

Our Democracy



Books and activities all about our government,
voting and voting rights, and active citizenship
for children ages 6–10 years old



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COVID-19 and Summer Learning

COVID-19 has upended everything. Many summer camps and local youth programs are closed or running pared-back virtual programs. From the team here at Start with a Book, we hope that the resources you'll find here in the Our Democracy toolkit will provide options for families and communities to keep kids reading, talking, exploring, and learning about their world.

Most of the activities described in this guide can be done at home or in small groups practicing social distancing. A few of the Action Ideas in the Active Citizens section will need to be adapted, or to wait until we are all together again in our schools and our communities.

Be safe and well, and keep the summer learning adventures going!

When the library is closed

Is your public library closed? See if your public library offers [OverDrive](#) where you can borrow and read free ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines on your phone or tablet. All you need is your library card to get access (and check out their [Libby app](#) for Android or iOS phones or tablets).

There are also a number of online services that offer high-quality audiobooks and ebooks: [Audible for Kids](#), [Tales2Go](#), and [Epic!](#).



Our Democracy: Government

The Three Branches

Recommended books



- [D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet](#) by Elissa Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [Everyone Counts: A Citizens' Number Book](#) by Elissa D. Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [For Which We Stand: How the Government Works and Why It Matters](#) by Jeff Foster (ages 9-12)
- [Her Right Foot](#) by Dave Eggers (ages 6-9)
- [House Mouse, Senate Mouse](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)
- [How the U.S. Government Works](#) by Syl Sobel (ages 9-12)
- [I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark](#) by Debbie Levy (ages 96-9)
- [Marshall the Courthouse Mouse: A Tail of the U.S. Supreme Court](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)
- [Shh! We're Writing the Constitution](#) by Jean Fritz (ages 6-9)
- [The Voice of the People: American Democracy in Action](#) by Betsy Maestro (ages 6-9)
- [We the People: The Constitution of the United States](#) by Peter Spier (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Government

Activity: Balanced Government

Watch:

- [3 branches of government](#) (Kids Academy)

Play:

- [Branch-o-mania](#) (Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government)
- [Branches of Power](#): Learn to control all 3 branches of the U.S. government! (iCivics, free registration required)
- [Checks and Balances](#) (BrainPOP)

Listen:

- [Who Makes the Laws?](#) (But Why? A Podcast for Curious Kids)

Get kids thinking

Mobiles often look effortless as they balance gracefully in the air. But balancing anything — whether it is a mobile or the powers of government — is hard work! Help kids learn more about balance in our government when you make a mobile together that represents its three branches.

Supplies

- Scissors
- Yarn or twine
- Rubber bands
- Three sticks that are roughly the same length (20 inches long is a good size). Choose sticks with several twigs in the middle of the stick. Use bamboo skewers if you can't find sticks.
- Construction paper
- Crayons and markers
- A computer and printer (optional)

Activity: Balanced Government

Let's get started!

Head outside to collect some sticks. While you and your kids are looking for sticks, talk about the various meanings and usage of the word branch — it's not just the limb of a tree! Relate the word back to the nonfiction book you read together and explain how "branch" is used to describe a related part of a larger system — such as a branch library or the three branches of government.

Bring your three sticks inside and have the kids arrange them into a triangle with the ends of the sticks overlapping. Arrange the sticks so that any short twigs are on the outside edges of the triangle. While the kids are working, talk about how the federal government has three branches that share the power, privilege and responsibility of running the government.

Cut a length of yarn that is twice as long as one of the sticks. With one end of the yarn lash two sticks together. Use the other end of the yarn to lash the next corner of the base of the triangle.

Cut another length of yarn that is twice as long as the sticks. Use one end to lash the remaining sticks together. Pull the remaining yarn through the center point of the first yarn length you tied. Pull all the yarn pieces up together and you should have a pyramid. Secure a knot in the top of the pyramid and use the remaining yarn tail for hanging the mobile.

Give the kids construction paper to create "leaves" to describe each branch of the government. On the leaves, kids can draw pictures that illustrate or symbolize the branches, write information about what each branch does, and include the roles and people involved in each branch.

Children may want to go beyond the book(s) you read together to see and learn more the branches of government. The White House website's section [Branches of Government](#) has descriptions, photos and links to all the branches. Kids can also write additional facts on the leaves and print out and glue photos.

Our Democracy: Government

Activity: Balanced Government

Let the kids arrange their leaves for each branch and help secure them to the twigs using tape or by tying leaves with yarn to the branches. Talk about how our Constitution uses “checks and balances” to keep any one branch from having too much power. Encourage the kids to make sure their mobiles are also balanced!

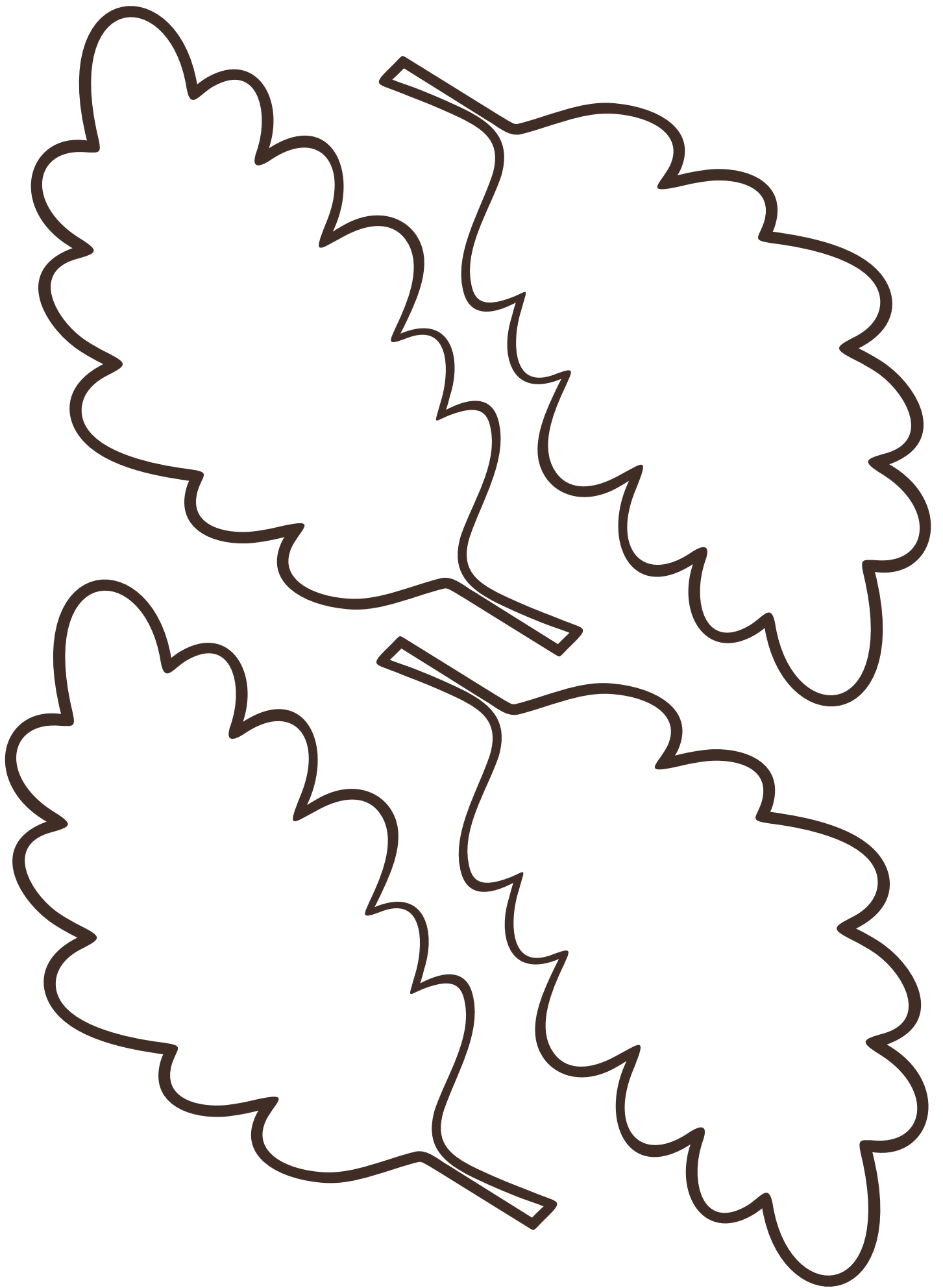
To learn more about how to make mobiles balance, see the [Balance the Forces Within a Mobile](#) project (with video) at the Science Buddies website.

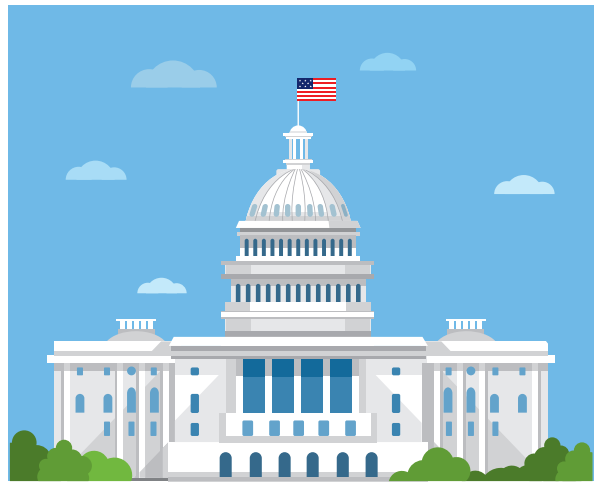
Suggest to the kids that they can add more to the mobile as you continue to read more about our government.



