



COURAGE:

Connections in Literature and Your Community

This guide includes excerpts from *The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, Inc.'s Teachers' Guides*
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THE MAX WARBURG COURAGE CURRICULUM, INC.

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum is a year-long language arts program dedicated to strengthening the character development and literacy skills of students. Since the program's inception in 1991, the Courage Curriculum has increased the academic performance, critical thinking, and essential knowledge of more than 75,000 sixth and ninth grade students in the Boston Public Schools and surrounding parochial, charter, and private schools.

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, Inc. was founded by Stephanie and Jonathan Warburg to honor the memory of their son, a courageous eleven-year-old boy who died of leukemia. Throughout his battle with the disease, Max fought hard and never lost hope. His parents wanted to memorialize their son's life in a way that would benefit children throughout Boston. Working closely with the Boston Public Schools, the Warburgs created the Courage Curriculum.

The program's sixth grade curriculum, *Courage in My Life*, features six carefully selected novels whose main characters are courageous young people. As students become familiar with Max and these literary characters, they come to understand their own capacity for courage. Their personal stories are shared in essays they write as the culmination of this year-long curriculum. Each spring, The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum honors winning students whose work, chosen from thousands of essays, is published in an anthology titled *The Courage of Boston's Children*.

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COURAGE IN MY LIFE

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Sixth Grade Curriculum Module

The following six award-winning novels were carefully selected to form the basis of our sixth grade curriculum. Each novel features characters who exemplify, as Max did, courage. Young readers will be able to connect and identify with these characters as they begin to discover and recognize courage in their own lives.

***Bridge to Terabithia*, by Katherine Paterson (Harper Trophy, 1977)**

Winner of the John Newbery Medal for the Most Distinguished Contribution to American Literature for Children

The life of a ten-year-old boy in rural Virginia expands when he becomes friends with a newcomer who subsequently meets an untimely death trying to reach their hideaway, Terabithia, during a storm.

***Maniac Magee*, by Jerry Spinelli (Scholastic, Inc., 1990)**

Newbery Medal Winner

After his parents die, Jeffrey Lionel Magee's life becomes legendary as he accomplishes seemingly impossible athletic feats in the racially divided Two Mills. The story deals with racism, homelessness and intergenerational issues.

***Number the Stars*, by Lois Lowry (Dell Yearling, 1990)**

Newbery Medal Winner

In 1943, during the German occupation of Denmark, ten-year-old Annemarie learns how to be courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis.

***Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, by Mildred D. Taylor (Dial Books, 1976)**

Newbery Medal Winner, ALA Notable Book, New York Times Book Review Best of Children's Books, Nominated for the National Book Award

This is a vivid story of a black family whose warm ties to each other and their land give them strength to defy rural Southern racism during the Depression.

***So Far From the Bamboo Grove*, by Yoko Kawashima Watkins (Puffin Books, 1987)**

Newbery Medal Winner, ALA Notable Book

A fictionalized autobiography in which eight-year-old Yoko escapes from Korea to Japan with her mother and sister at the end of WWII.

***Taking Sides*, by Gary Soto (Harcourt Brace, 1991)**

ALA Notable Book

Fourteen-year-old Lincoln Mendoza, an aspiring basketball player, must come to terms with his divided loyalties when he moves from the Hispanic inner city to a white suburban neighborhood.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING *MAX'S STORY*

Tell your class that you are going to be reading about and discussing young people who have done courageous things in the face of adversity. In small groups or pairs, have your students discuss what makes someone courageous. In these groups, students should come to some consensus as to what constitutes courage, and brainstorm a variety of acts that they would consider to be courageous. They should write down their brainstorms and their definitions of courage. Have the groups share their ideas with the rest of the class.

Read *Max's Story* to your class (or divide the story to allow members of your class the opportunity to read aloud). Before reading, let them know that they are going to be listening to a true story about a sixth grader in Boston who showed a tremendous amount of courage during his battle with a serious illness.

Example Pre-Reading Activity for *Max's Story*: Think/Pair/Share

Think/Pair/Share is a method which ensures appropriate thinking and reflection time as well as affording everyone in the class an opportunity to be engaged in the discussion. The idea is to level the playing field between students who are quick to participate (and sometimes dominate) class discussions and those who need more time to think through and prepare their comments. Students first *think* about a question or topic on their own, then *pair* off with a partner and talk about their thoughts with this one other person. Finally, they *share* and discuss their ideas and feelings with the class as a whole.

How to:

1. *Think:* Have students think about a time when they weren't feeling well and answer the question: What did it feel like? Ask them to consider the emotional feelings more than the physical feelings.
2. *Pair:* Have students turn to the person next to them and discuss their responses.
3. *Share:* Bring the class together as a whole.

