



Middle Grades

WRITERS MATTER 2021

— Reset Curriculum —


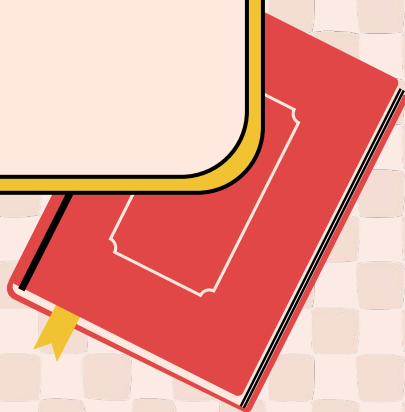



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

What does it mean to be
a community?

2

Celebrating Pride

3

The Skin I'm In

4

Zen, Joy, & Mindfulness

5

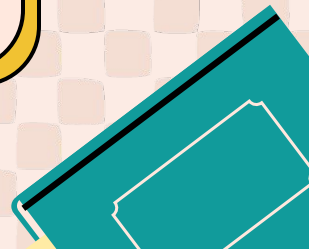
Looking Back to Move
Forward



01



**WHAT DOES IT
MEAN TO BE A
COMMUNITY?**



Who Needs a Pep Talk?





What is a quote that you think will guide you and others through this school year?

Write your quote here. Explain what it means and why you chose it.

The quote I chose is “

Click **HERE** to
research quotes!

Write your own Pep Talk here.

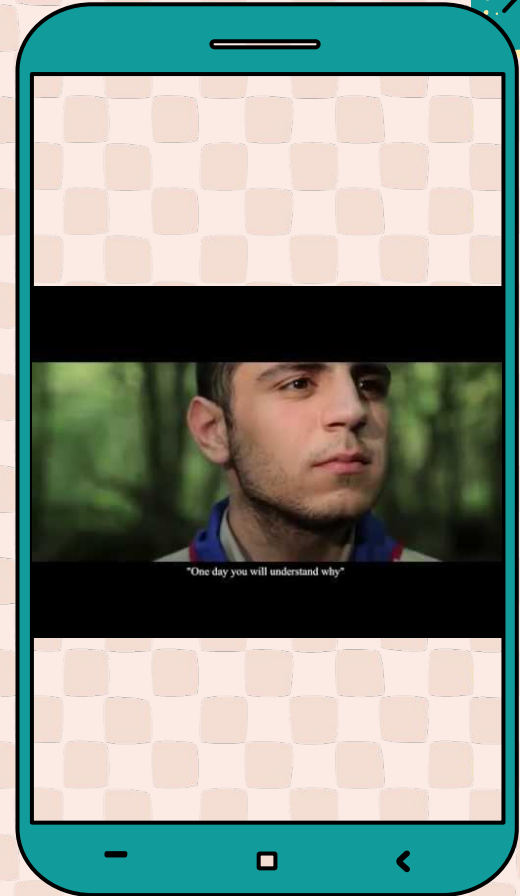
Your Turn!

Write your own pep talk.

What words of encouragement and motivation do students need to hear while beginning this school year?

What does “Community” mean?

Type here



What communities are you part of?

Neighborhood

Type here

Culture

Type here

Gender

Type here

**Race &
Ethnicity**

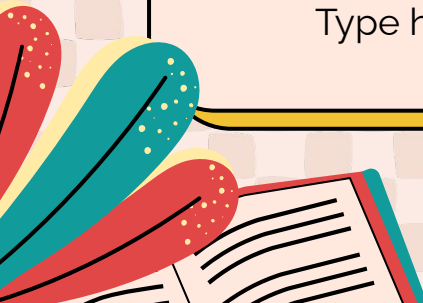
Type here

Language

Type here

Likes/Dislikes

Type here






Langston Hughes

"I, Too"

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain the meaning of the poem, "I, Too" by Langston Hughes.
2. What is the theme or the message of the poem?
3. What was Hughes' inspiration for writing the poem?
4. How does this poem relate to belonging to a community?

Write a poem about the **communities**
you belong to.



–SOMEONE FAMOUS

Languages Show and Tell



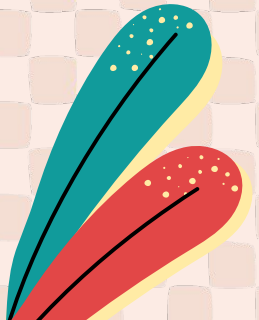
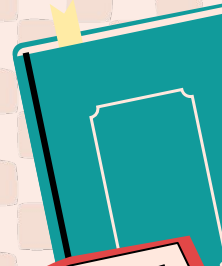
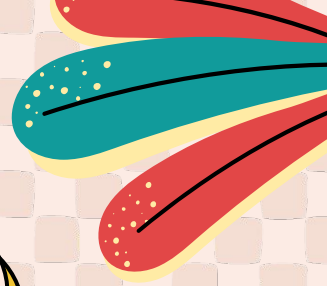
The background features a light gray and white checkerboard pattern. Scattered around the central text box are several stylized illustrations: a yellow book with a white cover in the top left, a teal book in the top right, a red and teal book in the bottom right, and a teal book in the bottom left. There are also several colorful, teardrop-shaped leaves in shades of teal and red, some with yellow outlines and small white dots, scattered throughout the scene.

Now it's Your Turn to Show & Tell

1. Think about something that represents one of your communities.
2. Take a photo of it OR bring it to school.
3. Write a poem, song, or descriptive paragraph explaining its significance.

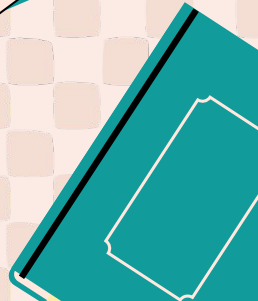
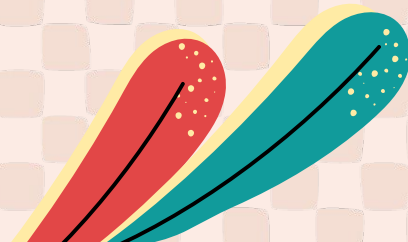
Be prepared to share with the class. Your "something" can be an item, a skill, a language, a recipe, a picture, etc.

Upload Here If You'd Like



02

CELEBRATING PRIDE



HAPPINESS & PRIDE



What makes you
happy?



