Text Set: The Civil War: The Culture and People of the War
11th Grade US History to 1877
by Brennan Maynard

I. Introduction

Often times when studying history students and teachers alike have trouble relating to historical figures. They seem to be unreal, abstract names and dates in a textbook. This feeling of distance is increased when one considers that much of history focuses on the lives of “dead old white guys”. If a student happens to fall outside of that narrow band of humanity chances are they find it difficult to relate to the information.

Luckily history is not just a collection of names and dates. History is the drama of humanity. This story is rich in diversity and differing viewpoints. Through the use of literature teachers can assist students in bridging the gap between themselves and the people that lived and died hundred (even thousands) of years ago.

The goal of this text set to bridge that gap. This text set is designed for an 11th grade class, US history to 1877. A wide range of writing (including one movie) are utilized in order to understand the culture and people of the American Civil War. Both primary and secondary sources are included in order to expose students to different types and styles (academic, fictional, and historical) of writing.

This text set is not designed to replace a standard text. Instead it is meant to reinforce and enrich the understanding of the thoughts, feelings and actions of those involved and affected by the war. Through this greater understanding SOL information (particularly those listed below) will be supported and reinforce. By making the material relatable and entertaining, retention will also increase.

In order to reach out to all students, all of the items feature multiple historic perspectives. Furthermore every student should be able to relate to some aspect of the characters (whether real or fictional) presented in these texts. There are many different themes throughout the text set, but of particular interest are the concepts of freedom, sacrifice, endurance through adversity, and friendship.


SOL Connection:
US History to 1877:

Skills
US I.1 The student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis, including the ability to
a) identify and interpret primary and secondary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in United States history to 1877
d) interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives

Civil War and Reconstruction: 1860s to 1877
US I.9 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the causes, major events, and effects of the Civil War by
a) describing the cultural, economic, and constitutional issues that divided the nation
f) describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves.

II. The Text Set:

1. Bull Run
Grade: 6th
Historical Fiction
a. Introduction and Summary:

Fleischman’s Bull Run tells the story of the beginning of the Civil War through the first major battle of the war (Bull Run) from the perspective of 16 different characters. The book is written in first person perspective, which increases the books accessibility. The structure of the book is episodic, with each chapter serving almost as a short story, which in turn supports the main narrative. Each chapter (usually only a page each) focuses on one of the main characters. The story move quickly and each chapter features an important event in the lives of one of the central character. The 16 key characters range the gambit from those directly involved in the battle (soldiers, generals, doctors, ect) to those affected by the battle (artists, slaves, wives, ect.). Although the book features a large cast of characters each is given a very distinct voice, which makes following the text and comprehension considerably easier.

b. Rationale:

Bull Run uses many different perspectives and points of view to tell its story, which is extremely helpful for understanding the culture of the Civil War. This book does a great job of quickly introducing a reader to many different viewpoints in a meaningful and entertaining manner. Students who are not initially interested in reading about the Civil War may change their mind after identifying with one or more of the story’s characters. The large number of diverse characters from different backgrounds (white, black, male, female, young, old, ect.) will attract a broad spectrum of students. In addition the book will help students empathize and digest the events of the Civil War by introducing them to relatable characters.

Reading this book will support and reinforce both SOL US I.1 d (understand historical events from different historic perspectives) and US I. 9 a,f (a. describing the cultural, economic, and constitutional issues that divided the nation; f. describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves).

c. Use of Text:

This text will be used to supplement a class textbook. Students who are assigned this book will have three days to read the text outside of class. This text will serve to reinforce and build schema for the culture and historic backdrop of the Civil War. After reading the book the reader would be required to write a short essay identifying which character they related to best and why. Also if time permits the students could get into groups of two or three each, pick a character from the book and take turns reading aloud a chapter focused on that character to the class. The format even lends itself to be read as a play.

