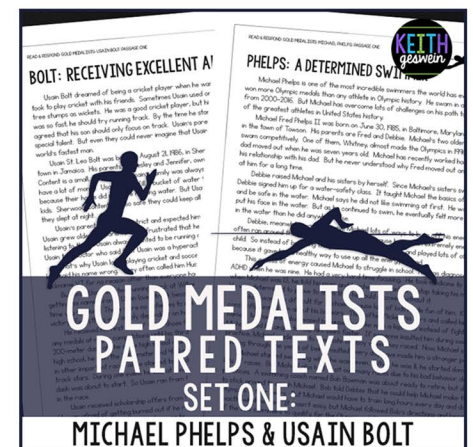
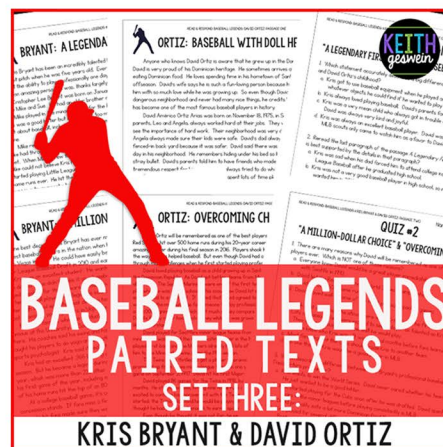
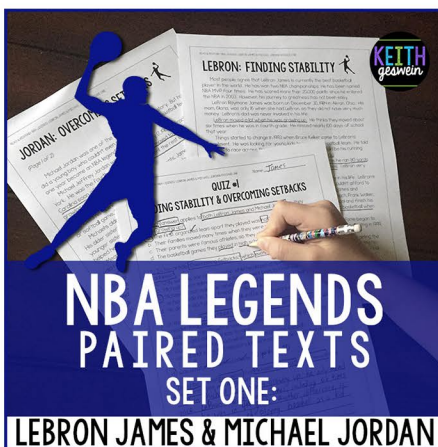
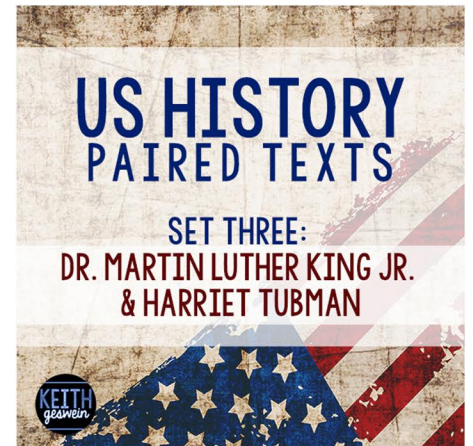
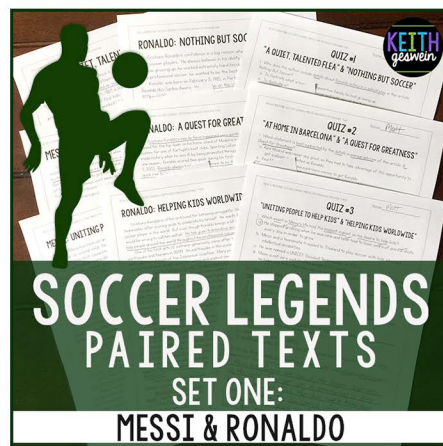
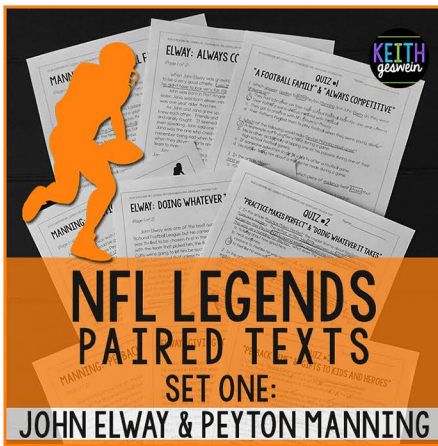


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# DOUGLAS: GOLDEN PERFORMANCES



Gabby Douglas has an amazing ability to learn complicated things very quickly. She taught herself how to do a one-handed cartwheel when she was three years old. She had to learn how to live with a new family, train with a new coach, and live far from home when she was just 14. Gabby has always been willing to take risks to improve, even if they seem frightening at first. Now, she is one of the most famous gymnasts in the world.