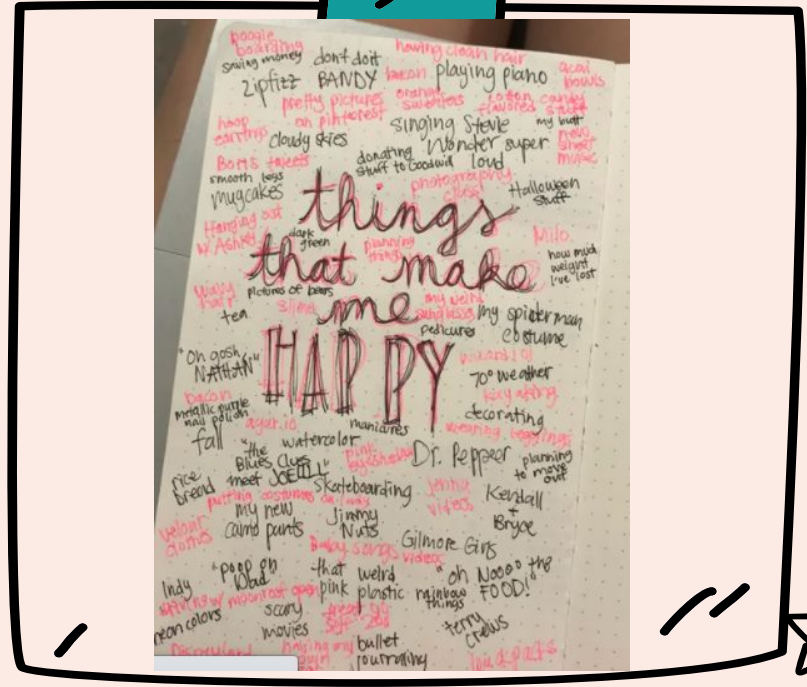
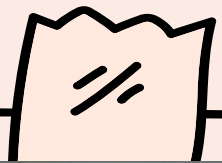
What are you most
proud of?

Now let's write 100 things that make you happy and proud!

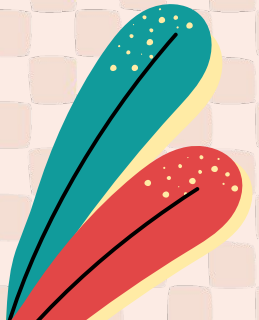
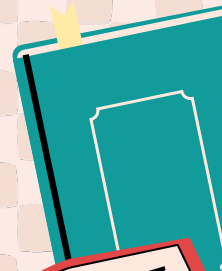


! → 2x2 ↓

HERE'S 2 MORE DESIGNS FOR INSPIRATION.



Upload Here If You'd Like



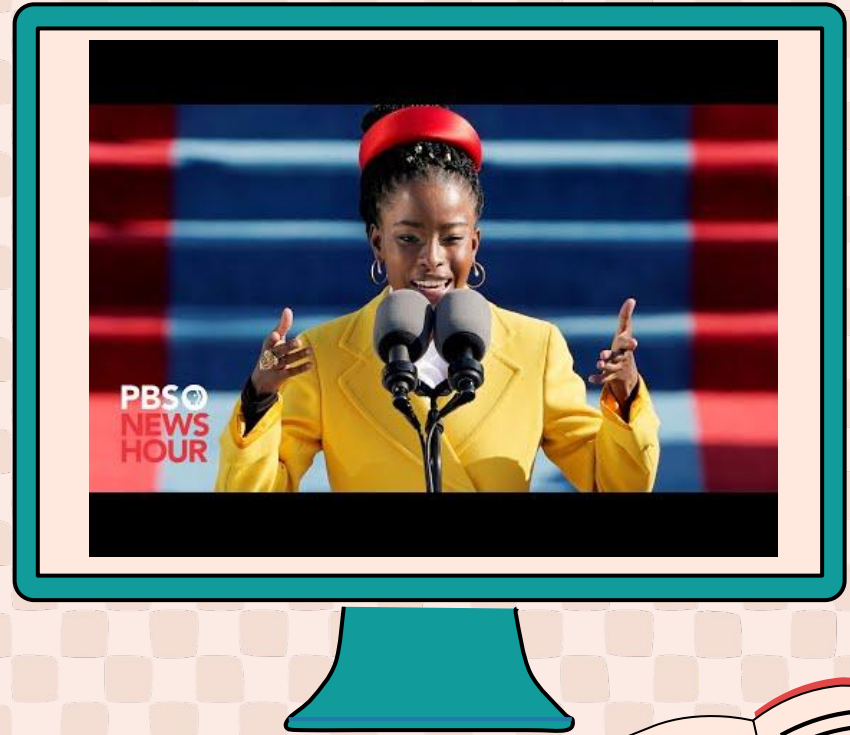
Amanda Gorman

“The Hill We Climb”

What inspires you? What is uplifting about Gorman’s speech?

Listen to Amanda Gorman’s poem and write about what inspired YOU in her speech.

What inspired me was...



CLICK on the image to read Gorman-inspired pieces written by fifth grade students:

