

## **Finding Your Voice... then Shouting!**

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### **ABSTRACT**

African Americans in the United States have suffered injury and trauma due to the arbitrary violence and bias of whites for hundreds of years. Beginning with slavery, white slave owners routinely created false narratives of African Americans being lazy, violent, unintelligent, etc. in order to justify making them subhuman property. Violence was used against African American enslaved people in order to keep them submissive to the horrific conditions they were subjected to. Because whites, who benefitted economically, were in positions of power, the laws they created upheld and perpetuated these conditions (Taylor et al., 2019).

African Americans coordinated, starting in the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 60s, a collective response to those years of dehumanizing oppression and inequity. Activists and leaders such as Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and countless others- many lesser known- organized and participated in various forms of protest such as sit-ins and marches in order to positively affect change (History.com Editors, 2022b). Along with the adults of this time, students also found ways to stand up as well.

*"When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something."*

*-John Lewis*

My goals for this unit are, first, for students to “do something”, to understand that regardless of age, activism lives within us all, every day. Next, I want students to realize that African American women writer’s voices, as well as their own, are important, even if they aren’t heard as often.

Students will read poems by African American women that encourage self-worth and standing up. They will then read the story of a young activist; one who did not allow her age or inexperience to determine what she could or could not do. These texts, collectively, will inspire them to find their own voices and to become leaders in their own areas of interest. These reading materials will also assist in teaching comprehension skills such as poetry analysis, theme, character analysis, making comparisons and inferencing. Last, these readings will spark discussions about stereotypes, bias, fear and activism- all topics *not* covered by the Core Curriculum.

This unit is designed for use with a fifth grade, regular education classroom, although the concepts could be adjusted for any grade. It should take approximately three weeks to complete, however, Part III-the culminating unit project of action- may continue throughout the year depending on student’s interest level and what they choose to do for their activism.

Key Words- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA, Activism, Poetry, Novel, Comprehension, Research, Social Justice

## **Finding Your Voice... then Shouting!**

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*“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph.”*

*— Haile Selassie*

African Americans in the United States have suffered injury and trauma due to the arbitrary violence and bias of whites for hundreds of years. Beginning with slavery, white slave owners routinely created false narratives of African Americans being lazy, violent, unintelligent, etc. in order to justify making them subhuman property. Violence was used against African American enslaved people in order to keep them submissive to the horrific conditions they were subjected to. Because whites, who benefitted economically, were in positions of power, the laws they created upheld and perpetuated these conditions. Each decade, each century, saw a continuation of only slightly altered versions of these systems and laws that were intended to preserve this lopsided paradigm (Taylor et al., 2019).

The Civil War that occurred between 1861 and 1865 led to the end of slavery. It was followed by the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), which was a series of attempts made by lawmakers to address the inequalities and dehumanizing by-products created by the hundreds of years of bondage of African American people. These included the following enacted by Congress: the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (which officially ended slavery and made it illegal) passed in 1865, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (which gave citizenship and equal protection to *all* who were born or naturalized in the United States) passed in 1866 and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (giving all citizens the right to vote), passed in 1869 (*Reconstruction / Definition, Summary, Timeline & Facts*, 2021).

However, during this same time period, then President Andrew Johnson also gave all southern whites- with a few exceptions- pardons from any actions or crimes committed during slavery and southern governments were given the freedom to legislate however they chose. This resulted in an almost immediate return to slavery-like conditions and mindsets by southern whites, despite the movements that were being made toward equality for African Americans on a national level. With the freedom these southern states and localities were afforded, the Reconstruction also saw the birth of laws that would eventually become known as Jim Crow laws (*Reconstruction / Definition, Summary, Timeline & Facts*, 2021).

Originally called the Black Codes, their intent was to control African Americans, what they could and couldn't do, limit their voting ability, and to make it extremely difficult for African Americans to rise above the status of domestics and low-wage laborers. This thereby ensured economic dominance by the whites in power (History.com Editors, 2022a). These codes, and the Jim Crow laws they eventually became were established as the latest iteration of the discriminatory and dangerous laws that supported the slavery archetype.

African Americans coordinated, starting in the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 60s, a collective response to those years of dehumanizing oppression and inequity. Activists and leaders such as Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and countless others- many lesser known- organized and participated in various forms of protest such as sit-ins and marches in order to positively affect change (History.com Editors, 2022b).

Along with the adults of this time, students also found ways to stand up as well. The Little Rock Nine, African American high school students from Little Rock, Arkansas, attempted to attend school after the Supreme Court decided that segregated schools were illegal in 1957. They were met with the Arkansas National Guard as well as mobs of Whites who threatened, harassed and intimidated them to not enter the school and to not come back. Even federal intervention in the form of troops sent by then President Eisenhower were not enough for them to peacefully be educated as the harassment continued once those troops left (History.com Editors, 2022b).

