

Name: _____

Date: _____

MAYA ANGELOU

Read the biographical passage about Maya Angelou and answer the questions.



Maya Angelou (1928 – 2014) was a towering figure in American literature and civil rights activism. Born Marguerite Annie Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri, Angelou's early years were fraught with the traumas of racial discrimination and personal violation. At the age of eight, she experienced a harrowing assault by her mother's boyfriend, a trauma that led her to become mute for five years, finding solace in books and literature.

Her memoir, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," vividly recounts the struggles of her childhood in the Jim Crow South, capturing the pervasive racism and her journey to reclaim her voice and identity. This seminal work laid bare the stark realities of racial injustice, while also conveying a message of hope and resilience.

Over her 50-year career, Angelou penned a multitude of works, including poetry, essays, and a series of autobiographies. Her writings, characterized by a lyrical prose style and powerful evocation of the Black experience in America, earned her numerous accolades, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Angelou's artistic versatility extended to acting, singing, and dancing, and she became a renowned speaker and professor, influencing countless individuals with her advocacy for equality and human rights. She worked with Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X during the Civil Rights Movement and her writings continue to inspire advocates for equality and justice across the world.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 What challenges did Maya Angelou face in her early life, and how did they influence her work?

- 2 What are some of the honors Maya Angelou received for her contributions to the arts and civil rights?

- 3 Why is Maya Angelou considered an important figure in American literature and history?

Name: _____

Date: _____

BILLIE JEAN KING

Read the biographical passage about Billie Jean King and answer the questions.



Billie Jean King is not only an iconic figure in the world of tennis but also a pioneering advocate for gender equality and social justice. Born in Long Beach, California, in 1943, King's passion for tennis was evident from a young age. Her skill on the court led her to win an astounding 39 Grand Slam titles, including 12 in singles, 16 in women's doubles, and 11 in mixed doubles.

Beyond her tennis achievements, King became a leading advocate for gender equality. In 1973, she defeated Bobby Riggs in the famous Battle of the Sexes match. An estimated 90 million people worldwide watched the broadcast. Her victory challenged claims that women were inferior athletes and brought wider attention to the campaign for equal pay and respect in sports.

King's activism extended off the court as well. She was a key figure in the establishment of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), which sought to improve the pay and conditions for female tennis players. Her efforts were crucial in ensuring that women athletes received comparable prize money to their male counterparts, a battle that continues in many sports today.

In addition to her work with the WTA, Billie Jean King played a significant role in the passage of Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits gender discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This law has been instrumental in increasing opportunities and funding for women in sports at the collegiate level and beyond.

King's contributions to tennis and equality have been widely recognized; she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 for her advocacy work. Her life and career continue to inspire not only athletes but anyone fighting for justice and equality.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 How did the "Battle of the Sexes" match contribute to the movement for gender equality in sports?

- 2 In what ways did Billie Jean King advocate for women's rights off the tennis court?

- 3 Why is Title IX significant, and how does it relate to Billie Jean King's legacy?

Name: _____

Date: _____

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Read the biographical passage
about Charlotte Brontë and answer
the questions.



Charlotte Brontë (1816 – 1855) was an English novelist and poet, renowned for her novel "Jane Eyre," a classic of English literature that challenged the social norms of her time. Born in Thornton, West Yorkshire, Charlotte was the third of six children in the Brontë family. Despite facing personal tragedies, including the death of her mother and two elder sisters in childhood, Charlotte's resolve to write and express herself through literature remained undeterred.

Charlotte's journey as a writer began at a young age, crafting stories and poems with her siblings in the isolated parsonage they called home. These early experiences not only honed her literary skills but also cultivated a rich imagination that would later define her work. "Jane Eyre," published under the pseudonym Currer Bell in 1847, emerged from her desire to articulate a woman's quest for identity and freedom against the constraints of Victorian society.

"Jane Eyre" broke new ground by exploring themes of class inequality, gender roles, and personal integrity through the eyes of its strong, morally courageous protagonist, Jane Eyre. Charlotte's ability to imbue her characters with depth and emotional complexity won her widespread acclaim, challenging contemporary notions of femininity and the role of women in literature.