In the PAR framework this item in the text set supports the Reflection step. The students will be able to extend their reading experience and relate the reading to their own life.

d. Readability:

The readability of this text was determined through the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. The Fry Graph calculated the book at the 8th grade reading level. The text’s strengths are 1) its book size, 2) font, 3) appropriate vocabulary, 4) concepts appropriate for age, 5) appropriate assumptions made regarding readers background, 6) ideas are expressed clearly and directly, 7) word choice is appropriate, 8) tone and manner of expression are appealing, and 9) mechanics are correct. The text weakness according to the Bader analysis chart are 1) new vocabulary is not defined in the text and 2) there are few illustrations. The text’s page length of 102 pages is deceptive. Furthermore the print is quite large with roughly 150 words to a page. When all things are considered personally I would rate this at the 6th grade level. As this text set is designed for 11th graders this can be used on the independent level.

e. Reference:
2. The Gettysburg Address
Grade: 10th Grade
Primary Source, Political Speech

a. Introduction and Summary:

After the Battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln was asked to speak at the dedication of a cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The speech that the President gave is considered by many to be one of the finest speeches in American History. Certainly the Gettysburg Address is the most famous of President Lincoln’s political speeches. At a mere 278 words it can be quickly read aloud. The message of the speech is simple yet profound. Lincoln wanted the fallen soldiers of Gettysburg to not have died in vain. He wanted their tragic deaths to have kept the United States whole and intact. Their sacrifice would maintain the liberty that formed the United States, the same liberty which proclaimed that “All men are created equal.”. Their deaths demanded that The Union endure through the horrific conflict that was the Civil War.

Instantly recognized as a triumph the speech have not lost its power over time. “Four score and seven years ago…” is one of the most quoted phrases in popular culture. The Gettysburg Address is a wonderful way to bring the power of the written word into a classroom.

b. Rationale:

In order to understand the culture and events of the Civil War it is pivotal to understand why men and women fought and died in order to keep the South for seceding. Also it is vital to understand how the idea that “all men (even African-American slaves) were created equal” became the cornerstone of the war. The Gettysburg address explains the Northern perspective exquisitely.

The moving nature of the text and its quick delivery will lend itself nicely to students who may not have the patience to listen to a long piece of primary source material. Furthermore the text will serve to humanize a historic figure (Lincoln), which will increase their interest in the history of the Civil War. The view of the abolitionist is incredibly important to understand if a student is to have a grasp of the ideological struggle of the war. The Gettysburg address states that view in an uncomplicated and sincere way. Hopefully after hearing the words of President Lincoln the students will be able to relate to the emotion of the era and the culture of the war.

This speech is an excellent example of how to support SOL US I.1 (The student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis, including the ability to a) identify and interpret primary and secondary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in United States history to 1877).

c. Use of Text:

The instructor would read this political speech aloud to the class after a lesson on Battle of Gettysburg. The words Gettysburg Address on its own are powerful but in the context of the battle that littered the fields of Pennsylvania with over 7,500 dead and 27,000 wounded they are quite moving. As a primary source this text cannot replace a standard textbook, instead it is meant to supplement a unit on the culture and people of the Civil War. As the Gettysburg Address will be read and discussed in class it will be taught at the instructional reading level.

After reading the speech those that choose this item for their text set would take the speech home and read it aloud again to a friend or a classmate. Then they would be instructed to find an example of a speech from their lives (such as a movie, a song, or another piece of literature) that they feel relates some way to the text. The student would then write a short essay on how the two relate and why.

In the PAR format this item in the text set will assist in the Reflection phase by allowing in student further reinforcement and reflection on the speech. The use of items that they have interest in already (movies and songs of their choose) would further engage the student.
d. Readability:

The readability of the speech was determined by using the Flesch-Kincaid Scale and the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. The Flesch-Kincaid Scale rated Gettysburg Address at 10.9. According to the Fry Graph the text is at a calculated at a 7th grade reading level. According to the Bader analysis chart, the strengths of the speech are 1) concepts are appropriate for the grade level, 2) major ideas are framed well, 3) ideas expressed clearly and directly, 4) word choice is appropriate, 5) tone and manner of expression are appealing, 6) appropriate size, 7) appropriate font sizes. The text’s weaknesses are 1) new vocabulary is not defined in the text, 2) assumptions are made regarding learner’s background knowledge, 3) word choice may be confusing, 4) vocabulary may be archaic or confusing, 5) there are no illustrations. When all things are considered the Gettysburg Address should be rated at a 10th grade level.