For more reading, writing, and learning resources, visit www.StartWithABook.org







Our Democracy: Government

Our Government at Work

Recommended books



- **Big Frank's Fire Truck** by Leslie McGuire (ages 3-6)
- **Busy, Busy Town** by Richard Scarry (ages 3-6)
- **D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet** by Elissa Grodin (ages 6-9)
- **Dear Mr. Rosenwald** by Carole Boston Weatherford (ages 6-9)
- **Delivering Your Mail** by Ann Owen (ages 3-6)
- **Helpers in Your Neighborhood** by Shira Evans (ages 3-6)
- **Look Where We Live! A First Book of Community Building** by Scot Ritchie (ages 4-8)
- **Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans** by Phil Bildner (ages 6-9)
- **Miss Moore Thought Otherwise** by Jan Pinborough (ages 6-9)
- **Out and About at City Hall** by Nancy Garhan Attebury (ages 6-9)
- **Tomás and the Library Lady** by Pat Mora (ages 4-8)

Our Democracy: Government

Activity: Government I.D.

Play:

- [Counties Work](#): Running a county is a lot of work! Manage things well, balance the budget, keep citizens safe, and try to get re-elected. (iCivics, free registration required)
-

Supplies

- Scavenger hunt template (included in this packet)
 - Cell phone camera or digital camera
 - Gold, red, white, and blue foil star stickers (optional)
-

Let's get started!

Read a few of the recommended books together with kids. Some of the titles are about how government works in our democracy. Others feature stories about people and services in our community supported by federal, state, or local governments — such as firefighters, mail carriers, sanitation workers, libraries, and schools.

Thanks to the books you've read and discussed together, kids are getting the picture that our government is not something that is far away in Washington, D.C., or even your state capital.

Evidence of our government is right on your own street and in your neighborhood! A great way to reinforce this understanding is by taking kids on a scavenger hunt for things that represent government activity in your community.

Use the checklist on the next page, add to it, or create your own. Traditionally, a scavenger hunt is a game that involves players collecting items from a list. Whoever collects all or the most items is the winner. This scavenger hunt makes use of your cell phone camera or digital camera. You and your child collect photos of items on the list and earn 5 points for each item collected. Earn 2 bonus points for noting which are items or services provided by the federal, state, or local government.

Our Democracy: Our Government
Activity: Government I.D.

We took a photo of	Points	Federal, state, or local service? (bonus points)	Total
Postage stamp			
Penny or other U.S. coin			
Driver's license			
License plate			
Library card			
Public school			
Public library			
Park			
Police car			
Fire truck			
Speed limit sign			
Traffic light			
Mailbox			
Bridge or hwy overpass			
Fire hydrant			
GRAND TOTAL			

Scoring

How did you do? 75 – 105 points: Excellent! The Liberty Bell is ringing for you! You're a real Uncle Sam! 50 – 75 points: Great! Bring out the fireworks! You're a dandy Yankee Doodle! 25 – 50 points: You're more wild turkey than bald eagle. Keep trying! 0 – 25 points: You're bringing up the end of the parade. Keep trying!

Our Democracy: Government
Activity: Government I.D.

We took a photo of	Points	Federal, state, or local service? (bonus points)	Total
GRAND TOTAL			



Our Democracy: Government

What Does the President Do?

Recommended books



- **Dream Big Dreams: Photographs from Barack Obama's Inspiring and Historic Presidency** by Pete Souza (ages 10 and up)
- **If I Were President** by Catherine Stier (ages 6-9)
- **Madame President** by Lane Smith (ages 3-6)
- **Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out** by the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance (ages 9-12)
- **The Presidents Visual Encyclopedia** by DK and The Smithsonian (ages 9-12)
- **Rutherford B., Who Was He? Poems About Our Presidents** by Marilyn Singer (ages 6-9)
- **Smart About the Presidents** by John Buller (ages 6-9)
- **So You Want to Be President?** by Judith St. George (ages 6-9)
- **Truth or Lie: Presidents!** by Erica Perl (ages 6-9)
- **When Penny Met POTUS** by Rachel Ruiz (ages 6-9)
- **Where Do Presidents Come From?** by Michael Townsend (ages 9-12)

Our Democracy: Government

Activity: President for a Day

Get kids thinking

In the United States, any native-born citizen over the age of 35 can be elected President. Your children or the kids you work with won't be that old for many years, but they can have fun in the meantime imagining what it would be like to take on the role and responsibility of the presidency.

Supplies

- A computer or device with an Internet connection
 - Paper and pencil (or computer and printer)
-

Let's get started!

Read some of the recommended books together with the kids. Some of the books provided information on the duties and privileges of the presidency. Revisit those pages and further explore and discuss what the job of President entails. Find out what the kids know about the current or recent past presidents. What are some of the issues or problems facing the President? What kind of work does the President do every day to solve these problems?

Talk with kids about what they think the President does on a typical day. Then check online together to see what an [actual Presidential schedule](#) looks like (this example is from President Obama's time in office).

Ask the kids what problems or issues are important to them. If any of the kids were the President, what would he or she do to resolve issues and fix problems? What would his or her schedule as President look like?

Provide the kids with paper and pencil (or a computer and printer) to create their own agendas for their day as President of the United States. Encourage the kids to also

Our Democracy: Government

Activity: President for a Day

create any speeches, Presidential Memoranda, Executive Orders, or Proclamations that they each plan to deliver on their day as President. Let them be as silly or serious as they like!

If children feel strongly about what they would do as President to deal with a specific issue, encourage them to share their ideas by [writing to the President](#).

Play:

- [Executive Command](#): Being the President is no easy task. Are you up to the challenge? (iCivics, free registration required)
- [Which U.S. President Matches Your Personality?](#) (National Geographic Kids)



The Many Hats of the U.S. President

Match the job descriptions on the next page with the roles below!

Chief
of State

Chief
Executive

Commander
in Chief

Chief
Diplomat

Chief of
Party

Chief
Legislator

Chief
Citizen



Cut out the job descriptions along the dotted lines and mix up the individual cards.

Then see if you can match them with the Presidential roles!

Ceremonial head of the government

Greets and entertains foreign officials.

Attends festivities of historic or national importance

Presents medals and other awards for national service

Head of the Executive Branch of the government

Carries out the nation's laws

Appoints cabinet members and federal judges

Issues federal policies called executive orders

Head of the nation's armed forces

Commander of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines

Can order troops into battle (but only Congress can declare war)

Keeps the nation safe and defended at all times

Architect of American foreign policy

Decides foreign policy (how U.S. will act toward other countries)

Makes treaties with other nations

Appoints ambassadors to other countries

Leader of the political party that controls the Executive Branch

Plays major role in party's stand on big issues

Appear at fundraisers and other political functions

Campaigns for party members running for political office

Influencer on the legislative agenda

Only Congress has the actual power to make laws. But the Constitution gives the president power to influence Congress.

Proposes legislation during the State of the Union speech to Congress

Signs or vetoes bills

Representative of all the people

Makes sure the people's voice is heard

Sets an example of being a good citizen

Works for the public interest



Presidential Proclamation

The President of the United States



Our Democracy: We Vote!

Recommended books



- [America Votes](#) by Linda Granfield (ages 6-9)
- [D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet](#) by Elissa D. Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [E Is for Election Day](#) by Gloria M. Gavris (ages 3-6)
- [Grace for President](#) by Kelly DiPucchio (ages 6-9)
- [I Voted: Making a Choice Makes a Difference](#) by Mark Shulman (ages 3-6)
- [If I Ran for President](#) by Catherine Stier (ages 6-9)
- [President of the Whole Fifth Grade](#) by Sherrie Winston (ages 9-12)
- [Understanding Your Role in Elections](#) by Jessica Gunderson (ages 9-12)
- [Vote for Me!](#) by Ben Clanton (ages 3-6)
- [Vote for Our Future](#) by Margaret McNamara (ages 6-9)
- [What's the Big Deal About Elections?](#) by Ruby Shamir (ages 6-9)
- [Woodrow for President: A Tail of Voting, Campaigns, and Elections](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: We Vote!

Watch:

- [Why voting is important](#) (Kids Academy)
- [Voting](#) (BrainPOP)

Play:

- [Cast Your Vote](#): Election Day is coming, are you prepared to vote? (iCivics, free registration required)

Listen:

- [Who Makes the Laws?](#) (But Why? A Podcast for Curious Kids)



Our Democracy: We Vote!

Get kids thinking

What is a democracy? A democracy means "rule by the people." It is a form of government in which power rests with the people, either directly or through elected representatives. We choose our representatives through an election process.

Voting is the heart of our democracy. Every person over the age of 18 in the United States has the right to vote. It's your way of making your opinion count in what kind of laws our country makes and other things our government does. Voting is not only a right, but a **privilege** and a **responsibility**. Talk with kids about what those two words mean.

After reading some of the books about voting and elections together, ask kids:

- How often do we elect a President? Congressperson? Senator?
- What does every citizen need to do to be sure they can vote?
- Why do you think each citizen keeps their vote private?
- Does the candidate with the most votes always win?
- How does our Electoral College system work?

Supplies

- Index cards (4 x 6 inches) or white card stock (8-1/2 x 11 inches) cut to 8-1/2 x 5-1/2 inches
- Piece of poster board (11 x 17 inches or larger)
- Marker
- Popsicle sticks (2) or small wooden dowels (1/8-inch diameter or smaller)
- Duct tape or adhesive tape

Activity: Lightning YES or NO

Let's get started!

This is a fast-paced activity to demonstrate open voting to kids, and give them the chance to vote on lots of issues.

First, you'll assemble the two vote cards. Write YES on one card and NO on the other, tape a popsicle stick (or dowel) to the back. Tape the poster board to the wall with duct tape or painter's tape.

As a group, brainstorm 10 to 15 statements that can be quickly judged with a vote of yes or no. Have fun with this list — the suggestions can be serious or silly or fantastical, or a combination. For example:

- I like polka dots
- I wish I had a jetpack
- I like cooked peas
- I always give away some of my Halloween candy
- I like fish sticks
- I want to go to the Moon
- I wish I had eight legs like an octopus
- I like comic books more than movies

Write the issues on a piece of poster board.

Now that you have the complete list, it's time to start voting! Announce the first issue, hold up the YES sign and point to one corner of the room. Hold up the NO sign and point to the opposite corner. Tell the kids to go to the corner that matches their vote.

