



SOCIAL JUSTICE ACROSTIC POEMS

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 3 – 5

LENGTH OF TIME: 2 or 3 sessions of 40 minutes

GOALS

- To help students share and explore issues they are passionate about through acrostic poetry.
- To build community by learning about one another through poetry.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will write an acrostic poem with a partner about an issue they care about.
- Students will have discussions with their classmates about issues that they care about.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (Also SL.3.1 and 4.1)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.5.4.B: Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate and expression on successive readings. (Also RF.3.4.B and 4.4.B)

EDUCATORS' NOTES

This lesson involves having students work as a class to generate important social justice words and then to write an acrostic poem with a classmate. This activity encourages students to explore issues that they care about with their peers and to form connections with each other around social justice topics.

Having your students write a social justice acrostic poem will help you to get to know your students better through issues they care about. Students may find unexpected similarities and/or differences in social justice issues that they are passionate about. This can open discussion and help create healthy dialog in your classroom community.

Prior to the lesson, you may want to write an example of an acrostic poem on chart paper to share with your students. If you share about yourself, students will be more comfortable doing the same.

MATERIALS

- Either colored pencils/markers and paper or computers/tablets and a printer
- Chart paper

INTRODUCTION

- Gather your students together. On a piece of chart paper, write Social Justice Movements at the top.
- Let your students know that you are going to develop a list of words or phrases on social justice movements and important issues that they care about.
- Examples might include: Black Lives Matter, respect all languages, animal rights, climate change, migration is beautiful, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, water is life, disability rights, gun control or March for Our Lives...
- Write the words and ideas that your students share on the chart paper.
- Once your students are satisfied with the list, have them each choose one topic that they would like to write an acrostic poem about.
- Have them find a partner who has chosen the same social justice issue.

WRITING

- Depending upon the grade level, you may want to walk your students through the process for crafting an acrostic poem.
- You could choose one of the words and craft a class poem together. Have your students help you choose a word or sentence for each letter.
- You may want to provide access to the internet or books where your students can do research for their acrostic poem.

FINAL DRAFT—CREATIVE PRESENTATION ACTIVITY/PUBLISHING

- Working with a computer:
 - Have students create a final version of their acrostic poem using different types of fonts, different sizes of fonts or different colors (if you have the capacity to print in color).
 - Students could add an image that represents something about their social justice issue in the background of their poem.
- Working with colored pencils or markers:
- Have students write a final version of their poem using different colors and different sizes of writing for each word. They could also decorate their paper with drawings.

SHARING THE POEMS

- Sharing the poems with other students in the class will help build community in your classroom.
- Different options for sharing include:
 - Students read their poems aloud to the whole class.
 - Have three pairs come to together to form groups of 6 students. Have them share their poems with each other. If you choose which pairs to group together, you have the opportunity to form more diverse groups of students allowing them to get to know classmates better.

- Post the poems around the walls of your classroom. Have students form new pairs or groups of three to walk around the room and read each other's poems and discuss.
- While listening to or reading the poems, ask your students to notice important points about the social justice issue.
- After each pair of students read their poem, have the other students in the class or the small group give an appreciation to that student and share something they learned about the social justice issue.

EXTENSIONS

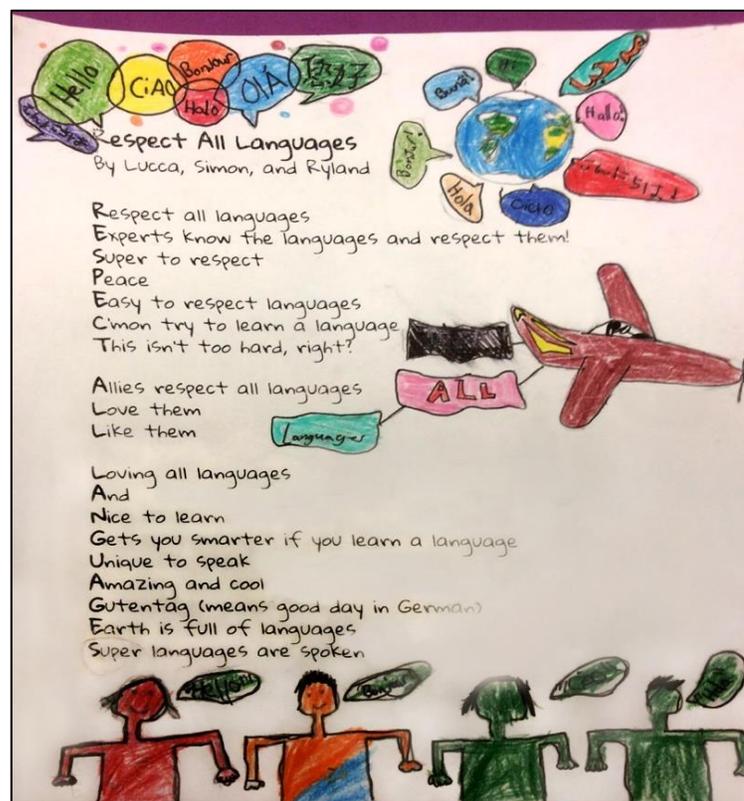
- Mount the poems on construction paper and post on wall of your classroom or in the hallway near your classroom.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Use an exit card for students to write down something important that they learned about a social justice issue from reading or hearing the poems.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- [Children's Books to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying](#)
- [Lesson Plans to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying in School](#)
- [Preventing Bias-Based Bullying – School Resources](#)
- [Welcoming Schools Professional Development Trainings](#)



Credit: Developed by Erica Eide and Kim McFarlane, Shorewood Hills Elementary School, Madison WI.
Acrostic poem examples by 3rd graders from the Shorewood Hills Elementary School in Madison, WI

Black Lives Matter

Black lives matter

Love your enemy

All lives are equal and beautiful

Care for all

Keeep mean thoughts to yourself.

Let your kindness shine and be laborious

Independent people like you are beautiful

Very nice people should be rewarded with kindness

Express the love in your heart

Share the love in your heart.

Make lives beautiful

All lives are awesome and independent

Tell people to love others

Tell a story of Dr. King

Everyone deserves respect

Really cherish happy moments with righteousness.

