

GRADES 2-5

An Educator's Guide to

I SURVIVED

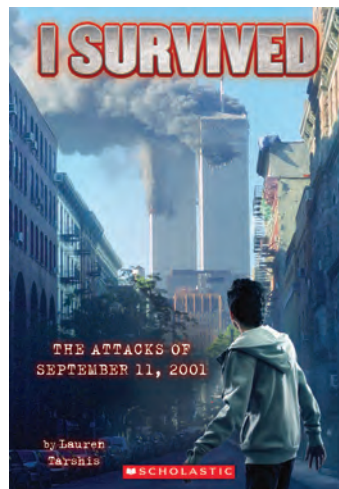
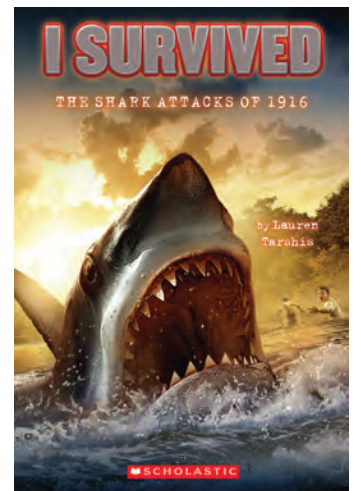
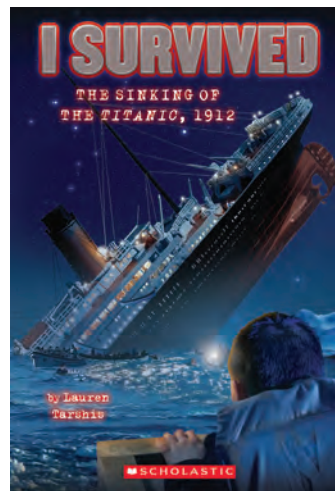
by Lauren Tarshis

Featuring Classroom Activities for Teaching to the **COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS** in the areas of

- Reading Standards for Literature (RL)
- Writing Standards (W)
- Language Standards (L)

Includes specific text-based examples for

- Content Area Connections
- Comprehension Activities
- Word Study
- Writing Connections
- Technology Connections



About the Series

Do You Have What It Takes to Survive?

Take your students on an adventurous historical journey, engaging them in a Common Core thematic author study. The activities in this guide engage students in reading groups, class discussions, and individual writing opportunities. Encourage your students to make connections between the events in the books and in their own lives.

About the “I Survived” Books

Does surviving a disaster change who you are? Or, does it force you to look inside yourself to discover what was there all along? Hopefully, your students, unlike the protagonists in the series, will never have to find out. Still, there is something intriguing about disasters that attracts people of all ages. The I Survived historical fiction series takes young readers on journeys into the past, giving them an up close and personal view of terrifying and thrilling adventures based on disasters that have left their mark on history. Most importantly, the books follow the main characters on a soul-searching quest, as they discover how resilient they truly are and find out that they are also survivors.

Meet the Author

Lauren Tarshis is the author of the I Survived series as well as the critically acclaimed *Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree* and *Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell in Love*. She is also the editor of the Scholastic magazine *Storyworks*. Additional I Survived teacher resources, including comprehension quizzes, can be found online at laurentarshis.com.

Lauren Tarshis is an inspiration for every student and teacher. If you know a student who struggles with reading or who never imagined he or she could write, much less publish a book, then introduce them to Lauren.

During a videotaped interview at scholastic.com/Isurvived/author.htm, Lauren shares her research strategies and explains how she plunks her characters into historical events, creating thrilling adventure books. More importantly, she shares a well-guarded childhood secret, one she kept from family, friends, and teachers for most of her school years. Lauren hated school because she struggled with reading, not even reading a book until she was in high school. As an adult, she fell in love with children’s literature and learned to write children’s books by analyzing the author’s style of writing, much as we are asked to do with the Common Core.

Introduce your students to a role model, someone who overcame reading struggles to enjoy endless hours of reading and writing. Now Lauren is living a dream she never imagined—and teaching students that it is never too late to learn.



