

**Unit 4: Social Issues Book Clubs: Spotlight on Making Connections and Synthesizing  
(4 weeks)**

**Rationale**

*Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?*

With experience in book clubs under their belts, students are ready to tackle the sophisticated genre of social issues texts. This unit pushes students to read beyond the plot, thinking about themes in texts. These books provide excellent opportunities for students to watch characters dealing with social issues and learn strategies for dealing with those issues. As students develop passion toward social justice, their enthusiasm for reading will improve.

**Learning Outcomes**

*What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?*

Students will:

- Identify and compare themes within and across texts
- Deepen understanding of a text that focuses on a social issue through independent reading and conversation
- Explore social issues in a texts across a variety of texts and through a variety of perspectives
- Demonstrate the qualities of good book talk by engaging in conversations that deepen understanding of the text
- Be active participants in their book clubs to listen to divergent ideas and different voices
- Utilize peers as a springboard for ideas

**Minilessons/Notes/Tips**

*What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?*

Possible Minilessons:

- Reviewing what is already known (e.g., features, structures) about reading and thinking about fictional texts
- Reading interpretively and creating text-sets of books that go together
- Exploring issues hidden within the pages of familiar books
- Creating a class chart of social issues (The term “social issues” refers to issues that affect a lot of people, not just the one character in a story. Many people worry about fitting in, peer pressure, poverty, bullying, absent parents, and racism all of which are examples of social issues.)
- Identifying and thinking deeply about the social issue(s) of a text by asking,
  - What does this story teach me about the social issue we are studying?
  - Which issues seem important in this story?
  - What are the characters’ reactions to these issues?
  - How do the characters deal with these issues?
  - What perspective does each character have on this issue?
- Identifying critical scenes where the social issue is glaring
- Mining critical scenes for:
  - Character(s) reactions
  - Deepen understanding of the social issue
- Understanding the complexity of the social issue in connection to the character’s struggle or journey
- Determining a theme of a text from details in the text
- Noticing the social issue in our lives as well as in the text
- Synthesizing themes and looking for patterns across texts

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- What does this particular text seem to be saying about this theme/issue? And how does that compare/contrast to another text about a similar theme/issue?
- What is the author's, narrator's point of view regarding the issue? How does his/her point of view influence how the story is told? Events unfold?
- Moving beyond initial reactions about themes by asking:
  - What other social issues could this text be about?
  - I used to think...by not I think.... (about a social issue, about a text)
  - What are the conditions, surroundings and people that contribute to the way the character is feeling?
- Reviewing routines and procedures for book clubs
- Reviewing ways to keep talk going during book clubs
  - Refer to partner conversational prompts from earlier units of study
- Thinking and understanding social issues on a deeper level by posing the following questions to club members:
  - Does this fit with what we have seen in the world?
  - Is there something the author wants us to know about being a member of that group?
  - What causes people to act this way?
  - What would happen if the character's group was flipped (e.g., a rich character was poor or a boy character was a girl)?
  - What does this say about what we believe?
- Educating peers from other book clubs on a social issue explored
- Celebrating the end of the unit. Possibilities may include but are not limited to the following:
  - Gather clubs that read about a similar issue and have them engage in a conversation (debate is encouraged) about the issue. Students should use text evidence to support thinking and ideas.
  - Gather clubs that read about a different issue and have them introduce the issue to the group, share what they have learned, engage in a conversation. (Students who did not read about the issue being presented by the other club can participate in the conversation by activating prior knowledge, experience related to the issue.)
  - Have each club "book talk" about any texts they highly recommend to their peers for summer reading. One option is to have students simply talk about their book. Other options include making a podcast for the book, making an advertisement, writing a book review, etc.)
  - Students reflect and respond to the prompt, What did you learn about yourself as a reader during this unit of study? How have you grown/changed as a reader as a result of this unit? How can you apply what you have learned about reading social issue based texts to all of your reading? Be as specific as possible.