In 1963, students again took the lead in marches such as the Children's March in Birmingham, Alabama. As the culmination of the Children's Crusade, the intentional recruitment of students when the adult response was lacking in the city due to harsh consequences, the March saw over a thousand students ages 7-18 participate. These courageous children skipped school to peacefully march in small groups through the streets of Birmingham, protesting racial injustice. The advent of television brought these protests and the violent responses by the police into America's living rooms. Children were jailed, hosed with streams of water forceful enough to knock adults down and attacked by police dogs. The pressure eventually grew to finally change the unfair laws in this city (Clark, 2021).

Although the protests and marches of this time (as well as before and after) helped immensely to change the landscape, much of the damage to African Americans had already been done. Harmful stereotypes that began before slavery persisted as they were already accepted and ingrained into the minds of almost every racial group, even African Americans themselves. These stereotypes and the biases based on them have colored, and continue to color everything within society from education to self-image to the systems that are a part of almost every institution. For example, huge disparities remain in education between whites and African Americans in reading proficiency, graduation rates and college completion, just to name a few (Taylor et al., 2019). The intertwining of false stereotypes, low expectations, fewer resources, unfair laws and systemic biases, has been woven into the fabric of society that we see and use today.

*"Change starts with one person questioning, challenging, speaking up and doing something to make a difference."*

*-Paul Kivel*

Events of the past decade have brought the question of equality and civil rights back into the foreground. To start, access to smartphones, which include cameras and connection to the internet, have increased in all populations, but in minority populations as well. Although there have been police involved shootings throughout history, multiple killings of unarmed African American men and women have been captured on cell phones cameras (to then be displayed via social media), and have brought the brutality of these killings into people's hands (Lee, 2020b).

America, and the world, are able to see, first-hand, the graphic details of these encounters for themselves. Concurrently, these same people see when, as happens many times, the officers, (who are often white), do not seem to fully be held accountable for their actions. They are also able to see the frequency with which this occurs, even when video seems to show a clear picture of what has happened.

In 2012, a Floridian named George Zimmerman, shot and killed an unarmed, 17-year-old, Trayvon Martin, as he walked back to his father's fiancée's townhome from the local convenience store. Zimmerman is not a police officer, nor is he considered white (although he is white and Hispanic), but his reasons for stopping him, then attacking and shooting him reflect the viewpoint of both groups- that African Americans should only occupy certain spaces and are only in "affluent" neighborhoods to commit crimes (Wikipedia contributors, 2022). It is a prime example of someone believing the continued stereotypes promoted since the 1600's and the laws that then uphold that ideology protecting them.

After a nationally televised trial, Zimmerman was acquitted of all charges. It was a reminder of how dangerous these stereotypes and biases are. The subsequent deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and more recently George Floyd (*HUSL Library: A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States: The Black Lives Matter Movement*, 2018), and many, many more caused increasing amounts of anger as this seemed to play out repeatedly, without consequence, and African American lives seemed to be worth very little.

With that, the plight of what it means to be Black or brown in the United States has shifted and moved many to realize that they have a voice that must be expressed. Injustice, violence and brutality against African Americans is more and more accessible to view. Some may happen without witnesses, but much, much more happens in front of a camera as there are so many more available. Many who spent their lives silent began to understand that action was the only appropriate response to what has continued to happen.

"Like the spark that ignites the fuel in an engine, anger is the combustion that catalyzes action" (Klar & Kasser, 2009). Constantly watching the cycle of irresponsible, lawless murderers of African Americans go free in 4k optics provides endless sparks and endless wells of anger. Activism, however, is one way that anger can be quelled. As can be seen throughout history, it is the response of those who are angry, those who are fed up and those who want to affect change. Activism is defined as "the behavior of advocating some political cause via any of a large array of possible means ranging, for example, from institutionalized acts such as starting a petition to unconventional acts such as civil disobedience (Klar & Kasser, 2009)." To be an activist means to stand up for what you believe in in some way, shape or form. Even this simple definition has real-life racial discrepancies, however, again stemming from the stereotypes ingrained from so long ago. A concentration of African Americans is often referred to as a riot, whereas the same concentration of whites is often a demonstration. Despite this racial difference, activism is still an important expression of opinion and catalyst for change.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is one such response for this newest awakening of activism. It began as a hashtag after the Zimmerman acquittal of the death of Martin. It has since grown into an organization and movement since with the increasing amount of (Black Lives Matter, 2020)

police involved shootings and white-on-Black crimes that appear to be due to race. The organization has become synonymous with marginalized people finding their voice, speaking out and making a difference.