When Gabby was 14, she moved away from her family in Virginia Beach to train with a new coach in Des Moines, Iowa. That meant she had to live with a new family, the Partons. It was hard for Gabby to leave her mother. But she was confident this new coach, Liang Chow, would help her improve enough to achieve her dream of becoming an Olympic gymnast.

Liang quickly proved that Gabby was right in taking the risk to move halfway across the country. Gabby had become a member of the US National Team around the time she joined Liang. But Liang's coaching helped Gabby go from an average member on the team to one of its best.

Liang also trained US Olympic gold-medal winner Shawn Johnson, so Gabby received valuable advice from a gymnast she admired. Liang helped Gabby correct some of her techniques and improve the quality of her routines. He also told Gabby to enjoy herself and smile more while she trained. He helped Gabby improve her focus so she could be more consistent during events. Gabby told *Time Magazine* that Liang, "Brings out what I didn't know I had inside of me."

Gabby soon saw the results of her improved training. She won second place in the uneven bars at the 2011 CoverGirl Classic in Chicago. She also helped the US finish first at the World Championships in Japan.

Gabby continued to improve as the 2012 Olympics drew near. She won first place on the uneven bars at three competitions in 2012, including the US Olympic Trials. US women's national team coordinator Martha Karolyi nicknamed Gabby "The Flying Squirrel" because her release moves on the uneven bars were so high in the air.

Even though Gabby was winning all these events, some people doubted her ability to succeed at the London Olympics. She fell off the balance beam during the 2012 nationals, which cost her first place in the all-around competition. Then Karolyi criticized Gabby at the 2012 Olympic Trials when Gabby looked at the crowd before beginning her routine on the balance beam. Gabby admits that she sometimes has problems focusing, especially with so many people watching.

But Liang has taught Gabby how to focus and believe in herself. After falling off the

*(Page 1 of 2, continued on the next page)*

# DOUGLAS: GOLDEN PERFORMANCES



beam at nationals, Gabby performed flawlessly during the 2012 Olympic Trials. She finished first in the all-around competition and in the uneven bars. After the Olympic Trials, Karolyi admitted that she has never seen someone improve as quickly as Gabby, who easily earned a spot on the 2012 US Olympic team. Gabby became the first African American to compete with the US Olympic gymnastics team since Dominique Dawes in 2000.

Gabby was thrilled to fulfill her dream of competing in the Olympics. But it wasn't enough for her just to get there. She wanted to win a gold medal. Gabby was part of an amazing US team nicknamed "The Fierce Five." Gabby said the team bonded extremely well, which helped them win gold medal in the team competition for the first time since 1996. Everyone on the team performed flawlessly, as the US was comfortably ahead during the entire competition. They finished over five points ahead of Russia, which is a huge margin in Olympic gymnastics. US coach John Geddart said "The Fierce Five" was the best gymnastics team of all time.

Gabby's incredible Olympic performance continued during the individual all-around competition. This involves gymnasts competing in all four events, which makes it one of the most coveted medals to win. Gabby was outstanding in every event. She started by nailing her routine on the vault, which was a complex one that only a few gymnasts in the world could do. Then she earned a good score on the uneven bars. All of her tumbling moves on the four-inch wide balance beam were solid. Finally, she dazzled the crowd with a lively floor routine to win the gold medal in the all-around competition. It was the first time an African American won gold in the all-around.

