Stories of Courage is a collection of eight true stories about exceptionally brave people from different parts of the world. Each courageous character demonstrates remarkable determination, and every story is inspirational.

In “Running for her Life,” Ana Quirot (Cuba) is a world-class sprinter who suffers a terrible accident at home one day. She is covered in burns and it is not sure whether or not she will survive. But over the course of several months Ana re-learns to walk and run until she is once again winning medals for her country.

The true identity of the brave man in “The River to Freedom” cannot be disclosed. “Matthew” (Sudan) is just one of the world’s brave refugees who has escaped persecution in his own country and set up a successful and meaningful life abroad. He suffered dreadful cruelty in prison, but managed to escape. He travelled thousands of kilometres across land and sea, eventually finding peace and freedom in a land far from his own.

Odette Sansom (Wartime Europe), “The Housewife Spy,” worked as a British spy against Nazi Germany and was also part of the French Resistance. She was imprisoned, tortured and sentenced to death. But despite these dreadful circumstances she remained loyal to her country and her principles. Her brave actions saved thousands of people’s lives.

“Fighting for the Forest” tells the story of Chico Mendez (Brazil). Chico devoted his life to the protection of the Amazon rainforest. He fought hard to educate the world about the importance of the forest’s natural resources and the lasting damage that its destruction would have. His campaigns against corrupt businesses and governments regularly meant putting his own life in danger. Although he was killed under very suspicious circumstances in 1988, work to save areas of the forest continues successfully in his name today.

“Prisoner for Peace” tells the story of Aung San Suu Kyi (Burma), the unofficial leader of Burma. Her government was removed from power by the Burmese army in 1988, and she was placed under house arrest shortly afterwards. Since that time she has fought tirelessly for democracy in her own country. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1991 and continues to fight for her people’s freedom today.

“A Mountain Accident” is about Aaron Ralston (USA). Aaron’s arm became trapped under a huge rock in the wild, remote Utah countryside. After several days in the open mountains, Aaron saved his own life by cutting off his arm and walking to safety.

“The True Courage of Erin Brockovich” (USA) is about an ordinary American mother with not much money and not much luck. One day she discovered that a large, rich American company was acting dishonestly and possibly putting people’s lives at risk. Against almost impossible odds she helped to win one of America’s biggest court cases against one of the most powerful companies in the world.

“A Doctor, a Father, and his Son” tells the story of Dr. Fumio Shigeto, Kenzaburo Oe, and Hikari Oe (Japan). This story is a remarkable example of how one person’s bravery can inspire bravery in others. When journalist Kenzaburo Oe is writing about the A-bomb in Hiroshima, he meets a brave doctor who changes his life for ever. Oe is inspired by the doctor’s integrity and is thus able to come to terms with his own problems. As a result, Oe’s severely disabled son, Hikari, is able to reach a degree of success and fulfillment that would not otherwise have been possible.

Each story in the book is completely separate from the others. The stories take place at different times, and in different places around the world. But courage against extreme difficulties unites the main characters throughout the book. Each one of them shows remarkable bravery, determination, and intelligence in solving the terrible problems that they face.

Extreme physical pain and the power of the mind over our physical realities is another recurring theme: Ana Quirot’s doctors do not believe Ana will ever walk again. But Ana is not prepared to accept this so she pushes her body to the limits. Hikari Oe is severely disabled, but his family encourages him to develop his strengths as well as recognising his limitations. And Aaron Ralston manages to cut off his own arm with a pocket knife, using the power of his mind over the pain in his body to save his own life.

Many of the stories feature one or two individuals who fight against organizations which are much more powerful than themselves. Chico Mendez is only one man, but he fights against some of the biggest and richest international businesses in the world. Similarly, although Erin Brockovich is not even a lawyer, she uses her intelligence and ingenuity to win one of the biggest court cases in American history.

The stories all show at least some measure of success against the problems that each person faces. Although Aung San Suu Kyi is still in prison, her work means that there is worldwide pressure on the Burmese government to reinstate the rightful government. And although Chico was murdered as a result of his work, large areas of the rainforest were saved, and work continues in his name today.