BLM has pledged to combat white supremacy while building and supporting local entities to manifest sufficient agency through which to intervene in situations where there is violence against African American communities (Black Lives Matter, 2020). They have helped to galvanize reform in a variety of police departments, created curricula that has made diversity and equity accessible to school-aged children, helped to bring about the dismantling of statues of known racists, and caused many companies and organizations to rethink policies that may have been non-inclusive, offensive or unfair to specific groups of people (*Black Lives Matter Protests: What's Been Achieved So Far*, 2020).

Although Black Lives Matter has been more prominent in the media, therefore making activism more accessible to many, including students, there are many other organizations that support racial equality and have also been working to make it a reality. Groups such as the NAACP, the ACLU, the Black Youth Project, among many others, have also worked on national and more often, on the local level to promote change. Whether directly joining BLM, or any other group's events or activities, or using its existence to inspire movement and activism in other ways, students- from all walks of life- now have increasingly more opportunities to be heard.

In addition to possibly creating beneficial change, standing up for one's beliefs and working to address injustice, activism has also been found to have benefits that are just now being discovered. Philosophers have pondered the idea that activism may be associated with positive well-being, fulfilling an innate human desire to express oneself and to make meaning out of their lives. Studies conducted within this century have supported these ideas as well: the self-reported scores of college students who actively worked to encourage or promote a cause they believed in showed higher levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem and vitality (Klar & Kasser, 2009). This is another benefit for at least some level of activism to be included within our schools and the reason for this unit.

*"Stand before the people you fear and speak your mind - even if your voice shakes."*

*-Maggie Kuhn.*

Activism also showed itself within the Teacher's Institute of Philadelphia's seminar, "Taking up the Mantle: African American Women Writers after Morrison" with Dr. Herman Beavers. In this seminar, fellows boarded a literary train and set out on a unique journey. For some, the stations were familiar. For others, they were new discoveries that changed their view of the landscape from that day forward.

The journey, of course, began with Toni Morrison with her appropriately named selection- *Home*. We discussed the many different sides of Morrison, including her activism, then how all of who she was set the stage for the influence that her legacy had on the African American writers who followed her. We specifically looked at how this influence shaped current African American women writers. The train wended its way through a variety of authors through the course of the seminar- Ayana Mathis, Lynn Nottage, Jacqueline Woodson, Claudia Rankine and

Suzan-Lori Parks, among others. The early video works of Issa Rae also added an insightful and comical wrap at our conclusion. At each station, we stopped, discussed the text and the author, as well as our surroundings to get a feel for where we were. We took our shoes off and grounded ourselves in the soil of each new space, of each new piece of text. We made connections between common themes that traveled with us on our journey and how these all led us back “home”, to Morrison. It was a journey worth the ticket!

As this seminar focused on African American women writers, this unit reflects that as well. It involves analyzing two poems and a novel, all by African American, women writers. This unit will take participants on a journey of their own- from student to activist.

### **Content Objectives**

*"When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something."*

*-John Lewis*

My goals for this unit are, first, for students to understand that though the voices of African American women are not heard as often in primary grades, they can be just as important and as powerful as any other voices in the public sphere. Next, I want students to realize that their own voices are also as important as any of the others that they hear around them. They will read poems by African American women that encourage self-worth and standing up. They will then read the story of a young activist; one who did not allow her age or inexperience to determine what she could or could not do. These texts, collectively, will inspire them to find their own voices and to become leaders in their own areas of interest. These reading materials will also assist in teaching comprehension skills such as poetry analysis, theme, character analysis, making comparisons and inferencing. Last, these readings will spark discussions about stereotypes, bias, fear and activism- all topics *not* covered by the Core Curriculum.

This unit is designed for use with a fifth grade, regular education classroom, although the concepts could be used with any grade by adjusting the reading material when appropriate. It should take approximately three weeks to complete. The action portion, Part III, may continue throughout the year depending on student's interest level and what they choose to do for their activism.

### **Teaching Strategies**

The two poems- “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou and “This is Not a Small Voice” by Sonia Sanchez will open the unit. Both poems will first be closely read with specific stanzas being deconstructed in order to determine meaning. The poems will then each be examined and compared for similar themes, perspective and the voice of the speaker. Students will examine the poet's approach to the topic they are writing about and possible reasons for choices made by the poet.

Students will create their own poetry either by using both poems to create their own found poems or they will use one poem or both as mentor texts to create their own original poem. Students will do much of this work with either a partner or a group. These activities will offer students an opportunity to create a piece (or pieces) that reflect their own voice related to their own personal situations or how they see what is currently going on around them.

