

Mapping Common Core: 7th Grade Language Arts

A Warrior's Soul and Renegade, by SR Staley

Middle Grade Novels

SR Staley, *A Warrior's Soul* (Wheatmark, 2011) 190 pgs, ISBN 978-1-60494-596-6. Luke is a 7th grader who is targeted by a bully and his gang. His sense of inadequacy is heightened by his belief that he is incapable of using his martial-arts based self-defense skills. Luke must rediscover his own self-confidence and belief in himself in order to stop the school bully and protect his friends. Includes classroom discussion questions and Q&A with the author.

SR Staley, *Renegade* (Wheatmark, 2013) 202 pgs), ISBN 978-1-60494-869-9. Maria has the reputation of being the school bully, but she is really provoked into fights because she is a target of her school's gangs. When she is attacked outside of school and incapable of defending herself, she realizes she needs new skills and tactics if she wants to stop her school's biggest gang, *las majores chicas*. Includes classroom discussion questions and Q&A with the author.

- **2nd Place Winner, 2012 Seven Hills Literary Contest, Children's Chapter Book Division.**
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Key themes and central ideas:

- **Effects of violence on human behavior and psychology (fear, shame, power, strength)**
 - **The nature of courage, leadership, and changing a bystander culture**
 - **Bullying, intimidation and oppression, as individuals and in groups, and its effects on human dignity**
 - **Adult versus peer relationships**
 - **Contemporary problems and challenges facing young teens**
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I. Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1. Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3. Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

II. Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.5 Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6 Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

III. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.7 Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.9 Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

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I. Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. **(Selected Passages)**

<i>A Warrior's Soul</i>	<i>Renegade</i>
<p><i>Fear</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of Luke's predicament in the alley vs. internal thoughts, ch 1 • Implied threat of Dirk's gang pursuing Luke, ch 1 • Absence of fear, climatic fight scene(s), chs 25-28. 	<p><i>Anger</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria's perspective on The Challenge vs her defeat of Rachel's wannabes, chs 1, 20 • Rachel's taunting of Maria, chs 1, 17, 20.
<p><i>Anger</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's reaction to his mother, ch 2, 13 • Luke's feeling of betrayal in front of the dojo and confrontation with his martial arts teacher, chs 7-8 • Luke's reaction to dream of Dirk attacking Lucy & Chuck, ch 14 • Chuck vs Dirk in final alley fight, chs 25-28 	<p><i>Shame</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria's reaction to her decision to leave the house at night, chs 10, 12, 13 • Leticia & Maria's banter regarding Maria's relationship with her teacher, Ch 15 • Joshua's attempt at telling jokes, Ch 15 • Leticia's feelings of responsibility after Maria is ambushed, ch 22 • Maria's reaction to her own violence toward Ricardo, chs 25, 26
<p><i>Confidence/courage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke cowering in the alley, ch 1 • Dirk's attack on Luke in the lunch room, ch 4 • Luke's reaction to Peter's teaching Lucy martial arts, Chs 16-18 • Luke's decision to stop Chuck, chs 19, 21, & 24 • Luke's approach to rescuing Lucy and defending against Chuck, ch 25-28 	<p><i>Violence/conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel's use of language to provoke Maria into a fight, ch 1, ch 17, 20 • Maria's attempts to diffuse conflict, ch 1 (vs. Rachel), ch 13 (vs Cecilia), ch 16 (vs Jesús), ch 17 (vs Rachel and Leticia), ch 20 (vs Rachel) • Ricardo's treatment of women, chs 9, 24, 26 • Cecilia's treatment of Ricardo, chs 24, 26 • Cecilia's language provoking Maria, ch 16, ch 28
<p><i>Perceptions of facts & circumstances</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke vs. his mother on bullying at his school, ch 2 • Chuck's understanding of the threat faced by Dirk and his gang, ch 12 	<p><i>Forgiveness/restraint</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria vs Rachel 1, ch 1 • Maria vs Rachel 2, ch 20 • Maria vs Rachel 3, ch 22

