

**These lessons can be used during Black History Month or anytime in the year. Content is aligned to the Common Core Standards and can be adapted and/or modified.**

**Reference book:** *Timelines from Black History*, (pages 82–83), Foreword by Mireille Harper (ISBN 978-0-2415-0361-4)

**Website:** [DK findout! African American History Month](#)

### ELA STANDARDS

- RI3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- RI3.5: Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.
- RI3.6: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.
- RI3.7: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- SL3.2: Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL3.3: Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- L3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- W3.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
- W3.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.
- W3.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- L3.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- L3.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English

### SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL (SEL) STANDARDS\*

#### **CASEL 5**

**SOCIAL AWARENESS:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.

This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Such as:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems
- on behavior

*\*Note additional standards specific to your state.*

# Teaching Sequence

This is a guide; teachers may use the sequence in its entirety or just choose certain activities, and can adapt/modify lessons to accommodate students (e.g. assigning more or less time for task completion).

Lessons & Objectives	Activities	Further reading/ home learning
<p><b><u>BACKGROUND</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Introducing Black History Month</u></b></p> <p><b><u>What is Black History Month?</u></b></p> <p>Serena Williams’ Backstory</p> <p>SWBAT...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate expected listening behaviors</li> <li>• Organize and record thoughts using a template</li> <li>• Identify and differentiate what they know, and what they don’t know</li> </ul>	<p>Tell the students that Black History Month is celebrated every year in the month of February, to honor the achievements of Black people throughout history. Although there were various celebrations before this, Black History Month began to take hold in the 1960s inline with the civil rights movement, and it was officially recognized in 1976.</p> <p>Ask students if they know who Serena Williams is, and what they know about her, why she is famous.</p> <p>Model how students should create three columns on their paper with the following headers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What I liked</li> <li>• What I learned</li> <li>• What question do I have</li> </ul> <p>Let students know that after watching two short videos, they are going to fill out that sheet.</p> <p>Play “<a href="#">Serena Williams, Story of a Tennis Sensation</a>” (stop at 3:30 mark) and “<a href="#">Serena &amp; Venus Williams’ Mom Shares Secret to Raising Strong Women</a>” (0:55–2:55). Then model filling out the sheet. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I liked that Serena got to play with her sister, that she and Venus got to make history together.</li> <li>• I learned that they started playing in Compton, and that at times it could be scary when they were playing because the city had issues with violence.</li> <li>• What are Grand Slams?</li> </ul>	<p>Further information: <a href="#">African-American History Month USA</a></p> <p><a href="#">Kids Britannica</a></p> <p><a href="#">National Geographic Kids</a></p>
<p><b><u>Lesson 1</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Reading Comprehension</u></b></p> <p>SWBAT...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retrieve information from a timeline</li> <li>• Use text features to identify and classify information</li> <li>• Review their own work for clarity and accuracy</li> </ul>	<p>[See “Reading Comprehension Questions” worksheet]</p> <p>Introduce the Serena Williams timeline (pgs. 82–83) and read aloud. Then direct students to the reading comprehension worksheet — remind students that when they work independently, they should reread the timeline in its entirety before answering questions, and when they look for information, they should use clues to help them answer the questions. For example, if they need to find a name, they might search for capital letters; if it is a date, they might search for numbers, etc.</p> <p>Model the first part of question one with the students and articulate your thought process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How old was Serena when she started playing tennis? (4 years old.)</li> </ul>	<p>See Serena in Action! US Open: <a href="#">Serena Williams’ 40 Greatest Moments</a></p> <p>Wimbledon: <a href="#">Serena and Venus Williams’ best Wimbledon shots</a></p>

Remind students that they should record their answers in complete sentences (and make sure that you do the same when you model.)

After independent work time, have the students work in pairs to compare answers, demonstrate their thinking to one another.

## Lesson 2

### **Serena on Surviving Discrimination**

SWBAT...