AMANDA GORMAN

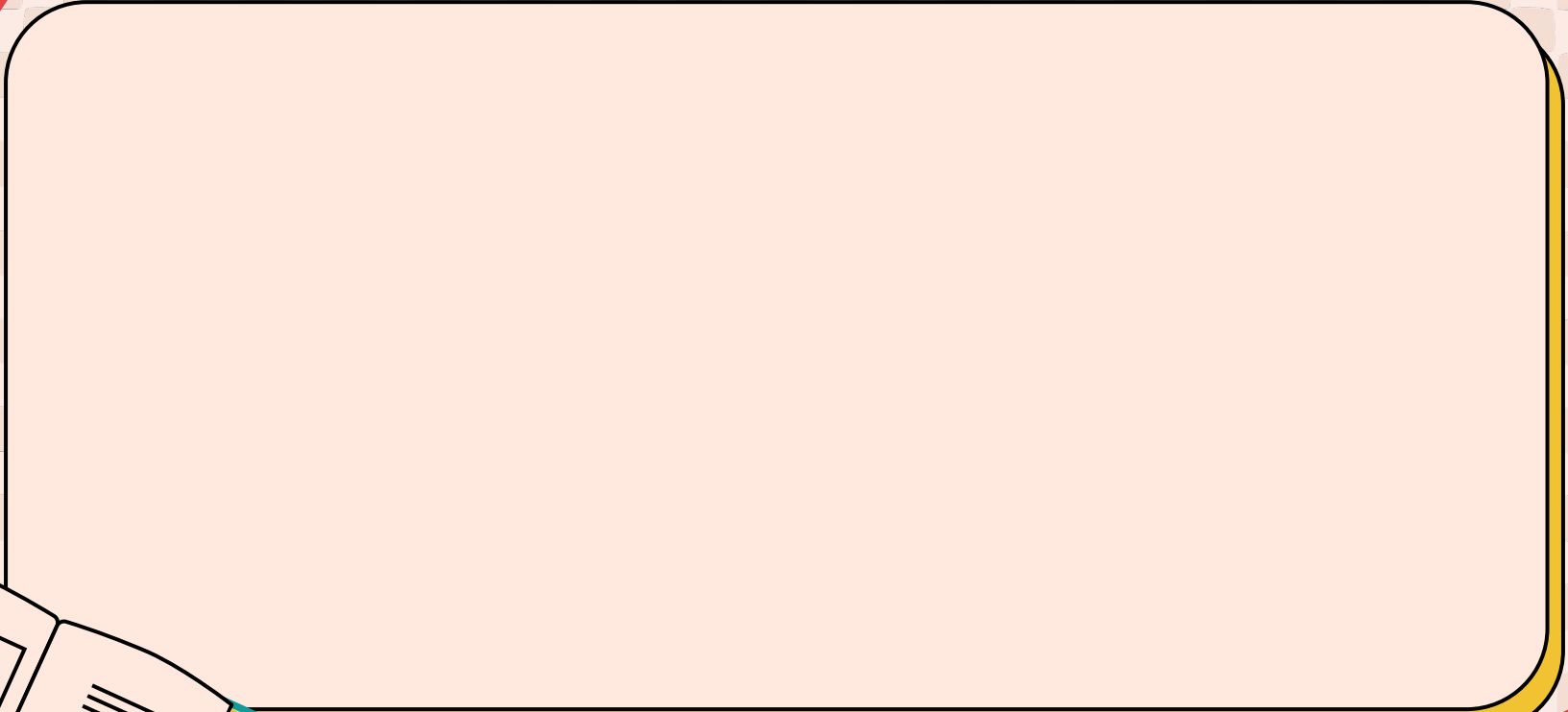


After watching Amanda Gorman recite her two poems above, students in 209 created Gorman-inspired pieces. Some were inspired by her overall message, a particular line, or simply a connection they made to her words.





Now it's your turn to write an Amanda
Gorman inspired poem.



Amanda Gorman's speech is inspirational and uplifting because of her word choice and passion for the topic. Many people feel uplifted when they are able to be their truest selves. Let's take a look at two videos of teens discovering their truest self.



Creating a TED TALK

What is a TED TALK?

- It's a series where people make speeches/talks about things they feel passionate about. Check out this **ONE** about a teen talking about the importance of being your truest self.

You're going to create a TED TALK about when you are your truest self.

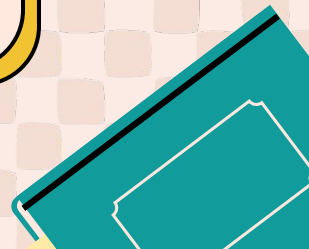
- Choose to discuss anything that makes you feel your truest self. Think about your: Culture, Gender, Hobbies/Interests, Religion, Music, Traditions, etc.
- You can discuss a memory or moment in which you felt your truest self.
- So BE CLEAR, explain what you mean.
- Show items that may be helpful to explain your points.



03



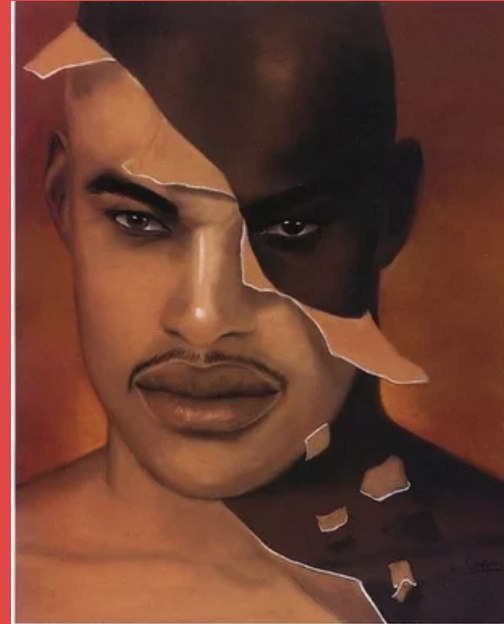
THE SKIN I'M IN



Look at these two pieces of artwork created by Laurie Cooper. Jot down your initial noticings and what connections can be made. How do you feel while looking at these pictures? Why do you think the artist created these?

“The Skin I’m In”

Laurie Cooper



Before we begin, what do you think the word "affirmation" means?

What is an affirmation?

Video #1: Spoken Word Poetry *Dark Girls - Sarah Ogutu*



What are Sarah's affirmations in this poem? Are they positive or negative? What is Sarah's message in this poem?

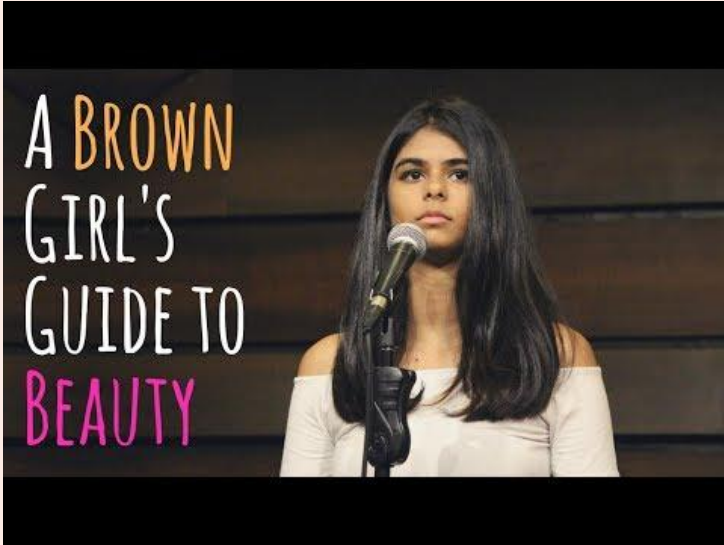
Video #2: Youtuber "Belief in Fatherhood"

My Son Doesn't Like the Color of His Skin



How does this father help his children embrace who they are and to love their skin? What affirmations are the children saying by the end of the video?

Spoken Word Poetry



**“A Brown Girl’s Guide to Beauty”
by: Aranya Johar**

Based on this poem, what are society's expectations for both men and women to be accepted? Do you agree or disagree?

After watching the video, type response here.

Do you ever feel you are pressured to be someone you are not? Have you ever changed something about yourself in order to fit in?

After watching the video, type response here.

Daily Affirmations Activity

Today we are going to create a list of self-affirmations. Hang it up in your room or on your mirror to remind yourself how amazing and unique you are!

Step 1: On a piece of paper write down your insecurities, stereotypes, or negative comments people have made about you or you have made about yourself.

Step 2: Now, rip up that paper! (Make sure you don't make the pieces too small!)

Step 3: Focus on what makes you who you are, and all of the beautiful and wonderful things about yourself. On the back side of the paper, write positive words or phrases to describe you.

Step 4: Now take all of those pieces and put them back together like a puzzle. Tape them together.

Step 5: Read out loud your new positive affirmations and share at least one with the class on our classroom **PADLET or Jamboard.**



Analyzing Lyrics

India.Arie - "I am Not My Hair"

Read the full lyrics [here!](#)

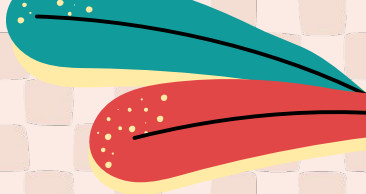



Click here to watch the music video.