Designate one child from the YES and NO groups to call out the vote tally; write that down on the poster board. Continue with the quick yes or no votes until you've voted on all the issues. Together, look at the vote totals for each issue and see if there are any patterns in how people voted.

Our Democracy: We Vote!

Activity: Lightning YES or NO

Ask the kids:

- Did you think about changing your vote to be on the same side as a friend?
- Would you have voted differently if there had been secret ballots?
- Is a secret vote important sometimes? When?
- How did voting make you feel?

This is a great activity for summer youth groups (or families) to do often to decide on group activities, jumpstart a morning meeting, and to get kids moving and energized for the day.

It's also a good way for kids to see the direct relationship between their votes and their daily lives and how it feels to be actively engaged within a community.

Activity: Representative Vote

Get kids thinking

Talk with kids about our form of representative democracy. In the U.S., citizens don't vote individually on every law. Instead, we elect representatives (Congresspeople and Senators) to vote on issues on our behalf. When we choose a candidate to be our representative, we hope that his or her votes in Congress will represent our point of view on the issues.

Supplies

- Ballot templates (included in this packet). Or make your own ballots with index cards or construction paper
 - Pens or markers
 - Shoe box or something similar to collect the ballots (you can cut a slot in the top)
 - Colored markers, paper, scissors, glue for decorating the ballot box (optional)
 - Poster board or large sheet of paper
 - Painter's tape or duct tape
 - Confetti (optional)
-

Let's get started!

As a group, decide on what issue you want to vote on. Here are some examples:

- Friday dinner: pizza or hamburgers?
- Group activity: hide and seek or freeze tag?
- Make recess longer or let school out earlier?

Activity: Representative Vote

Let's use the group activity as the example: **As a group, should we play hide and seek or freeze tag?**

See if there is a volunteer who wants to be the election official, whose job is to count the votes and report the results. Next, identify two volunteers who will be your candidates — the candidates will take opposing positions:

- Candidate 1: *"I support hide and seek!"*
- Candidate 2: *"I support freeze tag!"*

The Tally Board. Have the election official write "hide and seek" in one column at the top and "freeze tag" in the other column at the top. Tape the poster to the wall with painter's tape or duct tape.

Speech! Each candidate makes a persuasive statement about why their choice is the best and why they deserve your vote. Encourage the other kids (the voters) to ask questions of each candidate.



Decision Time. The voters decide which candidate represents their view on the issue, and then they each cast their vote using a paper ballot. Candidates get to cast their ballots, too. Remind the kids that their votes are private.

Ask the kids: Is it important that your vote is private? Why or why not?


And the Winner Is ... Ask the election official to read off the votes, mark each vote on the poster, add up the votes — and announce the winner! Congratulate both candidates for their campaigns and thank the voters for participating in an important civic duty. (Cue the confetti ... and maybe have some ice cream or Popsicles on hand for celebrating).



If the issue you voted on is something you can do together, make a plan to do it!




 OTE




Candidate's Name

Candidate's Name




 OTE




Candidate's Name

Candidate's Name




 OTE


Candidate's Name

Candidate's Name



 OTE


Candidate's Name

Candidate's Name


Our Democracy: The Right to Vote

Recommended books



- [The Ballot Box Battle](#) by Emily Arnold McCully (ages 6-9)
- [Because They Marched: The People's Campaign for Voting Rights that Changed America](#) by Russell Freedman (ages 9-12)
- [Bold & Brave: Ten Heroes Who Won Women the Right to Vote](#) by Kirsten Gillibrand (ages 6-9)
- [Chasing Freedom: The Life Journeys of Harriet Tubman and Susan B. Anthony](#) by Nikki Grimes (ages 9-12)
- [Child of the Civil Rights Movement](#) by Paula Young Shelton (ages 6-9)
- [Civil Rights Pioneer: A Story About Mary Church Terrell](#) by Gwenyth Swain (ages 9-12)
- [Elizabeth Leads the Way](#) by Tanya Lee Stone (ages 6-9)
- [Elizabeth Started All the Trouble](#) by Doreen Rappaport (ages 6-9)
- [Equality's Call: The Story of Voting Rights in America](#) by Deborah Diesen (ages 6-9)
- [Fight of the Century: Alice Paul Battles Woodrow Wilson for the Vote](#) by Barb Rosenstock (ages 6-9)

More books on the next page >

Our Democracy: The Right to Vote

Recommended books

- [Granddaddy's Turn: A Journey to the Ballot Box](#) by Michael Bandy and Eric Stein (ages 6-9)
- [Ida B. Wells: Let the Truth Be Told](#) by Walter Dean Myers (ages 6-9)
- [Let the Children March](#) by Monica Clark-Robinson (ages 6-9)
- [Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965](#) by Jonah Winter (ages 6-9)
- [March: Book One](#) by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin (ages 9-12)
- [Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the Fight for Women's Suffrage](#) by Claire Rudolph Murray (ages 6-9)
- [Martin's Big Words: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by Doreen Rappaport (ages 6-9)
- [Miss Paul and the President: The Creative Campaign for Women's Right to Vote](#) by Dean Robbins (ages 6-9)
- [My Name Is Truth: The Life of Sojourner Truth](#) by Ann Turner (ages 6-9)
- [A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by David Adler (ages 6-9)
- [Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis](#) by Jabari Asim (ages 6-9)
- [Susan B. Anthony](#) by Alexandra Wallner (ages 6-9)
- [Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer](#) by Carole Boston Weatherford (ages 9-12)
- [We March](#) by Shane Evans (ages 3-6)
- [You Want Women to Vote, Lizzie Stanton?](#) by Jean Fritz (ages 9-12)
- [The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist](#) by Cynthia Levinson (ages 6-9)

Activity: Celebrating Heroes Who Fought for the Right to Vote

Get kids thinking

On June 21, 1788, the Constitution became the official framework of the government of the U.S. It explains how our government will be set up and run. The Constitution creates the three branches of government and gives them the power to govern. It also protects the citizens of the United States and guarantees their basic rights.

For a quick overview of the Constitution, kids can watch these videos:

- [The Constitution for Kids](#)
- [The Constitution](#) (School House Rock)

Not all U.S. citizens were granted the right to vote by the 1788 Constitution. At that time, about two-thirds of white men were given this powerful right. Blacks and women had to fight for the right to vote.

There are three important additions (Amendments) to our Constitution and one important federal law that guarantee and expand voting rights:

- **15th Amendment (1870)**: The right for Black men to vote
- **19th Amendment (1920)**: The right for women to vote
- **26th Amendment (1971)**: The voting age was lowered from 21 to 18
- **Voting Rights Act* (1965)**: Prohibits racial discrimination in voting (such as poll taxes). The Voting Rights Act also guaranteed the voting rights of Native Americans, whether or not they live on reservations.

*Note: In 2013, the Supreme Court decided that a key part of the law could no longer be used. That key part required jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to get federal approval for any proposed changes in voting procedures to make sure that the changes would not harm minority voters.

Our Democracy: We Vote!

Activity: Celebrating Heroes Who Fought for the Right to Vote

Who fought for voting rights for women and African Americans? Encourage kids to learn about some of the heroes who worked long and hard for this right that we sometimes take for granted. Some risked their lives during the Civil Rights Movement fighting for voting rights. Here are some heroes that kids can explore through books, research, and activities:

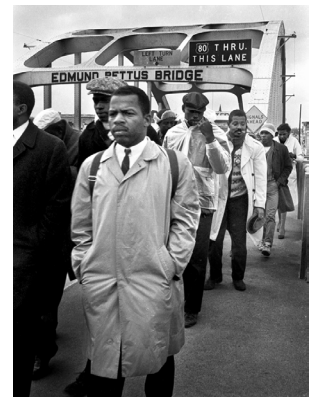
- Susan B. Anthony
- Nannie Helen Burroughs
- Fannie Lou Hamer
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- John Lewis
- Alice Paul
- Jeannette Rankin
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Lucy Stone
- Mary Church Terrell
- Sojourner Truth
- Ida B. Wells



Suffragists



Ida B. Wells



John Lewis

Activity: Celebrating Heroes Who Fought for the Right to Vote

Let's get started!

Read some of the recommended picture book biographies together with the kids, and let them explore some of the books on their own.

Ask the kids:

- Which voting rights activists are you interested in?
- What were the times like when they grew up?
- How did they become involved in speaking out and fighting for voting rights?
- What obstacles did they face? What do you do when you face a challenge or obstacle?
- Did they need to be brave? Can you think of examples? Can you think of times when you needed to be brave to accomplish something?
- How do you think they felt when the right to vote was finally won? How do you feel when you've worked really hard on something and you are successful?
- If you could have dinner with your person, what questions would you ask?

Have each child choose one voting rights hero to learn more about. Help the kids find more information about each activist, through books, Internet research, and television documentaries. Older kids can engage in more research independently.

Here are some online museum sources to explore:

- [Five African American Suffragists You Should Know](#) (National Museum of African American History and Culture)
- [National Voting Rights Museum and Institute](#)
- [The Right to Vote](#) (Library of Congress)

Our Democracy: We Vote!

Activity: Celebrating Heroes Who Fought for the Right to Vote

- [Untold Stories of Black Women in the Suffrage Movement](#) (video)
- [Votes for Women](#) (Smithsonian)
- [Voting](#) (National Museum of African American History and Culture)
- [Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence](#) (Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, archived on Google Arts and Culture)
- [Women's History Online Exhibits](#) (National Women's History Museum)

Once the kids have finished their explorations, you can try one of these activities:

- Create illustrated **hero cards**, with a portrait on one side and some facts about your hero on the other side. You can use the template cards on the next page, or create your own with blank index cards or heavy-weight paper.
- Create a **portrait of each activist** (include their name and dates). Frame and display the portraits in a "Hall of Heroes." Or, combine the portraits with additional information about each hero into a book or ebook (PDF format).
- Create an illustrated voting rights timeline on a large sheet of Kraft paper or create a multimedia timeline using an online tool. See this list from Common Sense Education of [timeline makers and templates](#).
- Write a thank you card to your hero.



