrimination. He spent 27 years in prison for his beliefs, before winning his freedom and election as South Africa’s president. In the United States and around the world, people are working every day to win rights, correct problems or change things for the better. Search the newspaper or Internet to find a story about a person or group of people working for change. Read the story closely and in the spaces below detail what the person or group has accomplished so far, what challenges remain and how perseverance has been important to the effort.

Change wanted by person or group

What the person or group has accomplished so far

What challenges remain

How perseverance has been important to the effort
Myrlie Evers-Williams worked more than 30 years to get justice for the assassination of her husband, the civil rights activist Medgar Evers. It took three trials to convict the admitted racist who killed Medgar Evers and later bragged about it. In criminal cases punishments are sought for people who break the law, and in civil cases people file lawsuits to correct wrongs or collect cash damages. Read a story in the newspaper or online about a court case that seeks to correct a problem that has continued for a long time. In the spaces below, outline the positions of each party involved in the case. Based on what you read, write how you think perseverance has been a factor for each party in the case.

Issue of the court case

Position of Party No. 1

Position of Party No. 2

Position of Party No. 3

How perseverance has played a role
PERSEVERANCE & CHARACTER

Perseverance is a character trait that makes it possible for people to succeed. It gives them the strength to take on challenges, the courage to overcome obstacles and the single-mindedness to not give up. The activities in Unit 2, examine how strong character enabled the people featured in this year’s Ford Freedom Award Program to persevere and succeed and the role strong character plays in the success of people in the community, the nation and the world today.

1. The Importance of Character *

The character of people shapes how they behave in public and in private. It is “how you act when nobody is watching,” as a U.S. congressman once said. Character traits include such qualities as perseverance, dedication, respect, honesty, courage and caring. As a class, discuss other traits that give a person strong character. Then direct students to find a person they admire in the newspaper. With the activity sheet “The Importance of Character” have them write how perseverance has helped the person. Then have them list five other character traits the person has that have helped him/her persevere and succeed. Finish by having them write a complete sentence stating how these traits make them admire the person.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic; producing clear and coherent writing.

2. Breaking Barriers

When Condoleezza Rice was growing up under racial segregation in the U.S. South, her parents told her “you may not be able to have a hamburger at Woolworth’s, but you can be president of the United States.” What they meant was that the discrimination of the 1950s might hold her back in the short term, but hard work and perseverance would make her a success over a lifetime. As a class, discuss other barriers people must overcome to succeed. Then ask students to find a person in the newspaper who is facing a challenge or barrier to success. Have them write a paragraph outlining character traits that will help the person overcome the obstacle and persevere.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

3. 12 Years a Slave

Solomon Northup was born a free man but endured 12 years of captivity after he was kidnapped and sold into slavery. He told the story of his ordeal in the book “Twelve Years a Slave,” which was made into an Oscar-winning movie in 2013. As a class, discuss the emotions Solomon Northup would have felt when he lost his freedom and struggled to regain it. Then challenge students to write a paragraph, essay or short newspaper column detailing what character traits helped Northup deal with his emotions and challenges and persevere in his quest for freedom.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

4. Gabby’s Success *

Gabby Douglas has said that being an African American in gymnastics often made her feel like an underdog because “no one [thought] I’d ever win.” With her success, however, she says she has been proud to “inspire so many people.” As a class, talk about the character traits Gabby Douglas needed to persevere and succeed against long odds in gymnastics. Then have students use the activity sheet “Gabby’s Success” to create a comic strip showing how her character and success could inspire others to persevere.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Using drawings or visual displays to enhance the development of main ideas.

5. Dr. King’s Dream

In his “I Have a Dream” speech, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said that one of his dreams was that his children “will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Challenge students to think like Dr. King and offer advice to children that you or your classmates might have in the future. Have them write an open letter to children of the future in the form of a newspaper editorial or opinion column, detailing how perseverance will help them in life and what other character traits you want them to have.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Writing opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information; reading closely what a text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it.

*includes activity sheet
THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER

The character of people shapes how they behave in public and in private. It is “how you act when nobody is watching,” as a U.S. congressman once said. Character traits include such qualities as perseverance, caring, dedication, respect, honesty and courage. As a class, discuss other traits that give a person strong character. Then find a person you admire in the newspaper or online. In the space below, write how perseverance has helped the person. Then list five other character traits the person has that have helped him or her persevere and succeed. Finish by writing a complete sentence stating how these traits make you admire the person.

