

## Teens Beating the Odds TEACHER'S GUIDE

### What teachers need to know:

Being **resilient** is the ability to “hang in there” or “bounce back” from frustrations and setbacks. It also means being able to adapt to change, and to appropriately handle stress or problems. The end result of **resiliency** is feeling successful and confident.

According to the study *Fostering Resiliency in Kids* by Bonnie Bernard (1991), resilient children share the following attributes:

- **Social Competence:** Resilient children respond to others and others respond easily to them. They are active, both physically and socially, flexible and adapt well to changes. Quite often, resilient children show signs of a great sense of humor and can laugh at themselves as well as life's situations.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** Resilient children are able to think through challenging situations and find a solution.
- **Autonomy:** Resilient children know who they are, can act independently and feel a sense of control over their situations/environments.
- **Sense of Purpose and Future:** Resilient children plan and set goals. They typically believe in a bright future.

### Lesson Plan

#### Objectives:

Students will:

- Discuss how the poem “Still I Rise” illustrates resiliency
- Apply resilient qualities to their own lives

#### Materials:

- Make copies of the Maya Angelou poem, “Still I Rise” (available at <http://www.poemhunter.com/p/m/poem.asp?poet=6834&poem=33053>. Please note stanza seven (7) may not be appropriate for all grade/maturity levels.
- Paper, pens, pencils
- Poetry books, magazines or approved poetry websites

#### Project and Purpose:

Students will read and discuss Maya Angelou's poem “Still I Rise” to better understand resiliency and apply what they learn to their own lives.

1. If possible, place desks/chairs in a circle so everyone can see each other.
2. Begin a discussion about what makes a person resilient, or what attributes resilient people have in common (see list above in, “What teachers need to know”).
3. Ask students to think of examples from history or from their own lives where resiliency made a person or a group of persons strong enough to overcome an obstacle. Have students be very specific in their answers.
4. Distribute copies of the poem, “Still I Rise” 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. Begin the poem with a different person and read a second round. This time, ask each reader to read his/her line with strong emotion or attitude that matches the words. They may also use volume and speed of delivery.
6. Ask the group which lines meant something to them and why.
7. Ask: *Who is this poem about? How do you know? Which lines tell you that?*
8. Discuss the following question: *How does this poem illustrate resiliency?*
9. Assign students to write a personal response to this poem either in a formal paper or in an informal journal entry.

#### Class Discussion Questions:

1. What challenges did the kids in the video overcome? How does this make them resilient?
2. What skills should a person learn to become more resilient?
3. Do you believe that “every child can succeed...against all odds?” Explain your answer.

**Self-Reflection Questions:**

1. The video speaks of the three Ps that make it hard to be resilient. Permanent (problems will never go away). Pervasive (problems are everywhere in your life). Personal (you feel everything is your fault). How have you overcome any of these three Ps in your life? Explain.
2. What resilient people do you admire? Describe how they have overcome challenges.
3. What is one area in your life where you show, or want to show, resiliency? What obstacles are in your way?

**Evaluation:**

- Did each student participate in the poem read around and resiliency discussions?
- Did students understand the concepts and signs of resiliency?
- Did students complete the written assignments?

**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.

