

Social Justice in Our Schools

To bring culturally responsive education in our classrooms, the following document has been prepared to assist teachers in integrating lessons on social justice, diversity, and culture into units. For each month of the year, a theme has been designated based on the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching. On the corresponding pages, you will find books, activities, key understandings, and connection to the standards.

Why is integrating these topics important?

The tenets of Catholicism have a strong foundation in the fundamental understanding of the value and dignity of each person. As we see polarization and discord within our society, it is important for students to discuss and understand the world through the lens of Catholic social teaching. We are also blessed to be a diverse Diocese and as such should make every effort to increase student understanding and appreciation of other cultures, countries, and ethnicities.

How can I use this document?

Each month has a specific theme, tied to Catholic social teaching, which ideally can be connected to your existing plans and curriculum. Over the course of a month, you would ideally integrate 2-3 texts and corresponding activities to capture the theme. This document is intended to be a starting point and teachers are encouraged to build from what they find below.

Do I need to use these specific texts and activities?

No, this document is intended to serve as a guide. You are, of course, welcome to use all the activities provided but feel free to adjust the texts or activities to suit your current classroom.

How can I access these texts?

Some texts may already be available within your school and can be easily shared between classrooms and grade level bands. The NYC public library also has each of the listed text available for loan with a valid library card. YouTube also has many of the texts listed below as read alouds which can be found by searching YouTube with the text title followed by “read aloud.”

Do picture books really belong in middle school?

Absolutely. Picture books are a tool for any age level. Using picture books in middle school allows students to conduct a deeper analysis of theme and meaning without being overly focused on vocabulary and lengthy text. These books can also be used to focus on specific literacy skills. Students who are struggling readers or English Language Learners have an increased opportunity to collaborate with their peers. It is important to preview reading picture books to students through a lens of learning. Students should understand that they are reading or listening to a picture book as a form of analysis, the same way they would analyze a longer or more complex text versus reading a “baby book.”

Monthly Themes

<i>September</i>	Solidarity, All are Welcome and Loved
<i>October</i>	Call to Family, Community, and Participation
<i>November</i>	Dignity of Work and Rights for Workers
<i>December</i>	Celebrations Around the World
<i>January</i>	Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
<i>February</i>	Rights and Responsibilities, Black History Month
<i>March</i>	Rights and Responsibilities, Women’s History
<i>April</i>	Care for God’s Creation
<i>May</i>	Life and Dignity of the Human Person
<i>June</i>	Being Leaders in Faith

September

Solidarity describes the belief that we are all one family in Christ regardless of national, racial, ethnic, economic, or ideological differences.

Key Understandings

- We are one human family and one family in God.
- Differences are an important part of each person. We can celebrate differences while being unified by our similarities.
- We are created in the image of God.
- We are called to be peacemakers and to love our neighbor.

Integration of the Standards

	<i>Grade 6</i>	<i>Grade 7</i>	<i>Grade 8</i>
Religion	6SS1, 6SJ2, 6SJ3, 6SJ7, 6SJ8	7SS1, 7SJ2, 7SJ7, 7SJ8,	8SJ2, 8SJ3, 8SJ4, 8SJ7, 8SJ8

Key Vocabulary

- God's Family
- God's Image
- Unique
- Diversity
- Compassion

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Damien the Leper
- St. Martin de Porres
- St. Catherine of Genoa
- St. Teresa of Calcutta
- St. Vincent de Paul

Teaching Method:

- Literature Walk, students engage in a variety of short text to determine the overall theme or messages of the books. While looking for the theme, they will also identify text evidence to support their understanding. It is important to emphasize that even these are shorter texts or picture books, they each carry an important message. Using picture books allows students to search deeper into the meaning and evidence of a text.

How it Works:

- Begin by setting up picture books around the classroom using the text list below as a guide. Students will be able to rotate to each picture book with a partner or small group, depending on the number of texts available. Groups/ pairs will be reading the text to identify common themes and messages. Each group should record their findings for the text as well as evidence to support. To ensure that students are working efficiently, you may want to set a time limit or tell groups when to rotate. You can also have a "bonus text" for early finishers.

Texts to Use:

- Your Name is a Song (Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow)
- The Name Jar (Yanksook Choi)
- Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun (Maria Dismundy)
- The Day You Begin (Jacqueline Woodson)
- All are Welcome (Alexandra Penfold)
- My Name is Sangoel (Karen Williams)
- Be Kind (Pat Zietlow Miller)
- Islandborn (Junot Diaz)
- Suki's Kimono (Chieri Uegaki)
- Lucy's Umbrella (Sarah Madden)
- The Sandwich Swap (Kelly DiPucchio)
- The Proudest Blue (Ibtihaj Muhammad)
- All the Way to the Top (Annette Bay Pimental)
- We're All Wonders (R.J. Palacio)

Discussion Questions:

- What common themes or ideas do you notice?
- Are there any characters that you relate to? Why?
- What character traits do you notice in many of these texts?
- How do the book themes connect to our understanding of Jesus' teachings and our faith?

