



A SIMPLE ACT

Comparing Texts

You will now read an excerpt from *An Invisible Thread*. First, complete the first-read and close-read activities. Then, compare the point of view of “A Simple Act” with the point of view of *An Invisible Thread*.



from AN INVISIBLE THREAD

About the Authors



Laura Schroff had a career in advertising sales for more than 30 years and helped launch *USA Today* and several other highly successful publications. She is now a motivational speaker and encourages people to make a difference in the lives of others.



Alex Tresniowski is a writer based in New York City. He has been a senior writer for *People* magazine, writing human-interest, crime, and sports articles, and he is the co-author of several books, including *An Invisible Thread* and *The Vendetta*.

STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text
By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

from *An Invisible Thread*

Concept Vocabulary

You will encounter the following words as you read an excerpt from *An Invisible Thread*.

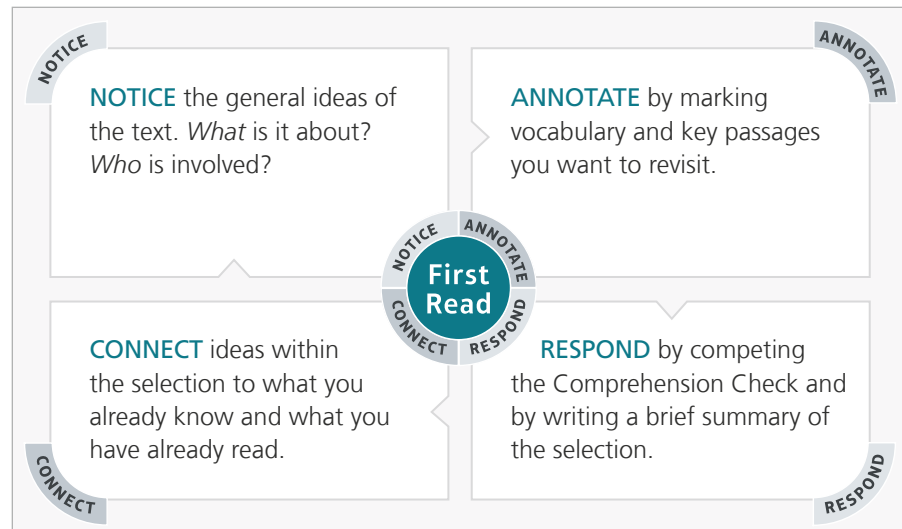
Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (3).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
resilience	
perseverance	
generosity	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read NONFICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.





from An Invisible Thread

Laura Schroff and Alex Tresniowski

BACKGROUND

Laura Schroff and Maurice Mazyck had been friends for 15 years when he gave the final toast at the celebration of her 50th birthday. Maurice's words, and Laura's reaction to them, reveal what each had gained from their long friendship.

- 1 **T**hen came the final toast. The speaker was in a sharp black tuxedo with spectacular black-and-white shoes, and his wife was in a stunning navy blue gown, her hair swept up. Nearly everyone in the room had met him or at least knew his story, and so everyone was excited to see him and hear him speak. He kissed his wife, walked up and took the microphone, and began his toast.
- 2 "Laurie, where can I start," Maurice began. "We met . . . the way we met was so special to me. I was a young boy on the street with barely nothing, and I was very hungry that day and I asked this lady, 'Miss, can you spare some change?' And she walked away. And then she stopped. She was in the middle of the street—she almost got hit—and she looked and came back and took me to McDonald's. We ate and then walked around Central Park; she took me to Haagen-Dazs and then we played some games.
- 3 "You know, at that moment she saved my life. 'Cause I was going down the wrong road, the wrong hill, and, you know, my mother—bless her soul, my mother died—and the Lord sent me an angel. And my angel was Laurie.
- 4 "Without you," Maurice said, raising his glass, "I could not be the man I am today."
- 5 I was so incredibly moved when I heard Maurice say I saved his life. Heck, I nearly lost it throughout his whole darn toast. Whenever I hear someone tell me how lucky Maurice is to have

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraphs 3 and 4, mark the punctuation.

QUESTION: Why do you think the author uses this type of punctuation in transcribing Maurice's words?

CONCLUDE: Would this passage have the same effect if it had just summarized what Maurice said? Explain.

NOTES

resilience (rih ZIHL yuhns) *n.*
ability to recover quickly

perseverance (pur suh VIHR uhns) *n.* continued, patient effort

generosity (jehn uhr AHS uh tee) *n.* willingness to give or share

met me, I have to stop them and correct them. The truth is that the lucky one is me.