HERO

A large, empty rounded rectangular frame with a thick black border. At the bottom center, there is a smaller, empty rounded rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for a drawing or illustration.

HERO

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HERO

A large, empty rounded rectangular frame with a thick black border. At the bottom center, there is a smaller, empty rounded rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for a drawing or illustration.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." — Mother Teresa

Get kids thinking

Ever observant, kids pick up on things, especially things that don't feel right to them — litter at the local park, a child being bullied on the playground, a classmate who can't afford to buy school supplies, news on the radio or television about race or climate change, or a homeless person who needs food and warm clothing.

Children are naturally inquisitive (why is this happening?) and empathetic (how can we help?). It's never too early to talk with kids about issues, large and small, local and global, and how every person can do something to make a difference.

Encourage kids to ask questions and support their interest in learning more about issues that concern them. It's okay to say that we adults don't have all the answers to solving big problems and that action doesn't always result in change right away -- but that we are committed to the effort over the long haul. Pledge to work together on an issue important to your whole family.

Teaching our kids to be active citizens in your a community means taking care of each other, by volunteering, participating in our democracy through voting, and taking responsibility to make our community healthier, kinder, and more beautiful, one action at a time.

What Matters to Me

Talk with kids about issues that they have read about, seen in the media, or heard adults discuss. These can be local, national, or worldwide issues and challenges.

Kids can learn about issues in many ways — reading books and kids' magazines, listening to podcasts, watching documentaries, listening to guest speakers at school, talking with older siblings, parents, and other family members, and digging into kid-friendly online resources. You might also attend local talks, rallies with speakers, or volunteer virtual or in-person get-togethers to learn more about an issue.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Here are some **online news sites** developed for kids that can help them learn more about what's happening in the world:

- [DOGO News](#) (K-8)
- [NBC Learn](#) (K-12)
- [News-o-Matic](#) (K-12)
- [Time for Kids](#) (K-6)
- [The Week Junior](#) (Grades 3-9)



Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Activity: The Wish Tree

Get kids thinking ...

Ask kids to think about a big issue that they wish could come true.

Supplies

- Colored index cards or light-colored construction paper
 - Pens, pencils, or thin markers
 - Hole puncher
 - String or yarn, cut to 12-inch lengths
-

Let's get started

Punch a hole in each card or construction paper square and give each child something to write with and a piece of string or yarn. Have kids write in big letters the topic they care about, and then a brief sentence about their wish for the world. Here are some examples:

Clean Oceans: I hope that one day there will be no more plastic in the oceans so that sea creatures can have a healthier environment.

No Violence: I want a world where no child or family has to experience war or violence.

Kindness to Animals: I hope we can live in a world where all animals are treated humanely.

Tie each wish card to a tree in your yard or the community green space. Or you could string the punched cards on a long piece of yarn or string and hang up a “wish strand” in your home.

This can also be a community or neighborhood event where you invite families nearby to contribute to the wish tree. Ask each child to share their wish out loud, and invite questions and conversation around each topic.

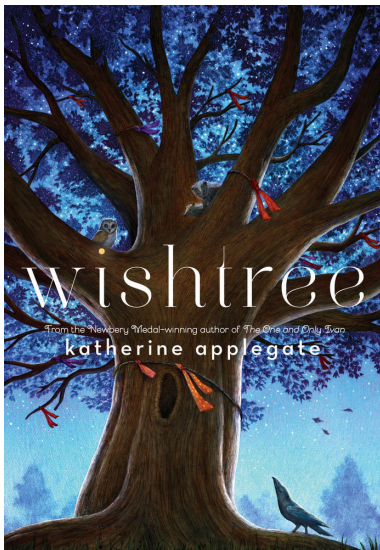
Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Activity: The Wish Tree



Yoko Ono, Wish Tree for Washington, DC (Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden)

More options



The chapter book [Wishtree](#) by Katherine Applegate is a wonderful book to read aloud together and talk about. It's the story of a community coming together to welcome people who are different from them. Red, an oak tree, is the neighborhood "wishtree" — people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. This wishtree watches over the neighborhood. When a new family moves in, not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experience becomes more important than ever. You can explore the [All Are Welcome Here resources](#) on the Wishtree website.

I Have a Dream: With the [I Have a Dream Mobile](#) activity, children express their dreams for their community, country, and the world. (National Constitution Center)



Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Activity: Kindness Jars

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members." — Coretta Scott King

Get kids thinking ...

There are big problems in our world that need big solutions. That can feel overwhelming to young kids, who may wonder, "how can I make a difference?" Let kids know that their day-to-day acts of kindness, empathy, and responsibility within their own families, friendships, school communities, and neighborhoods all make a difference in creating a better world.

Open up a conversation about kindness and what it means. Adults and kids can share examples of what kindness means to each of them.

Let's get started

Community starts with kindness. Being kind might sometimes feel like a muscle that needs to be exercised. Here's a simple idea for families or youth groups to try.

Find an old jar and decorate it if you like. Have each child write down a random act of kindness on a strip of paper and add it to the kindness jar. Kids can add more than one strip at a time if they are inspired, or you can go more slowly and have kids contribute one idea each day, until the jar is filled up.

Next, invite kids to dip into the jar to choose a kindness idea. Talk about it together and decide if this is something you can do right away, or plan to do in the near future. Give kids the chance to talk about their act of kindness.

What will your kindness notes say? Here are a few ideas, in case you need to get the brainstorming going:

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Activity: Kindness Jars

- Make a handmade card for a family member or friend
- Do a chore without being asked (for example, putting my toys away)
- Ask someone to share their “roses and thorns” from that day
- Invite a child to join your game — someone who may be shy or lonely
- Offer a hug to someone and tell them why you like them so much
- Write a silly poem

Try this!

You can also use a kindness jar to *collect* kindness: collect change to donate funds to help others or use your jar to grow a plant that everyone takes care of.

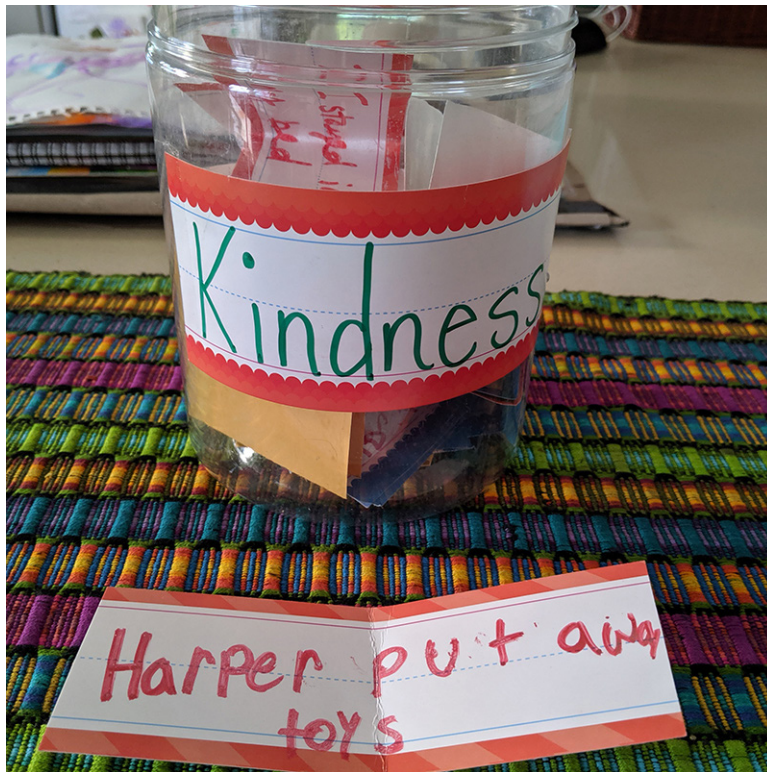


Photo ©April Brown and Akron Public Schools (OH)

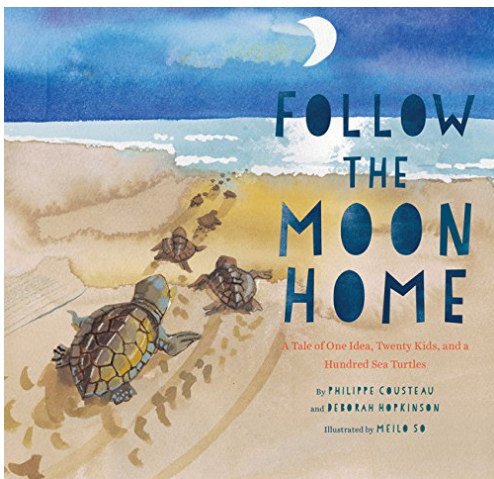


Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issues and Action

"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."
— African Proverb

The books and action ideas on the following pages can inspire and model how children can make a big difference, by learning about an issue and getting involved in finding solutions.



The picture book *Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles* is a great read-aloud and introduction to what kid-powered action can look like.

If you can't get a copy of the book, choose one of the other titles from the lists below and think about questions you can ask the kids to get them thinking.

In *Follow the Moon Home*, a young girl named Vivienne moves to a new town on the beach. Her teacher is leading a community action class project and asks the kids to identify a local problem to solve. She learns about the loggerhead turtles that come up onto the shore every year to lay their eggs and that many of the baby hatchlings lose their way trying to return to the ocean and died.

Vivienne asks why and discovers that it's because the babies think the bright lights from nearby beach houses is the moon guiding them toward the sea.

Vivienne and her classmates launch a campaign to save the baby turtles.

- What did the class do first to make sure their campaign had a solid start? (They gathered all the information they could)
- Where did the kids get their information? (Books, a local aquarium and sea turtle hospital, and a turtle expert who spoke to the class)
- What did the kids do next? (Brainstormed solutions and chose the best ideas)

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issues and Action

- What slogan did they come up with for their campaign? (Lights Out for Loggerheads) Do you think it's effective? Why or why not?
- How did the kids get the word out about how to save the baby turtles? (They put up information flyers, wrote an article for the local newspaper and a press release for local TV, and hosted a town hall to teach people what they needed to do to protect the turtles)
- What was Lights Out for Loggerheads asking people to do? (Keep the beaches dark, don't disturb the nests, adult turtles, or hatchlings — and volunteer to help!)
- Was the kids' campaign successful? How did they know?
- Does this story make you think about something you and your friends or family could do to support an important cause?