How perseverance has helped the person

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Five other character traits the person has that have helped him/her persevere and succeed

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How these traits make you admire the person

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GABBY’S SUCCESS

Gabby Douglas has said that being an African American in gymnastics often made her feel like an underdog because “no one [thought] I’d ever win.” With her success, however, she says she has been proud to “inspire so many people.” As a class, talk about the character traits Gabby Douglas needed to persevere and succeed against long odds in gymnastics. Then use the blocks below to create a comic strip showing how her character and success could inspire others to persevere. Finish by writing a complete sentence stating which character trait was most important to Gabby Douglas’s perseverance and success.

Write a complete sentence stating which character trait was most important to Gabby Douglas’s perseverance and success.
PERSEVERANCE & COURAGE
To persevere and succeed, people need dedication, steadfastness and tenacity. They often need courage as well — to overcome threats or violence, to conquer the unknown, to deal with stressful emotions or rise above physical challenges. The activities in Unit 3 examine how courage helps people persevere and succeed in life.

1. Courage & Perseverance
Courage and perseverance often go hand in hand when people seek to address problems, achieve goals or change the way things are done. As a class, discuss ways that both qualities play a part in efforts to achieve change. Then challenge students to use the newspaper to find a person seeking to change things for the better. With the “Courage & Perseverance” activity sheet, have them detail ways both courage and perseverance are needed to achieve change in this case.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic; producing clear and coherent writing appropriate to a task.

2. Facing the Unknown
The courage needed to persevere is not just courage in the face of physical danger. It is also facing the unknown, and overcoming obstacles in pursuit of a goal. Christopher Paul “Chris” Gardner was so poor he had to live on the streets with his son when trying to start a career in finance. He not only needed courage to face the uncertainty of his future, but to handle the responsibility of caring for his son. Have students closely read a story in the newspaper about a person who is demonstrating courage while facing the unknown or overcoming an obstacle. Direct them to write a paragraph describing the challenges facing this person and the kind of courage the person is demonstrating to persevere.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Reading closely what a text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking.

3. Civil Rights Courage
The Civil Rights Movement sought to change America peacefully, but its leaders often were confronted with violence that required great courage to face. Myrlie Evers-Williams was inside her home with her three children when her husband Medgar Evers was assassinated in their driveway outside. As a class, discuss the courage Myrlie Evers-Williams needed to continue the struggle for civil rights and achieve justice for her husband’s death. Then have them use the newspaper to find a person demonstrating courage to persevere today. Ask them to write a paragraph describing the kind of courage shown by the person, and how it could inspire others.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions; writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

4. Physical Challenges
NFL player Derrick Coleman and singer Stevie Wonder both overcame physical challenges to persevere and be successful. Coleman became deaf after age 3 and Wonder was born blind. Persevering with physical challenges to achieve goals requires a special kind of courage. Have students use the newspaper and the Internet to find a person who has overcome a physical challenge to succeed. Ask them to write a summary of how the person persevered to become successful and at what points in the process courage would have been most important.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions; conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

5. Military Perseverance
Throughout history, people in military careers have had to persevere to achieve goals, complete campaigns or win wars. And on every mission they must be courageous in the face of risks or danger. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Alexander Jefferson and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Harry T. Stewart Jr. both served as Red Tail pilots with the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, and demonstrated courage in combat. Members of the U.S. military continue to persevere with courage today. Have students find and closely read a story about a military mission in the newspaper or online. Have them write a paragraph detailing the goal of the mission and how courage and perseverance are required to achieve it.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Reading closely what a text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

*includes activity sheet
COURAGE & PERSEVERANCE

Courage and perseverance often go hand in hand when people seek to address problems, achieve goals or change the way things are done. Nelson Mandela required both to bring an end to apartheid in South Africa, and leaders like Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker and Diane Nash needed them during the Civil Rights Movement. As a class, discuss ways that both qualities play a part in efforts to achieve change. Then use the newspaper and Internet to find a person seeking to change things for the better. In the spaces below, detail ways both courage and perseverance are needed to achieve change in this case.

