Reading/Writing Strategies

Medal of Honor Study

Thomas J. Hudner

Wattsburg Area Middle School
Mr. Ward—8th Grade Class
As a relatively new Superintendent of a small rural school district, I sometimes become immersed in the day-to-day operations of the buildings and realize that I am feeling removed from the clientele that I most desire to serve—the students. The celebration of Memorial Day afforded me the opportunity to plan and implement a three-day lesson for 8th grade students that incorporated many of the initiatives that the district holds dear. I was able to select the nonfiction piece about Korean War veteran Thomas J. Hudner and familiarize middle school students with the account of his bravery as he demonstrated his loyalty to his colleague, Jesse Brown, the first African American pilot. Due to their differing backgrounds, Hudner and Brown would most probably not have crossed paths under normal circumstances. However, their lives intersected as they sought to defend their country during the Korean War, and a fast friendship was forged as they experienced the hardships of war and discovered their common love of country.

Besides exposing students to the experiences of Hudner and Brown, I sought to use the Pennsylvania Literacy Network’s engagement model to ensure that all students were actively participating in the lesson, and making meaning in a personal way. I employed before, during, and after reading strategies and explained to the students why we were using these strategies and how students could increase their comprehension with nonfiction pieces by internalizing effective ways to process text.

All in all, this was a productive three days spent in the classroom! The students were very receptive to the ideas presented in the lessons, and participated fully in the strategies. Their final RAFT assignments demonstrated that true comprehension had occurred. Students indicated on their exit cards that they especially enjoyed collaborating, discussing, and sharing with their peers and their awareness of how to read effectively was positively impacted.

I’m hoping that as a by-product of this lesson students will have a heightened sense of patriotism and an awareness of the sacrifices that have been made by untold numbers of members the Armed Forces to preserve the freedoms we presently enjoy. This binder provides both rough drafts and revised copies of the ideas that our 8th graders shared as a result of their reading….

Nancy Sadaly,
Superintendent
Wattsburg Area School District
Erie, PA
Lesson Purpose:

Demonstrate that the first person nonfiction can easily be employed as springboards for meaningful literacy lessons in middle school and high school reading and language arts.

Demonstrate how teachers can successfully incorporate before, during, and after reading strategies into nonfiction lessons in order to increase student comprehension and engagement across content areas.

Assignment:

After Reading RAFT Assignment

Projects:

Poems
- Molly L.
- Nate F.
- Keegan R.
- Christian H.
- Ben M.
- Megan R.
- Josh L.
- Steven B.
- Jared H.
- Ryan B.
- Lindsey J.
- Rachel P.
- Mackenzie Y.

Letters
- John B.
- Mackenzie C.
- Alex S.
- Courteney B.
- Carey W.
- Keegan S.
- Emma K.
- Genna Z.

Speeches
- Sydney F.

Journal
- Austin K.
Purpose of Lesson

My first objective in the lesson on Medal of Honor recipient Thomas J. Hudner is to demonstrate that the first person nonfiction accounts of MOH recipients can easily be employed as springboards for meaningful literacy lessons in middle school and high school reading and language arts. My second objective is to demonstrate how teachers can successfully incorporate before, during, and after reading strategies into nonfiction lessons in order to increase student comprehension and engagement across content areas.

By Nancy Sadaly, Superintendent WASD
This will most likely be my last night to live. Tonight I am fighting to survive. I am trying to stay warm in the freezing mountains. Also, to stay alive to be with my beautiful wife. She is the only person I think of during this horrible war. But if I die tonight I would hope for the best for my wife. I would watch her from the heavens so I will always know she is safe even when I am gone. Now as it gets colder I start to lose consciousness. But I will die as the first black pilot, a true friend and a good husband.

By Austin K.
Today we will be hearing from Thomas J. Hudner, a Medal of Honor recipient who showed great loyalty to his friend and fellow soldier, Jesse Brown. Hudner will tell you more about it himself, but he lost a good friend that day. I’m sure you’ll admire his bravery, as well as his ability to stay calm in the face of danger. When Jesse’s plane was shot down on December 4, 1950 in Korea, Thomas disregarded all thoughts for himself or the opinion of his commanding officers. He landed his plane in dangerous conditions to attempt to save his friend. Please welcome Thomas Hudner.