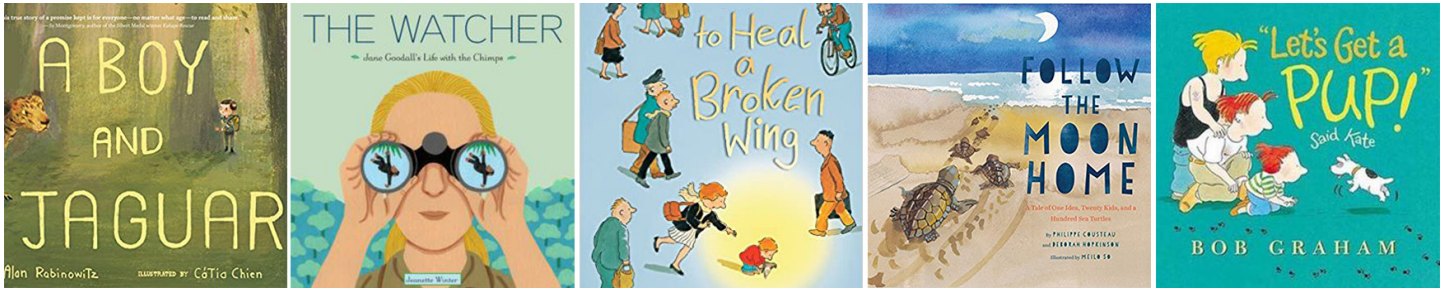
If you have access to other books from the lists on the following pages, read several of them together and ask kids open-ended questions about the stories. Some of the books are about real young people who made a difference with their actions. Encourage kids to ask questions and start thinking about what issues are important to them.

Here are some recommended books and activity ideas to help guide your community action. Kids may be interested in an issue not included here; many of the action ideas can be easily adapted for a range of issues. For book recommendations, check with the children's librarian at your public library.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Helping Animals

Recommended books



- **A Boy and a Jaguar** by Alan Rabinowitz (ages 6-9)
- **Butterflies Belong Here: A Story of One Idea, Thirty Kids, and a World of Butterflies** by Deborah Hopkinson (ages 6-9)
- **Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles** by Philippe Cousteau and Deborah Hopkinson (ages 6-9)
- **How to Heal a Broken Wing** by Bob Graham (ages 3-6)
- **Let's Get a Pup Said Kate** by Bob Graham (ages 3-6)
- **The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps** by Jeannette Winter (ages 6-9)

Action ideas

- Find out how you can support your local animal shelter. Check out the nationwide database of animal shelters with programs for young children at [Crayons & Collars](#).
- If you can't physically visit the shelter, have your family take a virtual tour and check on their website for a wish list of needed items or ideas for other ways to help.
- Launch an information campaign about why there are so many abandoned pets in shelters and what the community can do to reduce the number.
- Take care of neighbors' pets while they are on vacation.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Helping Animals

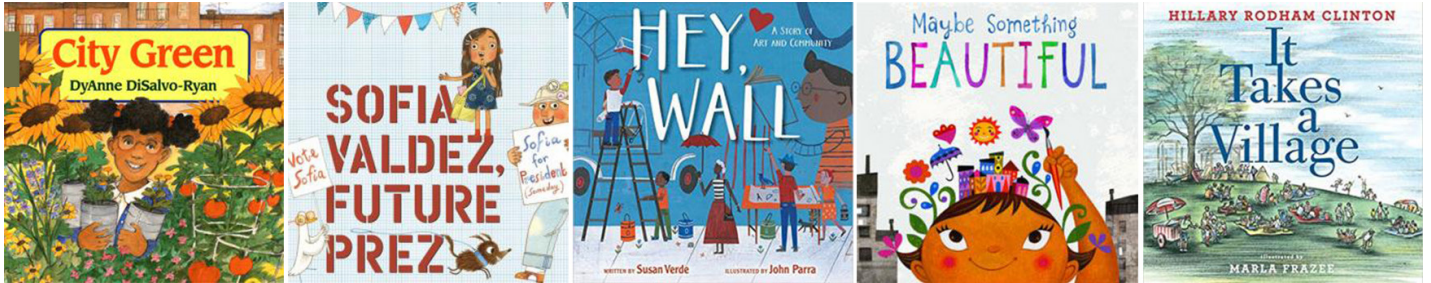
- Start a free dog walking service to help elderly neighbors with their pets.
- Participate in an “adopt an animal” program with a local zoo.
- Learn more about endangered species and how you can help their survival.
- Respect wildlife and their habitats when you are out in nature. Find some tips here: [Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace!](#)
- If you eat meat, consider switching to organic meat. Animals that are humanely raised have more space to roam, eat higher quality food, and in general are treated with more kindness.
- Learn about “cruelty-free” beauty products and launch an awareness campaign in your school.
- Build a birdfeeder and provide food for local birds in the winter.
- Learn about the local wildlife in your area. If their native habitats are threatened, find out how you can help.
- Join a wildlife organization and be active! Some organizations publish magazine for kids, such as [Ranger Rick from the National Wildlife Federation](#).



Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Your Local Community

Recommended books



- [City Green](#) by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan (ages 6-9)
- [Green Green: A Community Gardening Story](#) by Marie and Baldev Lambda (ages 3-6)
- [Harlem Grown](#) by Tony Hillery (ages 6-9)
- [Hey Wall: A Story of Art and Community](#) by Susan Verde (ages 6-9)
- [If Everybody Did](#) by Joanne Stover (ages 6-9)
- [It Takes a Village](#) by Hillary Rodham Clinton (ages 3-6)
- [Maybe Something Beautiful](#) by F. Isabel Campoy (ages 3-6)
- [Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Cornelius and the Spirit of New Orleans](#) by Phil Bildner (ages 6-9)
- [Miss Rumphius](#) by Barbara Cooney (ages 6-9)
- [Sofia Valdez, Future Prez](#) by Andrea Beaty (ages 6-9)

Play:

[Arthur's Park](#): To create a new park in an empty lot, Arthur has to make a speech to raise awareness, hold a bake sale to make money, and then equip the park. (PBS KIDS)

Watch:

[Kids in Action](#): CitySprouts is a community gardening program that promotes healthy eating, hard work, and nature education in urban communities. Hear from the kids in the program as they plant and harvest vegetables and learn to cook new foods.

Read:

[Ten Tips on Gardening with Kids](#) (American Community Garden Association)

Issue: Your Local Community

Action ideas

- Organize regular litter cleanups in your local park.
- Write a proposal to your local government to turn a vacant lot into a playground.
- Organize a mural project to liven up a public space. The mural can celebrate local heroes! Or create chalk sidewalk art to cheer walkers in your neighborhood.

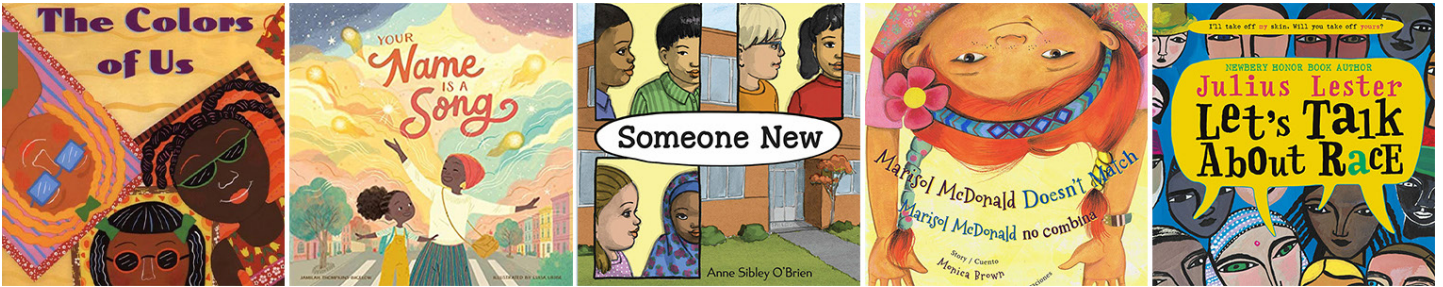


- Start a community vegetable and flower garden or create container gardens for people with little access to green spaces.
- Find out if your town or city has a tree planting program, and write to request trees for your neighborhood. Or adopt a tree and care for it, cleaning invasive vines and debris from around the tree, or learning all about the tree and creating signage.
- Offer to mow the lawn, weed, shovel snow, or paint a fence for an elderly neighbor.
- Spearhead a neighborhood furniture and clothing drive to distribute to shelters, faith groups, and other organizations that help low-income and immigrant families.
- Organize a community orchestra or band (all ages!) to play in public spaces.
- Establish an annual community art fair.
- Make illustrated walking maps of interesting and historic places to see in your town or city. See if local businesses and libraries will distribute them!

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Racial Justice

Recommended books



- [Baseball Saved Us](#) by Ken Mochizuki (ages 6-9)
- [Big Papa and the Time Machine](#) by Daniel Bernstrom (ages 6-9)
- [Black Is a Rainbow Color](#) by Angela Joy (ages 3-6)
- [Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship](#) by Irene Latham and Charles Waters (ages 9-12)
- [The Colors of Us](#) by Karen Katz (ages 3-6)
- [Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut](#) by Derrick Barnes (ages 3-6)
- [Hands Up!](#) by Breanna J. McDaniel (ages 6-9)
- [I Believe I Can](#) by Grace Byers (ages 6-9)
- [Let's Talk About Race](#) by Julius Lester (ages 6-9)
- [Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/Marisol McDonald no combina](#) by Monica Brown (ages 6-9)
- [My Hair Is a Garden](#) by Cozbi A. Cabrera (ages 6-9)
- [A Piece of Home](#) by Jerri Watts (ages 6-9)
- [A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart](#) by Zetta Elliott (ages 6-9)
- [Someone New](#) by Anne Sibley O'Brien (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Racial Justice

Recommended books

- [The Talk: Conversations about Race, Love & Truth](#) by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson (ages 9-12)
 - [We Came to America](#) by Faith Ringgold (ages 6-9)
 - [When We Were Alone](#) by David A. Robertson (ages 6-9)
 - [Your Name Is a Song](#) by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (ages 6-9)
-

Learn more!