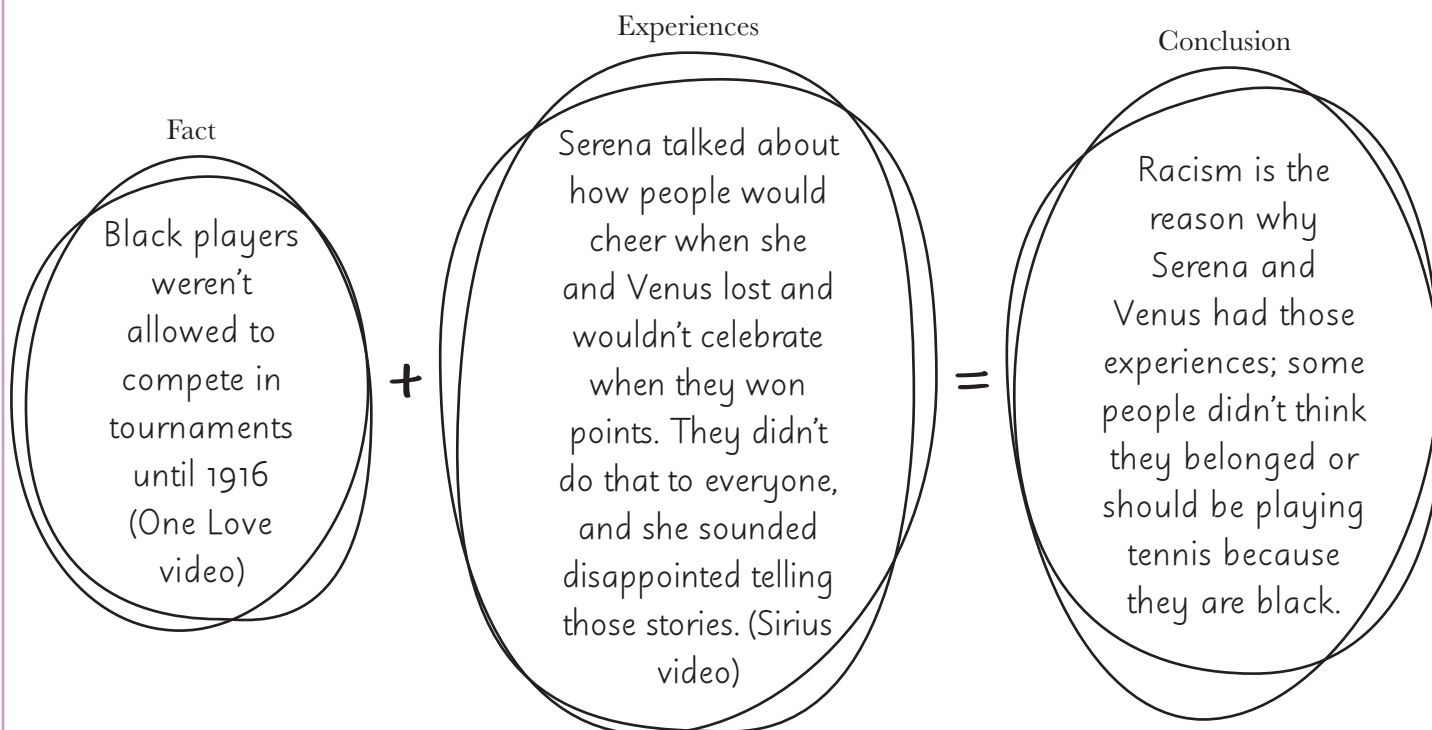
- Infer the feelings of a text subject
- Make connections between themselves and text

Understand and recognize different forms of discrimination

Set up the lesson by informing students that they will practice making inferences. Remind students that when we make inferences, we use evidence from our text/media, combine it with experiences, thoughts and observations, and then draw a conclusion.

Remind students that one of the things they learned from the timeline is that Venus and Serena experienced racism when they started playing (“1991” entry); check for student understanding on racism, what constitutes racism. When we look at the story of Serena Williams, one of the ways we know she experienced racism is based on the history of tennis itself, and how she talked about her experiences.