As this the speech will be read in an 11th grade class the text is appropriate at the instructional level.

e. Reference:
The Gettysburg Address, by Abraham Lincoln (Nov. 19, 1863)
http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm

3. An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge
Grade: 8th
Historical Fiction

a. Introduction and Summary:

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” is a short story set against the backdrop of the Civil War. The protagonist is Peyton Farquha a southern sympathizer. After an attempted sabotage of the Owl Creek Bridge Peyton is set to be hanged by Union soldiers. Seemingly a miracle occurs and Peyton escapes. Without ruining things there is a great surprise ending. The story is an early example of non-liner fiction. This literary device is currently featured in many contemporary movies and television shows. “Fight Club”, “Memento”, “Kill Bill Part One and Two”, “The Sixth Sense” and the television show “Lost” are just a few of the many to utilize the techniques of non-linear story telling and the unreliable narrator.

This short story relates to the text set by exploring the viewpoint of a southern sympathizer. Furthermore it reinforces schema and background knowledge of the culture of the time by having the setting of story take place in the south during the Civil War.

b. Rationale:

As a popular short story “An Occurrence…” will draw reluctant readers to the unit an interesting and entertaining narrative. While the central character is a white southern male his goal of survival and reuniting with his family are well understood by many. Students of various backgrounds will be able to relate to the emotions and thoughts of the protagonist. Furthermore the opinions of the southerner are difficult to understand. Why support slavery? Why fight to secede from the Union? This humanizing story of a prisoner awaiting his execution, his escape and attempt at reunion with his family will help the reader bridge the gap between our modern culture and the viewpoint of the southern farmer supporting the Confederacy.

The fact that the story short is brief at only about 5 pages and features a popular modern story telling technique (twist ending, non-linear structure) will make it easier for readers to understand.

Reading this book will support SOL US I.9 f) describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves.

c. Use of Text:

This text will be used to supplement a standard textbook. As a brief story told from one perspective (that of a white southern male) it is not appropriate to use to teach about the entire culture of the Civil War era.

In this text set if a student chooses “An Occurrence” they would break up into small groups of other students reading the text. In the groups they would take turns reading parts of the story out loud to each other. Students would assist each other in the vocabulary and content of the story. After reading the story they would right a short essay answering the following questions, Were you surprised by the ending, why or why not?
What other movies, stories or songs does this story remind you of? Why does it? Through the use of items (movies, stories or songs) that the student are interested the relevance and retention of the material will be increased.

If a student wishes to read this story for their text set lesson then they need to complete a CLOZE to make sure they are at least at the upper end of the instructional reading level. As the student will be working in groups to read this story it very important that this story not be beyond their reading ability, otherwise they could hurt another student’s enjoyment and understanding of the text.

A final word of caution as this story has to do with a hanging it may be inappropriate for all audiences. Use caution when allowing a student to choose this text.

In the framework of the PAR this item would come under the Preparation phase. This item give the student the chance to build background knowledge about Civil War culture specially the perspective of the white male southerners who supported the Confederacy.

d. Readability:

The readability of the text was determined by using the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. According to the Fry Graph this text at the 6th grade level. According to the Bader analysis chart, the advantages of the text are 1) vocabulary is appropriate for age of students, 2) concepts are appropriate for the grade level, 3) appropriate assumptions are made regarding learners background knowledge, 4) ideas expressed clearly and directly, 5) tone and manner of expression are appealing, 6) mechanics are correct, 7) appropriate book size, and 8) appropriate font size. The weakness are 1) vocabulary is not defined in the text, 2) The story twist at the end may be confusing, 3) there are no illustrations, 4) the violence of the story may not be appropriate for all readers. Therefore based on the above “An Occurrence…” should be rated at the 8th Grade Level.

e. Reference:


Grade: 14th Grade
Non-fiction

a. Introduction and Summary:

“A People’s History of the United States: Chapter 9: Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom” tells the story of slavery using primary and secondary sources. At time heartbreaking as much as it is thought provoking Zinn provides a framework in which to understand the institution of slavery. Beyond understanding the instruction itself, Zinn gives voice to everyone involved in slavery. From owners, to slaves, to abolitionists, to freed slaves, this chapter holds a treasure trove of quotes and information regarding the “peculiar institution”. “A People’s History…”’s in-depth analysis of slavery is rare to find, particularly in such an assessable and readable format. Zinn sets out to show that as entrenched as slavery was, a violent social change was the only way that the “peculiar institution” would ever end.