Example Pre-Reading Activity for *Max's Story*: Class Brainstorm

How to:

Ask the class to think about a person they know who has died or a person who died before the students were born, whom the students wish they had known. Present the following question: What could you do to help yourself and other students remember that person? Ask students to brainstorm and record their responses on the board. After students have done this, point out to them that this is called memorializing a person.

This should segue into an introduction of The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, which was founded by parents who wanted to create a special, lasting memorial for the son Max, who died of leukemia. They decided to memorialize Max by developing a curriculum so people could learn from his life.



MAX'S STORY

BY STEPHANIE WARBURG AND
CHARLOTTE HARRIS

Max Warburg was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. He lived in an apartment near the center of the city with his parents and his brother, Fred. Max was two and a half years older than Fred. Max had wavy light brown hair and bright brown eyes, and Fred had straight black hair and hazel eyes, but when they smiled, they looked a lot alike even though Max was much bigger.

The boys liked sports. They liked to swim in the summer, ski in the winter, and sail whenever they got a chance. Mostly, their father, who was an architect, had to work, but as often as he could he took the boys sailing, teaching them to tie lines, trim sails, and steer a course.

"Here," he would say, "Max, you take the wheel. Fred, you hold this line tight and Max will sail us out of the harbor."

And Max would. He'd stand at the helm the way he thought his father stood. Eyes on the sail to be sure it didn't spill its wind, both hands on the big wheel, and feet spread apart, wind blowing his hair and puffing out his jacket, Max would play the part of the captain, dreaming of the day he would have his own boat. He knew exactly what he wanted. A sixteen-foot, drop-centerboard boat called a 420, just the right size for a twelve-year-old, which he figured he would be before he would ever get his 420. Then he could take Fred on some great sails, even on the days his dad was too busy. Better yet, he could race and maybe win.

He knew what he'd call his boat, too. *Take It to the Max*, he'd call it, not just because it had his name in it, but because it sounded like the sky was the limit and that's how Max felt.

Max had other dreams. Ever since he was little, Max had been good at imitating people. His mom would talk to someone on the phone, and when she hung up, Max could imitate her 'talking to a stranger' voice or 'talking to her best friend' voice perfectly. He could hear an accent once and reproduce it exactly. He could mimic actors and other kids, making his friends laugh and fascinating everyone with this ability.

"You ought to be an actor when you grow up," people would tell him. So he started looking at the actors on TV with his mind on learning acting skills and camera angles.

"Mom," Max said one day, "Do you think I could ever be on TV?"

"Well, I don't see why not if you work at it," she told him. Max's mom was an artist, and it pleased her to see her son interested in growing up to be in one of the arts. Max joined a children's theater group and went for acting lessons. He started to gain the confidence an actor needs, and signed up with an agency that looks for children to act and model. One day a call came.

"Max, do you think you're ready to act in a television commercial?" the agency representative asked. "Sure I am. Will my friends be able to see me?" he replied.

"Not this time. This commercial is going to run in New Jersey, but maybe next time. Will you do it anyway? Right away?"

"Oh, yes! This is my first chance!" Max ran to get his mom, and, alive with anticipation, Max, Fred, and their mom drove to the studio. They parked and went inside to spend a day taping and retaping. Max watched the professionals, followed directions intently, and caught on quickly to what was expected of him. When the long day was done, Max tried to guess when the next time would be that he would get a chance in front of the cameras. He couldn't have guessed then that six short months later he would be a frequent talk show guest, but not for a reason anyone would want.

For Max, acting was fun and easy, and so was schoolwork. He loved to be with his friends in school, and he loved to read and figure things out. He loved to laugh and play jokes. At school, they called Max the peacemaker. Kids would argue or get to fighting, but Max would get into the middle and try to calm things down. Being a good sport and thinking of the other guy were Max's way. In tense situations, Max would be the one to lighten things up with a joke.

Not everything came easy. Living in the city surrounded by buildings and pavement, Max didn't have much chance to play ball, but he wanted to. As soon as he was old enough, Max joined a baseball league. They played on the Boston Common. Max was the youngest player and afraid of the fast balls coming straight at him over home plate. A couple of times he didn't get out of the way of the ball and it hit him, but he didn't let it get him down. For one thing, he knew Fred was watching and he knew as the big brother he'd better get right back up. Max was philosophical about his shortcomings. "I'll be better next time," he would say, and then he'd work at it. He never missed a practice. Even though he never got to be the best player on his team, by his third season his teammates knew they could count on him for a solid performance.

During the summers, Max and his family left the city for the seashore.