The unit will then follow with the novel *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramee, which chronicles the life of Shayla, a mild-mannered junior highschooler who is awakened to the “real” world. A world where the United Nations- what her diverse circle of friends call each other- can be broken and torn apart, just as easily as the world seems to be falling apart around her. She learns that things aren’t always fair, especially for African Americans in some cases, and that one can either stand up and do something to possibly change it, or accept it as it is. Shayla finally faces her fears of standing out and realizes that standing up is her only.

Students will be asked questions during this part of the unit aimed at discussing the macro and micro themes within the novel, as well as general comprehension of the concepts within the novel. They will also be posed questions to demonstrate their understanding the author’s approach to various aspects of their work.

Small group and whole class discussions on the social issues of stereotyping and bias, what they mean, student activism, etc. will then be held in order to continue to determine what students have seen and understood from the current events that have taken place around them. These discussions will lead to determining causes or issues that students feel that they would like to change, learn more about or try have on impact on.

For the last part of this unit, students will work with a partner or group to further identify a current societal or environmental issue that they feel a connection to, research that issue, determine a way of creating change for that issue and then carry it out. This will be the culminating project for this unit and hopefully solidify a student’s belief in themselves as an agent of change.

### **Classroom Activities**

*"The only way to be heard is to actually speak up."*

*-Unknown*

#### **Part I- Unit introduction, The Poetry**

##### **Lesson #1- Still I Rise ((1) 45 Minute Lesson)**

**Standard(s)-** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

**Materials-** Copies of “Still I Rise” (the whole poem and stanzas printed separately), paper and pencil for students to record their work.

**Objective-** Students will be introduced to the unit they will be working on.

Students will be able to analyze and deconstruct a poem in order to determine meaning.

**Plans-** The teacher will first introduce the unit that they are about to begin, giving an overview of the objectives and strategies that will be used. The teacher will let students know that the purpose will be for them to eventually determine a cause or an issue that means something to them, then to find their voice and get a feel for what it means to act on that voice. Once students have a general understanding of what they will be doing and why, the first lesson can begin.

The teacher will let students know that their first lesson towards their goal of finding their voice will be to read and dissect two poems that may give them a foundation for the rest of the unit. The first of these poems will be the above.

The teacher will first read the poem to students (with the omission of stanza #7 depending on grade level and maturity of the students) at least twice. Then let students know they will determine meaning from separate stanzas, then the whole poem.

After it has been read by the teacher, students are asked about their initial thoughts, if they have any. Then students are put into groups (the number of students depends on what is appropriate to your classroom) then given one or two stanzas from the poem. They are then tasked with reading the stanza several times within their group and recording any meaning that they get from the lines that they have read.

Once each group has determined meanings for their respective stanzas, they can be shared out as a class, in order. The whole poem is then distributed to students. Either as a class, or back within each group, students will reread the poem then find the main idea/theme for the entire poem.

High self-esteem, confidence and perseverance- ideas woven throughout this poem- will set the stage as qualities that can aid in finding one’s voice as well as come from actively speaking up for one’s belief.

## **Lesson #2- Poetry Dissection ((2) 45 Minute Lessons)**

**Standard(s)-** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9: Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

**Materials-** Copies of “This Is Not a Small Voice” in its entirety, also, lines of the poem copied onto sentence strips or cut up pieces from it written on chart paper. Every line can be used or specific lines depending on the teacher’s preference and/or student’s ability, paper and pencil for students to record their work.

**Objective-** Students will be able to analyze and deconstruct a poem in order to determine meaning.

**Plans-** The teacher will review what they have done so far in the unit, then introduce the next poem stated above. The teacher will read the poem in its entirety to the class and let them know that they will be doing an activity similar to what they did the previous day with the first poem except this time they will work with individual lines of the poem instead of the entire stanza. The teacher should let them know that *may* find that determining the meaning of this poem may be a little more challenging, but as long as they can explain their reasoning, no answer is incorrect.

Students can work individually with their own line, or as a group (they should still have their own individual lines, they just have members of the group to help) to closely read the line. Students will look for possible reasons why certain words were chosen by the poet/speaker, the possible reason for spaces placed between words, why certain names/words were used (versus other names/words), what they believe certain things refer to etc. The teacher can create a list of questions that students can use to help guide their thinking if it is believed that students may not be able to analyze the poem on their own. This can be done as a whole class activity if even more support it needed. The list of questions, some shown below, are generalized so that the object of the question can be changed to possibly be applied to more than one line of poetry.

<u>Line #</u>	<u>Poem Line</u>	<u>Possible Questions/Considerations</u>
1	This is not a small voice	What/who does the word “this” refer to? Why was the word “small” chosen?
2	you hear      this is a large	Why do you think the poet chose this space?
3	voice coming out of these cities	What/who does the word “these” refer to?
5	Kadesha. Shaniqua. This	Why were these names chosen? What/who does the word “this” refer to?