Liang did not want Gabby to look at the scoreboard during the all-around competition. Even though she took a quick peek near the end, Gabby understood Liang's message of staying focused on her routines and not the other competitors. Gabby said her attitude was to believe that she could dominate every event she competed in. As a result, Gabby won two gold medals at the Olympics.

It's very difficult for gymnasts to compete in two Olympics since they are four years apart. Only six American gymnasts have competed in more than one Olympics since 1980. But Gabby was able to earn a spot on the 2016 US Olympic team. Her leadership and skill on the uneven bars persuaded the coaches to select her. Gabby was solid during the team competition in Rio de Janeiro and helped the US win another gold medal in the team competition. They won in dominating fashion, finishing nearly ten points ahead of China.

While Gabby is working on perfecting some of her routines, she feels like she is stronger mentally and physically than she was in 2012. She sometimes FaceTimes her mom and jokes, "Mom, look at my arms!" because she is so strong. Gabby's determination and leadership helped keep the US as the world's best during the 2016 Olympics.



# BILES: DOMINATING GYMNASTICS



Simone Biles was a celebrity even before she competed in the Olympics. In 2013, the gymnast had such an amazing tumbling move on floor exercise that it became known as “The Biles.” She holds the record with 10 gold medals at the World Championships, all of which she earned between 2013–2015. Former Olympic champions say Simone is the most incredible gymnast they have ever seen. Simone has dominated the gymnastics world for the last several years, highlighted by winning five medals at the 2016 Olympics.

Simone started taking gymnastics classes in 2003 when she was six years old. By 2009, Simone often won multiple events at competitions. In 2011, Simone hoped to make the US Junior National Team, but her seventh-place finish on vault at nationals was one spot short of making the team.

Simone responded to this setback by working even harder. Her mom started homeschooling her, which meant Simone could train longer during the day and do her school assignments at night. Simone’s coach, Aimee Boorman, helped Simone do better at the 2012 US Nationals and earn a spot on the U.S. Junior National Team. She moved up to the senior team in March 2013.

Simone was not able to compete for a spot at the 2012 London Olympics because she was a year too young. So that meant Simone had to compete at a high level for almost four years in order to compete at the Olympics, which is quite challenging for a gymnast. But Simone and her coach were up for the challenge. In addition to working hard, Aimee says her student always keeps an incredible attitude about training for seven hours a day, five days per week. Aimee says, “She has this ray of light that shoots out of her when she competes. Even when she was eight years old, she could draw in the crowds.”

While some gymnasts excel in one or two events, Simone has worked hard to be strong in all four events -- balance beam, vault, uneven bars, and floor exercise. Simone showed her brilliance at the 2013 World Championships when she won a gold medal in the all-around, which totals a gymnast’s scores in all four events. Simone also won gold on floor exercise, silver on vault, bronze on balance beam, and fourth on uneven bars.

Simone had such an amazing tumbling move during her floor exercise that it became known as “The Biles,” which is a double layout with a half twist. Most gymnasts struggle to land properly after doing a double layout. But Simone can land it, and even do an extra half twist. All of this is more impressive considering it was Simone’s first time competing at the World Championships.

Simone also enjoyed seeing her teammate and close friend Kyla Ross win silver in the all-around. It was the first time two Americans won gold and silver in the all-around at the World Championships.

*(Page 1 of 2, continued on the next page)*

# BILES: DOMINATING GYMNASTICS



Simone also dominated during the 2014 and 2015 World Championships. She led the US to gold medals in the team events both years, as the US established itself as the world's best team. But Simone was the star of the show both years.

She won gold in the all-around both times, making her the first female gymnast to win gold in the all-around at three straight World Championships. She also won gold on balance beam and floor exercise at the World Championships in 2014 and 2015.

She had a long layoff before her next competition, which was the Pacific Rim Championships in April 2016. But the long layoff did not affect Simone. Even though she tried a new routine on floor, she still won gold in the all-around. She also won gold on floor, vault, and balance beam. Even after such a dominating performance, Simone said she was eager to watch the video of her routines because she knew there were things she could improve.

