



Exploring Diverse Perspectives with Authentic Texts

Introduction

The *Untold Stories* series is a literacy resource offering texts that share the culture, history, experiences, and values of diverse people throughout history. These stories connect, engage, and inspire readers. Living examples of empowerment, struggle, joy, resilience, and innovation are presented in the stories while demonstrating how these people have made their communities stronger.

One story is about Vicki Manalo Draves who found a way to persevere and become the first Asian American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Another is about Sheyann Webb, who happened upon a civil rights meeting at a church when she was eight years old. She went on to become one of the youngest activists during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and has dedicated her life to helping others. And another focuses on Derek Rabelo, a 23-year-old surfer, who is blind and relies on his heightened sense of hearing to navigate the oceans. Students also experience the incredible story of Susan La Flesche Picotte who became one of the first American Indian doctors in 1886. As a young girl, La Flesche was inspired to become a doctor when she cared for a woman in pain who later died because a doctor never arrived. This example shows the resilience of a young woman who ended up serving her community and making a difference in the lives of many people after seeking an education.

When students read one of the *Untold Stories*, they read about someone's vulnerability, passion, success, failure, pride, and more.

Untold Stories Derek Rabelo

Surfing the Unseen

Derek Rabelo was born blind. He grew up near the ocean and loved the water. He dreamed of surfing the waves. At 17, he learned how to surf.

Rabelo used the senses he had. He felt the water around him. He listened to the ocean. Each part of the waves sounded different to him. This helped him learn to ride them.

Soon, he wanted a new and bigger challenge. He decided to surf a **reef break** in Hawaii. It is called Pipeline. Surfers know that it is very difficult to do.

Rabelo trained for three years. He had a coach. Friends helped him practice. At last, he did it! A video of his success went **viral**. A filmmaker made a movie about him, too.

Rabelo became a **professional** surfer. He travels around the world. He looks for more challenges and bigger waves. He gives speeches to inspire others. Rabelo keeps on surfing the waves of his dream.

—Heather E. Schwartz

Untold Stories Susan La Flesche Picotte

First American Indian Doctor

Being first can be hard. There is no one to lead the way. There is no one to show you it can be done.

Susan La Flesche Picotte went to medical school. It was far from home. Few women in her time became doctors. But La Flesche Picotte earned a **medical degree**. She became the first American Indian doctor.

La Flesche Picotte's father pushed his daughters to "be somebody in the world." La Flesche was bright. She spoke many languages. She played the piano and painted. She knew how to work hard.

As a young girl, La Flesche cared for a woman in pain. She sent for the doctor four times. But he never came. The woman died. The doctor thought that Indian lives did not matter. But La Flesche knew they did.

She wanted to help the people at home. Many were sick on her **reservation**. As a doctor, La Flesche worked hard to care for them. She rode horseback and walked through snow. She was the only doctor in the area.

Then, she had a big idea. She wanted to build a hospital. It took many years to raise the money. But she did it. She built the first modern hospital on the reservation.

Though La Flesche Picotte had a hard life, she made a big **impact**. She changed the lives of many people.

—Georgia Beth

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The Logic Model

The Logic Model in Figure 1 demonstrates how *Untold Stories* is designed to develop life-long learners and critical thinkers. Evidence of this is suggested through its resources and activities, which are linked to positive outcomes for students. The goal of this table is to help the reader visualize how implementing *Untold Stories* can support and contribute to achieving school and district goals.