Once students have been given time to think, process and discuss their lines with their groups (if they are in groups), students will share out their ideas, in order, as the teacher reads the poem again. For any spots where students were stuck, other students or the teacher can add their ideas. If needed, reinforce the idea that poetry interpretation is the meaning that they get from the

poem, based on their experience and how they process what is in front of them. Students should then be given copies of the entire poem. As a class, or in groups, they can then determine the main idea/main themes of the poem as a whole.

Students can then work as a group, or whole class to summarize then discuss the themes/ideas in both poems- having determination, resilience, self-worth, having a voice and education and knowing that that voice can sometimes come, just as strongly, from children.

### **Lesson #3-Writing Found Poetry ((1) 45 Minute Lesson)**

**Standard(s)-** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

**Materials-** Copies of “This Is Not a Small Voice” and/or “Still I Rise” in their entirety. Paper and pencils are needed for Strategy #1. For Strategy #2, large printed copies of one or both poems, scissors, glue and paper to glue words to for the new poem are also needed.

**Objective-** Students will use strategies to create their own “found” poetry using the previously reviewed poetry.

**Plans-** The teacher will review the work that has been done with both poems thus far. The teacher will then let students know that they will create a poem of their own based on one or both of the poems discussed. They will be given two strategies (or the teacher can choose one strategy for everyone), then create their poem based on that strategy. They can also use both strategies!

#### *Strategy #1*

Students create a poem using one or both poems as mentor texts. After they have chosen which poem they will use, they will choose which stanza or section of the poem speaks to or had the most impact on them. They will then analyze and identify the parts of the section they have chosen and what the poet does within that section. They will then follow the same pattern, but inserting their own words and ideas, although some words, parts or lines can be borrowed for the new poem.

For example:

#### Lines from “Still I Rise”:

You may write me down in history      ← Tells what “You” may do in reference to the speaker

With your bitter twisted lies,      ← Tells details about the above

You may trod me in the very dirt      ← Tells what else “You” may do to the speaker

But still like dust, I'll rise.

← Tells what "I" will do, despite this negativity

New poem:

You may post about me in your accounts

With your bitter twisted lies,

You me drag me through the internet

But still, like an influencer, I'll rise.

*Strategy #2*

Students create a poem using the actual words from either or both poems. The teacher makes a copy of either or both poems, in as large a print as they are able to, then passes them out to students. Students will then cut out words or phrases from whatever part of the poem they choose, and recombine them based on their liking to create a new poem. The words or phrases can then be glued to a new paper to create lines of a poem. They can also be written onto the new paper. Words can only be added if they are from the poem being used.

This strategy is helpful to those who struggle with writing poetry, as the words are already there for them, they only need to decide how they want to order them. Students can many times, intentionally, or accidentally create extremely profound, artistic works.

The class will then share their work, discuss meanings and positive feedback about each student's work or their own.

## **Part II- The Novel**

### **Lesson #4-A Good Kind of Trouble ((2+) 45 Minute Lessons)**

**Standard(s)-** Standards will vary depending on the teacher's focus during this lesson.

Possibilities are:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

**Materials-** If possible, student copies of *A Good Kind of Trouble*, otherwise a teacher copy available for a read aloud and possibly copying of certain pages or chapters for closer examination by students.

**Objective-** Students will read the above novel in order to review a variety of literary skills, as well as to obtain a better understanding of what it means to find one's voice, and actively work to express it.

**Plans-** As this book is quite lengthy, lesson plan ideas are in the form of questions for specific chapters. These questions support possible review for literary skills and important points to discuss about Shayla's journey toward activism. Chapters within the book are very short.

Before the novel, or after, the teacher may decide, if it is appropriate for their students, to give a little background about stereotypes, bias and how it has affected minorities, especially African Americans in the United States. Information can be used from the beginning of this paper as well as any of the sources used in the Works Cited.

The teacher may also choose to discuss John Lewis' idea of "good trouble" and how that may tie into the title and into Shayla's actions, after the book is read.

*Chapter 1-* Do you think Shayla's perception of Bernard is solely based on her experience with him? Why or why not? What other factors could be influencing her thoughts of him? How does this sometimes cause harm to people? Are there times when it benefits people?

*Chapter 4-* How could the main character, Shayla, be described? What evidence supports this description? Possible vocabulary— tardies, abolitionists, abolish.

*Chapter 5-* What do we learn about race in this chapter? How would you describe Shayla's father? What evidence supports this description?

*Chapter 6-* "Bitten to the quick"- what type of figurative language is this? Based on the context, what do you think it could mean?