Anyone who watches Simone is amazed at her ability. Crowds love how insanely high she jumps during her floor routines. During the Pacific Rim in 2016, the television announcer said, "She could do her floor routine to 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' and still win."

Simone proved she was the world's best gymnast at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. She became the first American gymnast to win four gold medals at one Olympics. She won the all-around by over two points, which is a huge margin in gymnastics. She also won a bronze, which means she won medals in all five events she competed in. She was selected to carry the US flag into the closing ceremony. Simone was so famous by the end of the Olympics that everyone wanted to take a selfie with her. So many athletes kept stopping Simone to take a selfie with her while she was going into the stadium that they had to delay the closing ceremony!

Former gymnasts are stunned at how good Simone is. Shannon Miller won five medals at the 1992 Olympics, then two more in 1996. Even she can't believe that Simone is so good in every event. Shannon said, "Simone is the one everyone is trying to catch up with. She takes these very intricate, demanding skills and makes them look so incredibly easy."

She also has a good sense of humor. During the medal ceremony at the 2013 World Championships, all three of the medal winners were given a bouquet of flowers to hold while they received their medals. Another girl told Simone that there was a bee on her bouquet of flowers. Even though the ceremony was about to start, Simone frantically tried to shake the bee off. She threw her bouquet on the ground and ran around the medal stand trying to escape the bee. The other girls were laughing at Simone, who also had a good laugh about it once the bee flew away.

But no one is going to be laughing at Simone any longer after she completed one of the most incredible performances by any gymnast in Olympic history.

# QUIZ

## “GOLDEN PERFORMANCES” & “DOMINATING GYMNASTICS”

1. Which describes something that Simone and Gabby experienced?
  - a. They moved far away from home at a young age to receive better gymnastics training.
  - b. They had lots of success before they competed in the Olympics for the first time.
  - c. They won two gold medals at the 2012 Olympics.
  - d. They have a floor-exercise routine named after them.
  
2. If someone wanted to argue that Simone Biles is the world’s best gymnast, which paragraph from the passage *Dominating Gymnastics* includes details that would best support this person’s argument?
  - a. paragraph three
  - b. paragraph four
  - c. paragraph seven
  - d. paragraph nine
  
3. Which statement is best supported by the details in paragraph two of the passage *Golden Performances*?
  - a. Gabby is willing to take risks to achieve her dreams.
  - b. Gabby did not like living with her family when she was young.
  - c. Gabby was unsure if she would like being a gymnast when she was 14 years old.
  - d. Gabby was a very talented gymnast when she was three years old.
  
4. Write evidence that shows why people were confident Gabby would do well at the 2012 Olympics. Then write evidence that shows why people were confident that Simone would do well at the 2016 Olympics.

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# ANSWER KEY FOR QUIZ

## Multiple-choice questions:

Quiz #1    1. B            2. D            3. A

## Written-response question:

Quiz #: There are several examples in both passages about how well Gabby and Simone performed during events before the Olympics. Gabby won second place in the uneven bars at the 2011 CoverGirl Classic. She helped the US finish first at the World Championships. She won first place on the uneven bars at three competitions in 2012. For Simone, students should cite her incredible success at the World Championships from 2013-2015. They could write how a floor exercise routine was named after Simone. They could also describe how well Simone did at the 2016 Pacific Rim competition.

I hope your students learn as much from reading these passages as I did writing them!

This file contains three pairs of informational texts about famous gymnasts Gabby Douglas and Simone Biles. Students reading on grade levels five and above should be able to comprehend them.

I will be making more of these informational texts about famous athletes. Please email me at [kgeswein@gmail.com](mailto:kgeswein@gmail.com) if there are athletes your students would like to learn more about.

Be sure to follow my store on [teacherspayteachers.com](http://teacherspayteachers.com) to know when I release more paired texts. You can click my logo to get to my store.

The sources I used to gather information for these articles include:

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