One morning in July 1990, when Max was eleven, Max's mom needed something at the hardware store. Max was looking for something to do. "I'll go. Let me do it," he said, and he got on his bike and pedaled off toward town. About a mile from the house his front tire hit a pocket of sand the wrong way. The wheel skewed around sideways and Max fell the short distance to the ground. He landed on his shoulder, the breath knocked out of him. Hot burning pain filled his stomach and chest, making him curl in a ball and squeeze his eyes shut.

Max knew something was wrong, more wrong than just a fall from his bike. Max's mother knew something was really wrong as soon as she saw him walking beside his bike, steps slow and head down. Before he could get in the house she had him in the car and on the way to the local hospital emergency room.

"Max fell off his bike and he doesn't feel right," Max's mom told the doctor.

The doctor felt Max's back and side and the smile left her face. "What's this here? His side is all swollen. I think he's ruptured his spleen. Max is in trouble."

"What kind of trouble?" Max and his mom said, almost at the same time.

"I'm not sure, but we need to find out fast," said the doctor, frowning with concern.

She called an ambulance to take Max to Children's Hospital back in the city. Siren and lights clearing a path, the ambulance rushed up the highway to Boston, barely slowing down for the tight corners near the entrance to the hospital. Max was wheeled straight into the emergency room.

"This doesn't look good," the emergency room doctor said.

"If my spleen is split, why don't you operate on me and sew it up?" Max wanted to know.

"Can you sew Jell-O? That's what a spleen looks like. Not much to look at, but good to have because that's what your body uses to clean your blood. Mrs. Warburg, this boy is going to be here for at least ten days."

Sad and frightened, Mr. and Mrs. Warburg made their plans. Max's mom would stay with him, and his dad would take Fred back to the shore to keep things as normal as possible for him. The news from the hospital wasn't good. It looked as if Max had leukemia, a dangerous cancer in his bone marrow, but the doctors weren't sure which kind of leukemia he had. Some kinds were less difficult to cure, and some were easier to bear than others. Hoping that their son had the most common type, one that could be cured, the Warburgs started to learn about leukemia.

The results of the blood tests came back. Max had a rare form of leukemia, found in one in a million children. The lab doctor told Max's parents, "Now that we've seen these results, I wonder how Max ever got himself off the ground and back to the house the day he fell off his bike. He must be a very determined boy."

"Yes, he is," Max's father said. "He is going to need to be."

It was Dr. Susan Parsons who told Max what he had. "Leukemia is hard to beat. You'll have to have chemotherapy and radiation stronger than one hundred thousand X-rays. In order to test your blood and feed you, we're going to have to make an incision near your heart and insert a tube. You can't play ball and you can't play soccer or ride your bike. If your spleen gets hit again, it will kill you."

Max thought a bit. "Tell me what is going to happen."

"Statistically, I think you'll be okay, but you have to have a bone marrow transplant. Do you know what that is, Max? That means taking the fluid out of the middle of all your bones and then putting in the fluid from someone else's bones in its place. We can't do it unless we can find the right donor--someone whose bone and blood type match yours almost exactly. Often, not even members of your own family are a close enough match. Right now, there are about six thousand people out there looking for the one perfect match to save their lives. You'll be joining them, Max. Your chance of finding a match is about one in twenty thousand."

Again, Max thought a minute. "So, there are six thousand others. Okay, I'll be six thousand plus one. I'll be one of the lucky ones."

"You already have been. Because you fell off your bike, we were able to catch your disease early, before there were other symptoms. If we get a donor fast, time will be on your side."

After ten days of testing, they let Max come home to the apartment in Boston. Every week, in order to adjust his medicine, he had to go to the hospital for blood tests, which meant a little needle, and for blood samples, which meant a big needle and a tube. Max hated needles. His mother knew he hated needles and wondered when she didn't see him flinch each week as the nurse aimed the needle toward his arm. Even the nurse, who had seen so many different kinds of reactions to needles over the years, was surprised by Max's calm.

"What are you thinking about, young man?" she said to him on one of his visits to the blood lab, not really expecting a reply.

Max answered very seriously, "First, I wait and prepare myself. Then I put all my energy where the needle is going to go, and then I make fun of the needle." On his own, Max had found a way to conquer a fear that, if he did not get the best of it, could make it harder for him to get well.

No sports for at least six months, he'd been told, so he found a calendar, tacked it up, and drew a smiling face on the date six months away. Max had a goal. He knew he'd be sick for a while but he knew when it would be over. On the space for February 6, 1991, beside the smile he wrote, "Cured" and underlined it in red.

In September, Max went back to school. When he told Nurse Hoolihan at the hospital that the kids didn't seem to understand what was wrong with him, she said she'd come to his school and explain. The kids listened carefully to Nurse Hoolihan, but it was Max they wanted to hear the answers from.

"How did you catch leukemia?" asked someone, saying out loud the big question in everyone's mind.