Show the following videos: first, “[One Love Kids: Tennis History Lesson](#)” (stop at 2:01), followed by “[Serena Williams Shares Her Experience with Racism in Tennis](#)”. Substantiate the inference using a template/model (see below)

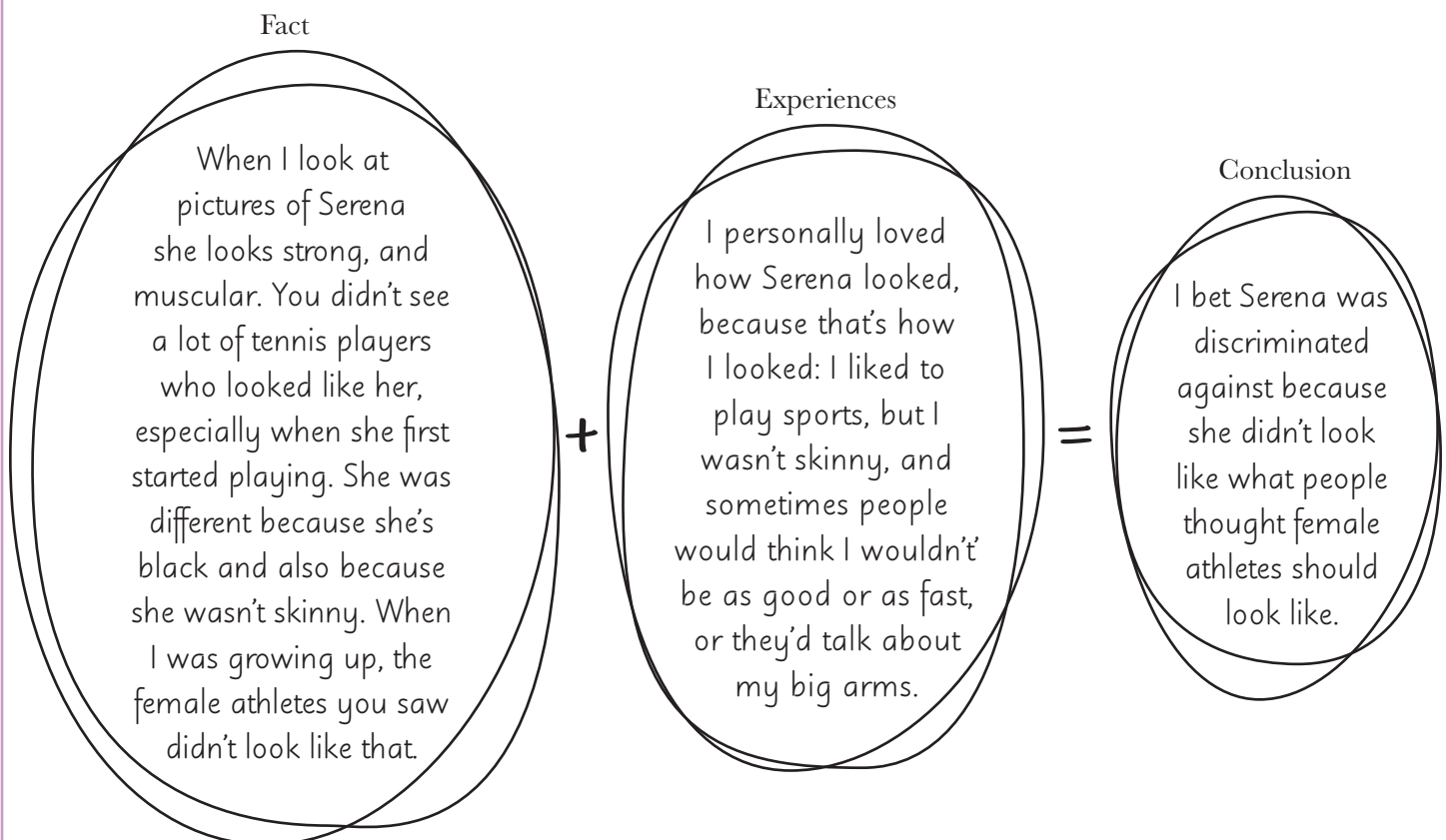


One of the things that makes Serena Williams remarkable is that she has been extremely successful in the face of many types of discrimination, and that when she didn't change herself to be successful even when people discriminated against her.

Based on what they've learned in the text and videos, ask students what facts about Serena might make people discriminate against her. Examples could include:

- The way she wore her hair
- The fact that her tennis game is based on power (versus finesse) – she was aggressive, she grunted when she hit the ball
- Her body type (muscular not lithe, skinny)
- Her family wasn't rich – she was coached by her parents and played on public tennis courts.
- She was raised in a predominately black community
- She was young when she became pro and started winning titles.