Figure 1—Logic Model

Problem Statement: There is a need for literacy resources that promote a deeper understanding of culture, self-awareness, and resilience through diverse stories in history.					
Outcome/Goal: To help students learn, reflect, write, speak, and critically think about impactful people in history					
Theory of Action					
Educators implement evidence-based literacy strategies.	K–12 students engage in and utilize literacy practices.	K–12 students will have increased skills and comfort speaking, writing, reading, and reflecting.	K–12 students will have increased achievement in literacy across all content areas.	K–12 students will be prepared for secondary and post-secondary education success.	K–12 students will be life-long learners and critical thinkers.
Logic Model					
Assumptions	Resources/Inputs	Activities	Outputs/Metrics	Outcomes	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can expand understandings of diverse perspectives and experiences. Literacy achievement is vital for student and school success. School districts are interested and prepared to incorporate new content and teaching strategies focused on cultural diversity. Technology is accessible in the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Guide with key research, mini lessons, and culminating activities 25 authentic texts, including 20 biographies 25 lesson plans that focus on literacy skills, content knowledge, SEL, and diversity Multimedia resources, including read-along audio, graphic organizers, and primary source presentations Culturally responsive assessments and rubrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit instruction in reading comprehension skills Exploration of diverse, authentic texts Inquiry-based discussions to help reflect on diversity and character traits Instruction and activities focused on the four domains of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing Individual and group culminating projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social-emotional competency progress (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making) Growth in inclusiveness and cultural awareness Meet or exceed expectations on standards Completion of lessons and activities Formative assessments Creation of a personal untold story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of literacy skills and strategies Deepened overall cultural awareness Easily construct conversations around diverse stories in history Increased achievement in literacy standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased cultural awareness and reflection among school-aged children Increased interest in literacy Increased appreciation for varying perspectives Prepared for secondary and post-secondary education success

Focus on Research and Practice

Untold Stories: Connect to the C3 Framework

Teachers are expected to guide students in understanding the challenges of particular times and places as well as the implications of those challenges today. At the same time, teachers must create “classroom environments that reflect diversity, equity, and justice” (Teaching Tolerance 2018, 2). In addition, teachers use their content to build other skills, such as writing and critical thinking, which help students on their college and career paths. The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is a guide to help today’s teachers overcome these challenges. This framework calls for teachers to move students beyond simply memorizing narratives. The C3 Framework reinforces skills to help students become critical evaluators of past and present societies and to better prepare them for college, career, and civic lives.

The C3 Framework is organized into four dimensions as a means of engaging students in rigorous learning of the concepts, skills, and disciplinary tools they need to prepare for college, career, and civic life. The four dimensions are known as the Inquiry Arc (NCSS 2013), and they are as follows: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries, Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools, Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence, and Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action. These four dimensions are present throughout the activities and reflections in *Untold Stories*.

Untold Stories: Meet the Needs of Classrooms Today

Cultural Responsiveness

Culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) teaching brings students’ backgrounds to the forefront in classrooms. CLR recognizes the importance of embracing students’ diverse lives in all aspects of learning. Teachers can build on experiences of students’ home and community lives to help all students achieve success in school.

Culturally responsive teaching expert Dr. Sharroky Hollie (2020) defines a culturally responsive mindset in the following way: “Being culturally responsive is an approach to living life in a way that practices the validation and affirmation of different cultures for the purposes of moving beyond race and moving below the superficial focus on culture.” When educators use culturally responsive teaching strategies, students are more engaged, which in turn helps them to be more successful academically.

Researcher Kathryn Au (2009) urges teachers to strive for settings that incorporate high academic goals that are appropriate for all students while also providing a comfortable environment that allows students to meet those goals. To be responsive

to all students' cultural backgrounds, Au recommends structuring classrooms to allow for success both in individual achievement-oriented ways as well as in group-oriented ways. Cooperative learning is an important part of this as it prioritizes student discussion and student-driven inquiry. "In diverse classrooms, cooperative learning allows students to learn from peers with different backgrounds and work with partners they may not reach out to as friends" (Learning for Justice 2018, 5).

As Dr. Hollie (2020) states, culturally responsive teaching helps students understand "when to use the most appropriate cultural and linguistic behaviors for any situation without losing who they are culturally and linguistically." This happens when educators *validate, affirm, build, and bridge* within their learning environments which *Untold Stories* models and supports.

Representation and Diversity

Students should see themselves reflected in the diverse texts they read. Dr. Sharroky Hollie (2018) embraces a philosophy of affirming students' home cultures and languages and suggests educators "love outrageously." Among other beliefs, Dr. Hollie recommends that educators supplement core thematic texts with culturally



responsive texts. To be culturally and linguistically responsive, educators must know their students. When educators validate students' cultures and languages through classroom management and materials, they help students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and allow students to use their backgrounds to supplement the classroom learning environment.