Photo: David Dreyfuss

“Tarshis has done a masterful job... vivid language that a reluctant reader can handle.”

—**Library Media Connection**



Complexity of Text (RL.4)

Text complexity is measured by three criteria: quantitative, qualitative, and student knowledge and task complexity. The Lexile levels range from 590L to 620L. Each book in the *I Survived* historical fiction adventure series begins with a flashback, captivating students by starting the story at a climactic point in history. The author's use of metaphors, similes, onomatopoeia, and other literary devices provides rich fodder for exploring connotative and figurative meaning of the text. The qualitative measures, combined with student background knowledge and with the text-dependent tasks listed below, suggest that the books are perfect for intermediate grade levels.

Content Area Connections

History Connections (RI.9)

These fictional stories are based on historical events. Whether you are hanging over the edge of a magnificent sinking ship, swimming in raging floodwaters, or dodging bombs that are falling like rain, the historical facts embedded within the stories build background knowledge. The author's notes at the back of the book help students understand how a writer researches and weaves fact and fiction into a story, providing a great model for using research in a creative writing project.

Science Connections (W.7)

You can't help but ask questions when reading these adventure stories. Do all sharks attack people? What makes an iceberg so powerful that it can sink an unsinkable ship? How do hurricanes form? The rich details spark inquiring minds. It is a perfect time to engage students in mini research projects, inspiring them to become self-motivated learners as they seek answers to scientific questions and build a better understanding of their world.

Vocabulary Connections (L.6)

Common Core asks us to include Tier II vocabulary, or terms that transcend all content areas, as well as content-specific vocabulary. An author study provides a window into the author's style of writing, including vocabulary that are often repeated throughout the series. An added benefit is that these stories are rich in jargon, specialized vocabulary, such as nautical or military terms, or earthquakes and hurricanes. These terms build necessary background knowledge that supports learning in other content areas.

Comprehension Activities

Distinguishing Fact from Fiction (RI.9)

(See reproducible: "Fact or Fiction")
After reading the book, read the author's notes and facts in the back. As a group, identify ten details from the story that are factual, or based on historical events or scientific research, and ten details that are fictional, or created from the author's imagination. Draw a conclusion. Which parts of the story are based on facts and which are fictional?

*(Answers will vary. Overall, the dates and events are factual, but the character is fictional. For example, in *I Survived Hurricane Katrina, 2005*, the dates, the breaking of the levees, and the reason for the flooding are factual. The mandatory evacuation of the people in the *Lower Nine to the Superdome* is true. *Abandoning pets* is also a true fact. The characters, including Barry, his friends, and Cruz are a part of the author's imagination. The creation of the comic book superhero is also fictional.)*

Summarizing the Story (RI.2)

(See reproducible: "Newspaper Article")

When tragedy strikes, newspapers report on the event. Pretend that

"Incorporates information about real events and fictionalizes it, then follows the story with facts... gripping... will hold the interest of reluctant readers."

—*School Library Journal*



“Realistic and gripping... will keep readers turning the pages.”

—Kirkus Reviews

you are a news reporter during the historical time period and interview the main character. Write an *I Survived* newspaper article, using details from the book to tell the character’s story. Be sure to provide the who, what, where, when, why, and how details.

Understanding Denotation and Connotation (RL.4)

Identify examples of figurative language, onomatopoeia, or idioms from the book. Select one. Create a poster explaining what the author “really” means, or the connotative meaning. Draw a picture or use clip art to illustrate the literal meaning. Include the excerpt from the text on the poster. Be sure to cite the page number. Write a sentence or two explaining the connotative meaning. Display the posters on the classroom walls.