Slavery is the defining social, ethical, economic, and political issue of the war. This analysis will give students a far greater understanding than any school textbook can.

b. Rationale:

Without a doubt this is an advance book for an 11th grade history class. There are however advanced readers who can tackle this chapter and benefit greatly from it. As a whole the class can benefit from class discussion based on quotes from the text. The class discussion will encourage students to use knowledge gained from the other text set items and the general unit lesson plan. Through the debate students will reinforce the lesson’s information and engage in critical thinking, which will increase retention of the material.
This item can be used with reluctant readers because the very nature of the text makes you think, and invites the reader to critically analyze the issue of slavery. It is however not a book for low to middle proficiency readers. This is a book for advanced readers. Essentially it will best be applied to those advanced students that need a challenge in their reading.

Particularly useful with engaging African-American students Zinn’s book places a large importance on those that are often ignored by history books. Because of this many students will be able to connect with the hardships of those profiled in the chapter.

Reading this text set item supports SOL US I.1: the student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis, including the ability to a) identify and interpret primary and secondary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in United States history to 1877 d) interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives and US I.9: the student will demonstrate knowledge of the causes, major events, and effects of the Civil War by a) describing the cultural, economic, and constitutional issues that divided the nation f) describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves.

c. Use of Text:
There are two main ways that this chapter can be used in this text set. The first way is to draw from this chapter quotes from primary sources and excerpts to read to the class. Some of the quotes are thought provoking and ripe for engaging in class discussions. For example a great quote to discuss would be why Lincoln in 1858 would say “I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of brining about in a way the social and political equality of the white and black races; that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, not qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people…”. This approach would be a great use in the PAR framework of Reflection. This would stimulate critical thinking among the students, and allow them to put to use the knowledge they have learned about the Civil War via either class or other text set items.

The second way would be after reading some of the quotes and having a class discussion allow a student to read the chapter as their text set item. After completing the chapter at home have the student write a short essay. The essay should have the student answer the following questions, “Was a violent answer to the issue of slavery necessary? Why or Why not?” and “Did anything in the text contradict anything else you have learn? If it did what was it and if they contradict how does one determine which is right? If it did not how does it support what you have learned?”

d. Readability:
The readability of the text was determined by using the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. The Fry Graph calculates the text at a 16th grade level. According to the Bader analysis chart, the advantages of the text are 1) vocabulary is age appropriate, 2) concepts are generally age appropriate, 3) ideas are expressed clearly, 4) word choice is appropriate, 5) tone and manner of expression are appealing, 6) appropriate book size, 7) appropriate font size. The weakness are 1) the readability is not matched to the reading level of the average student, 2) vocabulary is not explained within the text, 3) 11th graders may not have an appropriate background knowledge for the text, 4) there are no illustrations, 5) the writing style is non-fiction which makes it less accessible compared to fiction. While the reading level seems high for an 11th grade class, the length is not overly long (40 pages with a normal sized font). The fact that quotes from the book will be read and discussed in class will help build background information which will help when the student reads this text outside of class. Never the less only those readers who are reading at a high level (14th) of proficiency should be allowed to choose this item.