"I didn't just catch it," Max said matter-of-factly. "First, I had to have inherited a particular gene and then I had to have what my doctor said was an accident in my blood cells. One cell went crazy. It started making the other cells produce too many white cells and platelets. My white cells are crowding out my red cells, and that's not good for me. But, listen; no one can catch this from me."

You could see the kids were relieved. They stopped sitting so stiffly and acting so polite. Even Max's teacher and the other grownups in the room seemed to relax a little.

"What can we do for you?" Max's best friend wanted to know.

"Don't treat me funny. I'm not supposed to bump my spleen but I'm the same old Max."

There were reminders at home, too, that his life had changed. Max had to choose whether to give up his kitten, Fantasy, or have her claws out so that she couldn't scratch him and start an infection. Max couldn't bring himself to hurt Fantasy that way, so he found her another home. He missed his kitten. "Be careful, Max. Be careful," it seemed to him his mother kept saying. He missed hearing her say, "Off you go and have a good time," without a worried look.

The hospital did what it could to find a donor for Max so he could have the transplant that could save his life. His parents were tested and Fred was tested, but no perfect match was found.

Close relatives were tested and then friends of the family, and still no match. Wait, the hospital told them, a match might be found in the new national marrow donor registry.

His parents were troubled by waiting. The registry had too few matches and too many other people who were counting on the registry but hadn't been helped. "We can help. We can learn how to do donor drives." It was going to be hard, but they knew they had to try. What they didn't realize at first was that Max would make the donor drive succeed. At first, only the family worked on the drives. Then they were joined by many of their friends, and soon, old friends were joined by the hundreds of new friends Max found through television and radio.

Max's campaign for a donor was called the "Max + 6,000." Always, Max wanted people to remember that this wasn't just for him. It was for Max and all the others in America who needed the one perfect donor. Many people didn't really know what leukemia was all about or about bone marrow transplants, or how to help even if they wanted to help. One morning, figuring he had nothing to lose and plenty to gain, Max called a radio station to see if he could make his appeal on the air. He spoke on local radio shows. He was invited to talk on Channel 4 and then Channel 7 and then Channel 2. Smiling into the camera, Max would say, "Leukemia is a blood disease that starts in the marrow of bones. I need new bone marrow in order to get better. Come have a simple blood test and see if you can be my donor. Perhaps you will be my MUD, my matched unrelated donor."

Tom Bergeron, one talk show host, said to Max, "You're good at this. You look as if you're enjoying yourself."

"I am, sir. I wanted to be on TV and here I am. Maybe this is what I was getting ready for. Even if no donor turns up for me, I can help someone else."

For the people watching Max, it wasn't pity that moved them, it was Max's cheerful way of thinking of others before himself. The stations asked him back again and again. Hundreds and eventually thousands of people came to give a sample of their blood and promised to be a bone marrow donor if their type matched the type of anyone in need.

The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald picked up Max's story. "Max waits for his rescue," said one headline. "Max leads charge against disease." The reporters who met him liked Max and wanted to help him. Their stories reassured people and gave them practical information about when and how to become a bone marrow donor.

At every donor meeting, there was Max wearing a "Max + 6,000" button and a red carnation. Red for blood, he said, and laughed when people asked how he could joke about something so serious. Max would shake each donor's hand and say thank you. "You may not help me but you probably will help somebody," he'd say.

Every week, Max's white cell count got higher. Every week, the need to find a donor got more acute. "It may be getting too late," Dr. Parsons worried. "We have to find a donor soon."

Days slipped by. Weeks slipped by. Leaves on the trees outside Max's window turned red and orange and then brown and fell away in the winds of early winter. Max, Fred, and their mom and dad talked about the little events of each day and about the distant future but not often about the immediate future. They talked about missing the rest of the summer at the shore and about Take It To The Max, the dreamboat. The boat came to mean so much. It meant another summer growing up. It meant having a future. By mid-October, nearly three months after Max's leukemia was discovered, there still was no donor. "I'm going to order the 420 for Max,"

his father said. "It will mean a lot to him knowing the boat is started." He called the boat builder, who said yes, he could have the boat ready by spring. By the time Max was well, his 420 would be ready to put into the water.

With no donor found, surgery went forward to improve Max's chances later on, just in case a donor could be found. On November 15, Max's spleen was removed. He recovered for a week in the hospital and for six days at home. Then, on November 28, the hospital called. The lab had found the miracle match among the last batch of samples.

"Who is it?" Max asked.

"We don't know, but it's a perfect match!" the nurse said. Later, during long December days in the hospital, Max and his dad sent the anonymous benefactor a picture of the intravenous bag that held the life-giving bone marrow with a letter that said, "This is all we know of you but we want to thank you!" Much later, Mr. and Mrs. Warburg learned that the donor was a doctor in Seattle, Washington, whose great-, great-, great-, great-grandfather all the way back to the 1800s in Europe was the same as Max's.