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's use of the American militia at Lexington & Concord to as a metaphor for resistance to Dirk, chs 20 & 21 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria vs Ricardo, ch 24
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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

<i>A Warrior's Soul</i>	<i>Renegade</i>
<p><i>Luke's transformation as a leader</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fearful victim, ch 1 • decision to go back to martial arts training, ch 14 • First steps toward leadership, chs 16-19, 23 • Teamwork, co-operative leadership with Lucy, chs 15, 19, 21 • Emergence as leader, ch 22-30 	<p><i>Maria's transformation from victim to leader</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acceptance of socially defined role as bully/victim, ch 1, ch 2, ch 3 • evolution to survivor, chs 10-13 • evolution to defender, chs 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 28
<p><i>Violence and diffusing conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's decision to fight, ch 1 • Dirk's attack on Luke, ch 4 • Luke's decision to fight Dirk & his gang, ch 22 • Luke's decision to spare Dirk further injury, ch 28 • Effects of escalating violence and threats, Chs 1, 4, 12, 14, 22, 24-28. 	<p><i>Violence and diffusing conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure: Rachel's attack on Maria, ch 1 • Failure: Maria's interaction with Principal Rodriguez, ch 2 • Failure: Maria's attempt to defend herself in the park, ch 9 • Success: Relationship with Joshua, ch 10 • Success: Defending Leticia against <i>las majors chicas</i>, ch 13 • Success: Fight to defend herself against Ricardo, ch 24 • Success: Choosing not to fight Cecilia, ch 27
<p><i>Adult relationships with children,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's relationship with his Mom, ch 2, 13 • Luke's relationship with Peter, 9, 13, 16-18, 30 • 	<p><i>Adult relationships with children</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria's relationship with her parents, chs 6, 12, 26 • Maria's relationship with her teacher(s) Clare Larson, ch 3-4, 13 • Maria's relationship with Principal Rodriguez, ch 2 • Maria's relationship with Joshua, Christiana, chs 10-12, 15, 18, 23, 25, 26,
<p><i>Foregiveness/human dignity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirk's use of violence and threats to subjugate Luke, Lucy, Chuck, etc., chs 1, 4, 6, 22, 24, 26-27 • Luke's restraint in his fight with Dirk & his gang, chs 27-28 	<p><i>Restorative Justice/Forgiveness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel's attacks on/threats to Maria, ch 1, • Rachel's ambush of Maria, ch 20 • Maria's decision to aid Rachel & Carmella after the ambush, ch

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	<p>21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel's reconciliation with Maria, ch 22 • Maria's acceptance of Rachel, ch 227-28
<p><i>Luke's inability to control his environment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirk's gang chasing him into the alley, ch 1 • Dirk attacking Luke in the lunch room, ch 4 • Change in Luke confidence during self-defense instruction with Lucy, chs 16-19 • Peer response to Luke's discussion of the American revolution, ch 20-21 • Climatic fight in the alley where Luke prevails through luck and good judgment, chs 24-28 	<p><i>Self-defense & violence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria's & Rachel's fight, ch 1 • Maria's attack in the park, ch. 9 • Joshua's justification for training Maria, Ch 11/12 • Maria's use of the <i>han bo</i> against <i>las mayores chicas</i>, ch 13, 24 • Joshua's lessons with Maria & Leticia, ch 16, 18, 23
<p><i>Self-defense and violence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's perception of his skills, ch 1 • Luke's perception of himself in dream, ch 3 • Dirk's attack on Luke in lunch room, ch 4 • Peter's encouragement of Luke in the street, ch 9 • Peter's self-defense lessons with Lucy & Luke, chs 16-19 • Limits of self-defense, ch 30 	