Beyond "Jane Eyre," Charlotte's contributions to literature include other notable works such as "Shirley" and "Villette," which further explore themes of social criticism and personal identity. Despite her relatively short life, Charlotte Brontë's impact on English literature is profound, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire readers and writers alike.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 What is Charlotte Brontë best known for, and under what pseudonym was this work initially published?

- 2 How does "Jane Eyre" challenge Victorian social norms and explore themes of gender and class?

- 3 How did Charlotte's personal experiences influence her writing and the themes she explored?

Name: _____

Date: _____

MARIE ANTOINETTE

**Read the biographical passage
about Marie Antoinette and answer
the questions.**



Marie Antoinette, born in 1755 in Vienna, Austria, became the queen of France at a young age, marrying the future King Louis XVI. Her life at the French court was marked by opulence and luxury, which, combined with her Austrian heritage, made her unpopular among the French populace. Her spending habits and involvement in controversial court affairs only fueled public resentment, which was exacerbated by the economic crisis France faced in the late 18th century. Despite her efforts to adapt to French customs and politics, Marie Antoinette was often scapegoated for the kingdom's financial problems and the widespread hunger and discontent among the common people.

The phrase "Let them eat cake" is famously attributed to Marie Antoinette in response to learning that the French peasants had no bread to eat. However, there is no historical evidence to support that she ever uttered these words. This misattribution has become a symbol of the perceived insensitivity of the French monarchy to the plight of the poor and the extravagant lifestyle led by the nobility while the country was on the brink of financial ruin.

Marie Antoinette's reign saw the beginnings of the French Revolution in 1789, a turning point that led to the decline of the monarchy. The royal family's attempts to flee France in 1791 failed, resulting in their arrest and confinement. In 1793, following the execution of her husband, Marie Antoinette was tried by the revolutionary tribunal, convicted of high treason, and guillotined. Her life and death symbolize the excesses of the monarchy that led to its downfall and the rise of the Republic.

The story of "Let them eat cake" contributes to the complex legacy of Marie Antoinette, painting her as a villain in the narrative of the French Revolution. Her life story serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of miscommunication and the power of propaganda in shaping public opinion against individuals or institutions.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 Discuss the impact of Marie Antoinette's lifestyle on the public perception of the monarchy during a period of economic crisis.

- 2 How did the French Revolution change the course of Marie Antoinette's life and the monarchy in France?

- 3 Reflect on the historical interpretation of Marie Antoinette: How has her image changed over time, and why do you think she continues to fascinate people today?

Name: _____

Date: _____

SACAGAWEA

Read the biographical passage about Sacagawea and answer the questions.



Sacagawea (1788 - 1812), a member of the Lemhi Shoshone tribe, is celebrated for her indispensable role as a guide and interpreter for the Lewis and Clark expedition. Born in what is now Idaho, Sacagawea's early life was marked by turmoil and injustice when she was taken from her home at a young age, a stark reminder of the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples during this period in American history. Despite these injustices, Sacagawea emerged as a figure of resilience and resourcefulness.

In 1805, Sacagawea joined the Lewis and Clark expedition, where her unique skills greatly contributed to its success. Her knowledge of native plants, geography, and her linguistic abilities were invaluable, not only for survival but in fostering communication and diplomacy with other Native American tribes. Remarkably, she undertook this challenging journey while caring for her infant son, Jean Baptiste, embodying the spirit of courage and determination.

Sacagawea's legacy extends beyond her contributions to the Lewis and Clark expedition. Her life story is a testament to the strength and resilience of Indigenous women and their critical roles in American history. Today, Sacagawea is remembered not just as a guide, but as a symbol of female empowerment and the enduring spirit of exploration and cooperation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 Who was Sacagawea, and what significant event marked her childhood?

- 2 What were Sacagawea's contributions to the Lewis and Clark expedition?

- 3 What does Sacagawea's story teach us about the role of Indigenous peoples and women in shaping American history?

Name: _____

Date: _____

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Read the biographical passage
about Malala Yousafzai and answer
the questions.



Malala Yousafzai, born on July 12, 1997, in Mingora, Pakistan, emerged as a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate in recognition of her struggle against the suppression of children's education. Growing up in a region where the Taliban had often banned girls from attending school, Malala's passion for education faced direct threats, yet her conviction only grew stronger.