- 6 Maurice taught me so many things; I can't possibly list them all. He taught me how to live. He taught me one of the most important lessons a person can hope to learn—he taught me to be grateful for what I have. He taught me about **resilience**, courage, **perseverance**, and about the special strength that comes from overcoming adversity. He taught me the true value of money, the real meaning of lunch in a brown paper bag, the importance of a silly ritual like baking cookies. He taught me, more than I ever taught him, what it means to be a friend.
- 7 Everything I ever gave to Maurice, he gave back to me tenfold. Every meal, every shirt, every bike or toothbrush, was matched by Maurice with a more genuine appreciation than I have ever known. Every hand I ever lent him was returned with a hug; every kindness was paid back with an impossibly optimistic smile. If love is the greatest gift of all—and I believe it is—then the greatest privilege of all is to be able to love someone. Maurice appeared out of nowhere and allowed me to love him, and for that, I simply can never thank him enough. His **generosity** of spirit continues to astound me, and to this day my relationship with him is the relationship I am most proud of in my life. 🍷

MEDIA CONNECTION




Maurice's Toast

Discuss It In what way does this video of Maurice's toast deepen your understanding of and appreciation for the text?

Write your response before sharing your ideas.

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. At what stage of his life does Maurice give a toast explaining how he and Laura met?
2. What statement does Maurice make that makes Laura “nearly lose it”?
3. How does Laura respond when people say that Maurice was lucky to meet her?
4. What does Laura say she learned from knowing Maurice?
5. According to Laura, what are the greatest gift and greatest privilege of all?
6.  **Notebook** Write a summary of the excerpt from *An Invisible Thread* to confirm your understanding of the selection.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore Choose something that interests you from the text and formulate a research question.



from AN INVISIBLE THREAD

Close Read the Text

1. The model, from paragraph 1 of the essay, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

ANNOTATE: This phrase has unusual word order.

QUESTION: Why did the author choose to put the verb before the noun?

CONCLUDE: Using this word order makes the sentence seem more formal, which suits the setting of the scene.

ANNOTATE: The author uses vivid language here.

QUESTION: Why does the author provide so much detail about the speaker and his wife?

CONCLUDE: These details emphasize that Maurice has become successful.

Then came the final toast. The speaker was in a sharp black tuxedo with spectacular black-and-white shoes, and his wife was in a stunning navy blue gown, her hair swept up.

2. For more practice, go back into the text and complete the close-read notes.
3. Revisit a section of the text you found important and **annotate** what you notice. Ask **questions** such as “Why did the author make this choice?” What can you **conclude**?

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. **Analyze** In the first paragraph of the excerpt from her memoir, Laura Schroff gives the reader a positive impression of Maurice. Which of her word choices contribute most to this positive tone?
2. **Draw Conclusions** In his toast, Maurice says that when he asked Laura for spare change, at first she walked past him. Then, she stopped in the middle of the street, almost got hit by a car, and then walked back to him. Why do you think Laura turned around?
3. **Interpret** In paragraph 7, Laura says, “Everything I ever gave to Maurice, he gave back to me tenfold.” What does this statement suggest about her friendship with Maurice?
4. **Make Inferences** Why do you think Maurice gave the final toast?
5. **Essential Question: What can one generation learn from another?** How did reading this excerpt affect your understanding of how people from different generations can learn from one another?

STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text
Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Narrative Point of View *An Invisible Thread* is a memoir written from the **first-person point of view**. You can tell a work of nonfiction is written from the first-person point of view by looking for the following clues.

- The author uses the pronoun *I* to refer to himself or herself.
- The author is involved in the events being described.
- Authors often use **direct quotations**, or a person's exact words, to reflect the views of other people involved in the narrative.

Memoirs are usually written from the first-person point of view. Authors of memoirs use the first-person point of view because they are describing events and experiences in their *own* lives—both what happened as well as personal reactions and emotions.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. Record two examples of first-person point of view in paragraphs 5–7 of the text. Rewrite each example to change the point of view to third person by using the pronoun *she*. An example is shown.

Example: “I was so incredibly moved when I heard Maurice say I saved his life.”
She was so incredibly moved when **she** heard Maurice say **she** saved his life.

ORIGINAL PASSAGE	REWRITTEN PASSAGE

2. (a) When the text begins, the point of view is unclear. At what point in the text is it evident that it is written in the first-person point of view? (b) What clues in the text helped you to recognize point of view?
3. (a) What strategy do the writers of *An Invisible Thread* use to present Maurice's point of view? (b) Do you think this strategy is effective? Why or why not?
4. How do the ideas expressed by the first-person narrator in *An Invisible Thread* deepen your understanding of relationship between Laura and Maurice?



from AN INVISIBLE THREAD



WORD NETWORK

Add words related to generations from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

Language

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
 - a. Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives.
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
 - b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
 - b. Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

Concept Vocabulary

resilience

perseverance

generosity

Why These Words? These concept vocabulary words show positive qualities or personality traits. Maurice and Laura demonstrate these qualities in their relationship with each other. For example, the way Maurice overcomes adversity teaches Laura about *resilience* and *perseverance*. Notice that both of these words show positive aspects of Maurice's personality.

1. How does the concept vocabulary sharpen your understanding of how both Laura and Maurice benefited from their relationship?
2. What other words in the selection connect to the concept of positive personality traits?

Practice



Notebook The concept vocabulary words appear in the excerpt from *An Invisible Thread*.