Take one of these facts and model inferential thinking, using the template/graphic organizer:



Have students pick a fact (one that was shared, or something of their choosing), and complete their own inference organizer independently.

Bring the class back to together to answer the first question under the chart, “How did Serena deal with discrimination?”

- She trained hard to be the best (timeline)
- She remembered what her family taught her about black pride (video)
- She never got upset, she kept her cool (video)

Have students answer the last question on their own.

### Lesson 3

#### **Writing: Tribute/ Thank You Letter**

SWBAT...

- Utilize a specific form of writing to demonstrate understanding and organize thoughts
- Make connections between themselves and the text
- Articulate reactions and emotions based on what is described in the text

Develop a character based on text and inferences

Explain to students that much of celebrating Black History Month is recognizing “legacy” – finding connections to black people in history can help us recognize and celebrate black excellence in the present day, and see how the black experience is connected throughout time.

Ask students if they remember the name of the first black female tennis player to win a Grand Slam, before Serena. Direct them to the “Tennis greats” timeline sidebar, and reread Althea Gibson entry.

Replay “[One Love Kids: Tennis History Lesson](#)” (stop at 2:01), then play “[Althea Gibson: The Story of Tennis’ Fleet-of-Foot-Girl | Storytime Read Aloud](#)” and tell students they should make connections between Serena and Althea, noting their similar experiences and characteristics; have them make two columns on their papers to note each category. Model one example:

[Experience] I learned that both Serena and Althea grew up without a lot of money. [Characteristic] They both have very competitive personalities, they want to be the best.

Other examples:

<b><i>EXPERIENCES</i></b>	<b><i>CHARACTERISTICS</i></b>
<i>Won Wimbledon</i>	<i>Didn’t look like most other tennis players</i>
<i>Were coached by fathers / father figures</i>	<i>Hard workers</i>
<i>Started off playing in comparatively inferior settings</i>	<i>Were bold, didn’t apologize for being successful</i>
<i>Traveled world playing tennis</i>	<i>Loved being athletes</i>
	<i>Confident, believed in themselves</i>

Tell students that one of the most meaningful ways we can pay tribute to people who have been our role models, mentors, caretakers, etc. is to write them a letter. Tell them they will use their character and experience notes to write a letter from Serena Williams to Althea Gibson. Review how students should model the letter, and that it should include details from the text about both Althea and Serena.

## **CLOSING LESSON**

### **Defining Serena Williams**

SWBAT...

- Define keywords within a text
- Support/justify their opinion

Direct students to the intro/description for the timeline.  
Reread aloud, then have students isolate the three ways that the author defines Serena's success:

- Power
- Agility
- Mental Toughness

[See the "Three Defining Phrases" worksheet]

In pairs, students will work to complete the worksheet. (They will answer the last question independently.)

Regroup the class to watch "[The Williams Sisters When They Were Kids | Before They Were Superstars](#)" (you may want to stop at the 7:35 mark; use your discretion). After watching, have students answer the last question independently.



# Reading Comprehension Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Remember to:

- ✓ Read the entire timeline before beginning to answer questions.
- ✓ Have an idea of what the question is looking for, e.g. numbers, capital letters, nouns, adjectives, etc.
- ✓ Double-check your answer: Make sure that it makes sense and is supported in the text.

## Early Life

1. How old was Serena when she started playing tennis? How old was she when she became a professional tennis player?
2. Who were Serena's tennis coaches?
3. When Serena's family left California, what state did they move to?

1.

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2.

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3.

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## Tennis Career

4. How many Grand Slams are there? Name each one.

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5. What year does Serena first become the Number 1 tennis player in the world?

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6. What medical condition caused Serena to take a break from tennis? Choose one.

Broken ankle

☐

Asthma

☐

Migraine headaches

☐

Blood clots

☐

## Unique Facts

7. How many times was Serena named the Number 1 player in tennis?

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8. Did Serena Williams graduate from high school?