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

<i>A Warrior's Soul</i>	<i>Renegade</i>
<p><i>School</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirk's attacks/threats directed at Luke, chs 4, 6, 22 • Role of teachers in diffusing violence, chs 2, 4-6 • Limitations of training in dojo, chs 7-9, 13, 16-18 	<p><i>School</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria's "decision" to fight Rachel, ch 1 • Maria's decision to save Carmella & Rachel, ch 21 • Maria's decision to not fight Cecilia, ch 27 • Principal Rodriguez's decision to expel Maria for fighting, ch 2
<p><i>Community/non-school</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's decision to fight after being trapped in the alley, ch 1 • Luke, Lucy & Chuck's discussions at school, chs 4, 19, 21 	<p><i>Community/non-school</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel's attack on Maria in school versus when she walks back home alone, ch 20

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke, Lucy & Chuck discussion of strategy at the diner, ch 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The warehouse and Ricardo's decision to attack Maria & Jesús, ch 24. •
<p><i>Family</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's mothers view of her role in the family, chs 2, 13 • Influence of Luke's younger sisters on his identity, ch 2 • Peers as family, chs 4, 11-12, 15, 21, 23, 29, 30 	<p><i>Family</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesús's role as big brother to Maria, chs 7, 16, 24 • Role of Maria's father & mother, ch 6, 12, 26 • Peers as family, Ricardo's gang versus blood relatives, ch 7, 16, 24
<p><i>Dreams</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's dream of saving Lucy, ch 3 • Luke's dream of the attack by Dirk's gang, 14 • Luke's decision to confront Chuck & fight Dirk 	

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<i>A Warrior's Soul</i>	<i>Renegade</i>
<i>Dirk's taunting of Luke with the label "turtle,"</i> ch 4, ch 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to animal • Reference to martial arts 	<i>Use of Spanish words and phrases (throughout)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bruja</i> (witch) • <i>las mayores chicas</i> • among Maria's family, ch 6
<i>References to ninjas</i> , ch. 2, 3, 4, 16	<i>Meaning of the word "date"</i> , ch 16, 17, 19
<i>Use of profanity (mild)</i> , ch 22, 28	<i>Use of profanity (mild)</i> , ch 23
<i>Cowardice and bravery</i> , ch 1, 7-10, 22-28	<i>Walking cane versus han bo as used in the text at different points in the plot</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-defense education, ch 11-12 • practical self-defense at school, chs 13-14 • practical self-defense against Ricardo's gang, ch 24 •
<i>Provocation and personal responsibility</i> , chs 4-6	<i>Cecilia's use of the reference to "squirrel"</i> , ch 27
<i>Responsibility for others</i> , chs 1, 12, 14-19, 21, 23-27, 30	

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<i>Key plot points in the development of Luke as hero, ch 1, 3, 10, 14, 17/18, 22-25</i>	<i>Bri Griffin's poem "The Step"</i>
<i>Escalation of violence through threat and action,</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gang's pursuit of Luke in the alley, ch 1 • Dirk's attack on Luke in the lunch room, ch 4 • Chuck's plan to use a gun to defend against Dirk, ch 12 • Dirk's challenge to Luke, ch 22 • Luke & Chuck's defense of their friends, chs 24-28 	<i>Escalation of violence through threat and action</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Challenge, ch 1 • Attack on Maria in the park, ch 9 • Attack on Maria at school by <i>las mayores chicas</i>, ch 13 • Rachel's second attack on Maria, ch 20 • Ricardo's ambush of Maria and Jesús, ch 24
<i>Development of courage and self-confidence, chs 14, 16-19</i>	<i>Development of new skills and mindset, chs 11,12, 15,18, 22, 23, 24</i>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6 Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

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<u>Protagonists</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke and Chuck at the lunch table, chs 4, 12, 21 • Luke and Lucy walking to the dojo, ch 15 • Luke, Lucy & Chuck at diner, discussing strategy for dealing with Dirk, 12 • Luke, Lucy & Chuck in lunch room just before the climactic fight 	<u>Protagonists</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria and Leticia, chs 5, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27-28 • Maria and Rachel (after the ambush), chs 22, 27-28 • Maria and her brother Jesús, 7, 16, 24