In learning environments where educators take into account their students' home cultures and languages, students feel empowered. They begin to see that they can

do and be whatever they want. By incorporating nonfiction texts like *Untold Stories* and asking students open-ended questions, teachers will guide them in the quest to find connections between their lives and what they are learning through these anecdotes. “Students should consider *why* the texts are important, not just what they mean. What does this material have to do with their lives? How does it help them understand their families or communities? How does their learning connect to events in the news? And how can they use it to take action?” (Learning for Justice 2018, 6). As Marieke Nijkamp (2014) of *We Need Diverse Books* states, “Why does diversity matter? The answer to that question should be simple and straightforward: because everyone deserves to be a hero. Because everyone deserves to be seen. Because representation matters.”

Teaching Hard History

“Students deserve to learn the full and true history of the United States” (Learning for Justice 2019, 6). However, this is no easy task for classroom teachers, especially in elementary school. *Untold Stories* is one engaging avenue that will assist teachers with this important task. Some of the key ways that this series addresses how to effectively discuss hard topics with young learners are as follows:

- be ready to talk about differences
- teach about commonalities
- begin with the stories of the people
- embed civics education
- teach about conflict and change



Untold Stories: Make Social-Emotional Connections

SEL Competencies

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has gained increased attention in education over the past decade. SEL involves supporting students with a variety of skills, behaviors, and attitudes that they need to be healthy, happy individuals now and in the future. These skills include the ability to identify, understand, monitor, and regulate emotions in oneself, as well as the ability to recognize emotions in others, build successful relationships, and make positive decisions for their well-being, the well-being of others, and the well-being of society as a whole.

The benefits of SEL integration include: higher academic achievement; improved classroom behavior; more positive attitudes about school, themselves, and their peers; and better stress management. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five core competencies related to SEL. Within these five competencies, multiple strategies and behaviors are present (CASEL 2017).

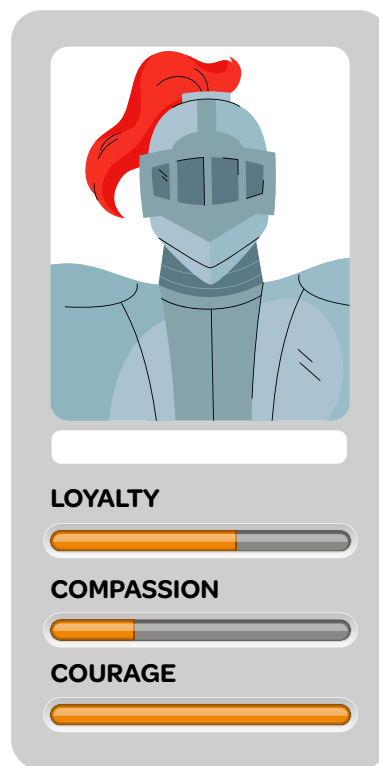
- **Self-Awareness:** Recognize your own emotions, thoughts, and values. Assess your strengths and weaknesses. Have a growth mindset.
- **Self-Management:** Manage your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Set and work toward goals.
- **Social Awareness:** Take on the perspectives of others, especially those who are different from you. Understand societal expectations and know where to get support.
- **Relationship Skills:** Establish and maintain relationships with others. Communicate effectively and negotiate conflict as necessary.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Make positive choices based on established norms. Understand and consider consequences.

Educators who purposely focus on the social and emotional aspects of what students are learning enhance “students’ capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges” (CASEL 2019). The *Untold Stories* series addresses these aspects throughout the real-life challenges that the everyday heroes face throughout the texts.

Character Education Traits

The *Untold Stories* text card series features biographies of historical figures whose stories are not usually highlighted in school. These text cards offer an engaging way for students to build upon their literacy skills while also participating in social-emotional learning. Ordinary people, from all different cultures, backgrounds, and identities, can do extraordinary things.

The stories have been chosen because of the exemplary character traits that the individuals demonstrated throughout their lives. By reading about these figures, students will better understand the way that a person's character (including their beliefs, attitudes, and actions) affects themselves and others. These real-world examples of character traits in action aim to inspire students to embody these traits in their day-to-day lives, as well. By learning about the different character traits described in the cards, students can feel empowered to use their own strengths to create positive change in the world.