Stories of courage inspire determination and a sense of justice in our own lives. When these stories are true, they can encourage us to face our own problems more confidently too.
Teacher’s Notes

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book see the photocopyable Student’s Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1. Ask students to read the blurb (in green type) on the back cover of the book. Ask students to think of any inspirational stories of bravery they have heard. Encourage them to think about people from history as well as contemporary examples. After a controlled classroom discussion the students should write a brief account of their chosen story.

2. If students do not know the word courage, pre-teach this vocabulary and any other key language to do with bravery (the word list on page 44 may help you). Then put the students into groups and ask them to work together to make a list of different examples of bravery, such as bravely fighting a terrible illness, fighting in a war, or rescuing someone in danger. Finally, each group reads their list to the rest of the class and the teacher gives one point for each valid example.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

“Running for her Life” and “The River to Freedom”

Students work in pairs. One student writes a list of similarities between the two stories, and the other student writes a list of differences. To encourage students to find similarities, tell them that their lists must be of equal length. For every difference, they will have to think carefully and find a similarity. Finally, ask some pairs to read their lists to the class.

“The Housewife Spy,” “Fighting for the Forest,” and “Prisoner for Peace”

Split the class into three separate groups and allocate one of the stories of this section to each group. Each group prepares a presentation about their story. The presentation should feature a short summary of the story, a description of the main character, and some background information about the problem that each character was fighting against. Finally, each group should say why their character’s work changed the world for the better. They should try to prove that their character’s work made more difference than either of the other two. Which group gives the most convincing argument?

“A Mountain Accident,” “The True Courage of Erin Brockovich,” and “A Doctor, a Father, and his Son”

Put students into small groups and allocate a story to each group. Ask each group to work together and plot a graph for their allocated story. The graph should represent time across the bottom and levels of importance or excitement up the side. How many climaxes are there in each story, and what are they? (Students should label them.) Finally, pick a few groups to draw their graphs on the board and explain their reasons. (You can make this more interesting by using the same axes and having each group use a different colour pen or chalk. This way the similarities and differences in opinion are very obvious).

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students to think of an example in their own lives where the actions of one person inspired them to do something with more confidence than they would otherwise have done. They should write a short account of this experience.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the ‘Before you read’ sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)
Students can do these activities alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

**ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK**
Read the Introduction on page iv. Look up any difficult words on page 44 of the Reader or in a dictionary. Now close your books and write 100–200 of your own words and ideas about “courage.”

**ACTIVITIES WHILE READING THE BOOK**

**“Running for her Life”**
1. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?
   - (a) Ana went to a special government school because she was good at sports.
   - (b) Ana did not face any problems at school.
   - (c) Ana’s best races are 100 meters and 200 meters.
   - (d) Ana met Cuba’s leader, Fidel Castro, more than once.
   - (e) Ana was washing clothes when her terrible accident happened.
   - (f) Ana agreed to rest when the doctors told her to.
   - (g) After her accident, Ana could not go out in the sun very easily.
   - (h) Ana won a gold medal in the same year as her accident.

2. Ana was a famous and popular runner in Cuba when her accident happened. Imagine you work for a Cuban newspaper at this time. Write a short newspaper article about Ana’s accident. How did it happen? What do the people of Cuba think and feel about it? What hope is there for Ana’s future?

**“The River to Freedom”**
1. Put these events in the right order. (1–8)
   - (a) Matthew is taken to an army prison. He lives in a small box for six months.
   - (b) Matthew gets on a ship and travels to Europe.
   - (c) Matthew jumps into the dirty river in his prison and escapes.
   - (d) Matthew walks across Sudan for three and a half months.
   - (e) Matthew floats in the Nile River for days.
   - (f) Matthew’s father is shot by some soldiers.
   - (g) Matthew builds a new life in Bulgaria.
   - (h) Matthew meets his friends in Port Sudan, and they agree to help him.

2. Find Bulgaria and Sudan on a world map. Think about the main differences between the two countries. What problems do you think Matthew faces in a new country? Write a list.