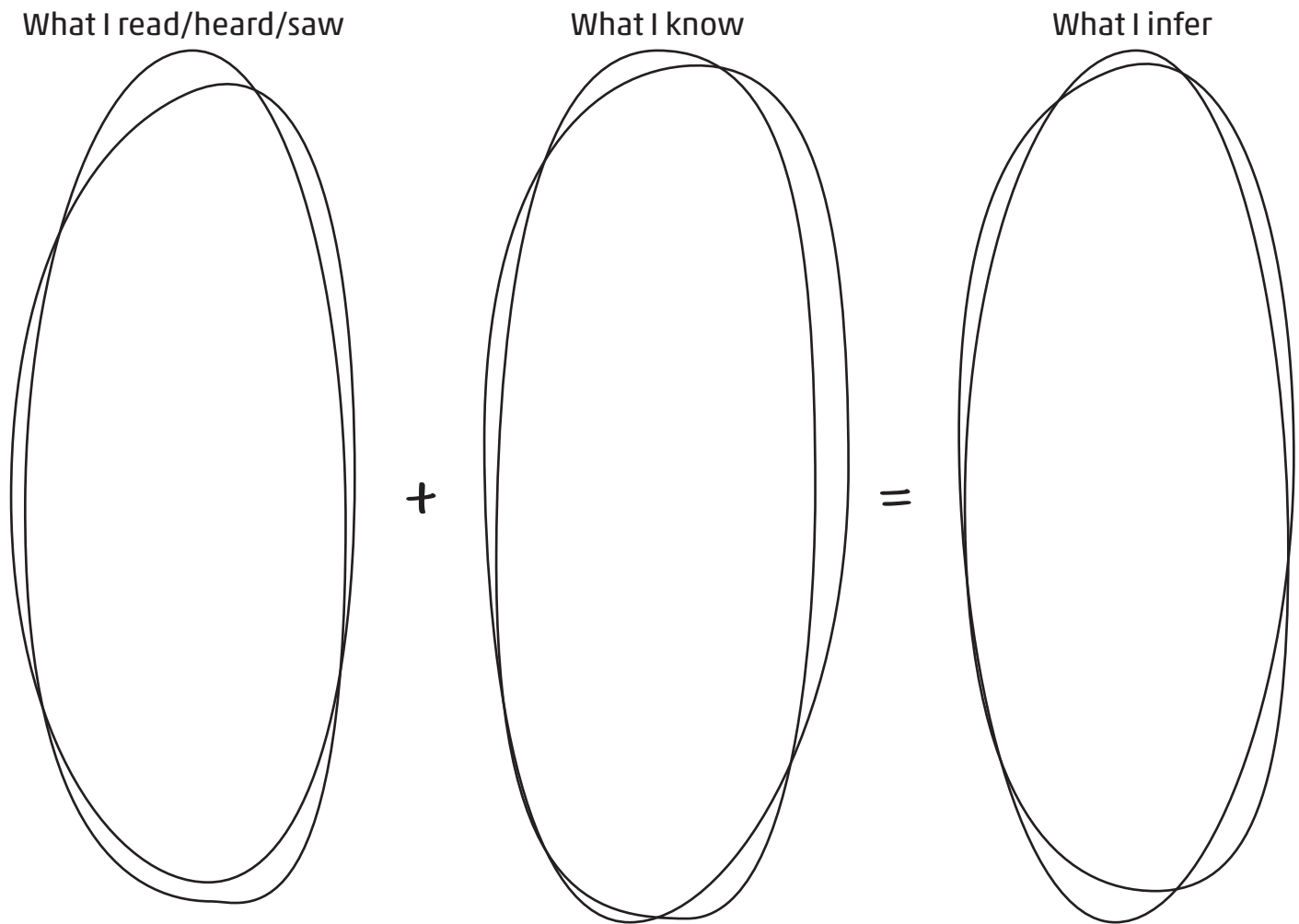
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9. What part of her body was operated on, and when?

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## Inferencing: Discrimination



**BONUS:** Reread your inference conclusion. Do you know what that type of discrimination is called? How would you "name" it?

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How did Serena deal with discrimination?

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If you were experiencing discrimination, how would you cope? What do you think is important to do if you are experiencing discrimination?

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## Serena's Three Defining Phrases

### Power

Dictionary definition

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In your own words

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Example from the text

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### Agility

Dictionary definition

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In your own words

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Example from the text

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### Mental toughness

Dictionary definition

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In your own words

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Example from the text

Serena was not much older than you when she started on her path to being a champion. In that video both girls displayed “mental toughness” – how do you think you can begin to develop mental toughness at a young age?

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