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scene in the alley, 21	
<u>Antagonists</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke and Dirk in the lunch room, ch 4 • Luke and Dirk in the hallway, ch 22 • Luke and Dirk at beginning of climactic fight, ch 24 • Luke and Dirk at end of climactic fight, 28 	<u>Antagonists</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria and Rachel before the alley fight, chs 1, 4, 17, 20 • Maria and Cecilia, chs 13, 24, 27 • Rachel & Cecilia, chs 4, 27 • Cecilia & Recardo, ch 24 • Jesús and Ricardo, ch 7, 16, 24
<u>Adult to teen</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke & Mr. Brunner, ch 5 • Luke & the school nurse after his fight with Dirk, ch 6 • Luke and Luke's Mom, chs 2, 13 • Peter and Luke outside the dojo, ch 15 • Peter and Luke inside the dojo with Lucy, 16-18 • Peter and Luke after the climactic fight with Dirk, ch 30 	<u>Adult to teen</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria and her father, ch 6, 12, 26 • Maria and her mother, 6, 12, 26 • Maria and Joshua, after the park fight, ch 10-11 • Maria and Joshua, during self-defense training, chs 15, 18, 23 • Maria and Christiana during self-defense training, chs 15, 18, 23, 25
<u>Adult to adult</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter and Luke's Mom, ch 13 • Luke's Mom & the school principal, ch 2 	<u>Adult to adult</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joshua and Christiana, first meeting with Maria, ch 11 • Joshua and Maria's parents, ch 12 • Joshua and the police, ch 27 • Clare Larson (teacher) with Principal Rodriguez, ch 3 • Clare Larson with fellow teacher Chris Downey, ch 4

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NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE

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<i>Ninja dream sequence</i> , ch. 3	<i>Reference to sirens in Greek mythology,</i>
<i>American revolutionary militia at Lexington & Concord and the "shot heard round the world,"</i> ch 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance to resistance to Dirk & his gang 	

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COMMON CORE DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITIES									
	A Warrior's Soul	I			II			III	
Chap	Chapter synopsis	RL.7.1	RL.7.2	RL.7.3	RL.7.4	RL.7.5	RL.7.6	RL.7.7	RL.7.9
1	Luke hides in an alley as he is chased by a gang of bullies, forcing him to confront his perceived cowardice and role as a bystander to violence.	★	★	★	★	★	★		
2	A dispirited Luke returns home and is confronted by his mother, who refuses to believe bullying is a problem at his school, telling Luke to just ignore Dirk & the gang.	★	★	★	★		★		
3	Luke dreams of being a ninja where he is the hero that saves his best friend, Lucy from an abductor.		★	★					
4	Luke's friend Chuck embarrasses him at lunch by revealing he secretly trains in martial arts. We are introduced to Lucy who is upset Luke didn't tell him about his training. Luke is accosted by Dirk and physically assaulted.	★	★	★	★		★		
5	A teacher breaks up the "fight," but didn't see the circumstances or Dirk's provocation. He blames Luke for the fight, and sends him to the school nurse.	★	★	★	★		★		
6	The school nurse treats Luke for his injuries but also believes Luke is also responsible for the fight and his injuries despite Lucy's protests.	★	★	★	★		★		
7	Unwilling to confront his mother about the fight, Luke walks around the neighborhood after school and finds himself in front of his dojo. He feels betrayed by his instructors and contemplates vandalizing the school, but is interrupted by a bystander. His failure to follow through on the	★		★	★				

