

### Finding a Narrative

Heroic Qualities	Heroic Image	Organizing Content into Story Form
<p><b>What “heroic” qualities or values are central to the topic? What makes the characters in this story full of wonder?</b></p> <p>Persistence, humility in learning, and generosity of spirit are three central qualities needed in the hero or heroine’s journey. Each type of essay might also be accompanied by particular heroic qualities: expository, rationality and wisdom; descriptive, specificity and imagination; comparative, open-mindedness and balance; persuasive, rhetoric and power.</p>	<p><b>What image captures the heroic qualities of the topic?</b></p> <p>An adolescent on horseback, about to embark on a quest for knowledge through four distant kingdoms. The hero or heroine has four empty saddlebags, into which she or he will deposit the Hero’s Manuals – a record of the skills and knowledge gained from Masters en route.</p>	<p><b>What “heroic narrative” will allow us to integrate the content we wish to cover?</b></p> <p>The story form of this unit is similar to that of Swift’s <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i>. Students embark on a journey to become Master Essayists; they visit four different kingdoms, those of exposition, description, comparison and persuasion. Each kingdom is beset by troubles: in the kingdom of exposition, everyone is ignorant and passive (The Land of Ignora); the kingdom of description is engulfed in a fog (The Land of Nimba); the kingdom of comparison is made up of navel gazer (The Land of Myopia); the kingdom of persuasion is inhabited by shouters (The Land of Izola). The task of the student to help the inhabitants overcome their afflictions. Before entering each kingdom, the student will meet a Guide, from whom she or he will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills she or he needs to combat the troubles of the afflicted kingdom. (For example, the Guide of exposition teaches rational argument and structure; the Guide of description teaches specificity and imagery, the Guide of comparison teaches categories and perspective and the Guide of persuasion teaches counterarguments and use of convincing expressions). (Teachers could create a “story” or “profile” for each Guide, clarifying for students the particular Guide’s personality, attire, life experiences, abilities, etc). As the student studies with the Guide and progresses through each of the four kingdoms, he or she compiles a Hero/ Heroine’s Manual, in which are recorded the secrets bestowed by the Guide. Upon exiting each kingdom, the student will write an essay using the skills attained through practice with the Guide. At the end of the unit, the student will have a completed Manual and a portfolio of various types of essays.</p>

# Developing Cognitive Tools

## The Hero/ Heroine’s Journey: The Essay

Exploring Human Strengths & Emotions	Extremes of Reality	Collecting & Organizing	Teacher-led/structured ↕ Student-led/open-ended
<p><b><i>How can students understand the human hopes, fears, passions or struggles that have shaped our knowledge of this topic?</i></b></p> <p>Spend some time making each kingdom imaginatively vivid for the students. Read some Swift with them and involve them in thinking up and describing (in words, art, theatre, etc) the peculiarities of each realm, all of which (as in Gulliver’s Travels) highlight some particular human weakness.</p> <p>In each kingdom, there will be tales of previous heroes who have battled to save the realm from its affliction: great essayists who have sought to dispel ignorance, expand awareness, and exhort to action. Begin with one or two examples (tales told by the Guide), then have students research and tell the story of others (you might provide them with a list of names as a starting point). Look for ways to dramatize the circumstances in which each writer was working: war or social unrest, poverty, discrimination, oppression, censorship. What “monsters” did she or he need to overcome? What particular treasures did she or he discover? What were their own thoughts about why and how they wrote?</p> <p>Once students have a sense of what motivated the great essayists, help them find something contemporary about which they have strong feelings. How could the skills of exposition, description, comparison and persuasion help dispel this affliction? Who could they model themselves on as a writer? Who are they writing for? What do they need from their Guide?</p>	<p><b><i>What extremes of reality are related to the topic – biggest, hottest, oldest, richest?</i></b></p> <p>What essays have caused the essayist to suffer atrocities such as torture or execution?</p> <p>What essays have brought about the greatest changes in society?</p> <p>What have been the most extreme conditions under which people have written?</p> <p>Who wrote the most essays? Who became rich or famous as an essayist?</p> <p>How short can an essay be and still be effective? How long?</p>	<p><b><i>What parts of the topic can students best explore in exhaustive detail? How can students present their knowledge in some systematic form?</i></b></p> <p>Choose a particular essayist to study. Create a timeline of her or his life. Compare it with a timeline of social change.</p> <p>Write an annotated bibliography for three essays within one genre (such as expository essays on the environment) or by one essayist.</p> <p>Write an advice column in which several people request help with various essay problems (in one genre). Imitate the language and structure of advice columnists as you communicate your own knowledge, give encouragement and advice.</p> <p>Read several essays of one genre (e.g. persuasive). Choose the one which you feel is the best exemplar for the genre. Include it in your Manual, with your notes about which effective writing techniques are present.</p> <p>Suggested essayists include Virginia Wolff, Emma Goldman, Martin Luther King, Thomas Paine, Sojourner Truth, Henry David Thoreau, and Canadian writers such as Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, and Thomas King. Teachers and students can add to this list in accordance with their particular interests, the social studies curriculum , current issues for their community, etc.</p>	

## Looking Forward and Concluding

## The Hero/ Heroine's Journey: The Essay

Towards Further Understanding	A Celebratory Ending	Assessment
<p><b><i>How can the unit develop embryonic forms of Philosophic and Ironic understanding? What cognitive tools characteristic of the disciplines or embodied self-awareness can be introduced here?</i></b></p> <p>Why do writers write?</p> <p>How does writing change you? Why is writing difficult?</p> <p>How is speaking different than writing? Does thought become permanent when it is written down?</p> <p>Why do some essays have lasting effects?</p> <p>How has writing changed society? Can writing and the fundamentalism that can accompany it be dangerous or destructive?</p> <p>How are oral cultures fundamentally different than literate ones?</p>	<p><b><i>What is the best way of resolving the dramatic tension inherent in the unit? What communal project or activity will enable the students to experience and share this resolution?</i></b></p> <p>One way to end this unit would be for students to pick what they feel is their strongest essay and to find a suitable external audience for it (e.g. a local or national newspaper, a loved one whose behaviour they might want to change, an organization's newsletter, etc). The students could also lay out, print and bind collections of their own favourite essays, so each student has a copy to keep. They could then have a publication launch party, to which they could invite local writers, members of the community, the principal, parents, etc.</p>	<p><b><i>How can one know whether the topic has been understood, its importance grasped and the content learned?</i></b></p> <p>Does the Hero's Manual include the required information for each of the four essay types studied and of the writing process itself?</p> <p>Does the student's portfolio include examples of each of the four essay types (either best examples of each type or a selection highlighting various areas of growth)?</p>