With nothin' to lose, postin' with the wave cap
And the cops wanna harass 'cause I got waves
Ain't see nothin' like that in all my days
Man, you gotta change all these feelings
Steady judging one another by their appearance
Yes, India, I feel ya, girl
Now go ahead, talk to the rest of the world 'cause
Does the way I wear my hair make me a better person?
Does the way I wear my hair make me a better friend?
Does the way I wear my hair determine my integrity?
I am expressing my creativity

Highlight your favorite lines. Why do those lines stand out to you?

Good hair means curls and waves (no)
Bad hair means you look like a slave (no)
At the turn of the century
It's time for us to redefine who we be
You can shave it off like a South African beauty
Or get in on lock like Bob Marley
You can rock it straight like Oprah Winfrey
If it's not what's on your head, it's what's underneath, and say
Hey (hey)
I am not my hair
I am not this skin
I am not your expectations, no (no)
I am not my hair
I am not this skin
I am the soul that lives within



"I am beautiful no matter what they say
Words can't bring me down
I am beautiful in every single way
Yes, words can't bring me down... Oh no
So don't you bring me down today"

**These are lyrics to the song,
"Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera.
WATCH a live performance and
discuss what connections you have
with the song.**

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR THE FULL LYRICS.



The Skin I'm In by: Sharon G. Flake

"John-John says his face tells the world he doesn't take no stuff. That people better respect him, or else. I never see nothing like that in John-John's face though. He looks more scared than mean. I guess there ain't no accounting for what folks see in their own mirrors." (Page 18)

What do you think your face says to the world?

Type here.

Is the face you show the world consistent with how you feel about yourself?

Type here.

How do our own self-perceptions often differ from what others see in us?

Type here.

Analyzing “Mirror”

A poem by Sylvia Plath



[Click here to read the poem](#)

1. Plath uses personification with the mirror as the speaker, how does the mirror describe itself?
2. In the second stanza, a woman enters the poem, how is the mirror important to her? Can you make a connection?
3. Does a mirror always tell the truth?

Questions

"Mirror, Mirror on the Wall..."

NOTE: This activity requires you to sit in front of a mirror or your phone camera so you can see your reflection!



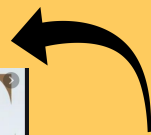
Step 1: Write about what you physically see when you look in the mirror.

Step 2: Pick out your favorite feature. Why is it your favorite? What makes it special?

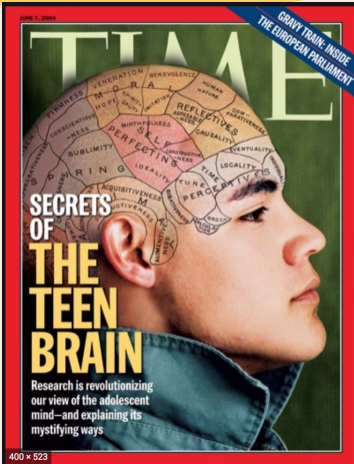


Step 3: Write about what the mirror does not show. Who are you on the inside? What are your personality traits, your talents, your passions, etc.

Use **CANVA** to create your magazine cover.



Magazine Cover



Today you will be creating a personal magazine cover to showcase who you are and what is important to you!

{Use your mirror writing to inspire you!}

Your magazine must include:

- A creative title that represents you
- At least 5 adjectives or headlines describing who you are or what is important to you
- A self portrait. This can be artwork or a photo. You can also include multiple pictures on the cover of the magazine.
- An "Exclusive" story title that shares a quality about you that the mirror does not show.



CHILLIN

featuring Frankie @ Ms. C



FALL ISSUE

2021

A PATIENT DOG & DOG OWNER

THOUGHTFUL: Sometimes our hearts are TOO big
CREATIVE TO THE CORE

MS. C

PAGE 2
POPPYARMAC.COM | 2021

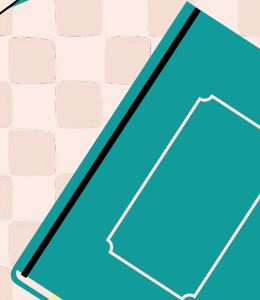
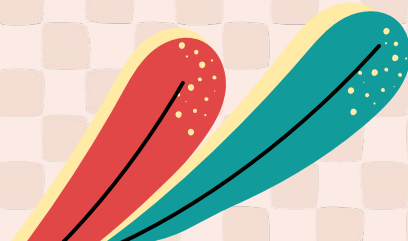
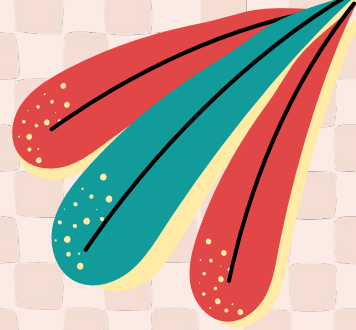
Being a teacher and being a dog owner are kind of similar. PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE.

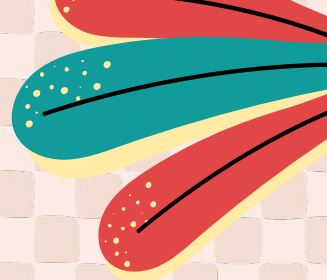


*I mean, if you don't have patience as a characteristic, you're not going to be good at either, am I right? Wait for a student answer, wait for your dog to stop barking like crazy at a dog that's half its size. Let's just say there's a lot of waiting in both jobs. Dogs and children tug at my heart, like many people. You know how in the *The Grinch*, they say his heart, "grew three sizes that day."...well my heart always seems like it's three sizes too big for my body. I worry about others, myself, my students, my dog, an ant, everyone, sometimes a little too much! And last, creativity is what I thrive on. As a teacher, I love being creative in my lessons and projects. As a dog owner, I am always taking my dogs on adventures to new places and new neighborhoods. All these characteristics describe who I truly am.*

Here is an example of one using Canva. Click on the images to take you to the links.