Compare and Contrast Genres (RL.5)

A great way to increase comprehension is to develop reading fluency. Nothing does that better than reader’s theater. Read-aloud plays for *I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912* and *I Survived Hurricane Katrina, 2005* are available at laurentarshis.com. Compare and contrast the play and prose versions. *(Answers will vary. A play is driven by dialogue with some narration. A story is driven with a well-orchestrated balance of narration and dialogue that functions to slow down or speed up the story.)*

Identifying Types of Conflicts (RL.9)

Create a chart to compare and contrast the conflicts in the book. Use sticky notes to sort the main character’s conflicts, both internal (man vs. self) and external (man vs. nature, man vs. man, man vs. society). How do the conflicts build suspense in the story? *(Answers will vary. As the main character is forced to face the conflicts or challenges, the suspense increases.)*

Understanding Character Traits (RL.3)

(See reproducible: “Character Study”)

Working in groups, brainstorm a list of words that describe the main character. Select the BEST word that describes the character (e.g., courageous, determined, persistent). Label the front of an index card with the character trait. On the back, write a detail from the story that BEST supports the word selected. Focus on details that describe what the character says or does. Sort the details from strongest to weakest.

Use the two strongest details to write a paragraph answering the question: What word BEST describes the main character? *(Answers will vary. In I Survived the San Francisco Earthquake, 1906, one student may describe Leo as loyal and another as persistent. In either case, the students can support their opinions by using the character’s actions, such as running into a fire to save his friend, Morris. He did not give up even when it meant risking his own life.)*

An example of a cumulative activity is to meet as a whole class to fill in the character study matrix. Each group will choose a book and select what they believe is the BEST character trait and fill in the corresponding section of the classroom chart. Each group will present their section to the whole class.

Analyzing the Author’s Craft (RL.5)

Understanding the use of a flashback helps to better understand plot or the sequence of events in the story. Identify where the flashback in the story begins and when it ends. Why does the author use a flashback? *(Answers will vary. It hooks the reader because it begins with the climax, the highest point of action. For example, in I Survived the Bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941,*



the flashback starts with bombs raining on Danny. This is a life-and-death situation that hooks the reader, making them want to read the rest of the book to find out how Danny got in this situation and how he gets out of it.)

Analyzing Setting (RL.3)

Understanding how the setting contributes to conflicts and resolution is important to understanding plot. How does the setting contribute to the conflicts in the story? (*Answers will vary. The setting in I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912 creates conflict. The story takes place on a massive ocean liner in the Atlantic Ocean. It is nighttime. The water is freezing, cold enough to harbor huge icebergs that can rip open the hull of an unsinkable ship. When George falls into the water, the suspense increases because he will die if he stays in the water too long.*)

Word Study

As students read, have them collect a list of words to create word walls,

a reference tool for writing activities connected to the books.

Context Clues (RL.4, L4)

Collect unfamiliar words from the stories. Using think alouds, show students how to fall back one sentence and hop ahead two sentences, looking for clues to the meaning of the unfamiliar word. When students find a word they do not know, have them write it on the front of the index card. On the back, include the context clue, or the word or phrase that helped them figure out the meaning of the word. Make sure they record the page number in parentheses. Include a synonym or antonym (a word they already know) for the word, as well as the definition in their own words. Post the words on a classroom word wall. Have students sort the words into categories: “Jargon,” or specialized terms, and “Web Words,” or words that they think will reappear in other texts.

Affixes and Roots (L.3, L.4b)

Prefixes change the meaning of words. Suffixes change the forms of words. Before reading, review affixes and roots. Use Scholastic’s handout, **Most Common Prefixes and Suffixes**¹, to support students. Enjoy a **Bingo Lingo Game**², available at Scholastic Printables, to help students familiarize themselves with some of the most common root words before reading. Once students learn a root word and understand how affixes change a word, this knowledge can help them decode many new words. Have students create mathematical equations from the new words. Have students dissect a word from the novels: prefix + root + suffix = meaning. For example, *invisible*: in + vis + ible = not able to be seen.

Word Sorts and Spelling (L.2d)

Engage students in word sorts that teach spelling rules. Search for words in the story that end in -ing.