### Notes/Tips:

- **Students should build reading stamina by reading independently for a minimum of 45 minutes.**
- Meet with guided reading groups consistently as a way to differentiate reading instruction for all students.
- As the class explores a social issue together as a group through a whole class read aloud (in addition to the book club work students will do in groups) it will be important for teachers to select an issue that they are passionate about. Teachers will read multiple texts about the selected social issue to model the strategies the students will be doing with their group members. Two recently published texts recommended for read aloud that tie into the Building Bridges initiative include *Out of my Mind* by Sharon Draper and *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio. Additional mentor texts include *Every Living Thing* by Cynthia Rylant and *What Do Fish Have to Do With Anything* by Avi.
- Read aloud and shared reading provide daily opportunities for students to turn and talk which will prepare them for engaging in conversations about texts read with reading partners and book club members.
- It will be important to provide students with multiple copies of a few books that address a social issue. This way, a club can read and talk across a few books. Many teachers create texts sets around a particular issue for students to read. Text sets include a range of genres related to the same topic. Poems, articles (feature, op-ed, etc.), short stories, picture books. (Another option is to have students help create text sets. The key is to make sure the text set contain materials at the just right reading levels of students.) Text sets allow for students to study an issue in depth, as well as to read about an issue from different perspectives. To access a host of suggested social issue short typed texts please view the artifacts folder for the unit on the district website.
- To view recommended genre specific texts for read aloud and independent reading use the following

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link <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-libraries.html>.

- Book clubs typically meet two or three days a week as students need time to read and prepare. (In order for students to engage in dynamic conversations they need to have read a chunk of the text rather than a single chapter.)
- Clubs can be comprised of 2-5 students.
- Group students together for clubs considering interests, level, behaviors, etc.
- To prepare students for the book club experience, teachers may choose to use guided reading to collect information about their students regarding their ability to discuss texts.
- Students should spend part of the reading workshop reading their book club book and the remaining time reading a different just right independent text to build reading stamina.
- Confer into book clubs to raise the quality of book talk.
- It is crucial for teachers to observe conversations to assess student behaviors and common mistakes as they discuss books on their own; thus providing the data to drive instruction.
- Create an ongoing anchor chart of conversational prompts (initiate conversations, keep the conversation going, question and deepen the talk).
- Clubs that have exceptional book talk should model for the class.
- Teachers may decide to include a culminating project that would allow students to synthesize then share what they learned while reading their texts.
- Teachers are encouraged to share copies of short typed texts they use for shared reading and/or independent reading with district colleagues. To view articles and short typed texts go to eChalk, Grade, select Elementary ELA, choose the folder titled "Short Typed Texts."
- **To view Grade 5 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 5 reading/writing page. Select "Resources" from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link [http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units\\_of\\_study/](http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/).**

### Professional Resources

*What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?*

- *The Common Core Lesson Book K-5* by Gretchen Owocki
- *The RTI Daily Planning Book* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project 5th Grade Reading Curriculum Calendar 2010-2011*
- *For a Better World: Reading and Writing for Social Action* by Katherine Bomer
- *The Art of Teaching Reading* by Lucy Calkins (Chapter 20)
- *Still Learning to Read* by Franki Sibberson and Karen Szymusiak
- *Literature Circles* by Harvey Daniels
- *Grand Conversations: Literature Groups in Action* Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds
- *Comprehension Through Conversation* by Maria Nichols
- *Talking About Text: Guiding Students to Increase Comprehension Through Purposeful Talk* by Maria Nichols
- *Teaching Reading in Small Groups: Differentiated Instruction for Building Strategic Independent Readers* by Jennifer Serravallo
- *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis
- *Teaching for Comprehension and Fluency* by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
- *The Next Step in Guided Reading: Focused Assessments and Targeted Lessons for Helping Every Student Become a Better Reader* by Jan Richardson