04

ZEN
JOY
MINDFULNESS





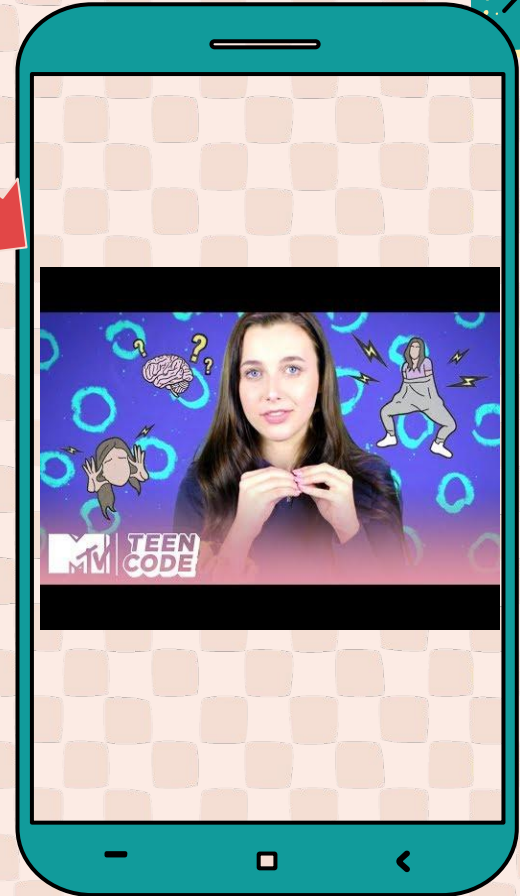
**Describe a scenario where you
feel no stress and pure joy.**

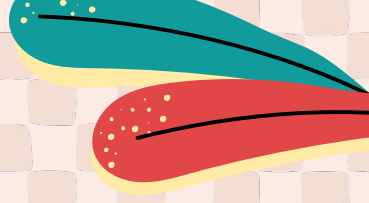
Respond here



We all have times when we experience stress. Watch this video of social media influencers discussing what they go through. What causes you stress and anxiety? How do you cope?

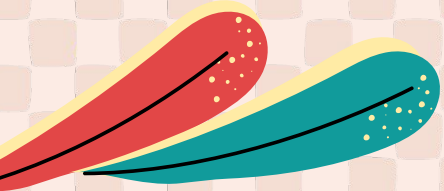
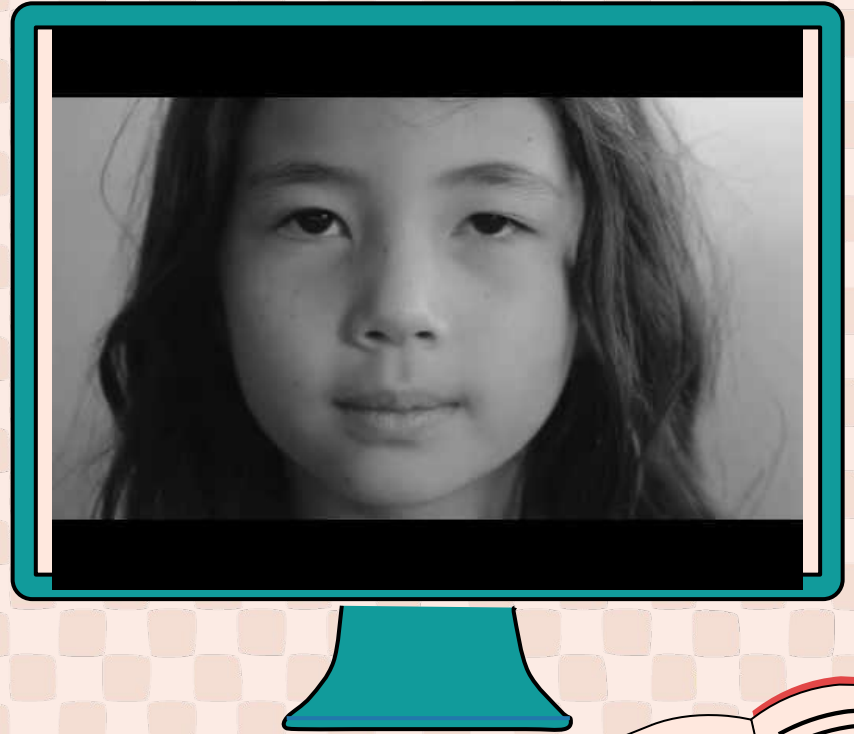
Type here





What is MINDFULNESS?

**Check out this video to
find out. Think about
what parts you can
relate to.**



Smiling Mind

Click the [link](#) to access videos. You can also download the app to your phone!

**What can you do
for self care?**

Type here

**Vibe Check! What color
is your vibe today?
Discuss why you are
feeling those emotions.**

Type here

**Be present in this moment!
Clear your mind and think of
your 5 senses. List one for
each.**

Type here

**Create your oasis. What will you
do to manage your stress, study
time, and sleep in a healthy
way?**

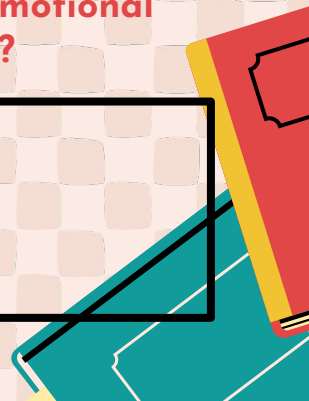
Type here

**Design your inner mentor.
What would they tell you to
overcome a challenging
situation?**

Type here

**What are your top 4
values on your emotional
compass?**

Type here



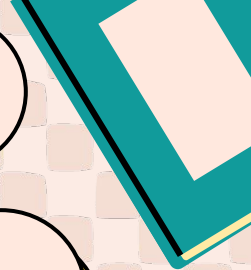
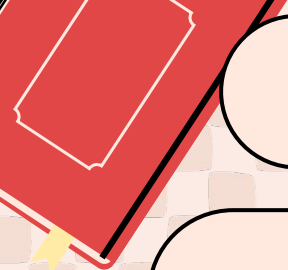


JOY GENERATOR

NPR's Joy Generator offers calming sounds and videos to put your brain and heart at ease. Click on the image & explore the site to find your own **JOY**.



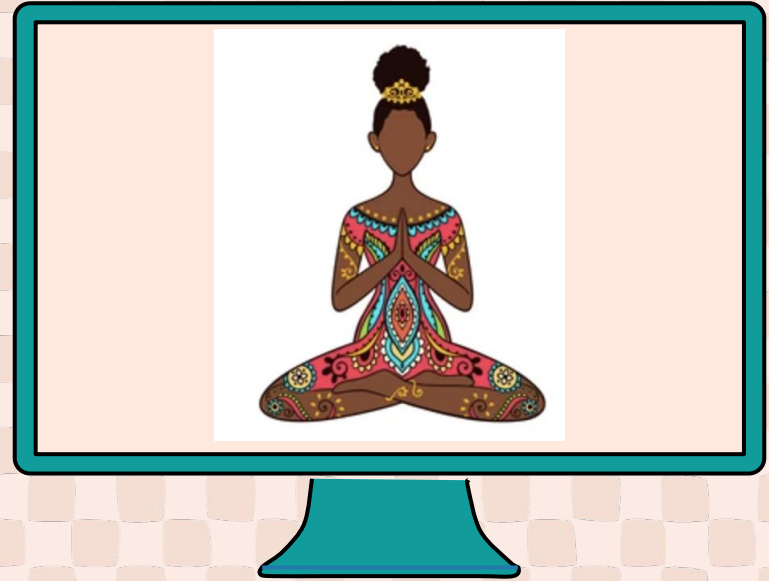
What brought you the most joy on the
JOY Generator?





SDP CALMING ROOM

This site is a school district site that includes art, music, and movement to bring **CALM** into your life..