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	vandalism reinforces his own sense of inadequacy and indecision.								
8	Luke runs away from the dojo, his confidence shattered, .and breaks down emotionally.		★		★				
9	Peter, his martial arts instructor, has tracked him down and encourages him to return to the dojo for training.	★	★	★	★		★		
10	Luke dismisses Peter's encouragement, but his anger at becoming Dirk's victim leads him to think about escalating the fight by getting a gun or knife to even the odds.				★				
11	Luke still doesn't want to confront his mother, so he stops at a deli for a slice of pizza, where he finds Lucy. Lucy tells him she was proud of how he fought back against Dirk.	★		★			★		
12	Chuck meets Lucy & Luke in the deli and reveals he has a plan to confront Dirk by threatening to use a gun to defend himself. Lucy is mortified but Luke is drawn to the idea and power behind using a gun to even the odds.	★	★	★	★		★		
13	Luke finally returns home to find Peter talking to his mother. She is disappointed in Luke because he stopped going to martial arts. Luke feels betrayed and angry, and refuses his mother's attempt to reconcile.	★	★	★	★		★		
14	Luke wakes after a restless night and remembers a dream where Dirk attacks Lucy & Chuck. Luke's frustration turns into a chaotic and angry martial arts workout in his room, ending resolve to go back to the dojo and talk to Peter.	★							
15	Lucy intercepts Luke on his way to the dojo to see Peter. She convinces him to let her go with him despite his reservations about martial arts and self-defense training.						★		

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16	Lucy is unimpressed with dojo, but Peter quickly schools her on the importance of practical self-defense. Peter challenges Luke to help teach self-defense.	★	★	★	★	★	★		
17	Luke reluctantly helps Peter teach Lucy as he remembers his own training. Peter instructs Lucy in the principle to les of defending against multiple attackers, like Dirk and his gang. Peter & Luke teach Lucy basic kicks and strikes, and Luke's confidence increases.	★	★	★	★	★	★		
18	Luke's confidence grows as Peter encourages him to coach Lucy. Luke becomes more empowered by his rediscovered self-defense skills. Peter warns Lucy & Luke that fighting is a last resort, the last option available after every other way of diffusing the threat has failed.	★	★	★	★	★	★		
19	After their session with Peter, Luke & Lucy realize that Chuck's plan to threaten Dirk with the gun was not going to work; they realize it is a race against time to prevent a disaster if Chuck implements his plan.			★		★			
20	In history class, Luke tries to make the point that violence is not the answer, but ends up convincing students the opposite during a discussion of how the American militia rose up against England at Lexington & Concord. The situation with Dirk escalates as another student, Stan, joins Chuck.	★	★	★	★		★		★
21	At lunch, Luke & Lucy attempt to convince Chuck to abandon his plan, but Chuck feels betrayed by their lack of loyalty. He resolves to confront Dirk without them. Luke is torn between common sense and his loyalty to Chuck.	★	★	★	★		★		
22	Dirk physically confronts Luke again in the hallway. Luke instinctively strikes back using his martial arts but instantly regrets it. Dirk is angered even more and vows to destroy Chuck,	★	★	★	★		★		

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	Lucy & Luke. Dirk challenges Luke to a showdown in an alley after school, and Luke agrees.								
23	The reality that the situation with Dirk has spun hopelessly out of control weighs on Luke as his travels after school to site of the fight and challenge. Chuck is waiting, and is still angry at Luke. They suddenly realize Lucy is missing.		★		★				
24	Dirk arrives, revealing he has abducted Lucy, physically threatening her. Luke begins to panic as he realizes Lucy is in danger, but settles himself by remembering his lessons on the dojo and the principles that Peter had taught him.	★	★	★	★		★		
25	Chuck unexpectedly pulls a gun and points it at Dirk. Dirk doesn't believe Chuck will pull the trigger and taunts him. Luke is forced to make a decision.	★	★	★	★		★		
26	Dirk, believing Chuck won't pull the trigger, pulls his own gun and points it at Chuck. One of Dirk's goons pulls a knife on Lucy, and Dirk signals him to cut Lucy. Luke is forced into action.		★		★		★		
27	Luke saves Lucy using the element of surprise, but Dirk now threatens Luke with his gun. Luke tries to convince Dirk to walk away, and Chuck to put his gun away. Chuck pulls the trigger, but the predictably bullet misses, giving Luke an opportunity to turn the tables on Dirk.	★	★						
28	Dirk is severely injured, but embarrassed and angry at Luke. Luke orders him to leave the alley, and Dirk submits to Luke realizing he has no choice. He leaves with an implied threat.	★	★	★	★		★		
29	Luke and his friends are stunned about the effects of the fight, but they realize they are in way over their head. The violence just escalated to more violence, and didn't solve their problem with Dirk or his gang. They know Dirk will be back,		★	★			★		