Write each word on an index card. Sort the words according to how the -ing changes the spelling of the word. For example, with run + ing, the consonant “n” is doubled. The “e” is dropped when adding -ing to escape. Use these words as a spelling list. Depending on the grade level, you may want to sort words by long or short vowel patterns first. (*Rule: drop the “e” before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel. Double the consonant when the last accented syllable is a short vowel sound.*)

Forms of Verbs and Nouns (L.1b)

Create a verb chart for the past, present, and future forms of selected verbs harvested from the books. Post the chart, a reference tool, in the classroom. Create a noun chart to study singular and plural nouns lifted from the story. Take it a step further and create a chart of singular and plural possessive nouns. Any of these word lists can become the spelling words for the week.

Writing Connections

Common Core asks students to engage in three types of writing: persuade, explain, and convey personal experience, distributed at 30%, 35%, and 35%, respectively. Each genre of writing requires the use of textual evidence.

Persuasive/Argument Writing (W.1)

Argument writing is one of the major shifts in the Common Core. It asks that we focus on logical fallacies and textual evidence to support an argument or opinion.

• Defending Your Position (RL.9): (See reproducible: “Supporting Character Traits”)

Text-to-world connections meet the Common Core thematic approach to teaching because they connect to real world events and build background knowledge. Nelson Mandela, former South African president, once said, “I learned that

¹ http://teacher.scholastic.com/reading/bestpractices/vocabulary/pdf/prefixes_suffixes.pdf

² http://printables.scholastic.com/printables/detail/?id=32009&Nty=0&N=fff&Ntk=Printables_SI&N=1231+138&No=0



courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” Explain what Nelson Mandela meant by this. Would Nelson Mandela describe the main character as courageous? Use text evidence from the story to explain why or why not.

Expository/Informational Writing

(W.2) Common Core asks students to engage in more informational writing. The following activities ask students to evaluate the author’s use of information, engage in mini research, and utilize research information in their own writing.

- **Evaluate the Author’s Craft (RL.9):** (See reproducible: “Analyzing the Author’s Use of Historical Facts”)

Use the author’s notes from the back of the book. Select a fact that corresponds with a passage from the story. Compare and contrast the facts to the author’s fictional version. Did the author use the historical facts, dates,

and events accurately? State if you agree or disagree. Support your position using text details from the story.

- **Mini Research (W.7):** Research a topic of interest sparked from reading the novel: icebergs, Civil War technology, Underground Railroad, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. Create a classroom presentation to share with the class.
- **Sequencing Events (W.8):** Create a timeline of historical events (before, during, and after) as they unfold in the story. Illustrate each event on the timeline. Include a caption describing the event.

Personal Experience Writing

(W.3) Personal experience writing encompasses journals, letters, blogs, poetry, and creative writing. Historical fiction novels are great models to demonstrate how authors utilize information from research to engage in personal writing, incorporating research details to create stories from the imagination.

- **Ode Poem:** Write an ode poem, praising a person, place, or object from the story. Publish them in a class book. For example, in *I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912*, you may want to write an ode on the Titanic or the mummy. In *I Survived the San Francisco Earthquake, 1906*, you might write a poem on the gold nugget. Depending on the age of the students, you may want to engage them in researching a person or object for additional background information.
- **Friendly Letter:** Pair a student who read one book with a student who read another book. Engage in a discussion that shares the details of the book. Have each student write a letter from one character

to the other, using details from the books to retell the events.

- **Retell an Episode:** Tell what happened from another character’s point of view. For example, students might want to use the facts from the back of *I Survived the Attacks of September 11, 2001* to retell Uncle Benny’s story, explaining how he survived that day.
- **Historical Fiction (W.7):** Individually or as a group, write a historical fiction story based on information learned from mini research.

Technology Connections (W.6)

Common Core asks that students engage in collaborative writing and online publishing. The resources below are great for primary and intermediate level teachers because teachers can create student accounts, and no e-mail addresses are required. However, as with any Internet activity, you will want to inform parents of any online activities in the classroom.