From a young age, Malala advocated for girls' education, writing a blog under a pseudonym for the BBC and speaking out publicly despite the dangers. Her activism made her a target, and in 2012, a gunman boarded her school bus and shot her. The attack sparked an international outcry, bringing unprecedented attention to the issue of girls' education globally.

Miraculously surviving the assassination attempt, Malala refused to be silenced. Instead, she leveraged her experience to amplify her message across the world stage, co-founding the Malala Fund to support education advocacy projects in various countries and authoring a best-selling memoir, "I Am Malala," to share her story.

Malala's unwavering dedication to education equality has made her an influential voice in international politics and a symbol of resilience and determination for young activists everywhere. Her work underscores the power of the youth voice in advocating for global change and the importance of education for all, regardless of gender.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 How did Malala Yousafzai begin her fight for education rights, and what risks did she face?

- 2 How did the attempt on Malala's life impact her advocacy work?

- 3 What does Malala's story teach us about the role of young people in social change movements?

Name: _____

Date: _____

SIMONE BILES

Read the biographical passage about Simone Biles and answer the questions.



Simone Biles, born on March 14, 1997, in Columbus, Ohio, has transcended the world of gymnastics, establishing herself as one of the greatest and most decorated gymnasts in history. Biles' journey to the pinnacle of her sport is marked by her incredible talent, resilience, and dedication.

From an early age, Simone demonstrated a natural affinity for gymnastics, quickly rising through the sport's ranks with her powerful performances and unparalleled skill set. Her breakthrough came at the 2013 World Championships, where she claimed her first all-around title, a feat she has repeated many times over at both national and international levels.

Simone Biles' name is synonymous with excellence and innovation. She has pushed the boundaries of what is possible in gymnastics, performing complex skills that have since been named after her. Her achievements include multiple Olympic gold medals and a record number of World Championship titles. Beyond her athletic prowess, Biles has been a powerful advocate for athletes' mental health, bringing attention to the importance of well-being in high-performance sports.

Despite facing personal and professional challenges, including navigating the pressures of international competition and advocating for change within the sport of gymnastics, Simone Biles' legacy extends beyond her medal count. She embodies the spirit of perseverance, the pursuit of excellence, and the courage to prioritize one's mental and emotional health.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1 How has Simone Biles contributed to the evolution of gymnastics?

2 In what ways has Simone Biles highlighted the importance of mental health in sports?

3 What can we learn from Simone Biles' approach to overcoming obstacles and prioritizing her well-being?

Name: _____

Date: _____

ANNE FRANK

Read the biographical passage about Anne Frank and answer the questions.



Anne Frank, a Jewish diarist, became an enduring symbol of resilience in the face of oppression. Her Jewish family moved to Amsterdam to escape the growing Nazi threat in Germany. However, when the Nazis occupied the Netherlands, Anne and her family were forced into hiding in 1942 to evade persecution.

For over two years, Anne and her family lived in the concealed annex of an office building, relying on the assistance of courageous friends who risked their lives to provide them with food and news of the outside world. During this time of fear and uncertainty, Anne turned to her diary as a source of comfort and a means to express her thoughts, fears, hopes, and experiences.

Anne's diary, initially intended as a personal journal, has become one of the most poignant and impactful accounts of the Holocaust, offering a deeply personal perspective on the horrors of war and the human spirit's capacity to endure. Despite the harsh conditions of her life in hiding, Anne's writing reflects her intelligence, youthful humor, and profound insight.

Tragically, Anne's story ends in sorrow. In August 1944, the secret annex was discovered, and the Frank family, along with the others hiding with them, were arrested and deported to concentration camps. Anne died in Bergen-Belsen camp in early 1945, just weeks before its liberation. Her father, Otto Frank, the sole survivor of the family, published her diary posthumously. Today, "The Diary of a Young Girl" stands as a testament to the unjust suffering of millions and a reminder of our collective responsibility to prevent such atrocities.

Anne Frank's legacy is a call to action against discrimination and for the promotion of human rights. Her life and diary challenge us to reflect on the value of tolerance, the importance of remembering history, and the power of a single voice to inspire change.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 What circumstances led Anne Frank and her family to go into hiding?

- 2 How does Anne's diary provide unique insights into life during the Holocaust?

- 3 Reflect on the importance of Anne Frank's diary in today's world. What lessons can we learn from her story?