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	and the fight itself will likely create problems with the police and their parents. They decide to consult Peter.								
30	Peter is relieved that Luke and the others are okay, but also admonishes them for taking unnecessary risks and not involving him earlier. Nevertheless, he realizes the conflict with Dirk is not resolved and the kids agree to continue with their martial arts training to protect themselves from future threats.	★	★	★	★	★	★		

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COMMON CORE DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITIES									
	Renegade	I			II			III	
Chap	Chapter synopsis	RL.7.1	RL.7.2	RL.7.3	RL.7.4	RL.7.5	RL.7.6	RL.7.7	RL.7.9
Poem	Bri Griffin's (Age 12) poem focuses on the courage it takes to step forward into the unknown and the importance of embracing new experiences.	★	★			★			
1	Maria is goaded by a new girl in school, a wannabe challenging her to a fight as a gang initiation ritual. Maria reacts, but easily defeats before the fight is broken up by a teacher.	★	★	★	★		★		
2	Maria is sent to the principal's office. The principal is frustrated with Maria and notes that this is her fifth fight. Maria is frustrated by the inability of the principal to address the gangs, and believes her Cuban background can't let her understand the realities of the kids from Mexican families. The principal believes she has no choice but to suspend her.	★		★	★		★		
3	Clare Larson, One of Maria's teachers intervenes, informing the principal that Maria is the target of the school's gangs. The principal is reluctant, but the teacher persuades her that expelling Maria would give the gangs even more control over the school. She gives Maria one more chance.	★	★				★		
4	Larson escorts Maria back to her class over the objections of the teacher. Several gang members are in the class, and they manipulate the discussion to force the teacher to expel Maria because she is the school bully. A spontaneous outburst from other students in support of Maria prevents her from being expelled.	★	★	★			★		

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5	Maria's best friend, Leticia, reveals that Maria's secret passion is reading and she routinely diagrams sentences to better understand the meaning of the passages. Her favorite book is <i>The Hole</i> , a story that revolves around the ethical dilemmas faced in the everyday life of a street kid named Miguel.	★			★		★		
6	When she returns home, Maria is confronted by her father who criticizes her for her fights and admonishes her to stop. Frustrated from his unwillingness to understand her situation, she retreats to her room.	★	★	★	★		★		
7	Maria's brother, Jesús, tries to console her. He extols the virtues of gang life, and convinces her to seek protection from the girls in her schools by meeting with the leader of his gang, Ricardo.	★	★	★	★		★		
8	Unable to sleep and worried about how her life is spinning out of control, Maria sneaks out of her apartment at night, and ends up in a deserted park.		★						
9	Maria is attacked by a gang of men who recognize her vulnerability. She tries to defend herself, but her efforts anger her attackers and they beat her.	★	★	★	★		★		
10	Maria wakes up in the park to learn that she was saved from the gang by a stranger, name Joshua. She is bruised and her ankle has been severely injured. He offers to help her, but she resists. Joshua convinces her to let him help.	★	★	★	★		★		
11	Joshua helps Maria to a friends should where she meets Christiana. Maria learns that they are both skilled martial artists and that Joshua has saved several people from attacks. They offer to help train Maria in self defense.	★	★		★		★		
12	Joshua escorts Maria back to her apartment he meets her parents, who have been searching for her for hours. Maria's father resists Joshua's	★	★	★	★		★		