Now, with marrow from the donor, treatment could begin to pave the way for the transplant that might save Max. Chemotherapy would be the worst part.

"Your hair is going to fall out, Max," Dr. Parsons told him. Max could see that other kids in the cancer ward had little or no hair. "It's part of getting better," he told Fred. But he wasn't sure he would be brave enough. He had seen others going for their treatment and returning exhausted and in tears. He was determined he wouldn't let the treatment sink his spirits.

First Max had a tube planted in his chest, as the doctor told him would happen, for giving medicine, taking blood samples, and for feeding him because he wouldn't be able to eat normally. He would have to be almost in isolation in a special environment called the Laminar Flow Room. In the sealed room, ducts brought a steady, moving stream of oxygen down and away from the bed, blowing foreign substances away from Max as his system tried to accept the strange marrow and begin making its own blood.

Except for daily trips to the Total Body Irradiation room--the hospital people called it the TBI--Max had to stay in the isolated room and could see few visitors. When his mom and Fred visited each day and his dad came in the evening, they had to scrub like doctors and wear cover-up coats and hairnets. Even a touch could harm, so there could be no hugs to give comfort and love. Each morning the halls were cleared of contaminating strangers so Max, inside a tent, could be wheeled through the empty halls to the treatment room.

Knowing he'd be lonely and expecting he'd be scared, Dr. Parsons had given Max a tape recorder so he could make a record of what was happening to him. Max told his tape recorder, "Going to TBI is really cool, like being in a space ship. The air coming in from the top of my oxygen tent is exhilarating. I feel like a great explorer from the next century gliding in on his chair."

The experience in the room wasn't exhilarating. The drugs made Max sick. He had to stay on a metal table, head on blocks, neck stiff and body sore, for a long time. When finally he sat up, he threw up. The vomiting meant he was done for the day. On his tape Max said, "The table is real hard and it makes my head so stiff, but it's fun because I can blast my music as loud as I want so it reminds me of home."

The first seven treatment days were chemotherapy and irradiation. The eighth day, the transplant itself, wasn't at all what Max expected. Instead of an operation with doctors cutting him open, Max lay on his bed all alone while the new marrow flowed into his body from a transparent bag of clear fluid suspended over his head and connected to him by a clear slender tube.

"How is that going to get into my bones?" he wondered while he watched, then later heard the doctors themselves marveling that the marrow sought its way to the right places once it was safely in his system.

The blood count was critical. After the transplant, Max's white cell count was zero. They wouldn't let him out of the Laminar Flow Room until his count was 3,000. One day after the transplant, his count was 20. The next day it was 100, then 150, then 300. Max had a long way to go, but he was making it. His body was rebuilding. Slowly the days passed.

Max knew these days would be hard. The pains doctors had warned about became the pains he felt. Max didn't complain. Instead, he tried to cheer up other patients stuck, as he was, in the hospital for Christmas. He got his parents to help. Max's mom and dad brought in a whole Christmas dinner for all the kids and their families in the Jimmy Fund wing, the part of the hospital where Max and the other children with cancer were staying. Teddy Kennedy, Jr., who had cancer when he was thirteen and was now all grown up, brought presents for the kids, along with living proof that they could get better.

Max yearned for breakout day, the day the doctors would let him go out of his room. Finally, early in the New Year, on January 2, Max woke to see balloons on the isolation room door and crepe-paper streamers overhead. The nurses, especially Nurse Rohan, his favorite, were celebrating for him. This was it; he was out! By wheelchair to the hospital door, then into the fresh air for the first time in 35 days, and then home! He loved the smell, he loved the look, and he loved the feel of home! Everyone in the hospital had been great to Max and he was grateful, but home was where he wanted to be. Back in his room, Max saw again the calendar with the smile marking February 6. It was still almost a month away. "Not quite cured," thought Max. "But maybe I'll be better by then. February 6 will be a happy day."

But it wasn't. Before long Max was back in the hospital with a high fever. Dr. Parsons sent him home again, uncertain what was wrong. Back he went again for ten days and again he came home no better. Still he had a fever and still he threw up. On February 6, he went back to the hospital again. The smile he was now famous for was still there, but it seemed to waver at the corners of his mouth. Max went back to his isolation room and this time he would have an oxygen mask, the sign of mortal struggle.

Max's mom and dad and Fred were at the hospital every day, staying with him until the evening when Max, heavy with drugs, fell asleep. The long days in the hospital were hard on Fred. He played with Max, but it wasn't like the last time Max was in the hospital. One day, sick and exhausted after a treatment, Max was being pushed back to his room in the wheel chair. Fred had had it. Right on the edge of crying, he pulled hard on his mother's arm, making it difficult for her to push Max's chair. "Come on, Fred. Max needs you to help out," she said.