Sea Calm by: Langston Hughes

How still,
How strangely still
The water is today,
It is not good
For water
To be so still that way

- When is water (sea/ocean/etc.) calming to you?
- Is there a time when water is so still that it seems strange?
- Are there things that make other people calm that make you uneasy?

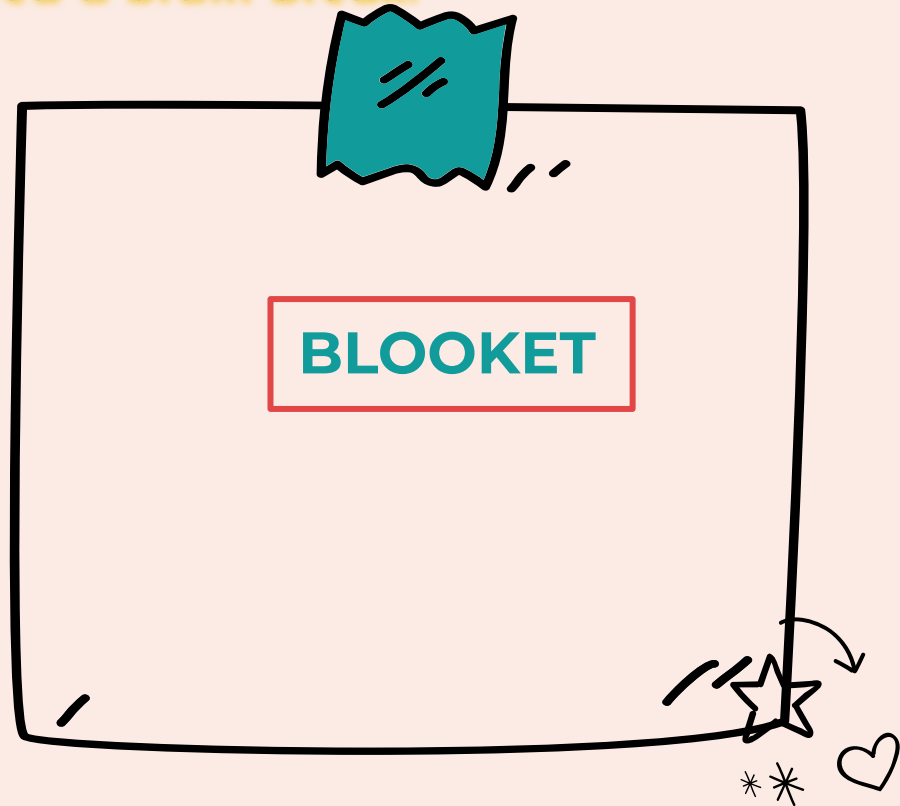
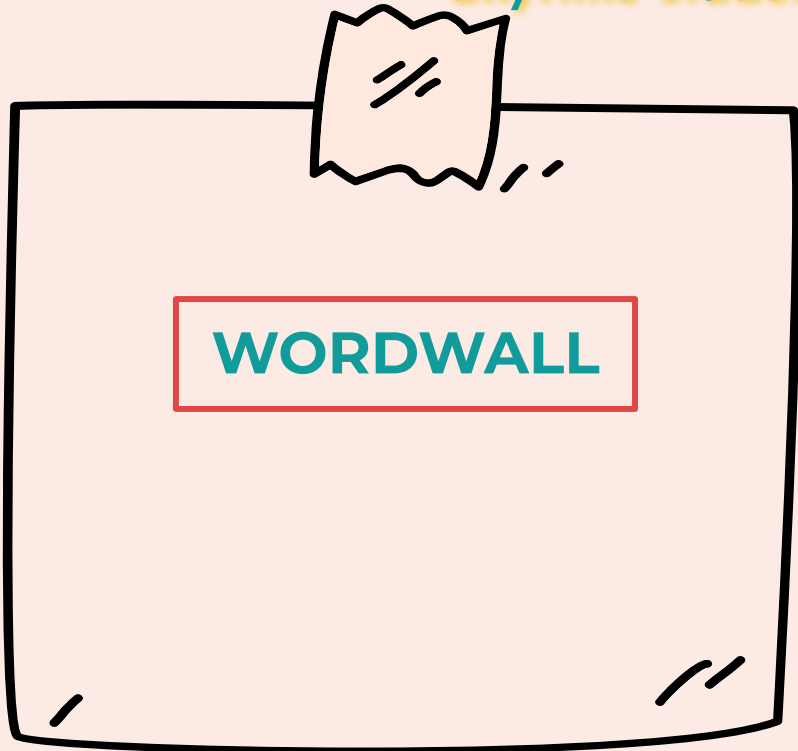


Using Hughes as inspiration, write a poem about something that is calming.



 This slide and the next are teacher resources.

Use these TWO links for fun activities in your morning meetings or anytime students need a brain break.





Beach Ball Brainwave



How to Play:

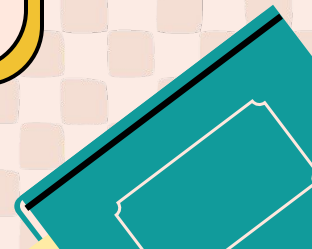
- Start with one word, then throw the ball to someone else who adds another word, and so on until an inspirational phrase is formed. The last person must say “period” when the phrase is complete. Generate as many quotes as possible. Then write them out on sentence strips and display them around the room or create a bulletin!



05



**LOOKING BACK
TO MOVE
FORWARD**

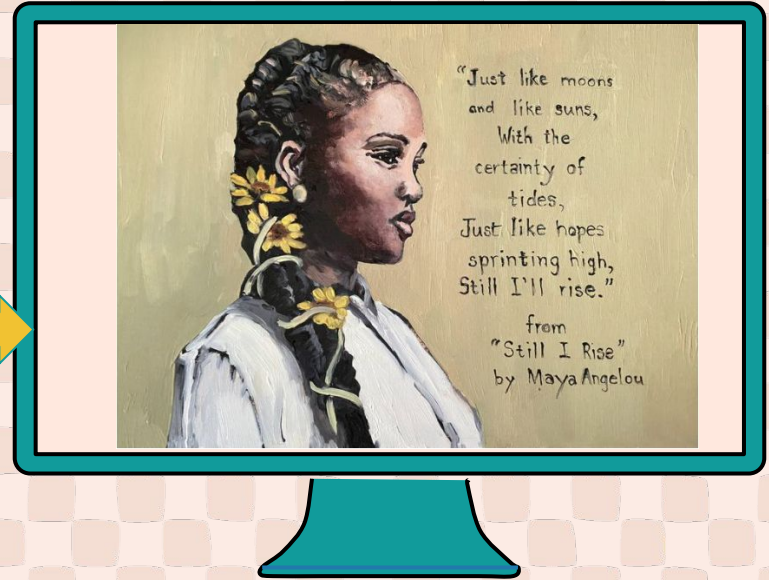


"Still I Rise"

by: **Maya Angelou**

This section is about all kinds of people rising up despite obstacles getting in their way. Watch this video of Maya Angelou's poem. Discuss the kinds of people who have risen through tough times.