*Chapter 7-* What major event has happened in the news in this chapter? How are people reacting to it? Why? What does it prompt Shayla to ask her mom on p. 41?

*Chapter 8-* "Cuts my head off"- what type of figurative language is this? Based on the context, what do you think it could mean? Lunch seems to be segregated at this school. What are the pros and cons of doing this?

*Chapter 22-* Is race a factor in what friends you chose to be around? Why or why not? What things are important in choosing a friend? Is race involved in any of those criteria?

*Chapter 39-* How can silence be loud? What does that mean? Why might silence be effective in some situations? What about this protest in chapter 39 made it "silent"? How familiar are you with the people mentioned on p.208- 209?

*Chapter 50-* What does Shayla's father mean when he says that sometimes you have to do some things that are seen as wrong to some people but morally right on p. 266? Does this explain what is meant by "good trouble"? How can this be challenging at times? What evidence in this chapter proves that Shayla is nervous about her sister Hanna's wellbeing?

*Chapter 51-* Why does Shayla's hands itch when she wears the armband?

*Chapter 52-* Why do you think change can be so hard for people sometimes? What changes have been easy for you? Difficult? How are the members of "The United Nations" similar? Different?

*Chapter 53-* What changes for Shayla because of her armband?

*Chapter 55-* How does Shayla change because of the armband? What purpose does the armband serve?

*Chapter 59-* What more does the armband symbolize for Shayla?

*Chapter 60-* Is the principal's decision to implement the new dress code a fair one? Why or why not?

*Chapter 61-* How are the events of this chapter similar and different to real life? What should Shayla do in this situation? Why? What would you do if confronted with a similar situation? Why?

*Chapter 64-* What do Shayla and Mr. Powell have in common? Why is the poem "Still I Rise" important for Shayla now?

*Chapter 67-* What does Shayla learn about teamwork with her activities (the protest and track)?

*Chapter 68-* What had to happen in order for "The United Nations" to become friends again?

*Chapter 69-* What does the last line of the chapter mean?

*Chapter 70-* What does Shayla finally learn about people, especially Bernard?

*Chapter 71-* Could the last line of the chapter be a theme for the novel? If so, what evidence would support this? What are other possible themes for this story? What evidence supports each? Would you say that the armbands were effective at Shayla's school? Why or why not?

Students will then spend some time discussing the major take-aways from the novel, how those may impact them, the advantages and disadvantages of the types of protests discussed in the novel and any other important points that stood out to them. This can be done as a class, partnership or small group. These discussions can also take place after specific chapters.

An addition to this lesson can be discussing the quotes used throughout the unit, what they mean and their possible connections to the poems or novel.

### **Part III- A Call to Action**

*"There's something so healthy about young people speaking up in unity."*

*-Robbie Robertson*

## **Lesson #5- Finding A Cause ((1) 45 Minute Lesson)**

**Standard(s)-** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

**Materials-** Students will need access to a computer for research and a notebook or paper for brainstorming and recording research that was found. Appendix B can be used for this section of the unit to record student information in one place and help guide students to accurately completing each section.

**Objective-** Students will determine a cause or issue that they would like to effect change in.

**Plans-** Once students have completed reading *A Good Kind of Trouble* and discussed Shayla's "call to action", the teacher will inform students that they will find their own issue/cause to pursue. The teacher will begin this part of the unit by letting students know that there are many things in the world that could benefit from change and, unfortunately, there are many things that are unfair or exclusionary to various groups of people. As they have read, students and young people, no matter how young, can be agents of change.

The teacher will then choose one of two options, based on their student's abilities:

### *1. The Student-Directed Option*

For this option, the teacher allows students to either work alone or with a partner. They will determine their own topics. They can do this based on their own knowledge of current events, then possibly researching anything they may need clarity on. They can also determine a topic based on their surroundings by creating an "eyeball journal", based on the novel, to help with this. This is a journal where they can write down their observations daily for a specified period of time. They can then use these observations to decide on a cause or an issue to continue the unit with.

Or,

### *2. The Teacher- Led Option*

The teacher will have a whole class discussion to brainstorm causes and issues that may impact student's lives or the lives of their loved ones. In order to begin this brainstorming, the teacher may start with the issues brought up in *A Good Kind of Trouble* (police shooting unarmed African Americans, systemic racism (the "new" dress code rule), etc.), current events (gun control, climate change, poverty, etc.) or smaller issues that more directly affect them (homelessness, mental health challenges, technology discrepancies, etc.). A list can be created by the teacher based on student input and what the teacher chooses to add. Students can then be assigned a cause from the list or choose from the list and work with a partner.