Differentiate for All Learners

By using *Untold Stories*, educators can differentiate according to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This series allows all students to receive better access to the curriculum because it offers more ways to engage with, interact with, and grasp the material. Effectively differentiating instruction and responding to the needs of a variety of learners have been shown as a critical factor in the success of any educational program (Henry and Pianta 2011).

Carol Ann Tomlinson (2014) offers suggestions for differentiating instruction, such as (1) scaffolding vocabulary development for English learners to help them understand the words that are essential for comprehending the main concept, (2) offering students different levels of scaffolding, such as extended brainstorming time or sentence starters, (3) providing content through multiple platforms, such as text cards or audio, and (4) allowing students to choose which methods best suit their needs.

Assess Student Learning

Formative assessments are used for diagnostic and prescriptive purposes. They provide the teacher with a compass that will determine what direction must be taken for future instruction. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2007) states, "I began to sense that virtually all student products and interactions can serve as informative assessment because I, as a teacher, have the power to use them that way."

The assessments in *Untold Stories* provide the important information needed to evaluate students in a meaningful and effective manner. The main focus of the assessments includes rubrics for evaluating presentations, writing, art, and cooperative learning, as well as vital individual and group culminating projects. Each *Untold Stories* lesson provides opportunities for informal assessment of student learning in reading comprehension, speaking and listening, and writing.

Set Up for Successful Classroom Discourse

Students need more than knowledge to be competent and responsible global citizens. They need skills that help them get involved in effective ways as well as dispositions or character traits that spur them toward action. Life in the twenty-first century requires people to think critically and take collective action. This aligns with the skills that are considered essential in twenty-first century classrooms: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (National Education Association 2012). The building blocks of these complex skills can be taught and practiced in any classroom:

- speaking and listening
- collaborating with others
- community organizing
- gathering and processing information
- public advocacy

Research has shown that discussions in classrooms increase students' concerns about the fair treatment of others, and studying historical events can improve students' understandings of fair and unfair policies. The standards and policies that many states and school districts have adopted also support the development of classroom discourse. *Untold Stories* allows students and teachers to work together to discuss these issues and begin to problem-solve how these situations could have been different or how they could have been prevented.

Integrate Literacy and the Content Areas

Untold Stories builds literacy and content knowledge through the use of short nonfiction texts. The student texts feature dynamic topics that address literacy and content standards.

In a globally-focused and information-rich society, students need to be eager to learn, seek answers, and gain the necessary skills to navigate informational texts they will come across in school, the workplace, and everyday life. Students also need to be able to read, write, and communicate collaboratively in a cross-cultural world (International Literacy Association 2017). Only through engaging in meaningful activities with diverse, rigorous texts will students become independent thinkers who not only understand what they read, but also question it and explore beyond it.

Focus on Words

There is a strong connection among phonics, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and academic success. Vocabulary knowledge is tightly related to reading proficiency and overall academic achievement (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan 2013). Students need explicit vocabulary instruction throughout the reading process to better understand the content of a text.

Reading is even more complicated for English learners and those reading below grade level. Learners need context-embedded vocabulary activities that acquaint them with the necessary and most central words for comprehension of the content. *Untold Stories* includes vocabulary activities designed to familiarize students with new vocabulary words, promote authentic practice, and encourage the understanding of meanings in context.



Focus on Reading Comprehension

Reading across the content areas involves incorporating texts from multiple domains. General reading and phonics strategies, such as identifying main idea and decoding words, can be focused on during instructional time within all content areas. To support content-area reading at all levels, the International Literacy Association (2017) suggests teachers focus on the goals and practices that are unique to each academic discipline.

With nonfiction texts, such as those found in *Untold Stories*, it's important to consider the source and context of the texts. Students can practice skills such as close reading to interpret informational texts. For example, teachers can have students reread multiple texts looking for examples of a specific theme or topic to deepen their understandings of events and perspectives. Regardless of what strategies are employed, the goal is to help students successfully read complex texts.