Click on the title for link to the poem



**What words stand out to you
the most in the poem?**

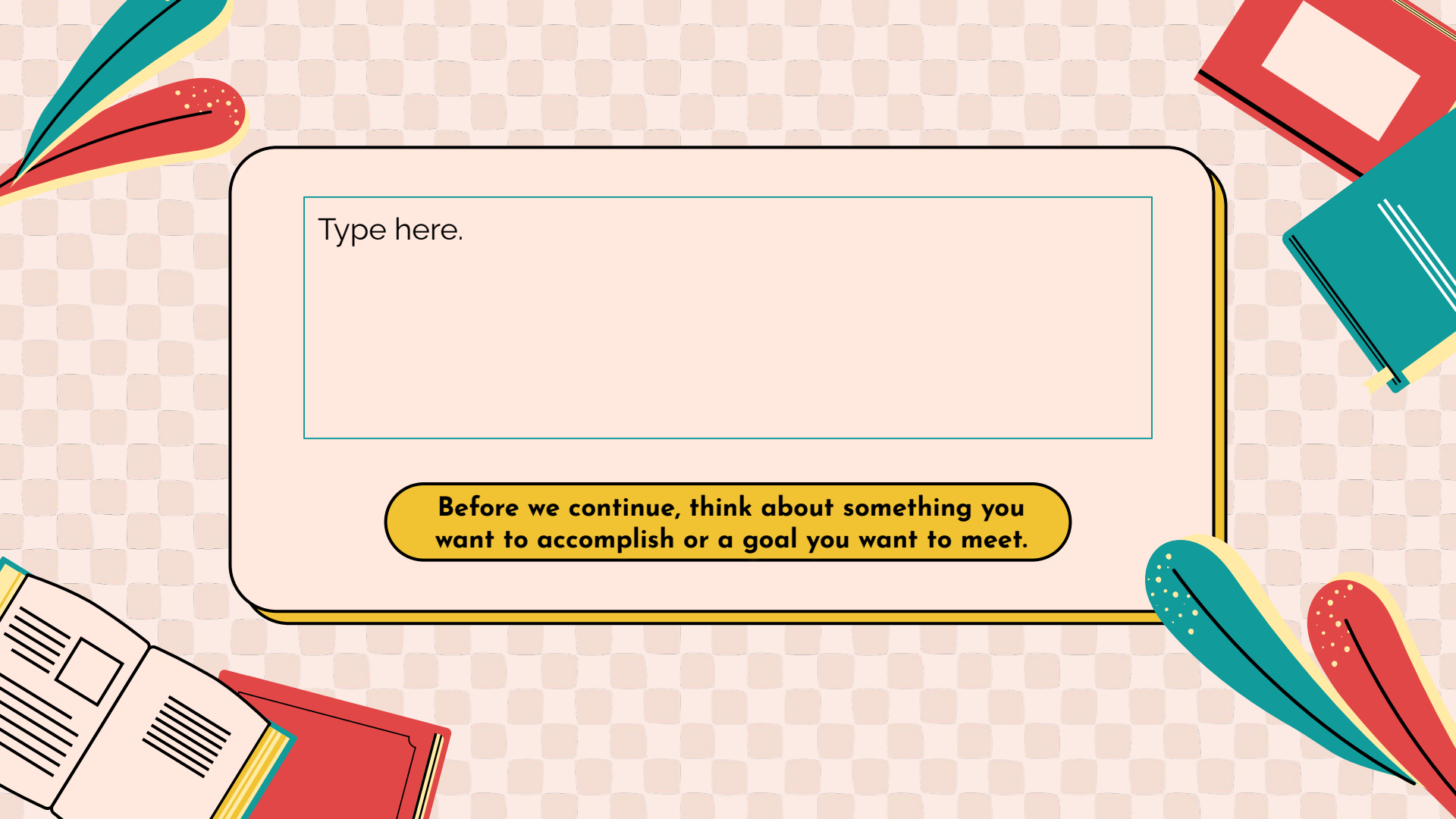
Type here

**Watch the author reading the
poem. See if you have a different
connection after the first video.**



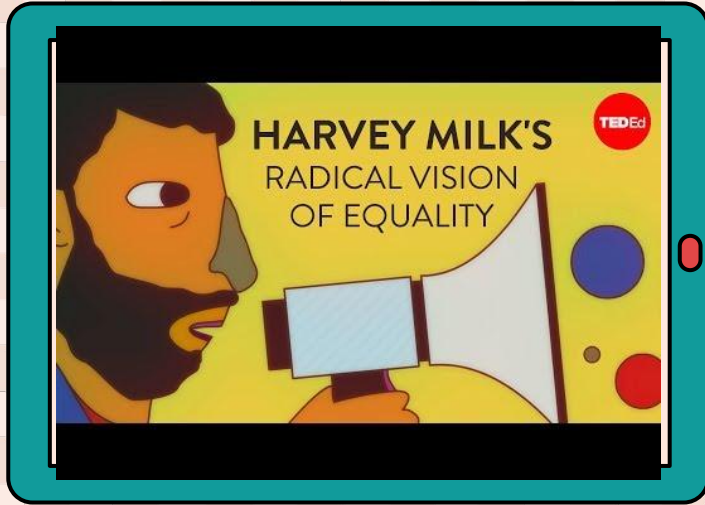
**What connections did you
make to her reading?**

Type here



Type here.

Before we continue, think about something you want to accomplish or a goal you want to meet.



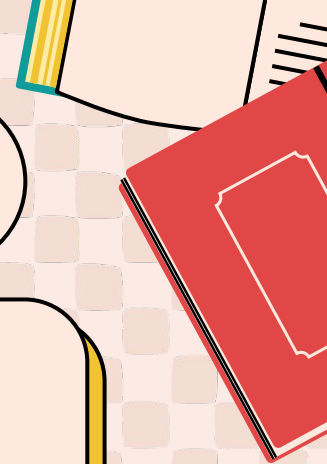
Harvey Milk is
a hero of mine who is a
champion for **LGBTQ**
Civil Rights.

Check out this video and discuss all the obstacles he went through to achieve his goals.



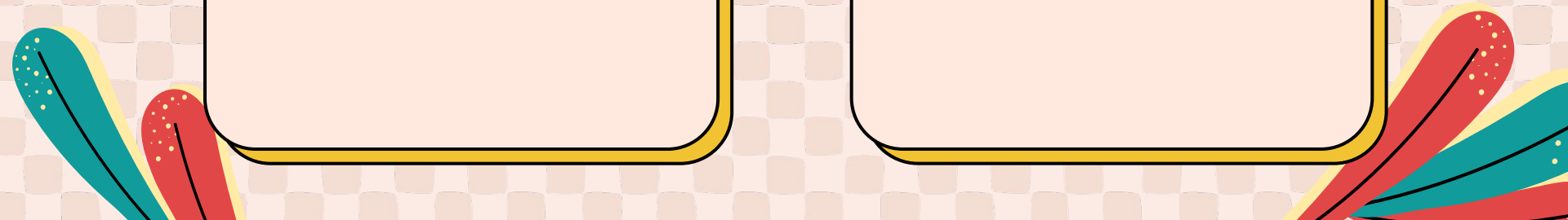
What did Harvey Milk teach you about not giving up?