Why courage is needed
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Why perseverance is needed
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Unit 4

Perseverance & Creativity

Perseverance is essential to achieving political or social change, or acquiring skills to become successful in careers or activities. For many artists, perseverance also plays an important role in the creative process. The activities in Unit 4 explore how perseverance can help artists achieve their creative goals.

1. Movies & More *

The movie “12 Years a Slave” was based on the true story of Solomon Northup, but it took a special kind of perseverance for screenwriter John Ridley and director Steve McQueen to turn a 19th century book into a 21st century film. Ridley and McQueen went through Northup’s book page by page when developing the script and also read newspapers and other materials from Northup’s time. In the newspaper or online, have students find a story about an artist creating something based on history, news events or other sources. With the “Movies & More” activity sheet have them write out five ways the artist should use care and perseverance to make sure the artwork is an accurate and effective reflection of its source.

Common Core State Standards: Producing clear and coherent writing appropriate to a task; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

2. Working for Success

Actor James Earl Jones is known for his deep, strong voice, but as a teenager he had a stutter that took years to overcome. After serving in the Army, he decided to become an actor and spent more years working odd jobs to support himself while looking for roles. Many artists struggle early in their careers to win recognition and to support themselves. Ask students to look through the newspaper and find an artist they like or admire. Then challenge them to write a short biography, detailing the challenges the artist faced and how he/she had to persevere to overcome them.

Common Core State Standards: Writing narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events; conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

3. Perseverance Poem *

Writers often seek to find new ways to tell stories, describe things or connect with readers. And sometimes it takes time and perseverance for them to win acceptance. Langston Hughes and Sonia Sanchez, for example, incorporated street slang and musical rhythms to convey the spirit of African American life in their poems, but were not quickly accepted. As a class, discuss popular artists who have tried new things and had to persevere to win acceptance. Then challenge them to find a story in the newspaper that involves perseverance in the arts or another field. With the “Perseverance Poem” activity sheet, have them write a poem about it in their own, original style.

Common Core State Standards: Demonstrating understanding of figurative language; applying knowledge of language to understand how language in different contexts.

4. Training, Practice & Perseverance

For many musicians, training and practice are the keys to becoming standouts at what they do. Singer Jennifer Hudson, for example, once trained five days a week for a year to learn what it took to become a successful singer. And Stevie Wonder went on the road with the Motortown Revue to develop his live performance skills. Have students use the newspaper and Internet to find an artist who has trained extensively to develop skills. Ask them to write a paragraph explaining how the artist remained motivated to persevere and succeed.

Common Core State Standards: Writing opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

5. Be an Artist!

Perseverance has helped many artists succeed. It also has inspired many artists to create works based on people who have persevered to overcome obstacles, achieve goals or help others. Have students think like artists and find a person in the newspaper who has persevered in an inspiring way. Challenge them to create a work of art inspired by this person’s perseverance, or to tell the person’s story. Ask each student to give their artwork a creative title and explain to the class how the art reflects the character or achievement of the person.

Common Core State Standards: Integrating information presented in different media or formats to develop a coherent understanding of a topic; using drawings or visual displays when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or points.

*includes activity sheet
The movie “12 Years a Slave” was based on the true story of Solomon Northup, but it took a special kind of care perseverance for screenwriter John Ridley and director Steve McQueen to turn a 19th century book into a 21st century movie. Ridley and McQueen went through Northup’s book page by page when developing the script and also read newspapers and other materials from Northup’s time. In the newspaper or online, find a story about an artist creating something based on history, news events or other sources. In the spaces below write out five ways the artist should use care and perseverance to make sure the artwork is an accurate and effective reflection of its source. Use the remaining space to draw an illustration of a key point that will require care and perseverance by the artist.
Writers often look for new ways to tell stories, describe things or connect with readers. And sometimes it takes time and perseverance for them to win acceptance. Langston Hughes and Sonia Sanchez, for example, incorporated street slang and musical rhythms to convey the spirit of African American life in their poems. Not everyone responded positively at first, but they persevered and now are considered major American poets. As a class, discuss popular artists who have tried new things and had to persevere to win acceptance. Then find a story in the newspaper that involves perseverance in the arts or another field. In the space below, write a poem about it in your own, original style. Begin and end your poem with the line: “Perseverance made the difference.”

Perseverance made the difference.

Perseverance made the difference.