Once a cause or issue is chosen by the student or student partnership, it should be narrowed down into as small a chunk as possible by the student, partnership, teacher or whole class. These

subcategories break down the issue into more bite size pieces so that students do not feel overwhelmed by the size of the problem. For example, if gun violence is chosen as a topic, it could be narrowed down to gun violence in Philadelphia, or in Philadelphia schools, or among a certain age group or population. Students will make note of their final decisions in preparation for the next part of the unit.

Students can use the internet to help with any of these activities if that is helpful for them.

### **Lesson #6- Researching the Cause ((1+) 45 Minute Lesson)**

**Standard(s)**- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

**Materials**- The student's cause or issue, laptop for research, paper for notes along with any previous notes they have already taken. Appendix B if it is being used for the unit.

**Objective**- Students will be able to gather information about their cause through research in order to determine the best way to act on it.

**Plans**- The teacher will review what has been done in the unit up to this point. Students will review their topics and how they were narrowed down. The teacher will then discuss that, in order to find a way to act on this topic, they will need to learn information about the topic and, if possible, learn what is being done currently to address it.

Students will then use laptops or other internet connected devices to gather information about their topic- what the problem is, the severity of the problem, who it effects and what is currently being done to address the issue. The teacher can provide a list of sources to aid in this research (the list may vary depending on the topics chosen) or students can be left to discover what they can on their own. Students will record what they find.

Information from each student or grouping is reviewed at the end of this lesson, the teacher will also make sure that students are progressing successfully through this section and assisting if they are not.

### **Lesson #7- Acting out the Cause ((2+) 45 Minute Lessons)**

*"I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."*

*-Fannie Lou Hamer*

**Standard(s)**- n/a

**Materials**- Appendix B, or the student's research notes and paper or a notebook to continue to record this next section of the unit.

**Objective**- Students will be able to determine the best ways to act on their cause or issue.

**Plans-** The teacher will discuss the next step in this unit which is action. A list should be created for the class to view as ideas are discussed. As strategies are added, or after the list is completed, they should be filtered for things that are age appropriate and broken down into things that make sense within the time frame desired.

Students will then review what has been done already for each of their topics based on the information they researched, if that was found. The teacher will next discuss any methods found in *A Good Kind of Trouble* (the silent protest, the highway protest and wearing the armbands) with the class, then add those to the list. Students can then add any methods that they can think of or heard about.

The teacher can add the following if not suggested:

1. Increasing awareness of the issue- Student would use the information gathered through their research to share with their class, school or family in the form of a presentation, skit, assembly, online petitions, surveys or email/social media campaign. Students could use any support received after this to increase the number of those who participate in any of the other forms of protest.
2. Organizing a class-wide, grade-wide or school-wide protest based on the increased awareness above. Once other students know more about an issue, they may be more inclined to act on it in an organized way. Protests could take the form of silent protests, marches, sit-ins, boycotts, etc. but should include signs, or other symbols (like Shayla's armbands) letting those who see them know what they are doing and why.
3. Finding groups that have similar ideas and working through them to further things that are already being done.
4. Writing letters to local government officials (and possibly beyond) detailing the need for action for students like them. The teacher should remind students that those officials are there to act of their behalf and on the behalf of the community they serve. Letters or emails could also be written to companies that are at the forefront of the issue (either for the issue or against it), detailing the problem and asking for their support or possible changes in how they do things that might help the issue or cause. Students should be reminded that their money as consumers (and that of their family and friends) may help support this company or add to their profits.
5. Students can also actively work to solve the problem that they care about by performing related community service or creating their own classroom or school-based program.

This list can also be kept at a few methods that can cover all topics if the teacher would prefer. Students will then choose the method of action that makes sense for their cause or issue and work with at least one other student to plan how they will carry out the action. For this part of the unit, as many students with similar topics or strategies for activism that can work together, probably the better.

Appendix B asks for students at this point to detail as much as possible what steps they will take in order to carry out their method of activism, and dates when they feel that they can complete them.

As the next part of this culminating activity, students will follow through with their plan, documenting what they do, the results, their reflections on what they experienced and what they may continue to do in the future. They can do this in their own notes or by following the Guided Notes in Appendix B. Suggested rubrics have also been included in Appendix C.

## Resources

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*Shayla, a sheltered middle school student has her consciousness raised by her friends and by the world around her and realizes she needs to speak up.*

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1994, [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46446/still-i-rise](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46446/still-i-rise).

*An iconic poem about persistence, determination and self-worth.*

Poets.org - Academy of American Poets. “This Is Not a Small Voice.” *Academy of American*

*Poets*, [poets.org/poem/not-small-voice](https://poets.org/poem/not-small-voice). Accessed 17 May 2022.