Any student who wishes to read this book outside of class should complete a CLOZE to make sure the text is a proper readability match.

e. Reference:
5. **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**

Grade: 9th or 7th (see readability notes)

Historical Fiction

a. Introduction and Summary:

“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” is the beloved story of Huckleberry Finn. The protagonist is a precocious teenage boy living in antebellum Missouri. Other characters include Tom Sawyer, a fellow teenage boy who also sees himself as a adventurer, Jim an honorable slave, and Aunt Polly, a middle aged women who seeks at reform Huck’s mischievous ways. The story takes the form of a journey that revolves around Huck’s desire for freedom. This journey of freedom serves to highlight Jim’s situation (as a slave) and build interesting parallels between the two. Huck’s travels are true adventures full of action and suspense. Through the narrative Twain’s amusing witticism are thought provoking, humorous, and most importantly informative.

b. Rationale:

“Adventures…” is a fun coming of age story set in the time period (antebellum) just prior to the Civil War. 11th graders will be able to relate to this novel. Universal themes (such as the desire for freedom) and likeable characters roughly the same age as the students (Huck and Tom) assist in activating schema, and support background knowledge. For reluctant readers “Adventures…” should only be used through instruction as outlined in the use of text below. Still there will be reluctant readers who wish to work through the book or who may have read the book in English class and will be more confident in attempting the text.

This item relates to the goal of the text set through the realistic depiction of the story (particularly the use of the regional vernacular of the time). The narrative is an invaluable example of the culture and issues that lead to the Civil War.

Reading this book will support and reinforce both SOL US I.1 d (understand historical events from different historic perspectives) and US I. 9 a,f (a. describing the cultural, economic, and constitutional issues that divided the nation; f. describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves).

c. Use of Text:

There are two different ways this book can be used in the text set. If the student has already read Huckleberry Finn then the student will be asked to reread the text, allow a week for this due length of the book. Then they will choose one chapter from the book and retell the story in their own words. The essay will require the students to write the main points of each chapter in their own words, as if they were telling a story to a friend. Make sure the student does not just copy the text but actually tries to retell it in their own words. Through this retelling the student will reinforce the material and work on metacognitive skills. When the students return to class have the other student compare their different re-tellings. In groups discuss “What was different between the re-tellings? What did you like about the re-tellings? Was the information accurate?” This will allow the students to help each other with comprehension and retention of the material.

In the PAR framework this activity would fall under the Reflection category. Also it will serve to create a more complicated and rich schema of background knowledge that fall under the Preparation category.

The second activity, especially if the students of the class have not read Huckleberry Finn before, would be to choose a chapter from the book and read the story aloud to the class. Instruction on the book would be required as the text is read. When complete the class would have the opportunity to write a short essay as above.

d. Readability:
The readability of the text was determined by using the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. The Fry graph places “Adventures…” at the 7th grade level. According to the Bader analysis chart, the text has the following advantages, 1) generally matched to the appropriate reading level according to the Fry Graph, 2) concepts are generally appropriate to the grade level, 2) tone and manner of expression are appealing, 3) ideas are expressed clearly and directly, and 4) font is appropriate. The disadvantages are 1) vocabulary and dialect can be difficult to understand, 2) sentence structure and unconventional language mechanics can be a challenge 3) authentic word use can be offensive, 4) length of the novel could be a challenge to complete. 5) some of the vocabulary words are explained in footnotes. The text is one of the two at 328 pages with medium to small font. The dialect in the novel can be quite challenging at times. As this is an 11th grade class some of the students will have already read this book for English class, if that is the case try to have the student use another item out of the text set such as “Across Five Aprils”. It is worth noting that if a student wishes to re-read “Adventures…” there is educational value in that also. The focus of an English class will understandable be different from the focus of this history unit. The readability of a re-read will also be lower and more accessible for the student as they should have strong background knowledge of this book. If this is the first time reading the text the book will be read at a 9th grade level on the instructional level. If this is the second time reading the book it should be read at the 7th grade level on the independent level.

e. Reference:

6. The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode Of The American Civil War
Grade: 9th
Historical Fiction

a. Introduction and Summary:
“The Red Badge…” is the coming of age story of a young man who joins the Union army in order to receive glory, hopefully by gaining a “red badge of courage”. A literary favorite of many readers young and old this story is a classic. The narrator’s discovery of the horrors of war and how he deals with it is a fascinating read. Henry Fleming, the protagonist, is forever changed by the realities of war; his romantic unrealistic notions are replaced with a mature view of the war. Eventually he overcomes his fear and faces battle as the man he wishes to be. Using vivid imagery, in the impressionistic style, Crane tells a story which pulls the reader in and makes them part of the story.