By Sidney F.

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My dear, sweet Pamela
Did you ever know
how brave your papa was
when he was in the face of war?
His friends were loyal
his comrades encouraging.
Your papa was such a lucky man
to have the friends he did
never leaving his side.
Your papa never stopped fighting,
even with death at his door.
Oh, how I wish you could have known
how brave your papa was!
Now, be proud, and hold your head high
Cuz’ you’ve got the bravest pop
there ever was!
My dear, sweet, Pamela

By Molly L.
Your Father

Your father Jesse Brown was a brave brave man. Knowing he might not come back again.

He went to war knowing he might not come back again.

Your father was the first black pilot to fly the skies. He was a very honest man that hardly lied.

Always remember he loved you and that’s why he did what he had to do.

He will be in the hearts of both you and I.

His good friend Thomas Hudner tried to save his life but your dad died by the moon light.

Know your father will always be with you through all your hard times that you’ll go through.

By Nate F.
Mr. Hudner,

I am very grateful for you trying to save my dear husband, Jesse. But, I am curious about a few things.

First, let me tell you how thankful I am. Jesse was so important to me, and having someone like you trying to save the first African American Navy aviator means so much. Although our daughter, Pamela, will not be able to grow up with him, she will get to grow up knowing her father had an amazing friend. Mr. Hudner, you more than deserved that Medal of Honor. Crash landing in the middle of a war is not easy for a man to survive, I presume.

I had a few concerns though about your decisions. I heard and read that you thought about cutting off Jesse’s trapped leg. Why didn’t you? It seems logical to me that at the time, the most important thing to do was get him out. Although the weather may have been cold, there was a helicopter there with a first aid kit.

I just wanted to thank you again for your efforts to save Jesse LeRoy Brown.

Sincerely,
Daisy Brown

By Genna Z.

Hudner

Graduating the Naval Academy in 1946, Hudner only wanted to serve aboard a ship.

He was a wingman for Jesse Brown, the plane crashed but it was sure to be found.

Doing all he could to keep Jesse alive, Hudner didn’t think he was going to survive.

Winning the Medal of Honor

To Jesse Brown he grew fonder.

By Keegan R.
Father

Precious daughter,

you’ve never met your father.

My head is filled with worry,

so I’ll tell you his story.

He was a brave man,

going to the war.

He was the first black pilot,

but he is not anymore.

I’m sorry you couldn’t see him,

and his brave, strong ways,

but there is also another man

who tried saving Daddy’s life in the old days.

This man’s name is Thomas

with the last name of Hudner.

When your father was shot,

Tom stopped for him, which made me wonder.

Why did this man stop

like a charitable type of royalty?

It’s because he possessed a thing,

and this thing is loyalty.

By Christian H.

Dear Thomas,

My name is Daisy Brown, and I’m the wife of Jesse. Jesse wrote to me about you often, and I am glad that in such a prejudiced time you befriended my husband. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for risking your life to save Jesse. The reasons for this are that you could have died. You let his last moments be with a friend, and you at least tried to save his life.

When I first heard of Jesse’s death, I worried that he died because no one went to save him. Thomas, you gave me a sense of relief when I heard that you did try to save Jesse. Although, it was foolish because two lives shouldn’t be lost, you were loyal and I applaud you for that. Your life was at risk and you still tried to save Jesse. The main reason I thank you is because you let Jesse have his last moments be with a friend. Even if Jesse was in and out of consciousness at one point, he had to have sensed your presence. If I would have found out he died alone, I wouldn’t have been able to live with myself. I’m glad to know that Jesse’s final thoughts could have been positive about mankind because of you, a kind friend. Finally, thank you for at least trying to save his life.

Since this is a time when racism is everywhere, and though terrible, I wouldn’t be surprised if no one came to Jesse’s rescue. I realize that you tried every way to free Jesse, and even considered leg amputation. I wish that his case hadn’t been so hopeless because my daughter will never get to meet such an amazing man.