Focus on Writing

Today's students must know how to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. It is important for students to see that writers do not just write novels and plays. Writers write things every day, such as blogs, emails, text messages, directions, social media posts, and journal entries. Writing serves as a vehicle for communication, a method of expressing ideas, and a way to respond to others (Harper and Orr Vered 2017). Content-area literacy is a broad set of general strategies applied with content-specific information. Through the activities highlighted in *Untold Stories*, students will learn skills such as writing in complete sentences, using graphic organizers, and utilizing the writing process to improve one's writing. Other content-area writing examples include offering and receiving feedback from peers and teachers and using reference tools such as online thesauruses to incorporate precise vocabulary. These strategies are helpful for student learners in all disciplines.

Focus on Speaking & Listening

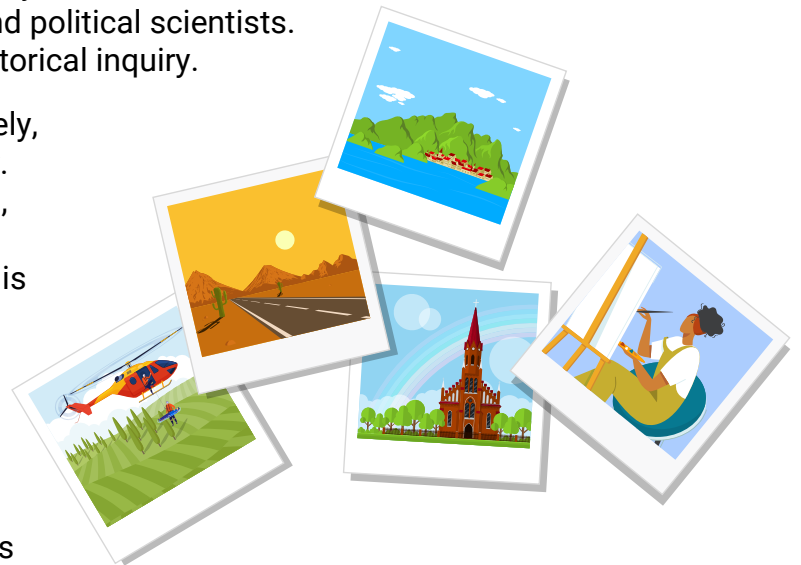
Speaking and listening is one of the four main goals for college and career readiness. Researchers Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (2014; 2019) built on these ideas as they pertain to content-area learning. Some instructional techniques that support speaking and listening requirements include: encouraging student presentations, using listening stations, holding paired or small-group discussions, and collaborating toward a common goal.

Throughout the Focus on Speaking & Listening activities in *Untold Stories*, students increase their abilities to make oral arguments using learned information to support reasoning. Additionally, listening skills should reinforce the ability to understand others' perspectives better. As students work together, they are building "skills for collaborating across differences," and modeling "respect for multiple perspectives and opinions" (Learning for Justice 2018, 7).

Question Primary Sources

Studying primary sources through an inquiry-based model replicates the way historians work. Students benefit from authentic learning experiences where they do the work of historians, geographers, economists, and political scientists. Primary sources invite students into historical inquiry.

Instead of receiving information passively, students are actively engaged in inquiry. They ask questions, make comparisons, and draw conclusions. According to the position statement of the NCSS, "There is a profound difference between learning about the actions and conclusions of others and reasoning one's way toward those conclusions. Active learning is not just 'hands-on,' it is 'minds-on'" (2016, 182). Primary sources like *Untold Stories* help students develop important critical-thinking skills.