Watch:

[Coming Together: Standing Up to Racism](#), a town hall from CNN and Sesame Street.

[Kids, Race and Unity: A Nick News Special](#). Watch young people across the country making their voices heard and finding proactive ways to fight racism in this hour-long video.

[Bookmarks: Celebrating Black Voices](#). Find more titles and conversation starters in this Netflix series.

Read:

[Talking to Young Children About Race and Racism](#). Get support for having meaningful conversations with kids about race from these articles and videos. (PBS KIDS Parents)

[10 Tips for Teaching and Talking to Kids about Race](#). Find age-appropriate activities and conversation starters in these tips for teaching and talking to kids about race (EmbraceRace)

[Learn the language](#) around race, bias and prejudice and use the age-appropriate terms for children when having conversations about race. (Anti-Defamation League)

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Racial Justice

Action ideas

- It is important to have open conversations about race, diversity, and racism. Know that it is okay to talk about race. Speak up when you notice that people of color are left out of a book you read or a show you watched or are absent from an important activity. Read, reflect, and engage in conversations with friends and family about how we can all confront racism and be actively anti-racist.
- Seek out a diverse group of friends. Practice real friendship and understanding by listening carefully when they talk about their experiences and their perspectives.



- Show classmates you value them and their culture. Learn how to pronounce everyone's names correctly and practice until you get them all right! Bring a tool like [Name Coach](#) to your teacher's attention so that no one's name is mispronounced and everyone feels welcome and included.
- Help diversify bookshelves in your community. Look for and read books in your favorite genre written by Black, brown, and indigenous people. Donate a copy of your favorites to schools and school libraries.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Racial Justice

Action ideas

- Raise money for organizations that support racial equity with a Read-a-thon. Learn more about organizations in your community that support racial justice issues or look online at organizations such as the [NAACP](#), [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), or [American Civil Liberties Union](#) to learn how your donation would be used. Then set a reading goal and seek sponsors who pledge to pay a set amount for each page or each book you read that you will donate to the organization of your choice. As a thank you to your sponsors, make a bookmark with a booklist of titles that embrace race.
- Make signs or banners for your yard or your front window that demonstrate your family's support for racial justice and community action.
- Investigate historical markers, statues, and names of streets and buildings in your community. Explore what history is being remembered and shared and take an inventory of who is included and who is not. What historical events or people do you think should be recognized by your community? Do your research and create a proposal for your city or town government about making changes.

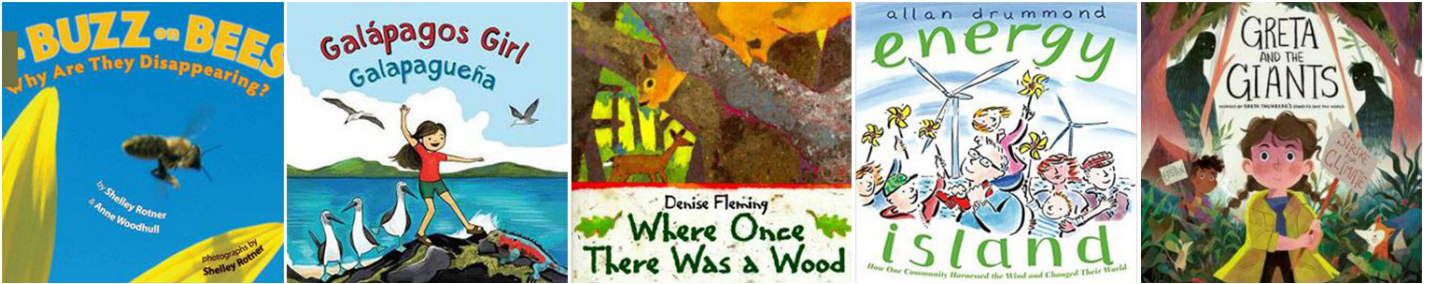


Harriet Tubman Park (Boston, MA)

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Protecting the Environment

Recommended books



- **The Buzz on Bees: Why Are They Disappearing?** by Shelley Rotner and Anne Woodhull (ages 6-9)
- **Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery in Your Own Backyard** by Loree Griffin Burns (ages 9-12)
- **Energy Island: How One Community Harnessed the Wind and Changed Their World** by Allan Drummond (ages 6-9)
- **Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles** by Philippe Cousteau and Deborah Hopkinson (ages 6-9)
- **Galápagos Girl / Galapagueña** by Marsha Dianne Arnold (ages 6-9)
- **Greta and the Giants** by Zoe Tucker (ages 6-9)
- **Olivia's Birds: Saving the Gulf** by Olivia Boulter (ages 6-9)
- **Rachael Carson and Her Book That Changed the World** by Laurie Lawlor (ages 6-9)
- **Stand Up! Speak Up!: A Story Inspired by the Climate Change Revolution** by Andrew Joyner (ages 6-9)
- **We Are Water Protectors** by Carole Lindstrom (ages 3-6)
- **Where Once There Was a Wood** by Denise Fleming (ages 6-9)

Issue: Protecting the Environment

Action ideas

- Participate in a bird count. Share your data with local environmental agencies to help assess the health of native bird species.
- Is your community planning tree planting events? Join in!
- Commit to reducing your use of plastics.
- Join a local riverfront or beach cleanup day.



- Add plants to your yard or garden that are friendly for birds, bees, and other pollinators.
- Conduct a daily water use survey at your house to see how much water everyone uses; discuss ways to reduce water use. Lots of us know to turn off the faucet while we brush our teeth — make a list of other simple ways to conserve water. See: [Daily Water Usage Activity](#).

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Protecting the Environment

- Research how much water it takes to make everyday things in your life. Did you know that it takes more than 2,000 gallons of water to make a pair of jeans? See: [Daily Water Usage Activity](#).
- Plant a rain garden to reduce the amount of polluted rainwater entering neighborhood storm drains (and polluting local waterways). See: [Design a Rain Garden](#).
- Support your local farmers by buying from farmer's markets or smaller grocery stores that buy directly from local farmers.
- Organize a walk or ride-your-bike-to-school day.
- Research the best way to recycle paper, plastic, aluminum cans, and or glass. Present your findings to the school principal along with a plan to set up a recycling program at your school.
- Start a petition or campaign to eliminate plastic straws and Styrofoam containers from the school lunchroom. Back up your request with facts about how long it takes these materials to decompose! Research and present to your school principal. See: [Write a Petition](#)
- Learn what kinds of policy and laws your local, state, and national governments are proposing around environmental issues. Write to your elected officials and share your views.
- Join a climate change march or rally, and stay to listen to the speakers. Don't forget to make a banner or sign that expresses your point of view and issue!

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Protecting the Environment

Learn more!

[31 Day Zero Waste Challenge for Kids](#)

[Finding Solutions](#): Learn how kids can work together, talk through problems, and make positive change for the environment, in this animated video. (PBS KIDS series Arthur)

[Speaking Out](#): Discover how to overcome obstacles and find your voice in order to take civic action for a cause you care about, in this animated video. (PBS KIDS series Arthur)

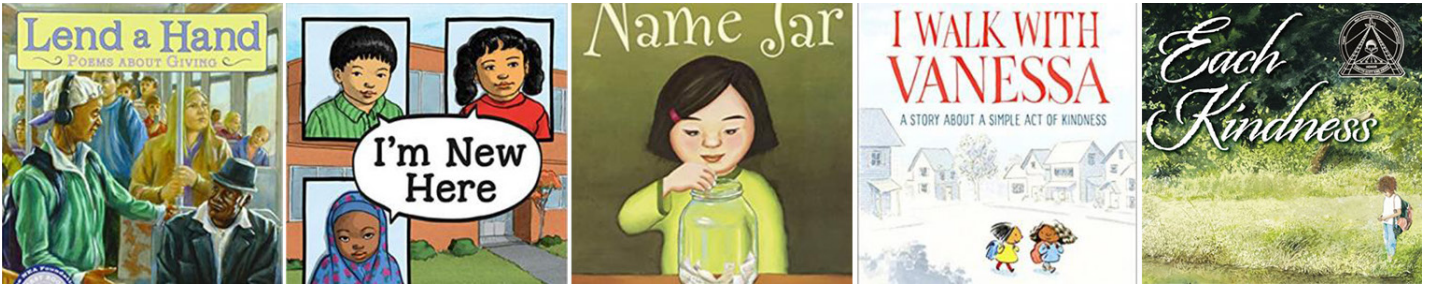
[Water Carries Everything](#): Ella and her friends work with a scientist to measure the quality of a river's water after it rains, in this video. (PBS KIDS series Plum Landing)



Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Friendship and Kindness

Recommended books



- [All Are Welcome](#) by Alexandra Penfold (ages 3-6)
- [The Can Man](#) by Laura E. Williams (ages 6-9)
- [Each Kindness](#) by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 6-9)
- [I Walk with Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness](#) by Kerascoet (ages 3-6)
- [I'm New Here](#) by Anne Sibley O'Brien (ages 6-9)
- [Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving](#) by John Frank (ages 6 and up)
- [The Name Jar](#) by Yangsook Choi (ages 3-6)
- [The Power of One: Every Act of Kindness Counts](#) by Trudy Ludwig (ages 3-6)
- [What Is Given from the Heart](#) by Patricia McKissack (ages 6-9)

Action ideas

- Learn how to say “Everyone is welcome here!” in different languages and create posters or flyers to post in your community.
- Start a neighborhood book club with a special focus — on books about kids from other parts of the world or who practice different religions or a focus on books about kids who look different, think differently, or have physical or cognitive disabilities.
- Offer to mow the lawn, weed, shovel snow, or paint a fence for an elderly neighbor.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Friendship and Kindness

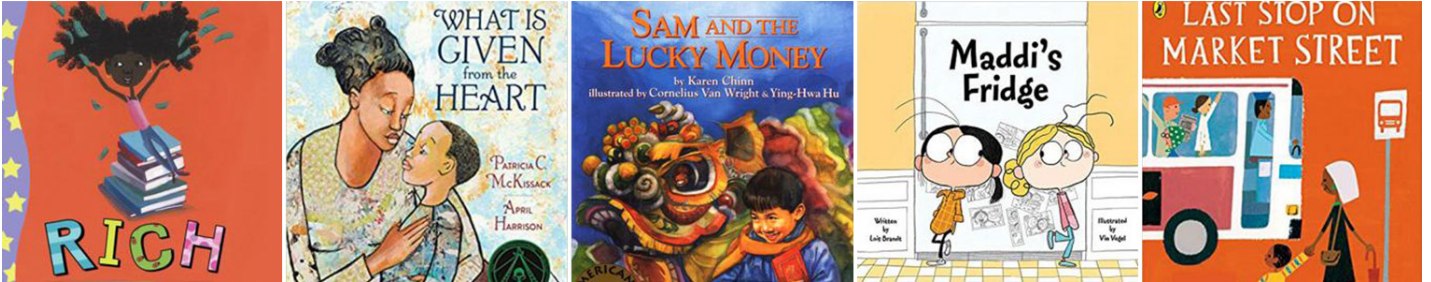


- Learn new playground games that emphasize cooperation rather than winning or losing.
- Read and learn about people who have taken action to make change in the world, people like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall and others who fought for civil rights in our own country. Create a set of “hero cards” based on what you’ve learned and share your knowledge with family and friends.
- Organize a book drive to add multicultural books to your school and classroom libraries.
- Gather a group of friends to make “Welcome Kits” that include useful and fun information for new kids in your neighborhood.
- Find out how you can be a pen pal or “video visitor” to someone who lives in a retirement home or assisted living facility — just to say how glad you are to be friends!

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Homelessness and Hunger

Recommended books



- [Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero](#) by Kelly J. Baptist (ages 9-12)
- [Last Stop on Market Street](#) by Matt de la Peña (ages 3-6)
- [Maddi's Fridge](#) by Lois Brandt (ages 6-9)
- [Our Little Kitchen](#) by Jillian Tamaki (ages 6-9)
- [Rich: A Dyamonde Daniel Book](#) by Nikki Grimes (ages 6-9)
- [Sam and the Lucky Money](#) by Karen Chinn (ages 6-9)
- [Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen](#) by Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan (ages 6-9)
- [What Is Given from the Heart](#) by Patricia McKissack (ages 6-9)

Action ideas

- Research and create a community flyer to build awareness about hunger and homelessness in your community. Oftentimes, people aren't aware how widespread these issues are and how members of their own community are affected.
- Organize a neighborhood drive to collect clothing, blankets, towels, disposable diapers, toys, and books to donate to a local shelter. Most shelters purchase personal care products on their own, but they may welcome extra hand sanitizer now.
- Organize a food drive for a local shelter or food bank.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Homelessness and Hunger

- Donate used furniture, appliances, tools, and building materials to Habitat for Humanity's ReStores. Profits from Habitat ReStores are used to help build affordable housing for people in need. Your donations are also a great way to keep reusable materials out of landfills!
- Organize a food drive for a local shelter or food bank.
- Collect grocery coupons from friends and neighbors and donate to a food bank
- Organize volunteers to help plant a school garden or community garden. Donate all of the harvest to a soup kitchen or shelter. See if a local nursery will contribute seeds, starter plants, and other garden supplies.
- For families that want to help globally, consider donating a flock of chickens, or a milking cow, or even honeybees to another family in need through organizations such as [Heifer International](#).



Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Literacy and Books

Recommended books



- [Brown Girl Dreaming](#) by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 9-12)
- [Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You!](#) by Marley Dias (ages 9-12)
- [Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School](#) by Janet Halfmann (ages 7-12)
- [Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile](#) by Gloria Houston (ages 3-6)
- [Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré](#) by Anika Aldamuy Denise (ages 6-9)
- [Waiting for the Biblioburro](#) by Monica Brown (ages 6-9)

Action ideas

- Build a Little Free Library for your neighborhood. Make it fun and original! Start an [Action Book Club](#) to go along with it.
- Set up a neighborhood or community kids' book swap.
- Organize a new or gently used book drive and distribute the books to shelters and community youth organizations.
- Create buttons or stickers that promote literacy and reading or using the library

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Literacy and Books

- Be a reading buddy! Older siblings can read to younger siblings; younger siblings can read to pets. Or, set up virtual reading buddies who read together via phone or video chat.
- Organize a fundraiser and donate the money to a local literacy organization.
- Create a neighborhood storytelling club where kids and adults share family stories, read books aloud, or perform reader's theater or poetry slams. Be sure to meet outdoors and practice social distancing. Or, you can choose to meet via Zoom or another video chat service.
- Many schools in this country and around the world don't have enough materials or the right kind of materials to help people learn. Learn more about what resources are needed to help and consider raising money to help meet the need.



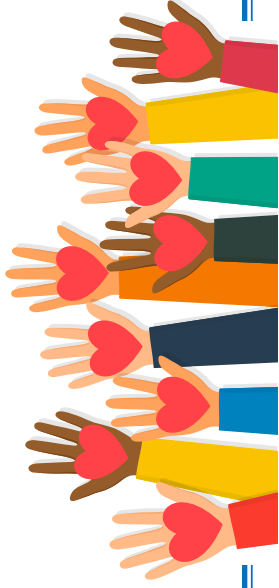
(Family or Community Group)

Making a Difference: Our Pledge

Together, we want to make a difference in our community and in our world.

We pledge to learn more about the issues, get involved, and speak out!

Our Issues:



Making a Difference: Learn More



If you're looking for more inspiration about making a difference — or details on how to plan a campaign, write a petition, create a flyer, design a banner or poster, and fundraise to support your community action — browse these books. They offer lots of ideas for projects that kids can get involved in and how to organize their actions.

- [101 Small Ways to Change the World](#) by Lonely Planet Kids (ages 9-12)
- [Giant Steps to Change the World](#) by Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee (ages 6-9)
- [How to Make a Better World](#) by Keilly Swift (ages 6-9)
- [The Kids Guide to Service Projects](#) by Barbara A. Lewis (ages 8 and up)
- [Say Something](#) by Peter H. Reynolds (ages 6-9)
- [Shaking Things Up: 14 Young Women Who Changed the World](#) by Susan Hood (ages 6-9)



Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Healthy Conversations

In healthy families and communities, it's important to have respectful conversations with each other, even if you disagree with another person's ideas. This can be really hard, especially if you feel strongly about an issue! To fully understand any issue, it can be helpful to consider a point of view that is different from your own.

Here are 6 things to practice when you are engaged in a conversation:

- 1. Really listen.** Don't wait impatiently for the other person to finish so that you can jump in with your thoughts. It's important to open your heart, mind and your ears!
- 2. Respond, respectfully.** You can acknowledge the other person's point of view, and then add, "but here's what I think ...". If the other person interrupts, ask politely to finish your thoughts.
- 3. Show empathy.** Often another person has strong beliefs because of things that have happened in his or her life. We can't always understand it, but we shouldn't dismiss those experiences.
- 4. Don't get personal.** Remember that you want to have a meaningful conversation about an issue. It won't help if you criticize or insult the other person.
- 5. Breathe.** If the conversation starts to get angry, calm down and focus on the issue, not your emotions. Sometimes you'll both want to take a "time out" to cool down. That's healthy!
- 6. Agree to disagree.** You may not end up changing each other's minds, and that's okay. What's important is that you both took time to listen deeply and respectfully — and that can open the door to more conversations and a healthier community.

Adapted from *How to Make a Better World* by Keilly Swift.

For more reading, writing, and learning resources, visit www.StartWithABook.org



Our Democracy: Booklists

The Three Branches

- [D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet](#) by Elissa Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [Everyone Counts: A Citizens' Number Book](#) by Elissa D. Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [For Which We Stand: How the Government Works and Why It Matters](#) by Jeff Foster (ages 9-12)
- [Her Right Foot](#) by Dave Eggars (ages 6-9)
- [House Mouse, Senate Mouse](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)
- [How the U.S. Government Works](#) by Syl Sobel (ages 9-12)
- [I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark](#) by Debbie Levy (ages 96-9)
- [Marshall the Courthouse Mouse: A Tail of the U.S. Supreme Court](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)
- [Shh! We're Writing the Constitution](#) by Jean Fritz (ages 6-9)
- [The Voice of the People: American Democracy in Action](#) by Betsy Maestro (ages 6-9)
- [We the People: The Constitution of the United States](#) by Peter Spier (ages 6-9)

Government at Work

- [Big Frank's Fire Truck](#) by Leslie McGuire (ages 3-6)
- [Busy, Busy Town](#) by Richard Scarry (ages 3-6)
- [D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet](#) by Elissa Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [Dear Mr. Rosenwald](#) by Carole Boston Weatherford (ages 6-9)
- [Delivering Your Mail](#) by Ann Owen (ages 3-6)
- [Helpers in Your Neighborhood](#) by Shira Evans (ages 3-6)
- [Look Where We Live! A First Book of Community Building](#) by Scot Ritchie (ages 4-8)
- [Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans](#) by Phil Bildner (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

- [Miss Moore Thought Otherwise](#) by Jan Pinborough (ages 6-9)
 - [Out and About at City Hall](#) by Nancy Garhan Attebury (ages 6-9)
 - [Tomás and the Library Lady](#) by Pat Mora (ages 4-8)
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What Does the President Do?

- [Dream Big Dreams: Photographs from Barack Obama's Inspiring and Historic Presidency](#) by Pete Souza (ages 10 and up)
 - [If I Were President](#) by Catherine Stier (ages 6-9)
 - [Madame President](#) by Lane Smith (ages 3-6)
 - [Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out](#) by the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance (ages 9-12)
 - [The Presidents Visual Encyclopedia](#) by DK and The Smithsonian (ages 9-12)
 - [Rutherford B., Who Was He? Poems About Our Presidents](#) by Marilyn Singer (ages 6-9)
 - [Smart About the Presidents](#) by John Buller (ages 6-9)
 - [So You Want to Be President?](#) by Judith St. George (ages 6-9)
 - [Truth or Lie: Presidents!](#) by Erica Perl (ages 6-9)
 - [When Penny Met POTUS](#) by Rachel Ruiz (ages 6-9)
 - [Where Do Presidents Come From?](#) by Michael Townsend (ages 9-12)
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We Vote!

- [America Votes](#) by Linda Granfield (ages 6-9)
- [D Is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet](#) by Elissa D. Grodin (ages 6-9)
- [E Is for Election Day](#) by Gloria M. Gavis (ages 3-6)
- [Grace for President](#) by Kelly DiPucchio (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

- [I Voted: Making a Choice Makes a Difference](#) by Mark Shulman (ages 3-6)
 - [If I Ran for President](#) by Catherine Stier (ages 6-9)
 - [President of the Whole Fifth Grade](#) by Sherrie Winston (ages 9-12)
 - [Understanding Your Role in Elections](#) by Jessica Gunderson (ages 9-12)
 - [Vote for Me!](#) by Ben Clanton (ages 3-6)
 - [Vote for Our Future](#) by Margaret McNamara (ages 6-9)
 - [What's the Big Deal About Elections?](#) by Ruby Shamir (ages 6-9)
 - [Woodrow for President: A Tail of Voting, Campaigns, and Elections](#) by Peter Barnes (ages 6-9)
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The Right to Vote

- [The Ballot Box Battle](#) by Emily Arnold McCully (ages 6-9)
- [Because They Marched: The People's Campaign for Voting Rights that Changed America](#) by Russell Freedman (ages 9-12)
- [Bold & Brave: Ten Heroes Who Won Women the Right to Vote](#) by Kirsten Gillibrand (ages 6-9)
- [Chasing Freedom: The Life Journeys of Harriet Tubman and Susan B. Anthony](#) by Nikki Grimes (ages 9-12)
- [Child of the Civil Rights Movement](#) by Paula Young Shelton (ages 6-9)
- [Civil Rights Pioneer: A Story About Mary Church Terrell](#) by Gwenyth Swain (ages 9-12)
- [Elizabeth Leads the Way](#) by Tanya Lee Stone (ages 6-9)
- [Elizabeth Started All the Trouble](#) by Doreen Rappaport (ages 6-9)
- [Equality's Call: The Story of Voting Rights in America](#) by Deborah Diesen (ages 6-9)
- [Fight of the Century: Alice Paul Battles Woodrow Wilson for the Vote](#) by Barb Rosenstock (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

- [Granddaddy's Turn: A Journey to the Ballot Box](#) by Michael Bandy and Eric Stein (ages 6-9)
- [Ida B. Wells: Let the Truth Be Told](#) by Walter Dean Myers (ages 6-9)
- [Let the Children March](#) by Monica Clark-Robinson (ages 6-9)
- [Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965](#) by Jonah Winter (ages 6-9)
- [March: Book One](#) by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin (ages 9-12)
- [Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the Fight for Women's Suffrage](#) by Claire Rudolph Murray (ages 6-9)
- [Martin's Big Words: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by Doreen Rappaport (ages 6-9)
- [Miss Paul and the President: The Creative Campaign for Women's Right to Vote](#) by Dean Robbins (ages 6-9)
- [My Name Is Truth: The Life of Sojourner Truth](#) by Ann Turner (ages 6-9)
- [A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by David Adler (ages 6-9)
- [Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis](#) by Jabari Asim (ages 6-9)
- [Susan B. Anthony](#) by Alexandra Wallner (ages 6-9)
- [Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer](#) by Carole Boston Weatherford (ages 9-12)
- [We March](#) by Shane Evans (ages 3-6)
- [You Want Women to Vote, Lizzie Stanton?](#) by Jean Fritz (ages 9-12)
- [The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist](#) by Cynthia Levinson (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

Active Citizens: Helping Animals

- [A Boy and a Jaguar](#) by Alan Rabinowitz (ages 6-9)
- [Butterflies Belong Here: A Story of One Idea, Thirty Kids, and a World of Butterflies](#) by Deborah Hopkinson (ages 6-9)
- [Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles](#) by Philippe Cousteau and Deborah Hopkinson (ages 6-9)
- [How to Heal a Broken Wing](#) by Bob Graham (ages 3-6)
- [Let's Get a Pup Said Kate](#) by Bob Graham (ages 3-6)
- [The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps](#) by Jeannette Winter (ages 6-9)

Active Citizens: Your Local Community

- [City Green](#) by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan (ages 6-9)
- [Green Green: A Community Gardening Story](#) by Marie and Baldev Lambda (ages 3-6)
- [Hey Wall: A Story of Art and Community](#) by Susan Verde (ages 6-9)
- [If Everybody Did](#) by Joanne Stover (ages 6-9)
- [It Takes a Village](#) by Hillary Rodham Clinton (ages 3-6)
- [Maybe Something Beautiful](#) by F. Isabel Campoy (ages 3-6)
- [Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Cornelius and the Spirit of New Orleans](#) by Phil Bildner (ages 6-9)
- [Miss Rumphius](#) by Barbara Cooney (ages 6-9)
- [Sofia Valdez, Future Prez](#) by Andrea Beaty (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

Active Citizens: Racial Justice

- [Baseball Saved Us](#) by Ken Mochizuki by Ken Mochizuki (ages 6-9)
- [Big Papa and the Time Machine](#) by Daniel Bernstrom (ages 6-9)
- [Black Is a Rainbow Color](#) by Angela Joy (ages 3-6)
- [Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship](#) by Irene Latham and Charles Waters (ages 9-12)
- [The Colors of Us](#) by Karen Katz (ages 3-6)
- [Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut](#) by Derrick Barnes (ages 3-6)
- [Hands Up!](#) by Breanna J. McDaniel (ages 6-9)
- [I Believe I Can](#) by Grace Byers (ages 6-9)
- [Let's Talk About Race](#) by Julius Lester (ages 6-9)
- [Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/Marisol McDonald no combina](#) by Monica Brown (ages 6-9)
- [My Hair Is a Garden](#) by Cozbi A. Cabrera (ages 6-9)
- [A Piece of Home](#) by Jerri Watts (ages 6-9)
- [A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart](#) by Zetta Elliott (ages 6-9)
- [Someone New](#) by Anne Sibley O'Brien (ages 6-9)
- [The Talk: Conversations about Race, Love & Truth](#) by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson (ages 9-12)
- [We Came to America](#) by Faith Ringgold (ages 6-9)
- [When We Were Alone](#) by David A. Robertson (ages 6-9)
- [Your Name Is a Song](#) by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

Active Citizens: Protecting the Environment

- [The Buzz on Bees: Why Are They Disappearing?](#) by Shelley Rotner and Anne Woodhull (ages 6-9)
- [Citizen Scientists](#) by Loree Griffin Burns (ages 9-12)
- [Energy Island](#) by Allan Drummond (ages 6-9)
- [Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles](#) by Philippe Cousteau and Deborah Hopkinson (ages 6-9)
- [Galápagos Girl / Galapagueña](#) by Marsha Dianne Arnold (ages 6-9)
- [Greta and the Giants](#) by Zoe Tucker (ages 6-9)
- [Olivia's Birds: Saving the Gulf](#) by Olivia Boulter (ages 6-9)
- [Rachael Carson and Her Book That Changed the World](#) by Laurie Lawlor (ages 6-9)
- [Stand Up! Speak Up!](#) by Andrew Joyner (ages 6-9)
- [We Are Water Protectors](#) by Carole Lindstrom (ages 3-6)
- [Where Once There Was a Wood](#) by Denise Fleming (ages 6-9)

Active Citizens: Friendship and Kindness

- [All Are Welcome](#) by Alexandra Penfold (ages 3-6)
- [The Can Man](#) by Laura E. Williams (ages 6-9)
- [Each Kindness](#) by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 6-9)
- [I Walk with Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness](#) by Kerascoet (ages 3-6)
- [I'm New Here](#) by Anne Sibley O'Brien (ages 6-9)
- [Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving](#) by John Frank (ages 6 and up)
- [The Name Jar](#) by Yangsook Choi (ages 3-6)
- [The Power of One: Every Act of Kindness Counts](#) by Trudy Ludwig (ages 3-6)
- [What Is Given from the Heart](#) by Patricia McKissack (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Booklists

Active Citizens: Homelessness and Hunger

- [Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero](#) by Kelly J. Baptist (ages 9-12)
- [Last Stop on Market Street](#) by Matt de la Peña (ages 3-6)
- [Maddi's Fridge](#) by Lois Brandt (ages 6-9)
- [Our Little Kitchen](#) by Jillian Tamaki (ages 6-9)
- [Rich: A Dyamonde Daniel Book](#) by Nikki Grimes (ages 6-9)
- [Sam and the Lucky Money](#) by Karen Chinn (ages 6-9)
- [Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen](#) by Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan (ages 6-9)
- [What Is Given from the Heart](#) by Patricia McKissack (ages 6-9)

Active Citizens: Literacy and Books

- [Brown Girl Dreaming](#) by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 9-12)
- [Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You!](#) by Marley Dias (ages 9-12)
- [Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School](#) by Janet Halfmann (ages 7-12)
- [Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile](#) by Gloria Houston (ages 3-6)
- [Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré](#) by Anika Aldamuy Denise (ages 6-9)
- [Waiting for the Biblioburro](#) by Monica Brown (ages 6-9)