So, Thomas, as I conclude I thank you once more for your bravery, loyalty, and valor when trying to save my husband Jesse. I will never forget your kindness, and I owe you everything. You deserve every award, and especially the Medal of Honor. I hope to meet you in person one day, because a friend of Jesse is a friend of mine.

Yours Truly,

Daisy Brown

By Emma K.
Daisy,

My dear wife, I want to let you know that everything will be ok. I will not be here with you anymore, but I will always be by you making sure you are doing ok. I know things are going to be different around the house without me, but I know how strong you are and I know you will be ok. Don’t worry about me, or the life you think we could have had. I want you to enjoy the rest of your life being happy, don’t let me stand in your way. You need to promise me though, that you will tell Pamela the truth about me, when the time is right, and let her know that I am ok. Help her understand that she can get through this world with you by her side. I want both of you to know that I love you so much, and I always will, even if I am not there to tell you.

With all of my love,
your husband.
Jesse Brown

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Oh, My Dear

Oh, my dear,
Woe is me
My love has gone amiss,
Out of the skies
Into the snow
He breathes his last breath.

Oh, my dear,
The man you won’t meet
His ashes spreading on the wind
Like dandelions in a field
His country served.
But the war not done.

Oh, my dear,
Just remember
You do not face
The road ahead alone.
Weary, tired, and alone
I, holding your hand.

Oh, my dear,
I love you so
You’re not alone
In this cold
Life-taking world
But you have me and my love.

Oh, my dear

By Ben M.
Your Father

He loved the war,
fighting for what was right.
Always being loyal and true,
ever afraid of anything.
Willing to risk his life
to save us and everyone else.
Always helped the unfortunate
to matter the consequence.
He was loving, caring and a friend
to everyone he met.
He was a brave man, and a hero.

By Megan R.

Daisy,

I don’t think I will be coming home. I had to make a crash landing. When I was hit with an antiaircraft gun, after numerous tries by my friend Thomas Hudner, they still couldn’t get me out because my leg was stuck in the plane. Although they failed, I couldn’t be happier to say that I appreciate the effort made by a brave, loyal, and courageous friend. There are no words to express the way I feel about what he did to try and save my life. Serving for my country was a great experience. I would be proud to say that is the way I died best of luck to you and Pamela. I ♡ U both. Go on with your lives in happiness as if I were there with you.

Lots of Love,
Jesse Brown

By Carey W.
Daisy,

I have some very bad news that you will receive very soon, so I would rather tell you myself. I was hit by an anti-aircraft fire while flying at a low altitude. I don’t think you will ever see me again because there is no way out. After I crashed I used all the strength I had to wave up above me to let them know I was all right. But when I looked down, I soon realized my leg was caught. My dear friend Thomas J. Hudner crashed to try to save me. After numerous attempts, I was still stuck. There was nothing they could do. I realized I could die by being frozen or by some other way. Please just live your life as if I were there beside you. Tell Pamela I love her. Always keep me in your memories. I will see you again someday!

Jesse

By Courteney B.

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Jesse’s Bravery

Your father. He was so great,
He flew his plane until his fate.
He was the first black pilot, you see,
And I know that’s what he was meant to be.
But then that night the enemy had come
And shot him down before he was done.

By Josh L.
Warrior’s Death

You are your father’s daughter,
And I your father’s wife.
For us is just the reason why
He sacrificed his life.

He flew his plane so proud,
But unfortunately
When he flew his plane,
He didn’t do so cautiously.

He fell out of the sky,
He hit the ground so fast.
He is gone from us right now
He is stuck back in the past.

I love you though, my dear,
That’s why you ought to know
Your father died a warrior’s death
Lying in the snow.

By Steven B.
Dear President Harry Truman,

Thomas Hudner should receive the Medal of Honor for his display of loyalty and bravery in the face of danger and disaster. During the crash-landing of the F4U, piloted by Jesse Brown, Hudner decided to attempt to rescue Brown, who was trapped in the wreckage.

Hudner crash landed his own plane to get down to the injured man trapped in the smoking form of his plane. Hudner radioed other airborne planes, requesting a rescue helicopter be dispatched with an ax and fire extinguisher. He remained on the spot despite the dangerous enemy action happening all around.