1. Use each word in a sentence that demonstrates your understanding of the word's meaning.
2. Work with a partner, and take turns coming up with as many **synonyms**, or words with similar meanings, and **antonyms**, or words with opposite meanings, as you can for each concept vocabulary word.

Word Study

Latin Suffix: -ity The Latin suffix *-ity* means the "state, quality, or condition of." In the selection, the author refers to Maurice's "*generosity* of spirit."

1. Explain how the suffix *-ity* contributes to the meaning of the concept vocabulary word *generosity*.
2. Look at paragraph 6, and find another word that uses the suffix *-ity*. Identify the base word that was combined with the suffix. Write a definition for that word.

Conventions

Adjectives An **adjective** is a word that modifies or describes a noun or pronoun. Adjectives may answer the question *What kind?* *How many?* *Which one?* or *Whose?* Possessive nouns and pronouns are used as adjectives to answer the question *Whose?*

What kind?	The young boy had a genuine smile.	Which one?	Have you read that book?
How many?	They talked for fifty minutes.	Whose?	I greatly admired Maurice's speech.

Two or More Adjectives **Coordinate adjectives** are two or more adjectives that modify the same noun and are separated by a comma. You can tell whether adjectives are coordinate if the word *and* could be used in place of the comma and you could reverse the adjectives. **Cumulative adjectives** also modify the same noun, but they are not separated by a comma. Cumulative adjectives cannot be reversed.

COORDINATE ADJECTIVES	CUMULATIVE ADJECTIVES
They became lifelong, devoted friends. You could say: <i>They became devoted and lifelong friends.</i>	She wore a light blue sweater. (<i>She wore a blue light sweater</i> does not mean the same thing.)

Read It

Identify the adjectives in each sentence, and name the nouns they modify. Then tell whether the adjectives are coordinate or cumulative and explain why.

1. Maurice gave an emotional, heartfelt speech.
2. His warm good nature inspired many listeners.
3. The book teaches many valuable life lessons.

Write It


The original sentence in the example below was revised by adding two adjectives. Review the example, and then add two adjectives to each practice sentence. Separate the adjectives with commas if needed.

EXAMPLE

Original: Laura wrote a memoir.

Revision: Laura wrote an *unforgettable personal* memoir.

1. Maurice shared a story with the audience.
2. Laura wore a dress.

 **Notebook** Write a paragraph describing Laura and Maurice's relationship. Include at least one pair of coordinate and one pair of cumulative adjectives.



A SIMPLE ACT



from AN INVISIBLE THREAD

Writing to Compare

You have read two selections about the friendship between Laura Stroff and Maurice Mazyck: the news blog “A Simple Act” and the excerpt from the memoir *An Invisible Thread*. Now, deepen your analysis and express your observations in writing.

Assignment

The news blog and the memoir tell about how Laura and Maurice’s friendship helped them both. To prepare for your assignment, consider the following:

- How the friendship started and grew
- Why the friendship lasted so long

Write an **explanatory essay** in which you analyze ways in which the authors of the two pieces present information about the same topic: the friendship between Laura and Maurice.

Analyze the Texts

Gather Evidence Reread both “A Simple Act” and the excerpt from *An Invisible Thread* to examine the key information that the two authors provide when describing their friendship. Use the chart to record your notes.

As you gather evidence, ask yourself the following questions:

- What descriptive details do the two texts provide?
- What quotations, if any, are used?
- Does the text focus on a series of events or more on the quality of the friendship?

	Types of Details Used	Overall Effect of the Text
A Simple Act		
from An Invisible Thread		

STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text

Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

Writing

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. How do the two texts differ in their presentation of the benefits of friendship?
2. What key information is the same across the two texts?
3. In which text is the emphasis on friendship more apparent? Explain your response.

Planning and Prewriting

Determine Your Central Idea In one sentence, write the central idea, or thesis, you will develop in your essay:

Central Idea/Thesis: _____

Create an Outline To help you structure your essay, create an outline to organize your ideas.

Outline

I. Types of Details Used

A. "A Simple Act"

B. excerpt from *An Invisible Thread*

II. Overall Effect of the Text

A. "A Simple Act"

B. excerpt from *An Invisible Thread*

Drafting

Write a First Draft Use your completed outline to write your first draft. Develop your essay with details from the texts and present a smooth and logical explanation of your ideas. Use clear language and transitions to connect your ideas.

Use Transition Words Using transition words can help you present your ideas in a logical sequence and you make your essay flow more smoothly. There are several types of transitional words and phrases.

- Words and phrases that show **similarities**: *also, in addition, likewise*
- Words and phrases that show **differences**: *but, however, yet*
- Words and phrases that show **sequence**: *first, next, then, finally*
- Words and phrases that show **examples**: *for example, for instance*

Review and Revise

Once you are done writing, critically review your essay. Make sure you have given specific examples to support your ideas. Then, check to be sure you have used transitions to link those ideas. Finally, proofread your work to ensure it is free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from these selections.

STANDARDS

Writing

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

Language

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- Spell correctly.