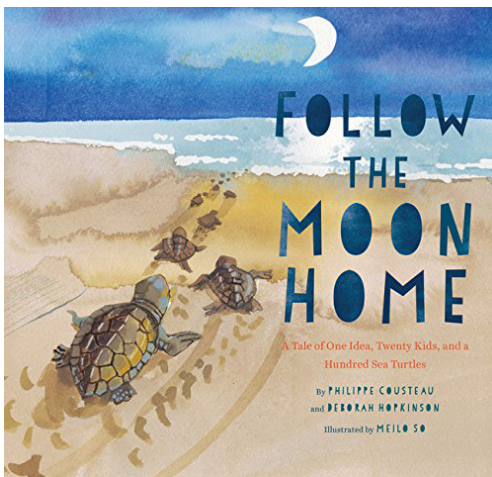


Our Democracy: Active Citizens

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?

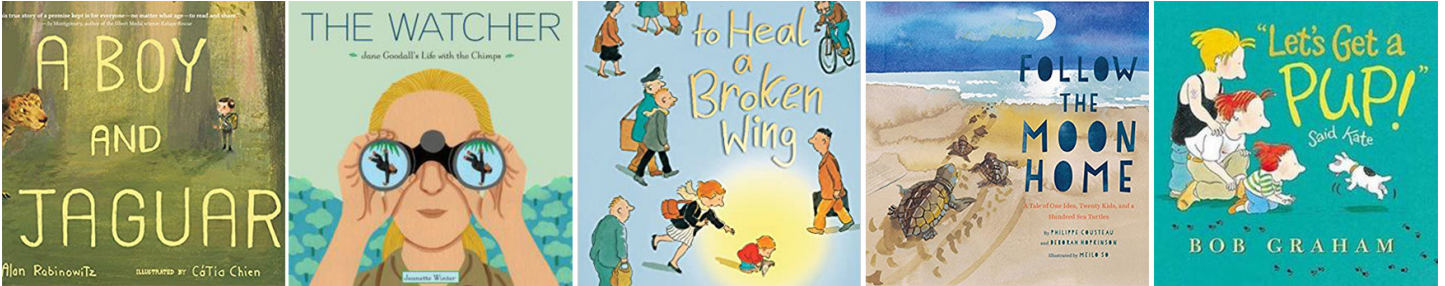
If you have access to other books from the lists on the following pages, read several of them together and ask kids open-ended questions about the stories. Some of the books are about real young people who made a difference with their actions. Encourage kids to ask questions and start thinking about 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)
- **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.
- Start a free dog walking service to help elderly neighbors with their pets.

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Issue: Helping Animals

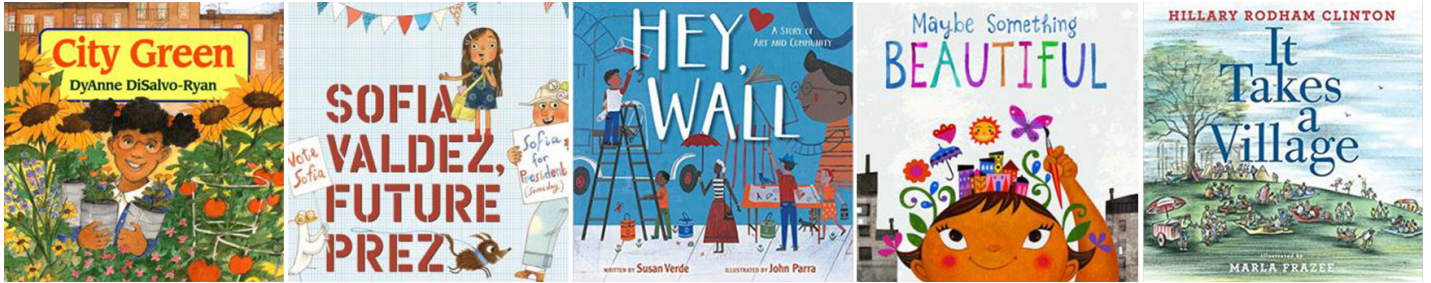
- Participate in an “adopt an animal” program with a local zoo
- Learn more about endangered species and how you can help their survival
- Respect wildlife and their habitats when you are out in nature. Find some tips here: [Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace!](#)
- If you eat meat, consider switching 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)
- [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)

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

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.