When I arrived in the rescue helicopter, the Sikorsky HO3S, he was still with Brown, talking to him while he floated in and out of consciousness. Brown’s leg was trapped and entangled under metal and other instruments. We tried everything, but without success. We even debated whether or not to remove Brown’s leg with a knife. Neither of us had the heart to go through with it though I knew we would have to leave, night was setting in and the temperature was dropping when we returned the next morning Brown was dead.

Thomas Hudner should receive the Medal of Honor for his courage, loyalty and strength.

Lieutenant Ward

By Mackenzie C.

Head Up

Daisy, Daisy,
Keep your head up!
Make sure to tell Pamela about the wonderful man
her father was.
Remember him, never forget him
as I won’t either.
And in the hardest of times
without him,
Pull through it and do it for him.
Never forget
the best of times with Jesse by your side.
He will be with you always
watching and helping.
So keep your head up
and keep your shine
through the
Bravery
Honesty
Friendship
and Integrity
of your husband,
Jesse Brown.

By Jared H.
Your Father Dear

Your father dear,
such a great a man,
was built of bravery
and courage that was grand.
He was the first black pilot
in the military,
and with this it gave him
a huge responsibility.
One freezing day
when your father was only 24 years old
his plane was struck down behind enemy lines,
but what his partner did was oh, so bold.
Thomas Hudner,
that was his name,
attempted to save Jesse
even after the helicopter came.
They tried, and tried
but it became very late.
They would have to go
which Hudner would hate.
The next day you father
received a warrior’s funeral after his death.
Your father was a great and brave man
all the way to his final breath.

By Ryan B.

Dear President Truman,

I am a helicopter pilot from the Korean War, and was sent in after fellow soldiers Jesse Brown and Thomas Hudner. Jesse’s plane had been hit by anti-aircraft fire. Jesse, being an educated pilot, made a crash landing. The only problem was that a panel in the cockpit jammed up his leg.

Jesse’s friend in the mission was another pilot, Thomas Hudner. Being a friend of Jesse’s, he bravely forgot about the mission and made an emergency landing. When I arrived, Mr. Hudner had used snow to put out possible fires, and had already evaluated Jesse’s leg. Mr. Hudner and I tried many techniques, but the conditions made it impossible to help Jesse. If I had not been there, Hudner would have stayed the night with Jesse. The next day after being found dead and stripped of clothing, Jesse was granted a warrior’s funeral.

I would like to nominate Thomas Hudner for the Medal of Honor due to his loyalty to his friend, and bravery amongst hard times. Mr. Hudner was not ordered to land, did so to help and attempt to save his friend, and to me this is something to be recognized. Also, Mr. Hudner’s bravery never faltered as he risked his life. Nobody had been into the territory and there could have been enemy forces, but Hudner went anyway. For this, I believe he should be rewarded with the Medal of Honor.

By John B.
You May Not Have Known Your Father

You may not have known your father, though he was very brave,
and the loyalty of his comrades was with him till the grave.

So please pull through,
as I will have to do.

We will mourn that he is gone, but just be glad that he was here.

On the cemetery lawn, we will shed many a tear.

Though he's now part of the past
his memory will last.

By Lindsey J.
Black Pilot

He was the only black pilot there,
but he didn’t care.

He was as brave as ever,
pushing and pulling all the levers,
he and his airplane acted as one, while flying high past the sun.

He never gave up,
and always wished everyone good luck,
When he would fly he was always loyal,
just like when he walked upon the soil.

He loved you,
and he showed it a lot too.

By Rachel P.

Daddy’s Bravery

Oh, Pamela, although you’ll never understand,
your daddy was a very brave and courageous man.

He went off on yet another perilous flight
for soldiers to find he crashed and died through night.

Fate predetermined that he had to go,
but Jesse left with a fight during that cold winter snow.

To fight for your country in a war,
is so much more than just blood and gore.

You wear that proud uniform so straight and tall,
saying to those who see, “I’ll fight till I fall.”

Your father felt that serving his country was a duty
because he found pride in America’s true beauty...

Freedom.

By Mackenzie Y

BY THE GRACE OF GOD