



THE INVICTUS GAMES: INSPIRATION THROUGH POETRY

English, Language Arts
Lesson Plans
Grades 9 – 12



THE INVICTUS GAMES: INSPIRATION THROUGH POETRY

In 1875, English poet William Ernest Henley wrote *Invictus*, a poem that has long served as inspiration for those facing adversity or challenges in their lives. The word *Invictus* means “unconquered”.

I AM is the motto for the Invictus Games and is inspired by the last two lines of *Invictus*: “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.” “I AM” reflects and defines the Invictus Games’ core purpose: to provide a platform for personal achievement, to compete not just against each other, but against oneself.

The Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 (IG2025) will bring together over 500 wounded, injured, and sick military service members and Veterans from around the world on a courageous journey of recovery through the healing power of sport. Learn how their experiences at the Games have transformed their lives and helped them in their quest to be “unconquerable.”

Objective

Students will be able to analyze the poem “*Invictus*” and see the power of this poem to inspire wounded Veterans competing in the Invictus Games. Students will be able to use this inspiration in their own lives.

Target Audience

This lesson plan is designed for students in grades 9-12. The content of this lesson would be suited for an English/Language Arts class or any teacher wanting to teach about the inspiration of the Invictus Games.

Teacher Note

There is no need to assess everything in this package as students will demonstrate their understanding through synthesizing the information in the final essay.

When taking photos of your student’s work, make sure there are no student identifiers in the picture.

IG2025 would like you to be part of the Invictus community and post your student’s work on Instagram (@invictusgames25) with the hashtag
#ShareYourIAM

This activity is on the last page of this document.

TEACHER NOTES

Introduce the Invictus Games (20 mins)

1. Introduce the Invictus Games by showing the “Heart of Invictus” trailer (1.55 mins) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeJuxMYhmEc>
This allows students to experience the competitors’ resilience and passion and the excitement of the Games.
2. Give students **“The Invictus Games: Student Information Handout”**. Either go over the handout with the class or have them read it independently.
3. Ask students to go back to the handout and **highlight or underline three things that stood out for them**. It could be things they have further questions about, things that surprised them or things that inspired them.
4. Have them **discuss in small groups one thing** they highlighted/underlined. They should read the phrase to the group and explain why this grabbed their attention.

Inspiration Through Poetry

This unit is best taught when teacher and students work together to go through the handouts. Scaffolding happens when students make meaningful and personal connections to the material. Give time for class and small group discussions as well as time for personal reflections.

The Videos

For the first viewing, show the videos to the class all the way through without stopping so students can see the big picture. On the second viewing, stop the videos when you want to emphasize inspirational moments. Show the class your thinking as you make personal connections to the material. Ask the students to think of their own connections and have them share those in small groups. You can also stop and start the video to discuss the questions on the handouts and give students time to write their answers.

Gradual Release Model of Instruction

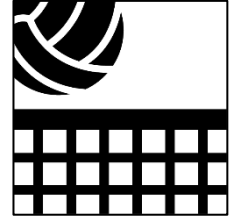
Utilize the “I do, we do, you do” strategy when going through the handouts. The “you do” part doesn’t always have to be independent work. Let small groups or partners work through each question so that student discussion is a key part of this unit.

Depending on the age of your students or class time, you can opt to only give students the first page of the “Poem Analysis”.

THE INVICTUS GAMES STUDENT INFORMATION HANDOUT

Watch “Heart of Invictus” Trailer (1.55mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeJuxMYhmEc>



Overview

The Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 celebrates the unconquered human spirit of military service members and Veterans who are wounded, injured, or sick. From February 8 – 16, 2025, over 500 of these heroes will travel from up to 25 different nations to Vancouver and Whistler for the first-ever Winter hybrid Games. These service members will compete in 11 different sports to support their journey of recovery with their family and friends cheering them on from the sidelines.

‘Invictus’ means unconquered and embodies the fighting spirit of the participants, as well as their motivation to move on with their lives, and to not let themselves be defined by their struggle.

This 7th edition of the Games will be held on the traditional territories of the Liłwat7úl (Lilwat), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 are working closely with the Nations to ensure they respond to Canada’s Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and to ensure Indigenous protocols are respected in all aspects of the Games.

Inspiration Through Poetry

In 1875, English poet William Ernest Henley wrote *Invictus*, a poem that has long served as inspiration for those facing adversity or challenges in their lives. The word Invictus means “unconquered”.

I AM is the motto for the Invictus Games and is inspired by the last two lines of *Invictus*: “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.” I AM reflects and defines the Invictus Games’ core purpose: to provide a platform for personal achievement, to compete not just against each other, but against oneself.

The Invictus Games provides a platform for the injured, and sick military service members and Veterans from around the world to embark on a courageous journey of recovery through the healing power of sport. Learn how their experiences at the Games have transformed their lives and helped them in their quest to be “unconquerable.”

Want to learn more about the transformative powers of the Invictus Games and feel the emotion, strength and perseverance of the competitors?

Watch “Heart of Invictus” on Netflix

Invictus

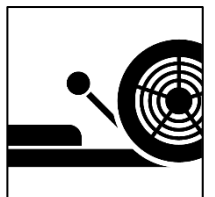
by William Ernest Henley

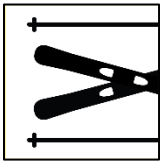
**Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.**

**In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.**

**Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.**

**It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.**





Poem Analysis

Name: _____

Instructions: Work with a partner and both people record your answers

After slowly reading the poem all the way through, listen to it being spoken out loud.

Invictus by William Ernest Henley, Read by Tom Burleigh. Poetry. (1.10 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4II9KI31FEw>

1. Using a highlighter go back to the poem and highlight all the figurative language (similes, metaphor, personification) as well as the sound device of alliteration. Beside your highlights, explain the effect of the poetic device and/or how it adds to the meaning.