Connecting Bible Passages

- After completing the literature walk, students can use the following Bible passages to draw connections to themes in the texts.
 - 1 Corinthians 12
 - Galatians 3:26-29
 - Ephesians 3:1-7
 - Romans 12
 - James 2:1-4

Activities to Celebrate Differences

- Have students learn about their names, the origins, the story behind why they have that name, and what it means to them. Create a mural using decorated name plates and their descriptions.
- Students can create and share "I am from" poems to help each other learn about their family/ cultural history.
- Use the following link to explore a variety of activities appropriate for middle school students to celebrate diversity <https://extension.psu.edu/more-diversity-activities-for-youth-and-adults>

October

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

describes the belief that marriage and family are a central part of our human lives. The Church serves as our faith family likewise our school serves as a type of "family."

Key Understandings

- We have responsibilities to our family, school, Church, and larger community.
- Community participation and engagement is critical in our connection to the world.
- The Catholic sacrament of marriage is between a woman and a man. *It is important to be sensitive to families who may have a different type of union

Integration of the Standards

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6SS1, 6SJ2, 6SJ3, 6SJ7, 6SJ8	7SS1, 7SJ2, 7SJ7, 7SJ8,	8SJ2, 8SJ3, 8SJ4, 8SJ7, 8SJ8

Key Vocabulary

- Holy Matrimony
- Civic engagement
- Interconnectedness

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Teresa of Avila
- St. Luke
- St. Faustina Kowalska
- St. Hedwig

Begin the month by having students engage in a **Bible scavenger hunt**. Students will work in pairs to locate the passage in the Bible and identify the main ideas that the class will be exploring this month. Students should make note of the main idea for each passage, then identify 2-3 overarching ideas.

Suggested Passages:

- Genesis 4:8-15
- Romans 12:4-8
- 1 John 4:19-21
- John 15:12-17
- 1 Peter 4:8-11
- Exodus 20:12
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-13
- 1 Timothy 5:8
- Psalm 127:3-5

Think, Pair, Share

Engage students in critical thinking and conversation by asking the following questions: what makes a family?, what are the most important aspects of family?, do you think the concept of family extends outside of a home (i.e. school, church, community).

Students can think about these questions independently or jot down their thoughts then work in pairs/ small groups to discuss their responses. Groups will share with the class to create a series of shared responses. Identify common ideas and themes in the conversation.

Family Interview

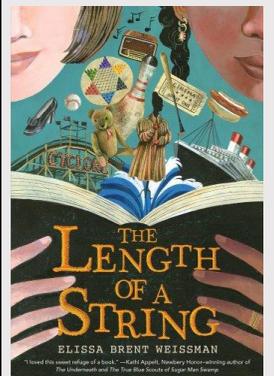
Students will use this activity to gain multiple perspectives on defining family and the role each person has within a family. Students should work in pairs to develop interview questions that will help them understand the importance of family (to family members as well as its role in society). After students have developed their questions, they should interview family members and record their responses. Encourage students to ask outside of their immediate family and contact grandparents, aunts/ uncles, etc. Based on the responses, students will create a web using illustrations and phrases to summarize their understanding of family.

Book Club

In lieu of individual lessons, a "book of month" can be used to read 1-2 chapters each day. This is a great way to begin or end each day. As you progress in the text, you can follow-up with discussions or journaling to reinforce key ideas. Journals and follow-up questions can be completed as morning work.

Extension Activities:

Students can create a family tree and try to develop the tree with stories from different generations of family members. Students can storyboard a sequel to this text. Did they like the ending? How would you continue the story?



Comparing Community to Family

Begin by having students consider how a community (or school/ parish) is like a family. What responsibilities do we have to others in our communities? Students will work in small groups or pairs to look through the following text. Afterwards, discuss as a class the key components that they noticed that make a community like a family. This activity can be extended for students to consider how they can make a difference in each of the "families" that they are part of.

It Takes a Village (Jane Cowan-Fletcher)

Last Stop on Markey Street (Matt dela Pena)

The One Day House (Julia Durango)

Be Kind (Pat Zietlow Miller)

November

Dignity of Work and Rights for Workers describes the belief that work is more than just a way to make a living. It is how we participate with God's creation. All workers should have access to worker's rights.

Key Understandings

- God provides for our physical and spiritual needs.
- All types of work are important and effect our world. Our resources are highly dependent on the labor of others.
- Workers are not always treated fairly, and we should have the goal of creating fair working conditions for all people.
- Workers of color, women, children, and undocumented individuals often face the greatest challenges in equitable work opportunities.