- **Kidblog:** Create and manage a blog based on the novel.
- **PBWorks:** Engage students in collaborative writing and digital publishing.
- **Glogster (for Educators):** Create multimedia posters presenting an overview of the book or research sparked from reading the book.
- **Google Apps:** Create presentations or work collaboratively on documents. Teachers can create templates (e.g., a playwright script) that students can access.
- **Book Trailers:** Use a digital camera to create a book trailer. See Lauren’s *I Survived the Shark Attacks of 1916* book trailer on YouTube.

Fact or Fiction

Student Names:

Historical fiction is a combination of true details based on historical events and fictional details created from the author's imagination.

Title of Book: _____

Directions: Write 5 fact details in the left-hand column. Write 5 fiction details in the right-hand column. Cite the page numbers where you found the fact or fiction details.

Historical Details (true facts based on historical events and research)	Fictional Details (created from the author's imagination)
()	()
()	()
()	()
()	()
()	()

Newspaper Article

Name: _____

Directions: Pretend that you are interviewing the main character. Use details from the story to tell what happened to the character. Write the who, what, where, when, why, and how details in the boxes below.

Who	What	Where
When	Why	How

Directions: Use the information above to write a newspaper article summarizing the character's story. Include the who, what, where, when, why and how details above.

Character Study

Name(s): _____

I Survived...	Main Character	Character Trait	Character's Words, Actions, or Thoughts
The Battle of Gettysburg, 1863			
The San Francisco Earthquake, 1906			
The Sinking of the Titanic, 1912			
The Shark Attacks of 1916			
The Bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941			
The Attacks of September 11, 2001			
Hurricane Katrina, 2005			
The Japanese Tsunami, 2011			

Supporting Character Traits

Name: _____

Character traits are words that describe a character. Use the character's words, actions, and thoughts to identify the word or character trait that BEST describes the main character.

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." --Nelson Mandela

1. What does Nelson Mandela mean when he said this?

2. Would Nelson Mandela describe the main character as courageous? Why or why not? Use each character's actions or thoughts to support your opinion.

Analyzing the Author's Use of Historical Facts

Name: _____

Historical fiction is created from historical facts, which are true, and details from the author's imagination, which are not true. Evaluate the author's writing by determining if the historical details are accurately portrayed in the novel. Read the author's notes at the back of the book. Record a fact in the first column. Identify the passage in the story where the author used the details. Write the details in the second column. Did the author portray history accurately? Write yes or no. In the last column, explain why or why not.

Author's Notes Details	Story Details	Yes or No	Why or Why Not?
()	()		
()	()		
()	()		

What is your conclusion? Overall, did the author portray history accurately? Explain.



About the Writer of This Guide

Mary Blow, a sixth grade English teacher in upstate New York, has been one of Scholastic's teacher bloggers and has written about strategies and resources to support teachers through the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. These resources and more can be found at scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/mary-blow. For the past four years, Mary has been a teacher advisor for *Scope* and *Storyworks*, Scholastic's literary magazines at elementary and middle school levels, providing ideas and suggestions for transitioning to the Common Core. Visit Mary's classroom website at lowvilleacademy.org/webpages/MBlow where she shares many of her resources with students and teachers.

Books Available

I Survived the Battle of Gettysburg, 1863

Paperback • 978-0-545-45936-5 • \$4.99

I Survived the San Francisco Earthquake, 1906

Paperback • 978-0-545-20699-0 • \$4.99

I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912

Hardcover • 978-0-545-20687-7 • \$16.99

Paperback • 978-0-545-20694-5 • \$4.99

I Survived the Shark Attacks of 1916

Paperback • 978-0-545-20695-2 • \$4.99

I Survived the Bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941

Hardcover • 978-0-545-20691-4 • \$16.99

Paperback • 978-0-545-20698-3 • \$4.99

I Survived the Attacks of September 11, 2001

Hardcover • 978-0-545-20693-8 • \$16.99

Paperback • 978-0-545-20700-3 • \$4.99

I Survived Hurricane Katrina, 2005

Paperback • 978-0-545-20696-9 • \$4.99

I Survived the Japanese Tsunami, 2010

Paperback • 978-0-545-45937-2 • \$4.99

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Or call toll-free 1-800-724-6527.