The story is a great depiction of the culture of the war, particularly the militaristic spirit of the time. The battles are considered by many to be an unusually realistic depiction of the sights, sounds, and emotions of the war.

b. Rationale:
As a wonderful example of impressionist writing “A Red Badge…” uses imaginative descriptions to make the war come alive for the reader. Reluctant readers will find this literary masterpiece action pact and full of emotion. Because the protagonist is a teenage boy many of the same feelings and emotions experienced will easily understood by students. This should encourage the reader and provide for an enjoyable literary experience.

Reading “The Red Badge…” support the SOLs US I. 9 a,f (a. describing the cultural, economic, and constitutional issues that divided the nation; f. describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves).

c. Use of Text:
If a student selects this item for their text set have them read the book outside of class. This book will complement their textbook and will not replace its use in this unit. Allow three days to complete the reading. Then for homework have the student write a short essay. The essay will have the students write the main
points of each chapter in their own words, as if they were telling a story to a friend. Make sure the student does not just copy the text but actually tries to retell it in their own words. Through this retelling the student will reinforce the material and work on metacognitive skills. When the students return to class have the other student compare their different re-tellings. In groups discuss “What was different between the re-tellings? What did you like about the re-tellings? Was the information accurate?” This will allow the students to help each other with comprehension and retention of the material.

In the PAR framework this activity would fall under the Reflection category.

d. Readability:

The readability of the text was determined by using the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. The Fry Graph rates “The Red Badge…” at the 7th Grade level. According to the Bader analysis chart, the advantages of the text are 1) Generally appropriate to the grade level, 2) vocabulary is appropriate for the grade level, 3) concepts are presented logically, 4) ideas are expressed clearly, 5) word choice is appropriate, 6) tone and manner of expression are appealing, 7) appropriate book size, 8) appropriate font size. The weaknesses are 1) some of the language is in dialect, 2) some of the grammar is archaic, 3) there are no illustrations, 4) the vocabulary is not defined in the text, 5) the violence of the novel may not be appropriate for all audiences. Overall this text is at the 9th Grade reading level.

As with some of the other items in the text set proper care should be taken to make sure that the violence of the novel is appropriate for the reader.

e. Reference:

7. Across Five Aprils
Grade: 9th
Historical Fiction

a. Introduction and Summary:

“Across Five Aprils” is the story of Jethro Creighton a child living in Illinois. Based on the author’s grandfather’s real life, this novel draws on stories, historical documents, and photographs to tell a coming of age story. As a child Jethro attempts to deal with his family becoming divided over the Civil War, specifically when two of his brothers fight for the North and one fights for the South. Over the course of the novel Jethro must deal with the loss of family members and the necessity for him to grow up fast. The book has a simple but profound message of hope and enduring through hard times.

By focusing on one family the book helps students understand the human story, specifically how the war affected normal everyday people living in America.

b. Rationale:

Jethro’s story is a popular one; the book has won many awards. The book is simple but entertaining. Students will quickly grow to care about the characters and want to know exactly what happens to the Creightons. This book also serves as an excellent bridge to more complicated fiction and non-fiction regarding the Civil War. For instance if a student reads initially wishes to read “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” but is not skilled enough of a reader this book could be a better fit. After reading this book a student would be far more capable of tackling the more complex “Adventures…”.

Furthermore as the book focuses on the younger members of the family the characters will activate schema and make the text more relatable. Universal themes such as loss of love ones, growing up, hardship and overcoming will make understanding and enjoying this book easier.

c. Use of Text:
As this text is generally below the reading level of an 11th grade history class, this book should be used on the independent level. Student would be given a week to read this text at home, then write an essay. The essay would answer the following questions, “What hardships have you had to overcome? What do you think helped Jethro make it through the hard times? What do you think about President Lincoln’s letter in the story?” In small groups the students would take turns sharing their writing and would assist each other in editing and proofreading it.

