

Windows, Mirrors, and Doors: Using Picture Books to Teach About Diversity

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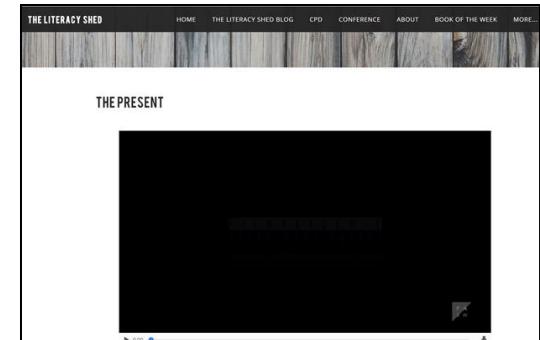


Ask teachers to describe the impact they hope to have on their students...

And most will eventually say something along these lines:

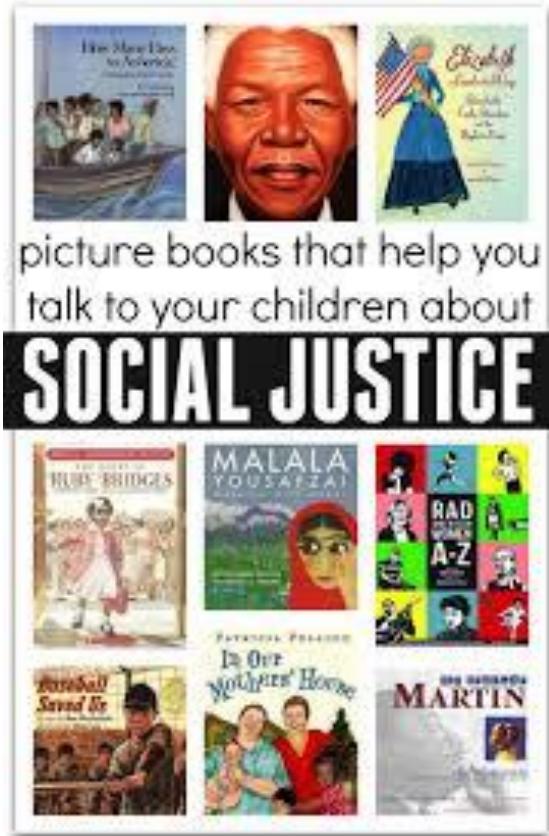
I want my students to grow into responsible citizens. I want my students to participate in society in an active, productive way.

And maybe: I want my students to change the world.



<http://www.literacyshed.com>

But how many of us know how to make that happen, really? Can we explicitly teach students how to change the world? If this question has been whispering in the back of your mind, then turn to the power of picture books.



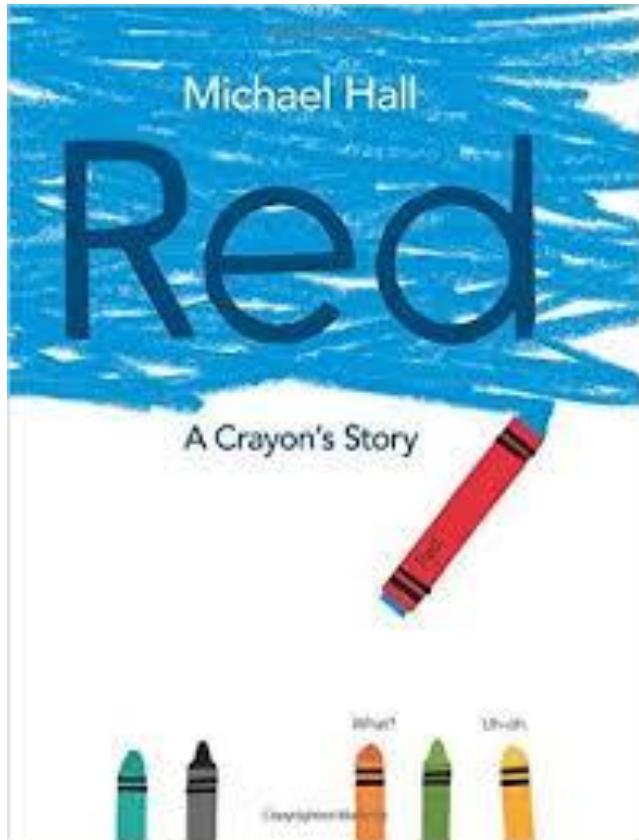
WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND HOW DOES IT FIT INTO THE CURRICULUM?

The [National Association of Social Workers](#) defines social justice as “the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.”

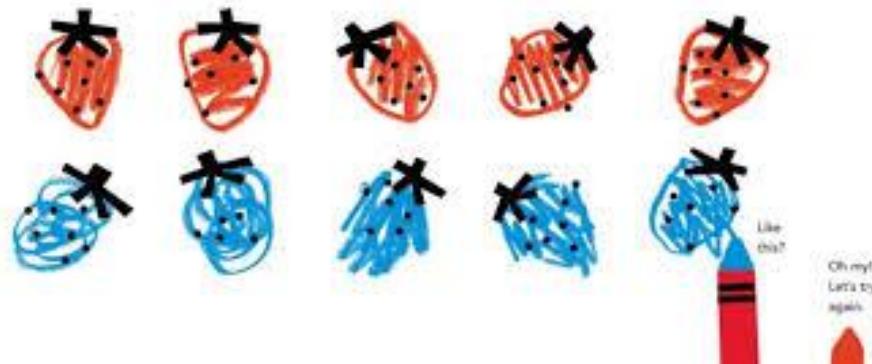
To study social justice is to learn about the problems that dramatically impact quality of life for certain populations, and how people have worked to solve those problems.

Here are some things to keep in mind when studying social justice issues with your students:

- Make getting to know students a key component of any social justice teaching.
- Know that not all students feel the same way about these issues.
- Familiarize yourself with the material before teaching.
- Keep your administrator in the loop.



Read Aloud



Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors

“Books are sometimes **windows**, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also **sliding glass doors**, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a **mirror**. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.” *-Rudine Sims Bishop*



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Book Tasting Talking Points:

Windows-

What do you find in the book that serves as a “window” into another culture or way of living? Is there something in the text or images that is out of the ordinary or unfamiliar to you?

Mirrors-

What do you find in the book that serves as a “mirror” of your experience? Does the text and/or images reflect something familiar or similar? Can you easily relate to the scenes or words in the book?

ONLINE RESOURCES

Teaching Tolerance website: <https://www.tolerance.org/>

Anti-Defamation League: [Current Events Classroom](#) is a collection of lesson plans that use current events as a springboard.

How can we change the world? [KID PRESIDENT](#).



In Conclusion

“When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part. Our classrooms need to be places where all the children from all the cultures that make up the salad bowl of American society can find their mirrors.”

-Rudine Sims Bishop





Please feel free to email us with questions anytime.

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