

## Resilient Poetry – Lesson Plan for Grades 9-12

### PROJECT AND PURPOSE

Students will read *The Seven Resiliencies* handout and consider how resiliency applies to their own lives. Students will then read and discuss Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise" to better understand how resiliency overcomes oppression.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Consider how resilient qualities apply to their own lives in dealing with problems.
- Discuss how the poem illustrates resiliency over oppression.

### MATERIALS

- "Still I Rise" handout
- *The Seven Resiliencies* handout
- Paper, pens, pencils

### PROCEDURE

1. If possible, place desks/chairs in a circle so everyone can see each other.
2. Distribute *The Seven Resiliencies* handout and discuss the terms and definitions.
3. Ask students to think of examples from history or from their own lives where these strengths made a person or a group of persons resilient enough to overcome tremendous obstacles. Have students be specific in their answers.
4. Distribute the "Still I Rise" handout and ask students to read it silently to themselves.
5. When everyone is ready, have the class do a "read-around." This is when each member of the class reads one physical line of the poem, even if it is only one word, in order around the circle. Begin the poem with a different person and read-around a second time.
6. Read-around a third time, this time asking each reader to read his or her line of poetry with a strong emotion or attitude that matches the emotion or attitude of the words in the line. Students may also change the volume of the lines and the speed of delivery.
7. Ask the group which lines were their favorites or which lines had the most impact on them and why.
8. Ask: *Who is this poem about? How do you know? Which lines tell you that?*
9. Discuss the following question: *How does this poem illustrate any of the Seven Resiliencies?*
10. Assign students to write a personal response to this poem in a formal paper or an informal journal entry.

### EVALUATION

- Did each student participate in the resiliency discussion?
- Did each student read aloud at his or her turn in the read-around?
- Did students understand the concepts of resiliency over oppression in the poem?
- Did students complete the written assignment?

## The Seven Resiliencies

(Adapted from Project Resilience by Steven and Sybil Wolin)

The following seven attributes describe ways you can show resiliency when facing challenges. Keep in mind that you – like most people – may show some, but not all, of these attributes/strengths when faced with difficult situations.

### Insight—

Having **insight** means asking questions of yourself, even when the questions are difficult. If you answer honestly, you can learn and move forward. Having insight helps you understand the problem and how to best solve it. Insight helps you analyze the situation from as many perspectives as you can.

### Independence—

Showing **independence** means keeping a healthy distance between yourself and other people so you can think things through and do what is best for you. It also means knowing how to step away from people who seem to cause trouble or make things worse by their words or actions.

### Relationships—

Building **relationships** means finding connections with people that are healthy for both of you and keeping those relationships growing.

### Initiative—

Taking the **initiative** means taking control of the problem and working to solve it. It means asking questions of yourself and answering them as honestly as you can, so you can move past a sticky situation. Sometimes people who take initiative become the leader in activities and teamwork.

### Creativity—

Using **creativity** requires that you use your imagination or resourcefulness to express your feelings, thoughts and plans in some unique way. Remember that when you make something happen, it shows resiliency of spirit and a positive attitude.

### Humor—

**Humor** is the ability to find something funny (especially yourself!) in a situation, even when things seem really bad. Humor often gives you the perspective needed to relieve tension and make a situation better.

### Morality—

Being a person of **morality** means knowing the difference between right and wrong and being willing to choose and stand up for what is right.

## RESOURCE

Project Resilience

## Still I Rise by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.