Integration of the Standards

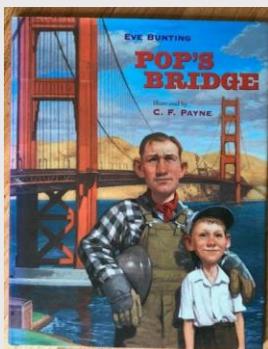
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6SJ5	7SJ5	8SJ5
Social Studies			8.2d, 8.2e, 8.9b

Key Vocabulary

- Right to work
- Labor unions
- Child labor
- Migrant workers
- Living wage

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Joseph the Worker
- St. Isidore the Farmer
- St. Elizabeth of Hungary
- St. Andrew
- St. Catherine Laboure



Pop's Bridge (Eve Bunting)

Begin discussing the class the term “essential worker.” What does this mean? Are some jobs more important? Why do you think this?

As you are reading the text, have students consider the characters and how they view their father's work. Does this change your thinking?

At the end of the story, have students discuss the message of the text and how it applies to their understanding of workers and the importance of all workers. To extend the activity, students can identify workers who may not receive recognition for their work and write them a thank you.

Draw a Defining Moment

In this activity, students will be gaining an understanding of different essential occupations as well as challenges that workers face. Students will be broken into groups to focus on an area of labor (farm workers, textile, factory, infrastructure, child labor, etc.). Students will read a short text about each area and draw what they feel is a defining moment from the text.

Afterwards, students will come back together as a group to do brief research on the topic in their book. Students will share the with the class challenges that occur in this area of labor, work that has been done to promote equity, and what still needs to be done. Depending on time constants, students can create a poster, multimedia presentation or slideshow to highlight this information. This activity can be extended by having each group develop a prayer for workers that addresses the issues of inequity they have learned about.

Picture Book Examples

Side by Side: Lado a Lado (Monica Brown)
Right this Very Minute (Lisl Detlefsen)
Which Side are you On? (George Ella Lyon)
On our Way to Oyster Bay (Monica Kuling)
Si Se Puede, Yes we Can! (Diana Cohn)
The Bobbin Girl (Emily McCully)

Several of these texts depict historical events and conditions. It will be important for students to gain a modern perspective and if time allows an understanding for how these are global issues.

Supporting Nonfiction Article Examples

<https://junior.scholastic.com/issues/2018-19/031119/the-girl-who-spoke-out-for-workers-rights.html#930L>

<https://newsela.com/read/tomatopickers-humanrights/id/14182/>

<https://newsela.com/read/benchmark-11-cheap-clothing-workers/id/37558/>

<https://newsela.com/read/mcdonalds-wage/id/8436/>

<https://newsela.com/read/smi-history-us-farm-labor/id/32399/>

December

Celebrations around the World

focuses on the joy that comes from sharing beliefs and traditions with others. World religions are connected in many ways.

Key Understandings

- Celebrations are a key component of religion and culture.
- Understanding and respecting other ways of celebrating is important to fostering a culture of inclusion.
- Individuals are part of different faiths.
- There are significant connections in global religions as well as in celebrations associated with these religions.
- Many religions have similar historical backgrounds and paths of development.

Integration of the Standards

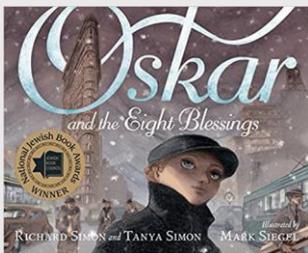
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6KF8, 6CC7	7KF8, 7CC7, 7CC8,	8CC7
Social Studies	6.4a-c		

Key Vocabulary

- Culture
- Tradition
- Inclusion
- Global religions (Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism)

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Lucy (Lucia)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe
- St. Nicholas
- The Immaculate Conception
- Ss. Joachim and Anne



Oskar and the Eight Blessings

This text works well to introduce the connections that exist between different religions. In this text, though it focuses on Hannukah the theme of the story is one that resonates with Christmas.

As students are listening, encourage them to identify the theme of the story and consider how this same theme can relate to the Advent season. Why is it important to think about and discuss the connections between our faiths? How does this story remind us that there are many similarities that exist between people, cultures, and religions?

During the month of December, students can work in small groups to investigate the connections between religions and religious holidays. In small groups, begin by assigning students a different world religion. Students should investigate the origins of this religion identifying its historical connections in relation to other religions. Have students share their understanding. The following video can be used to highlight the connected origins of world religions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvFl6UBZLv4&t=1s>

As students learn more about their respective religions, you can use the activity “make a connection” to identify common trends. This can be done with religions, cultures, or studying different celebrations of Christmas with the goal of celebrating both similarities and differences.

- To facilitate this activity, you will need a ball of yarn, ribbon, or string. Students will stand in a large circle (perimeter of the classroom, gym, or outdoors).
- The teacher or one student begins with a statement about their religion. If a student can make a connection, they will raise their hand to receive the ball of yarn. For example, the starting student might say “during Hannukah, candles are lit on the menorah.” Another student might make a connection saying, “Catholics light candles during Advent to prepare for Christmas.”
- Students should acknowledge the commonality of the candles but also highlight their different uses. This can continue with each student establishing different connection.

The following texts can be used to generate interest and begin student research on various religions. Note that using all these books is not necessary, a variety of titles is provided for increased access to finding them in the library or digitally:

-Chik, Chak Shabbat (Mara Rockliff)
-Abuelita’s Secret Matzahs (Sandy Sasso)
-Hannukah Around the World (Tami Lehman-Wilzig)
-Jalapeno Bagels (Natasha Wing)

-My Hindu Year (Cath Senker)
-Mama’s Saris (Pooja Makhijani)
-Hot, hot Roti for Dada-ji (F. Zia)
-The Diwali Gift (Shweta Chopra)

-Hannah and the Ramadan Gift (Qasim Rashid)
-Deep in the Sahara (Kelly Cunnane)
-A Party in Ramadan (Asma Mobin-Uddin)
-Yaffa and Fatima, Shalom, Salaam (Fawzia Gilani-Williams)
-Lailah’s Lunchbox (Reem Faruqi)
-Everyone Prays (Alexis York)

-Zen Ties (Jon Muth)
-Zen Shorts (Jon Muth)
-Fly Free (Roseanne Thong)
-Talking to God: Prayers for Children from the World’s Religions (Demi)

January

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable describes the belief that we need to focus on putting our poor and vulnerable first.

Key Understandings

- It is important for all people to have access to basic needs such as food, water, housing, and medical care as well as work and education. Individuals without access are considered poor.
- The Church teaches that these individuals should be treated with extra care and concern. It is important to share what we have with others.
- Many students have a stereotyped image of poverty. Students should understand that poverty can occur with any individual or family.
- Global poverty is a prevalent issue that needs attention.

Integration of the Standards

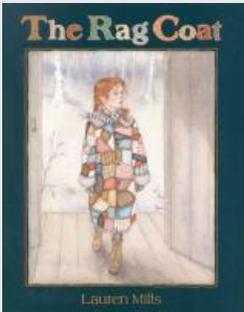
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6KF1, 6SS1, 6SJ3	7KF1, 7SS1, 7CC1, 7SJ3	8KF1, 8CC1, 8SJ3, 8SJ4
Social Studies			8.8b

Key Vocabulary

- Humanitarian efforts
- Refugee crisis
- Equal access
- Systemic poverty

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Genevieve
- St. John Bosco
- St. Cajetan
- St. Oscar Romero
- St. Louise de Marillac



The Rag Coat (Lauren Mills)

Begin by having students observe the cover illustrations. What do they notice about the girl? What do you think you can learn from this picture? How do you think she feels about her coat?

During Reading:

Are you surprised by Minna's reaction to the coat? Was she surprised by her classmate's reaction?

- Have students read Ephesians 4:32. How do Minna's actions bring this reading to life?
- In the text, Minna's father tells her "People only need people, and nothing else." Do you think this statement is true? What do you think this means? How do you think this fits into the teaching for this month?
- Minna's coat is an example of putting the poor and vulnerable first. Why do you think this is true?

To extend this activity, students can learn more about coal miner's and the impact of their work on coal mining communities and families.

Yasmin's Hammer (Ann Malaspina)

Before Reading: Explain to students that the story takes place in Bangladesh. Does the illustration on the cover make students think of poverty? Why or why not? Students should understand that for Yasmin's family, their life changed abruptly. As you are reading, have students look for the cause of their challenges.

During Reading: How did Yasmin's life change and what caused it to change? What did they hope for when moving to the city? What dreams does Yasmin have? How does the shopkeeper help her?

After Reading: Students should look at the Author's Note to understand the context of the story. How does the climate impact those who live in Bangladesh? How do children's lives look different in Bangladesh? Yasmin was unable to go to school in the text. When you think of poverty, do you think of education? Why is having an education so important for the children in the story?

For a nonfiction connection, have students read the following articles that look at education around the world.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2019/01/22/pass-or-fail-how-can-the-world-do-its-homework>

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/10-barriers-to-education-around-the-world-2/>

<https://www.unicef.org/education>

How is your experience different? What ways can we work to help provide global opportunities?

Sea Prayer (Khaled Hosseini)

How do people perceive refugees? What makes them a vulnerable population? What are the political conversations surrounding immigration right now? How does this text highlight a different point of view?

This text presents a different perspective of the global refugee crisis. Students can learn more about this topic using the following resources:

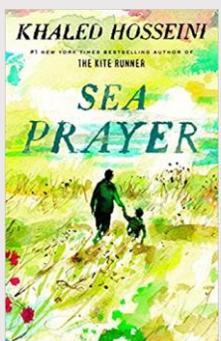
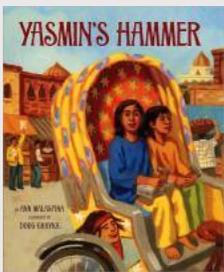
<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html>

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/understanding-global-refugee-crisis>

*The following link contains resources for teachers for help students understand the refugee crisis

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/education/2015/10/8-educational-resources-to-better-understand-the-refugee-crisis/>

In small groups, have students discuss the humanitarian efforts being lead for refugees, are these effective? what can be done differently? What is our role in aiding refugees?



February

Rights and Responsibilities

describes how each person has a fundamental right to life. We also have a responsibility to each other and our communities. This month focuses on rights issues related to race and coincides with Black History Month.

Key Understandings

- Each person has the right to have what they need to live (food, water, shelter, clothing, etc.) as well as access to education, medical care, and other opportunities.
- A person's rights can be impacted by how they look or where they live. Race can have a significant impact on a person's rights and opportunities.
- Racial prejudice and discrimination can come in many forms.
- We have a responsibility to assess our own behaviors as well as work to make changes within our community/world.

Integration of the Standards

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6SJ3, 6SJ4	7CC1, 7SJS3, 7SJ4,	8CC1, 8SJ3, 8SJ4
Social Studies		7.2e, 7.7b, 7.8e	8.1b, 8.1c, 8.4e, 8.9a, 8.9b

Key Vocabulary

- Oppression
- Bias
- Microaggression
- Privilege
- Discrimination

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Josephine Bakhita
- St. Benedict the Moor
- St. Monica
- St. Augustine

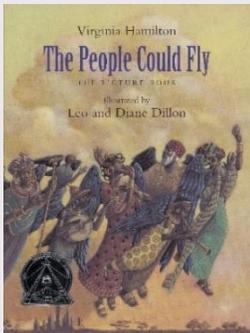
The People Could Fly (Virginia Hamilton)

Before Reading: Preview that while this is a picture book, the content and illustrations convey a more mature content. Discuss with students that this story is an African folktale that was originally an oral tradition. Based on the illustration and title, what do you think the purpose of this story will be?

During Reading: This text uses strong descriptive language, allusion, metaphor, and purposeful illustrations. As you are reading, have students make note of places in the text where they notice these literary devices. Afterwards, return to the text to highlight their use. How does this strengthen the story? What messages do they convey to the reader?

After Reading: This story is described as having "enduring power." With a partner, have students discuss what that means then work together to write a response describing how this story conveys enduring power. Why do you think this folktale is one that is still shared today? What important messages does it carry?

Have students continue to work with a partner to select a scene, quote, phrase, or illustration that they find compelling or that invokes a strong emotional connection. Have students record their thinking and then share with the class. As a class discuss how this text conveys an important message related to Black History Month.



Unspoken (Henry Cole)

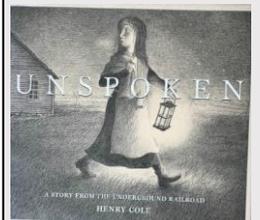
This wordless picture book gives the perspective of the Underground Railroad from a young farm girl. The following link plays the book with some music and sounds incorporated

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFpR-G_L5s8

Before Reading: Preface looking at or watching this book with the understanding that it is a wordless book. Have students consider what the purpose of using just illustrations might be. You might also introduce the idea of "a picture is worth a thousand words."

During Reading: What message is the author trying to convey? Do you think this text would be more powerful with words? Why or why not?

After Reading: As a follow-up to the idea of using a wordless book, have students consider Black History Month. What is the purpose of this celebration? In one picture, how can you convey the meaning? Working with a partner or individually, have students create an image that they feel celebrates the spirit of Black History Month. Encourage students to use detailed drawings and consider events, people, etc. that are powerful to their understanding. Afterwards, you can create a mural using all the drawings.



Suggested Activity: Book a Day Challenge

In this activity, you can either read aloud or challenge students to read a new picture book each day. Most of the texts are short and would take 5-10 minutes which is a great way to start or end the day/ transition after lunch. Students will encounter a new famous figure that represents Black History. At the end of each story, have students complete a quick draw/ quick write at the end of each story that captures what they feel is the most important moment in the individual's life. At the end of the month, students will have a collection of thoughts and images that can be turned into a small book.

- What Can you Do with a Voice Like That? (Holmes)
- The Oldest Student (Hubbard)
- Counting on Katherine (Becker)
- Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library (Weatherford)
- Fly High: The Story of Bessie Coleman (Borden)
- Dream Builder (Lyons)
- I am Farmer (Paul)
- No Small Potatoes (Bolden)
- Tiny Stitches (Hooks)
- Voice of Freedom (Weatherford)
- Fifty Cents and a Dream (Asim)
- Before there Was Mozart (Cline-Ransome)
- Clemente! (Perdomo)
- Racing Against the Odds (Weatherford)
- Ida B. Wells: Let the Truth Be Told (Myers)
- Rosa (Giovanni)
- Salt in His Shoes (Jordan)
- Alvin Ailey (Pinkney)
- The Youngest Marcher (Levinson)
- Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table (Martin)
- Wilma Unlimited (Kull)
- Nelson Mandela (Nelson)

March

Rights and Responsibilities describes how each person has a fundamental right to life. We also have a responsibility to each other and our communities. This month focuses on rights issues related to gender and Women's History Month. This month builds upon the understanding that students developed in February.

Key Understandings

- A person's rights can be impacted by how they look or where they live. Gender can have a significant impact on a person's rights and opportunities.
- Women are disproportionately impacted by gender stereotypes and discrimination particularly on a global scale.
- It is our responsibility to work to make sure all people have equal rights.

Integration of the Standards

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6KF10, 6SJ3, 6SJ4	7KF9, 7CC1, 7SJ3, 7SJ4	8KF10, 8CC1, 8SJ3, 8SJ4
Social Studies		7.7c, 7.8e	8.2e, 8.4e, 8.9b

Key Vocabulary

- Gender stereotypes
- Feminism
- Wage gap
- Glass ceiling

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Catherine of Siena
- St. Elizabeth Anne Seton
- St. Joan of Arc
- St. Teresa of Calcutta

Sketch a Scene

To introduce women's history, students will be working in pairs to read through a short, illustrated text about a famous, influential female or an important moment in women's history. Their goal is to illustrate (or sketch) the most important scene from the text. Afterwards, students can hang their illustrations around the room and complete an "idea walk." As they look at other illustrations, what are they noticing? What does they wonder? What are the common ideas or themes? This activity is a quick way to begin the conversation of women's equality and rights. Suggested texts for this activity include:

- Elizabeth Started All the Trouble (Doreen Rappaport)
- Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee (Marissa Moss)
- Wilma Unlimited (Kathleen Krull)
- She's Got This (Laurie Hernandez)
- Malala: Activist for Girl's Education (Raphaelle Frier)
- Miss Paul and the President (Dean Robbins)
- Ballots for Belva (Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen)
- I Could do That (Linda White)
- Lillian's Right to Vote (Jonah Winter)
- Turning Pages (Sonia Sotomayer)

Timeline

Women's history and the progression of rights may be abstract for students to understand. Students can work in small groups or pairs to create a timeline of women's rights achievements. To add to the context of the timeline, students should also include notable world events or changes to compare. For example, students would indicate 1920 as women achieving the right to vote in the US and would also show that the first electronic TV was invented in 1927.

***Please note that some information on women's history will discuss abortion/ birth control rights. It is important to address these in the context of the Church and its stance on the right to life for the unborn.**

<https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/womens-history-us-timeline>

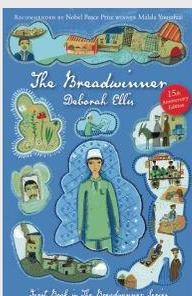
<https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/timeline/womenunite/en/index.html#/1940>

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/we2020/Pages/Timeline-Womens-Suffrage.aspx>

For groups who finish ahead, they may want to investigate women's rights around the world to add to their timeline. (i.e. in 1979 Nigeria achieved universal suffrage) <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/worldwide-womens-suffrage-timeline>

Book Club

Use the text "The Breadwinner" (Deborah Ellis) to begin a discussion on women's rights and access around the world. This text can be used as a read aloud (1-2 chapters) at the beginning/end of each day throughout the month. The story is particularly relevant as it takes place in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. You can extend this topic through integration of current events in the Middle East as well as the history of women's rights in this area.



April

Care for God's Creation

describes the belief that we show respect to God through respecting His creations. We are called to protect the Earth.

Key Understandings

- The Earth and all creation were created out of love by God. The way we treat the Earth is a way to convey our respect and appreciation for God.
- The Earth has limited resources. Humans have a significant impact on the Earth's resources.
- Different communities are challenged due to a lack of resources.
- Our actions have a direct impact on the environment locally and globally. Weather patterns, ocean levels, etc. are impacted by our actions.

Key Vocabulary

- Biodegradable
- Fossil fuel
- Carbon footprint
- Renewable/nonrenewable
- Climate change
- Greenhouse gases
- Conservation

Integration of the Standards

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6SJ1	7SJ1	8SJ1
Science	ESS3.A, ESS3.D, ESS3.C		

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- St. Francis of Assisi
- St. Modomnoc
- St. Katera of Tekakwitha
- St. Hildegard of Bingen

Class Activity: Environmentalist Museum

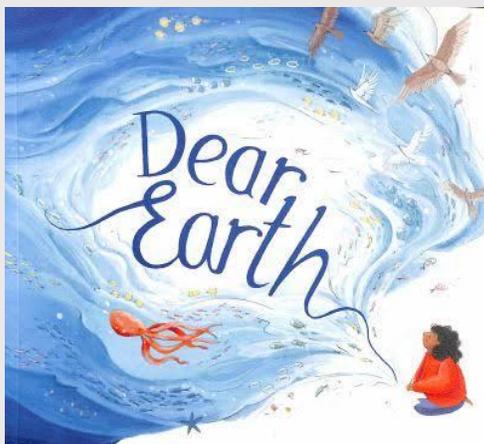
In this activity, students will work in pairs or small groups to learn about the life of an environmental activity. Using short biographies and online sources, students will research and record pertinent information. Students will then work to create a museum display to depict their environmentalist. Displays can be simple posters, timelines, or multimedia depending on time constraints. This project can be completed over the course of the month to limit time taken from other ongoing content. This project can also be extended to have younger grades or families "visit" the museum with student groups sharing their work.

Suggested Texts:

These texts are short biographies or picture books selected to be an introduction to the environmentalist. Students may want to complete more in-depth research using online sources.

- Who is Jane Goodall? (Edwards)
- Who was Jacques Cousteau? (Medina)
- Who was Rachel Carson? (Fabiny)
- Seeds of Change (Johnson)
- Tree Lady (Joseph)
- The Boy Who Drew Birds (Davies)

- Joan Proctor, Dragon Doctor (Valdez)
- Small Wonders (Smith)
- Out of School and Into Nature (Slade)
- The Brilliant Deep (Mesner)
- Swimming with Sharks (Lang)



Dear Earth (Isabel Otter)

Begin by reading just the first few pages of the story. Pause after the sentence "start by writing Dear Earth then let your imagination flow." Let students think and discuss with a partner about what they would tell the earth. What do they love about the earth? What do they wonder? What are they thankful for? Share as a class and encourage students to look for similarities in their thinking compared to the text.

After Reading:

This text is written from the perspective of letter writing to the Earth and makes a great opportunity to connect to the story of creation. Have students read the story of creation and share their thinking about God creating the Earth. Afterwards, have students write a letter to God thanking Him for his creation. Like in the story, students can highlight specific aspects of the Earth that are special to them.

Extension Activities:

- Have each student create a small painting or illustration of their favorite part of the Earth. Use recycled cardboard to save paper. Create a mural of all the student artwork to celebrate the wonders around us.
- As stewards of the earth, have students consider their role and impact. Activities such as calculating plastic usage, understanding carbon footprint, and doing an energy survey are great ways for students to begin to understand their individual/family impact.

May

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

describes the belief that every human life is precious. As a society, we must work to protect all life. Our actions as well as our choice of inaction have an impact on others.

Key Understandings

- Standing up for others, especially those who cannot stand up for themselves, is important and necessary. Inaction has a similar impact to negative action.
- Jesus taught us that every person is special, valuable, and precious.
- The Catholic Church views the protection of life from conception to natural death.

Integration of the Standards

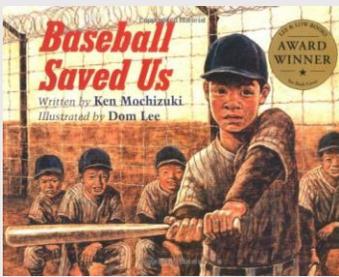
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6KF3, 6MF8, 6SJ3	7CC4, 7MF7, 7SJ3	8CC4, 8SJ3, 8SJ4
Social Studies			8.2a, 8.2c, 8.6b

Key Vocabulary

- Dignity
- Vulnerable populations
- Bullying/ cyber bullying
- Conception (*where age and maturity appropriate)
- Euthanasia (*where appropriate)

Integrating the Lives of the Saints

- *May is the month of Mary, her love and faith are shining example of respect for life.
- St. Isidore
- St. Joseph the Worker
- St. Maximilian Kolbe



Baseball Saved Us (Ken Mochizuki)

Before Reading: This text discusses life in a Japanese internment camp during WWII. Students can gain an understanding of interment camps by reading the following article <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/rise-to-world-power/us-wwii/a/japanese-internment>

Discuss with students why internment camps were created. Do you feel like this was unjust? How did this impact the dignity of those who were forced to go to the camp?

During Reading: What emotions do you see from the characters? Character feelings are not explicated described but there are many behavioral examples that act as descriptors. Have students work in pairs to make these connections (i.e. Teddy refusing to get his father a cup of water).

After Reading: Students will read Mark 12:31 and compare their understanding of this passage to what they have read in the book. How do the events in the story counter this teaching? How could other characters have acted to change Shorty's experience? Why do you think his friends did not support him?

The following link contains primary source documents as well as activity ideas to help students gain a deeper understanding of interment camps

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/learning/lesson-plans/teaching-japanese-american-internment-using-primary-resources.html>

The Whispering Town (Jennifer Elvgren)

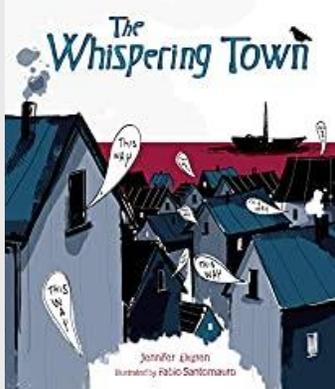
Before Reading: Preface this text with a check-in on student understanding of the Holocaust and concentration camps. This is an eighth-grade social studies standard, but students may have some context. For 6/7 grade students, you can use resources from the following site <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/an-overview-of-the-holocaust-topics-to-teach>

Do you see similarities between internment camps and the treatment of the Jews? How are both examples of harming the life and dignity of others?

During Reading: How would you describe the individuals in this town? What risks are they taking? Why do you think they are choosing to take these risks?

After Reading: In this text, the Danes in the town were breaking the laws put in place by the Nazis. Is there ever a time that following the law is the wrong thing to do? Students should journal their thoughts on this question and then break into groups to discuss. Would you be willing to risk your freedom or life for someone else?

- This text can be connected to students learning about Maximilian Kolbe and his life in a concentration camp. How is his sacrifice an example of protecting the sanctity of life?
- This text can also be paired with a Book Club of "Number the Stars" which follows a firsthand account of the Danish resistance through the eyes of a 10 year-old, Annemarie.
 - In both texts, the characters demonstrate tremendous selflessness in their goal of protecting others. What other character traits are highlighted in the text? How do these traits mirror the purpose and meaning of Catholic Social teaching? Where can we see examples of these selfless actions in the Bible?



June

Being Leaders in

Faith calls students to participate in their faith through their words and actions.

Key Understandings

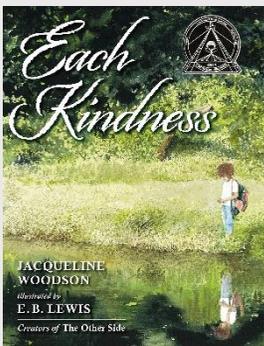
- This month, students will be able to take the ideas that they have learned about social justice and consider how they can apply them in terms of being a faith leader. It is important for students to understand that their actions are impactful to their school, parish, and community. By living their faith and acting as an example for others, they can influence change.
- What are the characteristics of a leader? Who are role models that can influence you to be a leader?
- What are action steps for being a school, parish, or community leader?
- As an upper grade student, how can you be a role model to primary grades?

Integration of the Standards

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Religion	6KF1, 6KF9, 6SJ6, 6SJ8	7KF2, 7US8, 7SJ6, 7SJ7, 7SJ8	8KF3, 8KF9, 8US8, 8MF4, 8SJ6, 8SJ7, 8SJ8

Key Vocabulary

- Leader
- Role model
- Positive influence
- Social responsibility

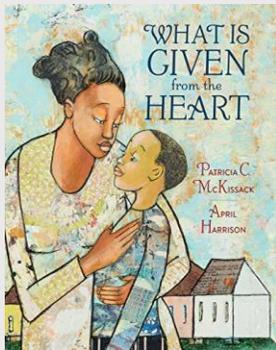


Each Kindness (Jacqueline Woodson)

Before Reading: As a class, read through the Act of Contrition. Have students make note of the phrase “in choosing to do wrong and failing to do good.” In pairs or small groups, students will discuss the difference between these two categories. What does this look like? Are they equally wrong? How does each impact our relationship with God?

During Reading: What examples of “choosing to do wrong” are seen in the text? Where do you see examples of “failing to do good?” How would you describe the students in the story? Use specific examples from the text to support your thinking.

After Reading: It is important for students to understand that while we can always ask God for forgiveness, we do not always have the option of making amends with those we have wronged like in the story. As a leader of faith and justice, how could you rewrite this story? In small groups, have students rewrite a scene of the story keeping in mind that action as well as inaction have an impact on those around us.

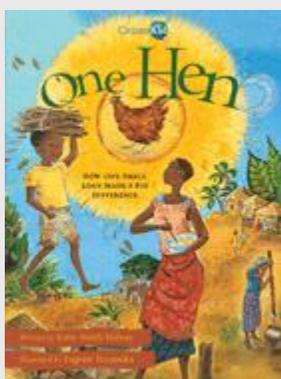


What is Given from the Heart (Patricia McKissack)

Prior to reading, have students discuss the following quote "We all have something to give to help others." Encourage students to think about this from a literal and figurative perspective. Are there limitations to this statement? What might those be?

During Reading: What does James struggle with throughout the book? Is there a difference between a physical item and a gift from the heart in terms of the impact it can have on another person?

After Reading: What did James need to create his gift for the box? What character traits did he demonstrate through his actions? Have students brainstorm how acts of empathy can impact individuals in their community. With a focus on their parish community, what acts of empathy might they be able to do? Who within the community would benefit from a similar act of kindness or empathy?



One Hen (Katie Smith Milway)

Read to students the portion of the title that says “one small loan can make a big difference.” Discuss with students, “what does it mean to get a loan?” Have students think about what loans are typically given for and who gives the loans. Do you think one small loan can really make a big difference?

After Reading: How does this story illustrate the importance of small efforts? Have students create a storyboard of significant events to illustrate the significance of the one hen. How does each event tie back to the one hen? What does this tell you about how one person can significantly impact the lives of others?

Additional resources for this text can be found here <https://www.onehen.org/free-lesson-plans/>

Extend this reading by having students learn microfinance and the impact that small loans/goods can have within communities around the world. This concept solidifies the understanding that anyone can make a difference. There are several resources in the link below about microfinance:

<https://www.kidsglobal.net/the-issues/microfinance/>