Name: _____

Date: _____

HARRIET TUBMAN

Read the biography of Harriet Tubman and answer the comprehension questions using the passage for reference.



Harriet Tubman (c. 1820 – 1913), born Araminta Ross in Dorchester County, Maryland, was an American abolitionist and political activist. Despite the harsh conditions of her enslavement, including a severe head injury suffered as a child, Tubman escaped to freedom in 1849. Her escape marked the beginning of her remarkable journey as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad.

As a key figure in the Underground Railroad, Tubman returned to the South about 13 times, helping approximately 70 enslaved people, including her family and friends, escape to freedom.

She became known for her strategic planning, use of disguises, and unwavering determination. Despite the increased risks after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which forced her to extend her routes to Canada, Tubman never lost a passenger.

During the Civil War, Tubman served as a nurse, scout, spy, and guerrilla soldier for the Union Army. She led the Combahee River Raid, resulting in the liberation of over 700 slaves, and was the first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war.

After the war, Tubman settled in Auburn, New York, where she was active in the women's suffrage movement and cared for her aging parents. Her legacy as a symbol of courage and freedom continues to inspire countless people worldwide.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 What were Harriet Tubman's early life conditions, and what injury did she suffer as a child?

- 2 Describe Harriet Tubman's role and activities in the Underground Railroad.

- 3 What was Harriet Tubman's life like after the Civil War, and why is she a significant figure in American history?

Name: _____

Date: _____

ROSA PARKS

Read the biographical passage about Rosa Parks and answer the questions.



Rosa Parks (1913 – 2005) was an African American civil rights activist whose refusal to surrender her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Born on February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama, Parks grew up in an era of rampant racial segregation and discrimination.

Parks was a seamstress and a long-time member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

On December 1, 1955, Parks refused to give up her bus seat. Her arrest was not planned, but her resistance reflected years of civil rights activism. She was arrested and fined, and her action became a powerful symbol in the fight against racial injustice.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott, triggered by her arrest, lasted for over a year and was a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement. It led to a Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional. Parks' quiet strength and moral courage continued to inspire the movement, earning her the nickname "the mother of the civil rights movement."

After the boycott, Parks faced harassment and threats in Montgomery. She moved to Detroit, Michigan, where she continued to be active in the struggle for justice and equality until her death in 2005. Her legacy as an icon of the Civil Rights Movement lives on, symbolizing the power of individual action in the fight for equality and justice.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1 What was Rosa Parks' early life like, and what was her profession?

2 What was the significant action Rosa Parks took in 1955, and why was it important?

3 Why is Rosa Parks considered a pivotal figure in the Civil Rights Movement?

Name: _____

Date: _____

RUBY BRIDGES

Read the biography of Ruby Bridges and answer the comprehension questions using the passage for reference.



Ruby Bridges was born on September 8, 1954, in Tylertown, Mississippi. At age two, her family moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, in search of better opportunities.

In 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges became the first African American student to attend William Frantz Elementary School. Her enrollment helped desegregate public education in New Orleans. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* had ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, but implementing that decision required further court orders and determined action.

Despite the legal ruling, the reality of integration was met with strong resistance. On her first day, Ruby was escorted by federal marshals as she faced hostile crowds who protested her presence at the school. Many white parents withdrew their children in opposition, leaving Ruby alone in her classroom. Her teacher, Barbara Henry, a Boston native, was the only one willing to educate her, and she provided Ruby with individualized instruction for the entire year.

Ruby's perseverance and courage symbolized the fight for racial equality in education. Over time, more students returned to school, and integration slowly took hold. Her bravery was recognized nationally, and she became a key figure in the struggle against segregation.

As an adult, Ruby Bridges continued her advocacy for education and racial equality. She founded the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which promotes tolerance, respect, and equal opportunities for all children. Her story has been immortalized in books, films, and even a famous painting by Norman Rockwell titled *The Problem We All Live With*. Ruby Bridges' legacy serves as a powerful reminder of the impact one individual can have in shaping history and fighting injustice.

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 What Supreme Court ruling led to Ruby Bridges' enrollment at William Frantz Elementary School?

- 2 What organization did Ruby Bridges establish, and what is its purpose?

- 3 Why is Ruby Bridges considered an important figure in the Civil Rights Movement?