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	attempts to help, but finally accepts them after he realizes Maria's life may depend on her learning self-defense skills.								
13	At school, Leticia is shocked at Maria's physical state. Maria refuses to tell Leticia about Joshua. Both of them are confronted by, Cecilia, the leader of the school gang. Leticia attempts to defend Maria, but Maria ends up stealthily defending both of them with a cane using the new self-defense skills she has. Clare Larson intervenes.		★	★	★		★		
14	Leticia is impressed by Maria's skills with the cane, and she finally convinces her to take her to meet Joshua & Christiana.			★	★		★		
15	Joshua & Christiana reluctantly accept Leticia as a student with Maria after their bond/loyalty as friends becomes clear. Joshua admonishes Maria for using the cane too soon. Maria is impatient, but Joshua emphasizes she needs to learn when to use the weapon, not just how to. Skills come with responsibilities	★	★				★		
16	Jesús confronts Maria about sneaking out and the attack. He pressures Maria to get help from Ricardo. Although she resists, Maria finally agrees when she realizes how important it is to her brother. Jesús assures Maria he will protect her.	★	★	★	★		★		
17	In school, Rachel confronts Maria. She has learned that Maria is going out with Ricardo, and Rachel is jealous. Leticia is blindsided by the revelation and Maria lies to Leticia as she realizes Jesús has gotten her in over her head.	★			★		★		
18	Maria's loses focus in her training with Joshua & Christiana. Joshua teaches Maria an important principal of martial arts fighting, and Maria begins to think differently about how she defends	★	★		★		★		

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	herself against Cecilia, Rachel & gangs.								
19	Leticia discourages Maria from going out with Ricardo, but Jesús has assured her everything would be okay.	★			★		★		
20	Maria is ambushed by Rachel and her wannabe girls as she walks home alone from school. Maria tries to avoid fighting, but Rachel attacks her. Maria tries to ward them off with conventional street fighting tactics, but fails. Only when she adopts the self-defense principals taught by Joshua does she turn the tables, including using her cane.		★	★	★		★		
21	Rachel and the other girls are severely injured by Maria as she successfully defends herself. But Maria holds back, using just enough force to neutralize the attack. Still, one of the girls if hurt so badly she needs medical assistance. Maria calls 911 realizing she is going to get in more trouble.	★	★	★	★		★		
22	Leticia feels guilty because she let Maria walk home alone. Rachel approaches Maria & Leticia and apologizes for the ambush. Maria & Leticia are confused, but Leticia tells them Maria's willingness to help her in the alley saved her friends life, and her actions showed her the injustice of her violent gang.	★	★	★	★		★		
23	Christiana is angry when she learns that Maria was jumped by Rachel. Joshua decides the stakes are getting higher, and he trains Maria & Leticia in knife defense. They learn new principles of defending against multiple attackers.	★	★		★		★		
24	Maria accompanies Jesús to an abandoned warehouse for her "date" with Ricardo. She learns that Ricardo is in fact the man who attacked her in the park, and he is now intent on	★	★	★	★		★		

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	seeking revenge for being beaten by Joshua. Jesús is attacked and badly beaten while Ricardo and his gang then attack Maria. Maria uses her training to defend herself, and eventually turns the tables on Ricardo. In a climactic moment, she must decide whether to kill Ricardo or spare his life.								
25	Maria is struggling with her decision and the aftermath of the attack. She is consoled by Christiana. Overwhelmed, Maria collapses into Christiana's arms.	★	★	★	★		★		
26	Joshua, Maria and her parents are at the police station. Jesús will survive, and Ricardo is alive. Joshua reveals that Maria used extraordinary restraint and skill when she decided to spare Ricardo's life. That restraint is, in fact, what will keep her from being arrested and sent to jail. Maria's parents have a new found respect for Joshua, Christiana, and Maria.	★	★	★	★		★		
27	Cecilia challenges Maria, threatening her over what she did to Ricardo. Maria does not allow Cecilia to provoke her into a fight, but, emboldened by her self- defense skills and spirit, stands up to Cecilia. Cecilia backs down.	★	★		★		★		
28	The story concludes with Maria realizing that Cecilia has not given up, and now the girls will face yet more threats. Maria, Leticia, and Rachel vow to continue their self-defense training and work as a team, not a gang.	★	★	★	★		★		