Type here



Write a poem about a problem in the world that you want to solve.

Type here



Words of Advice:

I think goals should never be easy, they should force you to work, even if they are uncomfortable at the time.

Positive thinking is a valuable tool that can help you overcome obstacles, deal with pain, and reach new goals.

I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.

Prove yourself to yourself, not to other people.

Ask yourself if what you are doing today is getting you closer to where you want to be tomorrow.

Drag and drop your quote here.



Your Favorite Quote:

What does this quote mean to you? How can you apply it to your life?

Type reflection here

Black Out Poetry

1. Read this excerpt from the short story, "Grace" by Darcie Little Badger.
2. Think about your *goals*, your *future*, and what *motivates* you. Change the font color of words that stand out to you.
3. Highlight the remaining words in **black**.
4. Read your new poem to your classmates!

When I was very young, mama taught me three things. One. Someday, we'll go home. It's there, waiting, never really stolen. But until then, we gotta live like a pair of dandelion fluffs in the wind and drift around until the day comes to settle and grow. Two. I'm alive because my great-grandma resisted the men who tried to round them up and kill them or steal everything that mattered. Even when it meant hiding in plain sight, surviving in small enclaves after the world figured we all died. It hadn't always been that way. Once, my people helped the settlers and trusted their promises of friendship. But then Texas got incorporated into the United States, and that meant my people were suddenly unwelcome in our own home. Three. I'm Lipan Apache. Mama has been teaching me what that third fact means all my life. No matter where my family travels and who we encounter, I am Lipan. ----

"I understand it's difficult sometimes," she said, "but in the real world, you need to associate with all kinds of people. Find ways to get along and work together. It's important."

Real world? Did she think that everyone younger than eighteen lived in a simulation? I leaned forward and continued in an almost- whisper, afraid I'd start shouting otherwise. "Brandon tried to kiss me, and I said no. Now he's treating me like garbage. I don't have to work with anybody who disrespects me that way. *Ever.*"

I didn't think my math teacher's eyebrows could go any higher, but they managed somehow. Ms. Welton handed me a new pink worksheet. "If you need help finishing on your own," she said, "please let me know."

"Thank you." After transferring answers from the old to the new assignment, I returned to the island Brandon had made with our desks. "We're working by ourselves now," I said.

"Oh."

He just looked at me for a bit, like he expected more. An explanation? An accusation? An apology? I gave him nothing. About a minute later there was a *screech screech*, and the space between us widened. During the next group project, Ms. Welton let me join a team of three. My buddies and I finished the assignment ten minutes early and spent the rest of class talking about superheroes in nondisruptive indoor voices. A few days later, when Ms. Welton returned my work, I noticed that she wrote "Great Job!" beside my grade. I folded the neon-pink sheet of paper into a photograph- sized rectangle and tucked it inside my scrapbook of mementos. It was a reminder of my real ally on Paiute land.



Inspiration for the Future

“One of the lessons that I grew up with was to always stay true to yourself and never let what somebody else says distract you from your goals. And so when I hear about negative and false attacks, I really don't invest any energy in them, because I know who I am.”

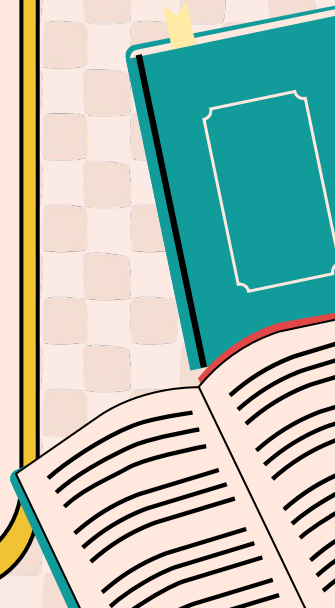
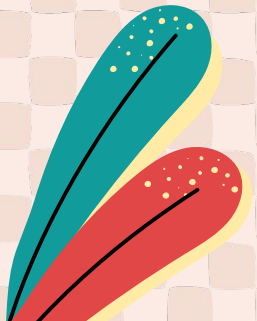
~ Michelle Obama



"Who are you gonna be?" Poem



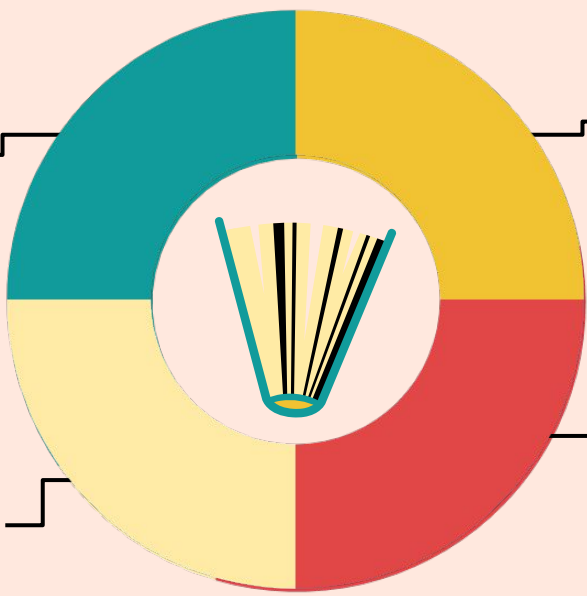
A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a yellow border, intended for writing a poem. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the image.



Final Project: Interview a family member about their past and what they were able to accomplish despite their own hardships. Here are some questions to get you started.

Tell me about some of your goals (in life, career, etc.) as a younger person.

What were some of the obstacles that stood in the way of accomplishing your goals?



What were some of your accomplishments that you are most proud of?

Who or what helped you to get through tough times when you wanted to give up?

You can post a link to your final project here.

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a yellow border, intended for posting a link to a final project. The box is centered on a light beige and white checkered background. Surrounding the box are various colorful illustrations of books and papers, including a teal book on the left, a red book on the right, and several papers with lines of text and checkboxes.

The background features a light gray and white checkerboard pattern. Scattered around the central text box are several stylized illustrations: books in teal and red, and teardrop-shaped leaves in teal and red with yellow outlines and small white dots. The central text is contained within a white rounded rectangle with a teal border.

Any questions?

Ask any of the teachers below:

- **Aubrey Stewart**
amstewart@philasd.org
- **Kelly Ann Coughlin:**
kcoughlin@philasd.org