Incorporate Technology

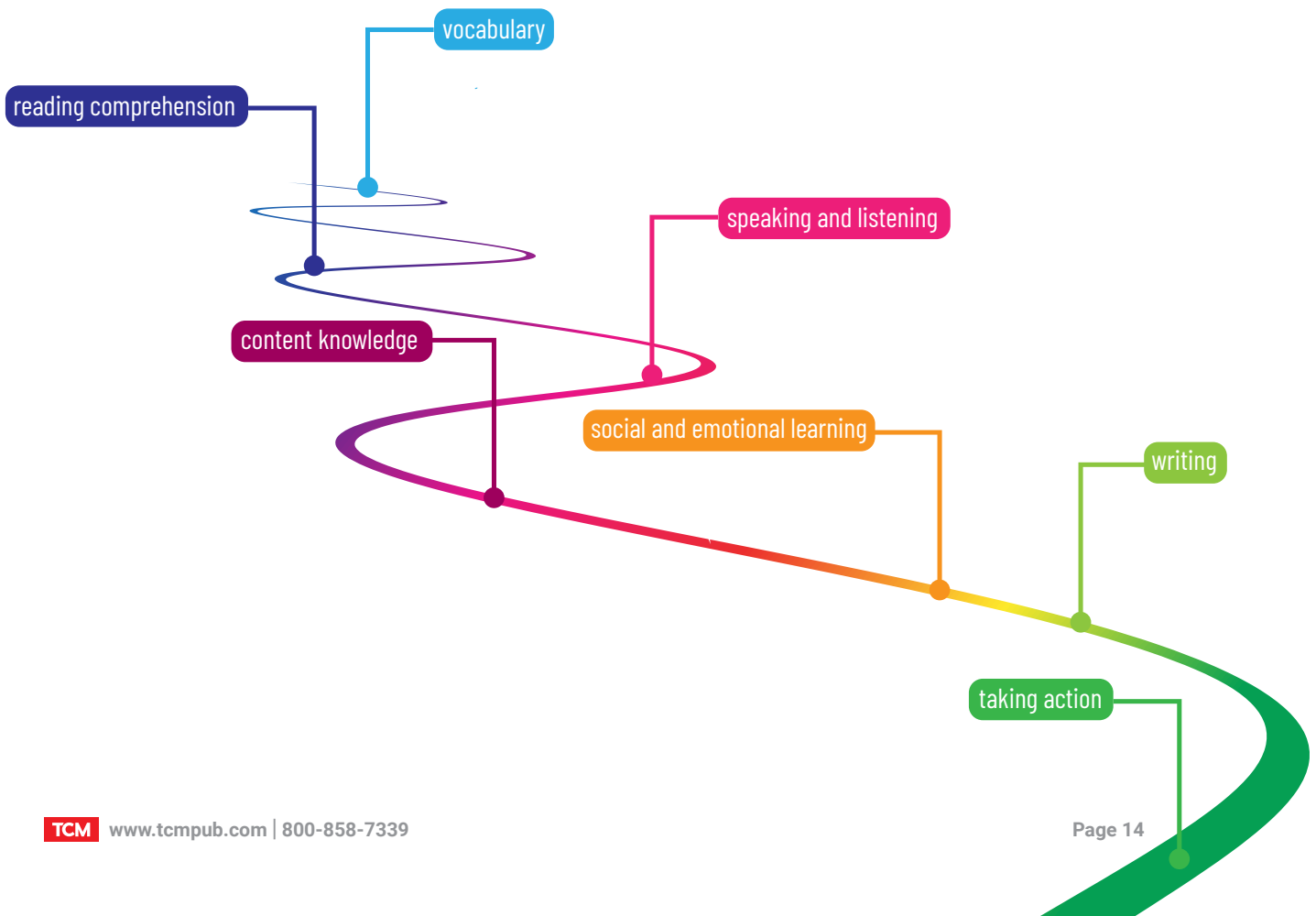
Research shows that "technology—when implemented properly—can produce significant gains in student achievement and boost engagement" (Alliance for Excellent Education 2014). The Digital Resources provided in *Untold Stories* offer students opportunities to add greater accessibility beyond print resources through images, audio recordings, and electronic read-along cards.

Supporting Learners

Untold Stories includes easily accessible Digital Resources to support the materials and provide blended learning opportunities as well as a professional audio recording for each text card. The recordings can help develop the fluency of English learners and provide struggling learners additional support. The recordings provide students with models for appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression.

Conclusion

Students should see both their own identities and unfamiliar viewpoints reflected in their curriculum. *Untold Stories* is a literacy resource that offers students the opportunity to learn about ordinary people doing extraordinary things, all while promoting diversity and representation. Each *Untold Stories* card features a person or event with a captivating story as well as a time line, vocabulary, and a character education trait. The teacher lesson plan allows teachers to guide students in 7 key focus areas: vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking and listening, writing, content knowledge, social and emotional learning, and taking action. This resource aims to build both literacy and content-area skills, help students connect with the texts they are reading, and empower students to explore their own untold stories.



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