*A selection by the above poet that speaks to the impact of children and those that are otherwise marginalized and/or seldom “heard”.*

Appendix A  
Common Core Standards Used in this Unit

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9: Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Finding Your Voice (Then Shouting!)  
Project

1. You are working: Independently or With \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your cause or area of concern is:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. You can narrow this down to the following topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The following information about your topic was found through your research:  
A detailed explanation of the problem:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How extensive or severe is this problem? In what ways? How much does it affect people who are similar to you (age, race, gender, etc.)?

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What is currently being done to address this problem or issue (Are there organizations or programs that are already addressing it? Have there been demonstrations of any kind in regards to it? If so, what types)?

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5. What methods of activism/protest could help your cause?

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6. Which of these are you choosing to follow through with to speak out for your cause? (Be sure that the action is worthwhile, but practical, with the materials you have available).

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7. What people or materials will you need to carry this action out?

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8. What will your goal be for this project? Your goal should make sense with what you are planning to do and what you can accomplish (do you plan to increase awareness, increase student or school involvement in your cause, create relationships with people or organizations that can help further your cause, create your own program, etc.)

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10. Was project completed? Yes Or No

11. Do you feel that you were able to achieve your goal? In what ways?

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12. What parts of your goal were not able to be completed? Why weren't they completed?

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13. Describe any reflections you have on what you were able to accomplish. Do you feel that it was successful?

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14. Are there any next steps? What things do you plan to do to continue your work on with this project? What help do you think you might need?

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## Appendix C

### Rubrics to Guide Scoring the Culminating Project (Using Appendix B)

#### Using Points:

If using points, all can be worth 5 points except #4 and #9 which can be worth 20 as they require more time, energy and are more crucial to the success of the overall project.

#### Using a Rubric Matrix:

Domain	4- Advanced	3-Proficient	2-Basic	1-Below Basic	0- No Evidence
Topic	The student's topic has been narrowed down to a manageable idea, it is appropriate to the student's grade and ability and shows that the student is successfully reaching above and beyond what satisfies the requirement.	The student's topic has been narrowed down to a manageable idea and is appropriate to the student's grade and ability.	The student's topic has been narrowed down to a fairly manageable idea, is mostly appropriate to the student's grade and ability, but the student may need a small amount of additional guidance in order to be successful.	The student's topic has not been narrowed down to a manageable idea, or is not clear, the student needs moderate to large amount of additional guidance in order to be successful.	No topic is evident.
Research	The student has found more than enough information to thoroughly explain the problem as it relates to their topic, how extensive the problem is and what is activism is currently being done.	The student has found enough information to adequately (or appropriately for their skill level) explain the problem as it relates to their topic, how extensive the problem is and what is activism is currently being done.	The student has found some information to explain (appropriately for their skill level) the problem as it relates to their topic, how extensive the problem is and what is activism is currently being done.	The student has found little information to explain (appropriately for their skill level) explain the problem as it relates to their topic, how extensive the problem is and what is activism is currently being done.	No research is evident.
Method of Activism and Goal	The student has determined a method of activism and goal for their project that is appropriate to their topic and the available resources and clearly shows going beyond what is required.	The student has determined a method of activism and goal for their project that is appropriate to their topic and the available resources.	The student has determined a method of activism and goal for their project that is mostly appropriate to their topic and the available resources but needs a small amount of additional guidance in order to be successful.	The student has difficulty determining a method of activism and goal for their project that is appropriate to their topic and the available resources. Student needs a moderate to large amount of additional guidance in order to be successful.	No method of activism is evident.
Plan of Action	The student has developed a thorough plan, along with a sensible timeline, for how they will follow through with their method of action. Their plan is appropriate with their skill level, resources and time allowed for the project.	The student has developed an adequate plan for how they will follow through with their method of action. Their plan is appropriate with their skill level, resources and the time allowed for the project.	The student has developed a plan or partial plan for how they will follow through with their method of action. Their plan is mostly appropriate with their skill level, resources and time allowed for the project. The student may need a small amount of additional guidance in order to be successful.	The student has developed a partial or inadequate plan for how they will follow through with their method of action. Their plan may not be appropriate with their skill level, resources and time allowed for the project. The student may need a large amount of additional guidance in order to be successful.	No plan of action is evident.
Project Completion	The student's project is complete, their goal was achieved, and the student went above and beyond the requirements.	The student's project is complete, their goal was achieved, or reasonably accounted for if it was not achieved, and they have met the requirements for the project.	The student's project is mostly complete, or their goal was not achieved completely and/or the student has met most requirements, but not all.	The student's project is at least more halfway complete, or their goal was not achieved completely and/or the student has not met most requirements.	The project is not complete, the student's goal was not achieved and there is little evidence of effort or thought put into meeting the requirements of the project.