Max was used to being the helper himself. Knowing he was needed, he said, "I can cheer Fred up. Put him here in my lap."

Fred went into his older brother's lap, glad to be riding the long corridor and glad to have Max acting like his old self. The two rolled along, Max's head hidden and arms waving out from

under Fred's armpits, a four-armed, laughing pair all the way from Pulmonary to the Transplant floor. Hearing them, the nurses couldn't tell that one of the laughing boys was perilously ill until, rounding the corner; they recognized Max and his family.

"That's like Max," they told his mother. "At night on the transplant floor, the younger kids cry. They're in pain and they miss their families. I hear Max call to them, 'Don't cry. I'm here. You've got a friend!' You have an unusually brave son, Mrs. Warburg."

"I'm not sure he realizes," his mother said. "He says to me, 'Mommy, do you think I'm brave?' I don't know why he doubts."

"How does he keep his laughter? How can he keep on smiling?"

"That's Max," said his mom. "That's the way Max is."

On March first Dr. Parsons told Max his life was threatened. The blood transfusions and medicines pumped into him weren't working well enough. The doctors' skills and the hospitals' resources and Max's own incredible will were losing against the disease. Max saw the solemn faces around him. His body swollen in places, emaciated in places, spotted with sores in places, Max looked Dr. Parsons straight in the eyes and said, "Well, okay, so what's the plan? How are you going to get me well?" They looked at Max in disbelief, to see his conviction so strong despite his ordeal, and took heart themselves.

"Come here to the window, Max, come look," said his father.

There in the hospital driveway below, high on a truck and with mainsail flying, was *Take It to the Max*. Max's eyes widened in pleasure, his delight was evident in every gesture of his excitement. He glowed, knowing the care and love that brought his boat to him at this place at this time. Nurses and doctors all came to exclaim about Max's treasure and enjoy his infectious happiness.

That night, Max stayed up until close to midnight working on a project with his dad. When he was ready to put out the light, Max and his mom and dad prayed together and thanked God for all the help He had given and all the people who had been so kind to him. Then Max went to sleep. Max died in his mother's arms, holding his father's hand, at 6:55 in the morning on March 5, 1991.

In the days that followed there was a terrible silence. The silence swelled and roared, because silences can do that if what you want to hear isn't there and what you don't want to hear is everywhere. Then stories started to fill the empty spaces, stories about Max.

Many stories ended with a shake of the head, a glance away, and the simple statement, "Max amazed me then. He was so brave. Children amaze me. I am amazed by the courage of children."

AFTER READING *MAX'S STORY*

After reading, discuss *Max's Story*. You may want to ask your students the following questions:

- How did Max show courage?
- What did Max do that you find to be especially courageous?
- Have you ever known someone who had to deal with a situation similar to Max's?
- How did he or she demonstrate courage?

Read aloud some of the award-winning essays from *The Courage of Boston's Children*, the essay book published each year by The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum. Discuss the stories and talk about the kinds of courage that the student writers demonstrated.

Have your students write about someone (this person could be themselves, someone they know or have read about) who acted courageously. What was the courageous act? What circumstances contributed to the need for courage? What was the result of the courageous act?

Make time in class to share these stories. You may want to share your own personal story of courage with the class.

Example Post-Reading Activity for *Max's Story*: Connecting to Emotions

Review the list of emotions for the Pre-Reading Activity: Think/Pair/Share. Ask students to identify and discuss which emotions or feelings Max may have had. Students can also add feelings and emotions from *Max's Story* that were not brought out before the reading.

You may also consider watching the accompanying video, *Take it to the Max*, with your students. This video is available for view at www.maxcourage.org

TEACHERS' GUIDES FOR *COURAGE IN MY LIFE* NOVELS

The following materials have been excerpted or adapted from The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides. These guides, which correspond to the six anchor novels on our sixth grade curriculum, offer structure and support for teachers participating in our programs.

You will find our logo next to activities and discussion questions that relate specifically to the theme of courage. While some of the following content relates specifically to the six novels on our curriculum, all can be adapted to fit the needs of your classroom and readings of your choice.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Pre-Reading Activities are suggested for each novel to enhance classroom discussions and students' comprehension of their reading.

Sample Activity: K-W-L: The Holocaust

This activity is suggested for use while reading Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry

This pre-reading activity will help activate students' existing schemata, evaluate what is already known and uncover biases and misperceptions.

How to:

This can be a whole class or small group activity. On a piece of flip chart paper divided into three columns, ask students to record in the first column what they Know about the topic and what they Want to know in the second column. Ultimately, at the end of the book you should complete the third column (what your students Learned) as a post-reading activity.