Example: *Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole*

Metaphor & Personification: the night is a heavy blanket that covers the author

Simile: a pit that is deep where you can't see the bottom, is black in a way that is endless, unknown and scary

2. With your partner, find 3 lines that have strong imagery. **Below, copy the lines and explain** using detailed descriptions, what you see in your mind with each line you chose.

3. With your partner, look at each couplet to find the meaning. Go back to the poem and underline key words and use your knowledge about the definition of the key words and how these key words might be a metaphor for something else. Write your ideas in the blank space beside the poem.

Example: *Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole*

dark, gloomy, scary, a time when people could feel depressed, scared, alone

surrounds, envelopes, suffocates, heaviness

a strong menacing color, power, death

south and north poles, the whole world

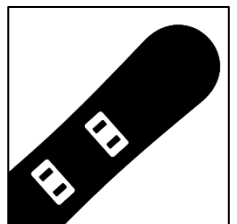
The author is feeling incredibly depressed and alone. This despair has taken over his whole body and his whole world.

Poem Analysis (cont'd)

4. Write a short paragraph describing the mood of the poem, *Invictus*. Does it change or is it the same throughout? Explain.

5. Write a short paragraph on the tone of the poem. Tone tells us how the writer feels or their attitude. What is the attitude of the author? Does this change or is it consistent throughout? Explain.

6. Write a short paragraph on the use of rhyme scheme in the poem. What is the rhyme scheme and how does it add to the mood or tone of the poem?



About The Author

Name: _____

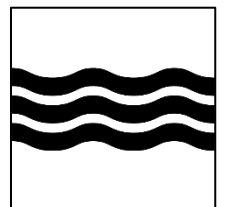
Internet Research Instructions: *Conduct rapid fire research and find a few points to answer each of the following questions.*

1.Where does the word Invictus come from and what is the actual definition?

2.Find background information on the life of William Ernest Henley. Record a few key pieces of information.

3.How does his lived experience relate to this poem? Find some relevant facts and explain how his struggles in life relate to this poem. Discuss specific lines and how this relates to what he was dealing with when he wrote Invictus.

4.What other famous person found great inspiration from the poem, Invictus. How did this poem also relate to his/her lived experience?



The Impacts of Physical and Psychological Injuries

Name: _____

Read the article called, "*The Psychological Impact of Physical Battle Scars*" and take notes on the symptoms that these wounded veterans experience as a result of their physical injuries. www.research.va.gov/currents/winter2015/winter2015-17.cfm

Read pages 5-8 from the pdf called, "*Traumatic Brain Injury and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.*" Take notes on some of the symptoms Veterans may experience. <https://atlasveterans.ca/documents/tbi/tbi-vs-ptsd-en.pdf>



The Invictus Games

Name: _____

Instructions:

Watch the video, "The Power of the Invictus Games" to learn about this event. (3.31 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpnYcXJVWNM>

Watch the video in the article, "Invictus Games give military men and women hope, inspiration." (9.23 mins)

Video: Nobody wants to reflect and say I have an issue, I have a problem:
Invictus athlete on PTSD

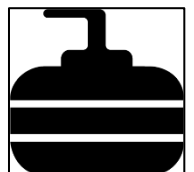
<https://globalnews.ca/news/3765697/invictus-games-give-military-men-and-women-hope-inspiration/>

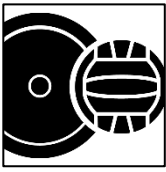
1.Where was Phil Bandanai serving and what was the mission he was on when his jeep was attacked?

2.What were all the issues that Phil Bandanai was dealing with before he realized he needed help?

3.Why did Phil want to be part of the Invictus Games?

4. How has Phil's journey preparing for the Invictus Games changed him?





Putting It All Together

Name: _____

The Power of Sport

"Sport is an incredibly powerful tool for recovery for those who have been wounded, injured or fallen ill during or as a consequence of service. Physical activity has a number of benefits for both physical and mental health, and engaging in sports, esports and adventurous challenge can help to rebuild strength, endurance, and confidence. In addition, the social support and camaraderie that can be found in a sports team can be especially beneficial for those who have experienced trauma or isolation, and the structure and goal-oriented nature of sports can provide a sense of purpose and accomplishment for those on their recovery journey".

invictusgamesfoundation.org/how-we-work

Part One:

Taking everything that you learned about the poem *Invictus*, the TBI and/or PTSD that many people in the military deal with and the Invictus Games, write an essay on how the three are intertwined.

The introduction should give background information on the Invictus Games, the poem and the healing journey of the competitors

In the body, discuss the topics below, using specific examples from the poem, the article and the videos

- How the poem relates to PTSD or other military injuries and to the Invictus Games.
- How the Invictus Games contributes to the healing of the competitors and their families.

Conclude with how you could take inspiration from the poem and the Games. What life lessons have you learned and how can you apply them to your own life? What strategies or activities would benefit you? (It doesn't have to be sport). How would that change you as a person or change the way you think and/or feel?

Part Two: Share Your Learning

Think about the last lines from the poem *Invictus*. "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." Take a close look at your conclusion. Pick out key words, powerful phrases or insights and create an Instagram Post on the next page.

Starting with the phrase "I AM", craft your own I AM statement. This could be one word or up to 2 sentences long and should be inspiring for others. Think about how the poem *Invictus* and the Games inspired as well as how it changed your thinking or your actions/behavior. Include descriptive verbs and imagery to grab people's attention.

Use a felt pen or a sharpie and make it large so it stands out when your teacher takes a photo of your work to post on Instagram.

AMI