**“The Housewife Spy”**
1. Match these sentence halves.
   - (a) Odette married an English man, and
   - (b) Odette wanted to help her country, but
   - (c) The British Secret Service was interested in
   - (d) Odette told the Germans that
   - (e) Each time the guards came to Odette’s prison room
   - (f) At Ravensbrück the prisoners worked
   - (g) Odette often thought about
   - (1) … she was only a housewife.
   - (2) … Winston Churchill was Peter’s uncle.
   - (3) … until they died.
   - (4) … moved to England when she was nineteen.
   - (5) … death was possible.
   - (6) … her daughters and husband in England.
   - (7) … Odette’s photos of northern France.

2. Read about Odette’s life as a spy before she went to prison (pages 10–11). Now use your imagination and write a page from Odette’s diary at this time.

**“Fighting for the Forest”**
1. Answer these questions.
   - (a) Where is the Amazon rainforest, and why is it important?
   - (b) What kind of work did Chico and his family do?
   - (c) Why did farmers clear large areas of the forest?
   - (d) Chico’s work meant that poor people lost their jobs. Why?
   - (e) Who did Chico talk to about the forest? Make a list.
   - (f) Why did Chico travel to the US in 1985?
   - (g) What did the Brazilian government do in 1988, before Chico’s death?
   - (h) Is the Amazon rainforest safe today? Why/Why not?

2. Who do you think killed Chico Mendez? Give reasons for your answer.

**“Prisoner for Peace”**
1. Finish these sentences in your own words.
   - (a) Suu and Michael’s life in England with their children was …
   - (b) In 1988 Suu decided to stay in Burma because …
   - (c) In her prison home Suu continued her work by …
   - (d) Suu did not collect her Nobel Peace Prize because …
   - (e) The army decided to let Suu go free in 1995 because …
   - (f) In 1999 Suu did not visit her sick husband because …
   - (g) After her husband’s death Suu felt …
   - (h) Today, Suu is …
2 Suu wanted to use the ideas of Martin Luther King and Gandhi in her fight for freedom. What do you know about these famous people? How is Suu similar to these great men?

“A Mountain Accident”
1 Complete these sentences with a suitable word from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>carefully</th>
<th>different</th>
<th>fresh</th>
<th>hard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quickly</td>
<td>safe</td>
<td>slowly</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) The air in the mountains was … and cool.
(b) Aaron could not escape … enough from the falling rocks.
(c) Aaron thought … about his problem.
(d) Aaron tried … ways to cut his arm off.
(e) His body was … but his mind was …
(f) He cut his arm off …
(g) Aaron’s final walk was very … But at last he was …

2 Tell Aaron’s story again in your own words.

“The True Courage of Erin Brockovich”
1 Put these events in the right order.

(a) Other law companies start working with Ed and Erin against PG&E.
(b) Erin asks Ed Masry for a job.
(c) Erin realizes that PG&E was poisoning Hinkley’s drinking water.
(d) Erin and Ed send 634 notices for lawsuits to PG&E.
(e) Erin becomes rich, but she continues to work for other ordinary people against big companies.
(f) Erin finds health papers and house papers together in the Hinkley box.
(g) Erin visits the people in Hinkley for the first time.
(h) PG&E has to pay $333 million to the people of Hinkley.

2 How was Erin different from other people in the office? What made her successful?

“A Doctor, a Father and his Son”
1 Read these sentences and look at the words in italics. Who, what or where are they?

(a) His courage taught Oe to face his personal problems bravely.
(b) American planes dropped the A-bomb there in 1945.
(c) Luckily, he was standing next to a wall, and he was not killed or burned.
(d) For six years they worked hard to give their son the best possible life.
(e) Hikari listened silently to it for hours, unable to speak.
(f) When he heard his son’s voice, he thought he was dreaming.
(g) Today you can buy it in music stores around the world.

2 You are Kenzaburo Oe. Write a short article about Hiroshima for your magazine. What is Hiroshima’s story? Why was the bomb important for the world? What happened to the people of Hiroshima? Why is Dr. Shigeto an important man in the city? What lessons can we learn from the story of Hiroshima and its people?