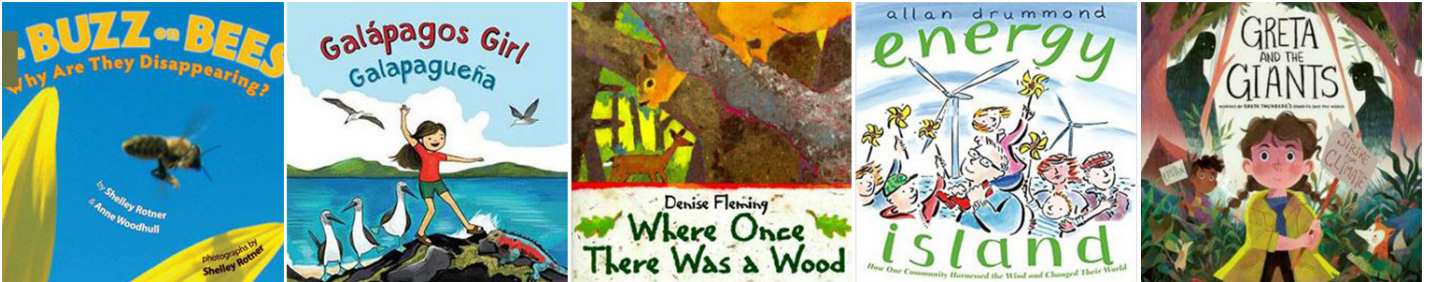


- Start a community vegetable and flower garden or create container gardens for people with little access to green spaces.
- Find out if your town or city has a tree planting program, and write to request trees for your neighborhood. Or adopt a tree and care for it, cleaning invasive vines and debris 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: 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)
- **We Are Water Protectors** by Carole Lindstrom (ages 3-6)
- **Where Once There Was a Wood** by Denise Fleming (ages 6-9)

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

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)

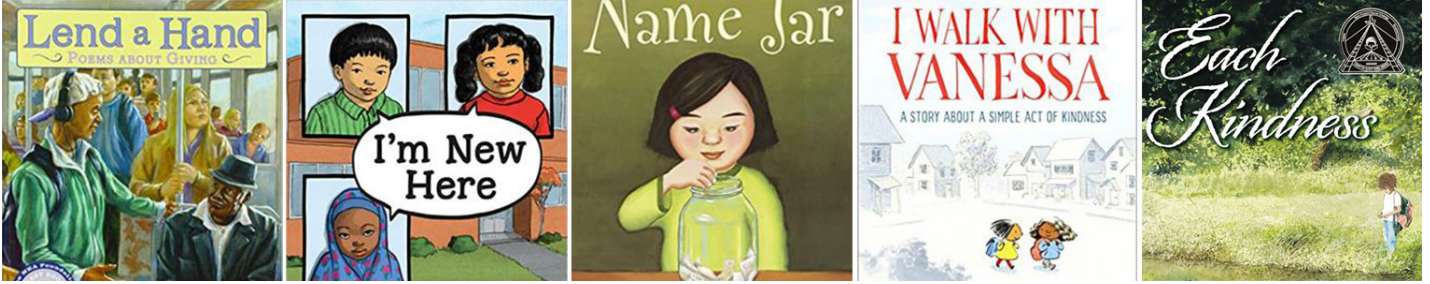
[Water Carries Everything](#): Ella and her friends work with a scientist to measure the quality of a river's water after it rains, in this video. (PBS KIDS series Plum Landing)



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

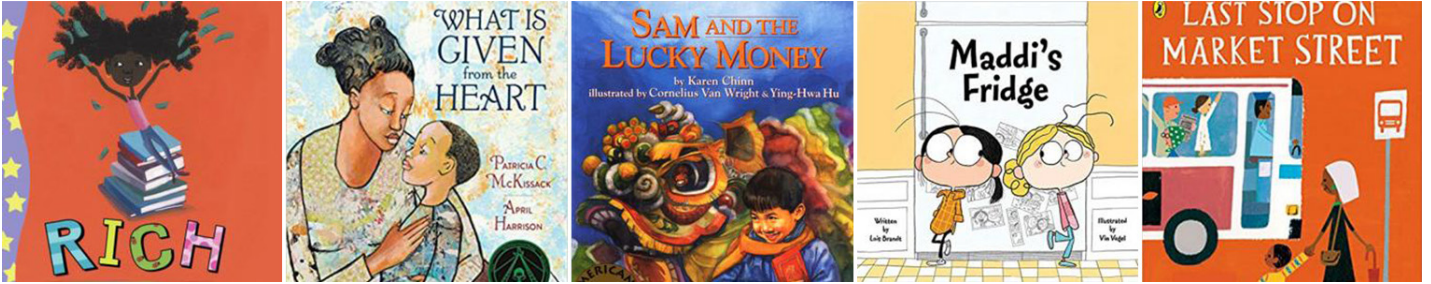


- Learn new playground games that emphasize cooperation rather than winning or losing.
- Read and learn about people who have taken action to make change in the world, people like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall and others who fought for civil rights in our own country. Create 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)
 - [Rich: A Dymonde 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.