If you break students into small groups, you should bring them back together to collaborate on a single K-W chart. Based on what your students already know about the Holocaust, you may decide to spend more or less time building their background knowledge in this area. There may be misperceptions that need to be clarified. You may consider consulting or collaborating with a colleague from your school's history or social studies department or a member of your community on this activity.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

These activities involve critical comprehension work and student-driven learning.

Sample Activity: Student Retelling

While teacher-generated questions may affect students' construction of meaning, the open-ended format of retellings reveal only what the student understood and remembered. Retellings, therefore, are important not only because they provide students with an opportunity to share their understandings of the assigned reading, but also because they provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to assess comprehension.

How to:

1. Before reading each chapter, assign two students to the retelling activity. One student will be asked to retell the main ideas of the chapter and the other student will be asked to recall supporting details. To help these students prepare, you may want to provide them with a schematic map to write on and refer to.
2. After reading the chapter, each student should present his or her information.
3. When students are finished, ask class members to fill in any information (main ideas or details) that may have been missed. The goal is to elicit as much information as possible from the students before influencing their thinking with comprehension questions.
4. Based on what the students have recalled, you may want to clarify misperceptions and/or reread particular sections of the chapter.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Comprehension is directly enhanced by strong vocabulary knowledge. Effective vocabulary instruction balances explicit definitional instruction with experiential construction of word knowledge. In addition, good principles of vocabulary instruction are to:

- Provide students with an opportunity to relate the new words to known words
- Promote active, in-depth processing of new words
- Provide multiple exposures to new words
- Teach students to be strategic vocabulary learners
- Encourage students to practice their word knowledge
- Create an environment that promotes general vocabulary development

The vocabulary development technique that follows allows your students to interact with and practice their developing vocabulary within the context of the story and the classroom.

How to:

1. Create vocabulary teams with three to four students on each team. Provide each team with a pad of small Post-It Notes™ and a sheet of poster board.
2. Present the vocabulary words from each chapter before you read. *The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides outline vocabulary words for each chapter based on the following criteria: words used in a different or new way, words that cannot be understood from context, and words critical for comprehension of the story.*

Teachers are encouraged to add words of their own to this list or to solicit challenging words encountered by their students.

3. Ask student teams to look up the definition of each word in a dictionary. Students should record these words in their personal vocabulary journals. *These journals could be a specific section of a student's notebook, or loose leaf paper designated for this purpose.*
4. After the chapter has been read (whether aloud or as an assignment), read aloud the sentences that contain the target vocabulary words. Discuss the meaning of the words in the context of the story to ensure that students understand them.
5. In their teams, students should write each word on a Post-it Note™, organize these Post-it Notes™ into categories (using whatever criteria they create), and label each category. This work should be arranged like a web on their poster board. Ideally, your students will create categories that relate to the story. For example, if your class is reading *Number the Stars*, your students may have categories such as “words describing Denmark” and “words about fear.”
6. At the end of each chapter, students will add new vocabulary words to their webs. This means that they will be constantly revising their webs. For example, some categories may break down into two smaller groups, some categories may dissolve as others are created, and some categories might be linked by new associations. The discussion, grouping and labeling of words becomes an ongoing process as students have more exposure to the vocabulary words and their awareness of the words as the story deepens.

ACTIVITY MENU

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides provide a menu of optional activities that correspond to each anchor text. Many of these activities build toward and prepare students for Boston Public Schools and Massachusetts Department of Education student requirements, key questions and writing portfolios.

These activities require students to take different perspectives or to make personal connections to the stories they are reading. Activities range from traditional writing exercises to more interactive and engaging multi-modal, experiential and cross-curricular projects. Some activities will also challenge students to apply their understanding and awareness to different situations.



Sample Activity: Symbolic Design

This activity is suggested for use while reading Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry
Have students create symbols or logos to express the following emotions and ideas: fear, happiness, anger, hatred, peace, danger, and courage.

THE MAX CONNECTION

Throughout *The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides*, teachers find activities which relate the literature to Max's experience and the overarching theme of courage.



Sample Activity

Students should choose a person who deserves to be profiled for demonstrating courage. Once they have chosen this person, allow for class time to visit the library and do research on the person's life. Students who have chosen to interview someone they know can use this time to search for background information that will help them to ask good questions during an interview.

Before sending your students off to research or interview, work with them to generate a set of questions to guide them in this process. Remind your students to use *Max's Story* and examples you may have used from literature to get ideas for questions.

Possible questions include:

- What is the biggest obstacle this person faced in his or her life?
- How did he or she overcome that obstacle?
- Would he or she make different decisions, given the chance to go back and relive that part of his or her life?