As a general work of fiction this text would not replace the textbook.

In the PAR framework this text would fall under Reflection. The text set use of this novel would give the student a chance to reflect on the writing in light of their own lives and serve to foster thought on how the written word relates to our own life.

d. Readability:

The readability of the text was determined by using the Fry Graph by Edward Fry. The Fry Graph places the text in the 9th grade level. According to the Bader analysis chart, the advantages of the book are, 1) generally matched to the grade level, 2) the vocabulary is appropriate for the grade level, 3) the concepts are presented logically, 4) ideas are expressed clearly, 5) word choice is appropriate, 6) tone and manner of expression are appealing, 7) mechanics are correct, 8) font is appropriate. The disadvantages are 1) the length of the novel (at 188 pages), 2) there are some examples of dialect, 3) there are no illustrations, and 4) the vocabulary is not defined in the text, 5) sometimes the text makes inappropriate assumptions about the students background knowledge. Overall this is a solid 9th grade book.

e. Reference:


8. Glory
Grade: Rated “R”
Movie: Historical Drama

a. Introduction and Summary:

“Glory” is the story of the first all African-American regiment to see combat in the American Civil War. The movie is a cinematic wonder and winner of three academy awards. Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington are incredible. The story is told from the perspective of four people. They are Col. Robert Shaw (Matthew Broderick) a young idealist who puts to the test his abolitionist beliefs by leading and creating the Union’s first all African-American regiment; Sgt. Rawlins (Morgan Freeman) a former slave and ditch digger who raises to the rank of Sergeant, leading wisdom and strength to his fellow soldiers; Private Trip (Denzel Washington) a runaway slave full of hate who must learns the value of brotherhood and honor; and Maj. Forbes (Cary Elwes) Shaw’s rich best friend who also must grow up due to the harsh realities of the war. All will be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country and equality.

With superb acting and a based on a fascinating true story the struggle for equality is not just words on a page but played out in an accessible and entertaining way. This movie portrays the “Glory” of the Civil War in a way unmatched in film.

b. Rationale:

For the most reluctant readers this movie will serve as a way to bridge the unit to the student. It is the hope that after watching this movie the student will want to learn more about the people and events of the Civil War. If that is the case other items in the text set (especially Bull Run) can be recommended possibly even for extra credit as a way of encouraging reading. It has been my personal experience that many people are profoundly affected by this movie.

The movie does a good job of explaining itself as the story progresses so very little background knowledge would be needed for a student to enjoy and understand the film.
The movie will reinforce the SOLs US I.9 a,f the student will demonstrate knowledge of the causes, major events, and effects of the Civil War by a) describing the cultural, economic, and constitutional issues that divided the nation f) describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves.

c. Use of Text:

   If time permits it would be wonderful to show this movie in its entirety to the class. It is an “R” rated movie but only because of a few uses of profane language and violence. This movie is often shown in history classes and permission should be reasonably obtained.

   If time does not permit, this item can be given to a student (especially a student who struggles with reading) to view at home. After viewing the movie they would be required to write a short essay answering the following questions, “What were your general impressions of the film? In what way did the film depict the war in a way that was different from how you pictured it in your mind? Did you learn something anything from the film that you did not from your text? Do you have any questions regarding the film?”

   In the framework of PAR if “Glory” is shown after completing the lesson it can be an excellent way to encourage Reflection. Also you could be used as an introduction to the unit with the hopes that it would stimulate a reluctant reader to try the “Bull Run” text.

d. Readability:

   As this is a movie it does not have a readability score, however some of the items from the Bader Textbook Analysis Chart are quite applicable. According to the Bader analysis chart, the advantages are that 1) The movie is essentially one grand illustration, 2) the concepts are appropriate for the grade level, 3) the tone and manner of expression are appealing, 4) the word (dialogue) choice is appropriate 5) the vocabulary is appropriate 6) the length is appropriate. The disadvantages are 1) it is not a text so little actual reading will occur, 2) the violence and language may be inappropriate for some.

   As this is a movie is does not have a readability score, yet the maturity needed to watch the film can be estimated at the 4th grade level.

e. Reference: