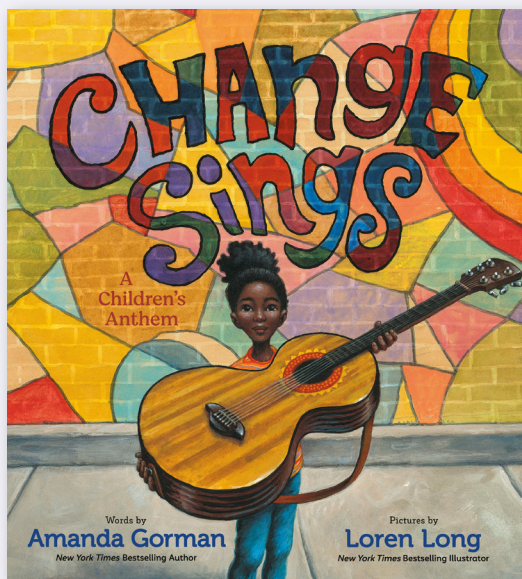
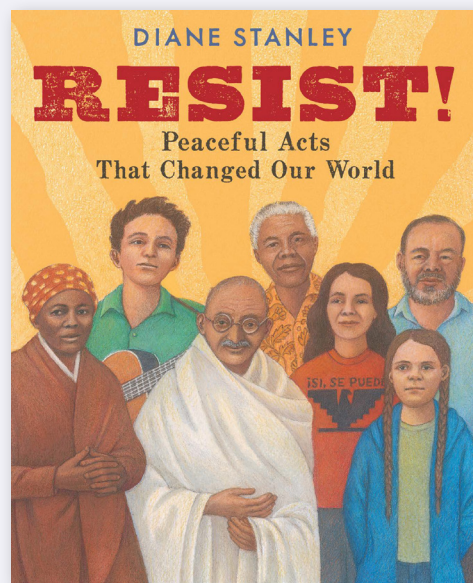
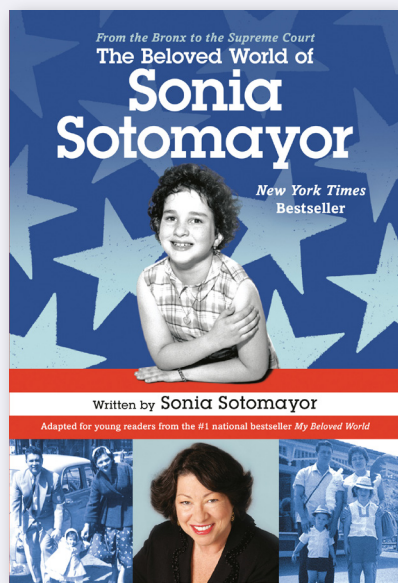


THEMATIC GUIDE

Teaching Civic Engagement
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



CONTENTS

■ INTRODUCTION 2

■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION 3

■ BUILDING KNOWLEDGE 4

■ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES 5

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 7

■ RESOURCES 8

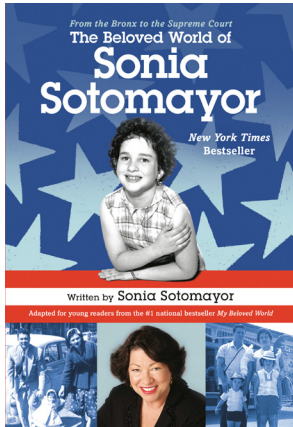
■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE 8

■ INTRODUCTION

In a 2021 Carnegie Corporation article titled “What We Owe Our Children,” U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor warned, “Civic duties and behaviors are learned, not inherited. If the seeds of lifelong, prepared, and engaged participation are not planted... they will never grow.” How, then, do we plant the seeds of citizenship in young children? According to the Tufts University Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, “even students as young as kindergarten-age can start to develop core assets like civic responsibility, a sense of community, empathy, and an ability to speak their mind when they see injustice.”

The books in this text set focus on the concept of civic engagement by addressing the following line of inquiry: What does it mean to be a citizen in the twenty-first century? What role can I play? Students will learn about democracy through a study of elections and the people who have changed their communities for the better. Teachers can choose one or any combination of books and strategies to use with whole-class instruction, reading circles, or independent reading as they teach young students how to make a difference, accept differences, and be an engaged citizen in today’s world.

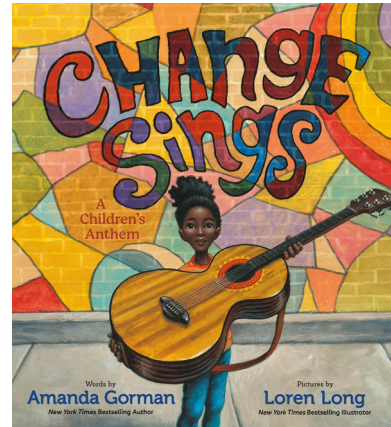
■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION



The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor SONIA SOTOMAYOR

978-1-5247-7117-1
Paperback | Yearling
352 pages | \$8.99 | Lexile: 1070L
Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

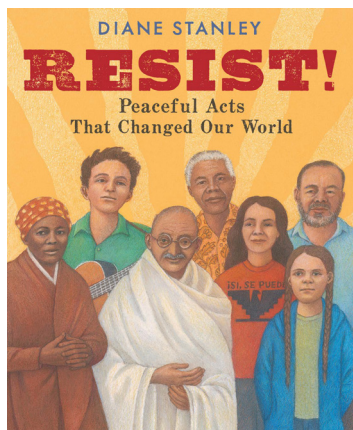
The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor challenges young readers to remain persistent in the face of hardship by recounting the inspiring life of a groundbreaking U.S. Supreme Court justice.



Change Sings A Children's Anthem AMANDA GORMAN, Illustrated by LOREN LONG

978-0-593-20322-4
Hardcover | Viking Books for Young Readers
32 pages | \$18.99 | Lexile: AD470L
Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

In the picture book *Change Sings: A Children's Anthem*, poet Amanda Gorman encourages children to use their abilities to make a difference and recognize that change begins inside each one of us.



Resist! Peaceful Acts That Changed Our World DIANE STANLEY

978-0-8234-4487-8
Hardcover | Neal Porter Books
48 pages | \$18.99

Diane Stanley's *Resist! Peaceful Acts That Changed Our World* highlights historic and contemporary advocates who have confronted injustice through the power of peaceful protest.



DK Reader Level 2: What Is an Election? CARYN JENNER

978-1-4654-9986-8
Paperback | DK Children
48 pages | \$4.99 | Lexile: 750L
Also available: E-Book

What is an Election?, by Caryn Jenner, introduces beginning readers to the concept of democracy and emphasizes the rights and responsibilities of every citizen voter.

■ BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

The books in this collection vary in complexity and include topics that are new to many students. In order to provide an equitable environment where all students are prepared for context and reading demands, the following activities present opportunities to build knowledge and provide access to the texts.

SEE, THINK, WONDER

Show the class one or more images depicting the election process. Ask students to reflect on what they see with the “See, Think, Wonder” routine. Lead students through the three analysis rounds, each time providing a more detailed lens. Students should consider:

- What do I see? (What details stick out?)
- What do I think? (What about the image or wording makes me think that?)
- What does this make me wonder? (What questions or big ideas does this image raise?)

Election and voting images might include ballot boxes, campaign posters, candidate speeches, and voting lines. The images can be photographs, artistic renderings, or infographics, and they should reflect a diversity of voters and candidates. An online image search will produce an assortment of pictures, or teachers can use *What is an Election?* from this text set. It offers photos and renderings, both historic and contemporary, and reflects multiple cultures and abilities.

CIVICS WORD WALL

To ensure equity and access, students may need intentional vocabulary instruction essential for comprehending specific texts. Rather than assigning the entire list at one time, pre-teach only the words that will be important in a particular day’s lesson. Ask students to stop and note when these words are used in the text(s). After reading, have students rephrase meanings with partners or in writing. Words addressed can then be added to the classroom word wall, and students can engage in games and activities to solidify their learning. Examples of civics vocabulary appearing throughout this text set include *activist, candidate, citizenship, congress, convention, democracy, election, government, politician, protest, resist, rights, tolerance, and unite*.

TALK MOVES

After explaining that responsible citizens respect alternate views and discuss opinions politely, teach students to practice civil discourse through the use of talk moves. Before engaging in classroom discussions, invite students to contribute to a class list of norms or talk rules. Post them on the wall and remind students of these shared norms each time they are involved in partner, group, or class discussion. Norms might include “one speaker at a time” or “listen to understand.” During discussions, ask students to use sentence frames such as “I’d like to add on to what Maria said...” and “I respectfully disagree with you because...” Other sentence frames help students use evidence to support their views, such as “Can you give an example?” or “What is your reasoning?”

After class discussions, ask students to rate their use of talk moves and set goals for future civil discourse. For more information and examples of talk moves, see <https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-productive-talk-looks-elementary-grades>.

■ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CLASS CONSTITUTION

In both *What is an Election?* and *The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor*, students read about the United States Constitution and its impact on citizens, lawmakers, and the justice system. Engage students in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship by creating a class contract or constitution. Invite each student to brainstorm one to three rights they believe each student has in class. Students might suggest the right to learn, to be safe, to have fun, or to share ideas. Compile the ideas to create a class list.

Next, discuss as a group specific actions students can take to make sure each right is respected. The class constitution is a list of these rights and responsibilities. Constitutions can be enlarged with a poster maker, posted on the wall, and signed by every classmate. Personal copies can be kept in student notebooks. When needed, both teachers and classmates can remind each other of the agreements in order to promote inclusion, acceptance, and productivity. Alternatively, the document can be called a classroom “contract.” For more on this idea, see https://www.facinghistory.org/back-to-school-2019/download/Lesson_Plan_4_Creating_a_Classroom_Contract.pdf.

FOUR CORNERS VOTING

What is an Election? explains to students that “Not all countries have elections. In some parts of the world people do not have a chance to vote. One person holds all of the power and makes all of the decisions for everyone” (p. 32). Using the Four Corners strategy, demonstrate the significance of voting while practicing civil discussions with differing viewpoints. In the Four Corners strategy, students are asked to “vote” their opinion on various statements or quotations by walking to one of four corners in the room. Students select the appropriate corner based on whether they agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, or disagree.

Once in their corners, students talk to each other and arrive at a shared reason for that corner’s decision. One student from each corner then explains the group’s reasoning to the rest of the class. At this point, students can move to a different corner based on the persuasiveness of their classmates’ argument. Those who have shifted might explain what persuaded them towards different points of view. Practice the strategy first with easy or silly statements, such as “Our state is the best state to live in” or “Hot dogs should be considered sandwiches.”

After students have practiced, move on to more complex prompts or quotations, such as “Rules should always be followed” or “Good fences make good neighbors.”

To scaffold this strategy, students might take a moment to consider their point of view and formulate their reasoning on paper prior to the activity. As an extension, students can journal about how their thinking shifted or stayed the same after listening to other viewpoints.

STAND UP; SIT DOWN

Change Sings and *Resist!* both address the concept of peaceful protest. Explain to students that there are many ways citizens can make their voices heard, including voting, but sometimes, people use demonstration. To illustrate, show students images of peaceful protests and demonstrations throughout history. Images might include Gandhi's Salt March, the march from Selma to Montgomery for civil rights, the pink hat women's marches, Greta Thunberg's school strikes for climate justice, and Black Lives Matter protests. For early elementary students, provide a brief explanation of each image. Older students can participate in a station rotation where small groups access short texts, video, or audio recordings that provide information about these protests.

Next, direct students to one or more texts from this set. In *Change Sings*, Amanda Gorman writes, "I use my strengths and my smarts, Take a knee to make a stand" (p. 10). Similarly, in *Resist!*, Diane Stanley refers to Claudette Colvin and Rosa Parks's bus demonstrations as "standing up by sitting down" (p. 18). Ask students, "What does it mean to take a knee in order to make a stand?" "How can a person 'stand up' by sitting down?" Discuss the idea of silent protests and demonstrations. Younger students can practice the concept of "standing up by sitting down." Ask students to stand up. One at a time, read the class some simple opinion statements and direct students to sit if they disagree with the statements and remain standing if they agree. As an extension, students might make "protest" signs and use them during this activity. Older elementary students can analyze images, texts, and recordings from civil rights lunch counter sit-ins, environmental demonstrations, or NFL national anthem protests.

CHANGEMAKERS WAX MUSEUM

The power of a single voice is a central theme in *The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor*, *Change Sings*, and *Resist!* Readers are encouraged to listen to all voices and use their individual abilities to make positive change. Challenge students to select a historic or contemporary changemaker from one of the texts and bring that person to life in the form of a wax museum exhibit. Students might research Puerto Rican-born Sonia Sotomayor, who turned a life-threatening health condition into a determination to see all sides and fight for the underrepresented. Or, students can choose one of the advocates in *Resist!*, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Martin Luther King Jr., Ruth Bader Ginsburg, or Nelson Mandela.

After researching how their figure used their voice to make a difference, students can prepare a "script," dress like their chosen changemaker, and strike a pose. When classmates or visitors push their pretend button, students deliver their script in character. Older elementary students might choose to record and view their deliveries using an online platform such as Padlet or Flip.com. As an extension, challenge students to see themselves as change agents. Engage the class in a get-to-know-you

activity that elevates differences and similarities. Ask classmates to introduce one another to the class, highlighting abilities and accomplishments others may not know.

SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

In order to promote civic character development and community connection, students can engage in an extended service learning project. With age-appropriate format and focus, students of all abilities can benefit socially, emotionally, and academically while working to improve their school, neighborhood, and broader community. Using infographics, pamphlets, and websites, introduce students to local initiatives that have resulted from community collaboration. Examples might include food pantries, community gardens, or renovated parks. Discuss the process by which these projects came to life, starting with a recognized need. Explain that each student in the class has the power to make such a difference in their own community. Using a think-pair-share format, ask students to brainstorm local needs, discuss them with a partner, and jot down their thinking on a Post-it note. Collect all Post-its, ask students to help categorize the ideas, and, together, select a class service learning project.

Once the focus is selected, engage students in research. For example, if the class has chosen to learn about animal rescue needs in the local community, they might build knowledge and skills in existing resources, spaying/neutering, foster care, and pet adoption. Local veterinary offices and animal shelters could provide materials and host class visits. For the service portion of the project, students might choose to foster pets at school or in homes, or volunteer at a pet adoption event. Older students might even coordinate an event. Throughout the project, ask students to evaluate their learning, skills, and self-efficacy. Younger students might use a simple emoji rating scale while older elementary students can fill out a Google form with multiple choice and short answer questions. At the end of the project, students may showcase their learning and empowerment by delivering an explanatory speech, completing a culminating essay, creating an infographic, or publishing a website.

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions integrate themes found throughout the texts in this set and can be used for journaling, essays, small-group discussions, and large-group seminars.

1. What does a good leader look like? Why is it important that a leader embody these qualities? What might happen if a leader does not?
2. How do I define “fair” and “unfair” in a way that acknowledges the rights of all? How might I speak up when I feel someone’s rights are not respected?
3. What is something happening in my school, neighborhood, or community that I would like to change? What are some steps I can take toward making that change happen?
4. When have I seen compromise or problem-solving ease conflict or meet a need? What lessons might I learn from this example?
5. Why should every person vote? What is the impact when people don’t vote or are kept from voting?

6. What makes me unique? How can I use my unique qualities to meet my goals or help others? How can I get to know people who look, act, or think differently than I do?
7. Who is someone from history, contemporary society, or my own life that has made a positive difference? What can I learn from their example?
8. What does it mean to be a citizen in America? How can I be the best citizen possible?

■ RESOURCES

The following resources provide more information and ideas for engaging students in civics education.

Educating for America:

<https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap>

iCivics:

<https://www.icivics.org/news/product-announcement/civic-learning-resources-elementary-students>

National Constitution Center:

<https://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/we-the-civics-kids>

Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools:

<https://tinyurl.com/CivicMissionSchools>

Youth.gov:

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/civic-engagement-and-volunteering/service-learning>

■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Laura Reis Mayer is a high school instructional coach and National Board Certified teacher in Asheville, North Carolina. She has taught middle, high school, and college English, speech, drama, and literacy. As a consultant to various national organizations, she develops and facilitates professional learning on college and career-ready standards, teacher leadership, and National Board Certification. She has authored more than twenty Penguin Random House teacher's guides.

Visit our website, PenguinRandomHouseEducation.com
to browse more civics titles.