For students who are interviewing living people, have them ask permission to photograph that person. Your student may choose to draw a picture of their courageous person.

Students who are researching a historical figure may photocopy pictures or illustrations from a book or magazine. Make sure that your students credit their sources for these photos and illustrations.

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

The six novels featured in *The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's* sixth grade program provide excellent material for exploring the rich use of language. Throughout the *Teachers' Guides*, different literary devices such as metaphor and imagery are identified. Activities are provided to allow students to explore and use these language devices.

Sample Activity: Point of View

Lead a class discussion about *point of view* in literature, which refers to the person telling the story. Explain that if one of the characters is telling the story, it is called a *first person narrative*. Further explain that stories can also be told by a narrator outside of the story, this is called a *third person narrative*. Ask students to determine who is telling the story. How old is the narrator? What are the advantages of having a first-person narrator? What are the limitations?

SPECIAL LONG-TERM PROJECTS

The following projects are suggestions for special activities that students can engage in both during and after reading the suggested novels. They are meant to both enrich these readings and allow students the opportunity to reflect upon courage in their own and others' lives.



Sample Activity: Creating Oral Histories

When beginning a novel, discuss with your students how the author got his or her ideas for writing their story. Discuss how stories are shared and passed down.

Invite students to think of a person with whom they would like to create an oral history, i.e., an older person in their family. Perhaps the class would like to produce a history of their school or neighborhood through interviewing people and listening to their stories about the past. They might choose to learn more about the era of the novel you are reading by interviewing people who lived during that time. Students could ask for examples of courage in the lives of the people they interview.

Students can also find pictures, copies of birth certificates, and other artifacts to accompany their histories. Upon concluding the novel, encourage students to invite parents and other family members to the classroom to listen and share in the oral histories they chronicled.

Resources for this Activity: Books About Writing Oral Histories

Cooper, Kay, *Who Put the Cannon in the Courthouse Square?* Walker, 1984, Grades 5-8

Jungrels, Abigail, *Know Your Hometown History: Projects and Activities*, Watts, 1992, Grades 4-6

Weitzman, David, *My Backyard History Book*, Little Brown, 1975, Grades 4-7

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides also include Chapter Summaries, Discussion Questions and Activities to Extend Comprehension and Relate Literature to Life. These sections are specific to the six selected novels. For more information about how to participate in our programs or access our full curriculum kit, please visit www.maxcourage.org or contact our office at info@maxcourage.org.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides provide an overview of the main events and ideas from each chapter of our six anchor novels. These summaries are especially helpful when planning related activities or anticipating challenges your students may face in their reading.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides include discussion questions, corresponding to the end of each chapter of each selected novel. In some instances, questions are suggested to be asked throughout the oral reading because of a complex comprehension issue. Teachers are encouraged to give their students appropriate time to reflect on the questions. To further aid students who may have difficulty with comprehension, teachers may write the questions on a chalkboard or provide a copy of the questions prior to reading the chapter.

ACTIVITIES TO EXTEND COMPREHENSION AND RELATE LITERATURE TO LIFE

In *The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Teachers' Guides*, activities are provided as an additional means of extending comprehension and relating literature to students' lives. Some activities relate to the arts, such as listening to spirituals or creating artistic renderings of the story's setting. Others will be thematically linked to content areas, such as comparing today's prices with prices during the Great Depression or finding a story's setting on a map.

Teachers may find the Boston Public Schools' ELA Key Questions helpful when evaluating their students' comprehension of selected texts. For more information about the Boston Public Schools, please visit: www.boston.k12.ma.us

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS KEY QUESTIONS

TOPIC

- What is this book/chapter about?

THEME

- What lesson is the author trying to teach?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author's point of view?

PLOT

- What are the most memorable or significant events?
- What role did they play in developing the theme?
- What's going to happen next? Were your predictions accurate?

CHARACTERIZATION

- Who are the most important characters?
- What makes them so important?
- How do they help develop the theme?
- What are their key characteristics?

CONFLICT

- What challenges are the key characters facing?
- How are they responding to these challenges?
- How should they respond?
- How would you respond?

SETTING

- How do location, time and culture affect the characters and plot?
- What role do they play in developing the theme?
- Would the story be different in another location, time or culture?

LANGUAGE

- How does the author's use of language enhance the story?

CONNECTIONS

- What comparisons can you make between the characters and events in the book/chapter, yourself, and contemporary characters/event you're familiar with?

SIGNIFICANCE

- Why is this book important?
- Is there anything unique about this book?
- Is there anything difficult or challenging about this book?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?

GENERAL

- What are the most interesting things you've learned from this book?
- What surprised or amazed you?
- How would you change any part of this book/chapter?

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