

Unit 4.1 • Strength and Struggle

Unit Overview

Strength and Struggle is about having the courage to be yourself even in the face of adversity. The unit’s two texts portray characters who stand up for themselves and their beliefs in very different circumstances.

Unit texts

In the unit’s nonfiction text, *Mario and the Hole in the Sky*, Mario Molina shares the truth about the impact of aerosol sprays on the ozone layer, even when he is publicly ridiculed and discredited. In the unit novel, *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, the main character Piddy must deal with a serious bully at her new school. Difficult decisions made by characters emphasize the complicated negotiations we all must make in life, and the triumphs that occur when we stay true to ourselves and take actions that align with our values.

Both texts also feature characters from Latin backgrounds, and Spanish words and phrases are sprinkled throughout. This will give students who are native or fluent Spanish speakers an opportunity to shine, allowing them to serve as translators for their classmates. Non-Spanish-speaking students will understand the Spanish terms by practicing a unit skill, using context clues to clarify the meaning of unknown words and phrases. The unit also includes a lesson on cognates. In addition, the two texts portray varied and non-stereotypical Latin characters. *Mario and the Hole in the Sky* is a biography of Mario Molina, a Mexican-born scientist from an affluent background. *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* focuses on Piddy, a high school girl living in Queens, New York, who is of Cuban and Dominican descent. She is a strong student with an interest in STEM. She hangs out with the “nerds,” and sometimes struggles with the feeling that she doesn’t fit in with the other Latin girls at her school.

Unit skills and topics

Literary analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing complex characters and how they develop over the course of the story Analyzing how complex characters interact with other characters
Reading comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarizing and clarifying as components of Reciprocal Teaching Using 5 Ws (who, did what, when, etc) as a scaffold for summarizing Using and citing evidence from a text
Decoding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying base words and chunking compound words Recognizing and chunking words with a base plus a prefix or suffix Recognizing cognates
Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did Piddy make the right decision—should she walk away, or stay and fight?
Fluency topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dominican and Cuban culture, food and history, quinceaneras, New York City neighborhoods, selling Avon, working in a hair salon, bullying, domestic abuse, truancy
English language development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orally and in writing, summarizing most important aspects of information Understanding figurative language and figures of speech in context



Literature Used in Unit 4.1:

- *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina
- *Mario and the Hole in the Sky* by Elizabeth Rusch