Read Aloud

Dr. Rose Reissman.

26. Stand Up! 10 Mighty Women Who Made a Change

Brittney Cooper Illustrator Cathy Ann Johnson Orchard Books- Scholastic- 2022

Grades 2-4 and beyond.

Topics: American History, What It means to be an American, Constitution, Building Community, Student Voices, Rights and Responsibilities, Immigration.

Genres: Collected Biography, Informational Non-fiction, American History, Inspirational Picture Books, and Juvenile Guide to Activism for Elementary Readers.

This beautifully designed accessible non-fiction, collected biography and young reader social action work, and deftly communicates its participation and self T development/assertiveness messages. This is done by the creators beginning the narrative from the visual and narrative perspective of a baby who is physically learning to stand. From the beautiful conversational tone and mixed media visual rendition of this baby to elementary age protagonist growth, the author then shifts focus to ten key American females who stood up for what was right. Throughout the narrative and in beautifully rendered sunlight strong orange tones at the end, author Brittney Cooper and illustrator Cathy Ann Johnson, assure and motivate the reader with the knowledge, that just like the ten female personalities cited, the reader will be change the world for the goof by standing up.

Talking Points:

Before reading the book:

1. What does it mean to “stand up” for what you believe in and to “speak out” for what is just? Have you as a child ever spoken up or tried to help a friend or an adult who was being treated unfairly? If so share your story. Think about school, neighborhood, play or party times when adults are not around to watch? Do you think that at your age, just a child in school, you can “stand up” and “speak out” for others? Is it a waste off time for you to “stand up” for others because you are a child?

During the reading of the book:

1. What do Ms. Cooper, the author and Ms. Johnson, the illustrator, mean by needing to stand up? Is their purpose in this beautiful book to help you with posture and standing powerfully when you speak? Explain your answer by using details in the story.
2. In what ways did Mum Bett, Phyllis Wheatley and Ida B. Wells stand up? What are some key verbs- action words that describe how each of these women “stood up”? Are any of their actions, ones a child in elementary school can do? (Answers: demanding rights, writing poems, speaking and writing)
3. Which of the females who stood up are close in age to you? How were they able, even though not adults to stand up by:” sitting down,” “going to school,” and “refusing to be ignored”? Answers: Claudette Colvin, Ruby Bridges and Mari Copeny. What empowered – made each strong enough to “stand up”?

Take Action:

1. Students can select one of the females in the book and create a trading card or Facebook page for her. Divide them into teams of 2-3 maximum and have them develop a trading card or Facebook style poster celebrating their selected female activist with a picture downloaded or illustrated plus one key quote from or about the activist. A timeline for her achievements and final quote from the students or their family members about why and how she inspires them today. If appropriate they can hashtag her as well. For example: Mum Bett #freeme2xslave

26. Rise Up and Write It –Nandini Ahuja – Illustrator Anoosha Syed Harper Collins 2021

Grades 2-4

Topic: Building Community, Student Voices, What it means to be an American citizen, local government, social activism, and youth leadership.

Genres: Picture Book, Take Action Inspirational juvenile literature, environmental juvenile literature, neighborhood juvenile literature.

This delightful immediately adaptable to local elementary student community service and leadership programs, is actually both an engrossing narrative as well as kit with replicable student models. Among the models beautifully tucked in envelopes are: business letters to public officials, petition model template, flyers for local community meetings, signs, postcards templates, and logos for young activist groups. In addition to these beautifully designed and student “voiced”/”illustrated models,” the very concrete ways in which elementary students can effect proactive community initiatives are told through the fictional story of an urban elementary student who is inquisitive. Farah looks out of her apartment window and notices that her neighborhood is filled with cars, but no butterflies. She wonders why and finds out from her mother that there are no flowers in the neighborhood to attract butterflies. She finds an empty lot of public land that would serve well as a community garden. The steps she takes after identifying this site are those any citizen can take to at least assure a discussion of a local request. They all involve standard writing and communication formats which are effectively used by adult citizens to “voice” their concerns. The strength and usefulness of this book lies in how it translates and inspires young citizens with the ways in which writing, illustrating and communicating skills, they are mastering in elementary school can work now for them as young citizens.

Talking Points:

Before reading the book:

1. Are there any academic subject skills we are learning which can help us as young citizens communicate to our local mayor or elected representative, changes or projects we want and need to happen in our community or skills? What are those skills and in what subject are we learning them? How might we use those skills to get local adult government adults to make things happen?

During the read-aloud:

1. What question does Farah ask? How does her walk around her neighborhood help her to identify an answer to that question?
2. In what ways does writing help Farah to communicate her idea about the garden to elected officials and her community of adults? Detail the kinds of writing which also includes writing with drawing to persuade (signs), that the story includes?
3. Farah is told at first that the idea of a parking lot is one the panel is likely to accept, how does she react to that information? What does her reaction teach us about persevering or following through on a dream or a project? Explain how it teaches that lesson.

Take Action Project:

1. As a class or in teams of 4 maximum, identify a local neighborhood project or space you would like to see happen. Examples: a recreation after school playground spruce up, a safe streets festival, a pop up store or restaurant for kids, a park clean-up, a holiday barbecue and dance festival or a community garden. Using one or more of the template “Write It” forms in the book, write a letter to your local elected council person, make a sign, start a petition or create a flyer for your proposed idea. Remember to not take “no” for an answer and also email the letter as well as jpg your signs and flyers so they can be posted online.

27. Black Beach- A Community, an Oil Spill, and the Origin of Earth Day-

Shauna and John Stith-Illustrated by Maribel Lechiga- Little Bee Books, 2023

Topics: Building Community, Student Voices, Government, Rights and Responsibilities, Environmental Protection Concerns, Informed Citizen Response, Social Action and Environmental Activism.

Genres: Picture Book Informational, American History-Oil Spills, Earth Day informational Juvenile Literature.

Black Beach-A Community, an Oil Spill, and the Origin of Earth Day – is a very accessible elementary school student picture book that explains the impact of the January 28th, 1969 Union Oil’s Platform Alpha, massive underneath blowout on the population of Santa Barbara. The picture book wisely presents the coalescing of the Santa Barbara population in activist efforts to contain the oil spill effects through the lens of elementary student Sam. The anxiety, worry and emotional pain Sam feels when her beloved ocean and beach are rendered black by the oil is viscerally illustrated and expressed in this realistic fictional story. The actions she observes community members taking, throwing in straw to soak up oil and toweling off birds, plus news footage inspire Sam to turn her sadness into action. Her actions include: mailing bottles of oil from the spill to politicians, and advocating as a young grassroots community member for the first Earth Day, established April 22, 1970. The story from Sam’s perspective concludes with her participating in the first Earth day by bringing a can to recycle and learning about DDT environmental harm dangers. The powerful presence of school students in the Earth Day event is emphasized in the narrative. The back material offers teachers: an extensive bibliography of secondary sources, a timeline of the Environmental Protection movement, Earth Day Every Day themes/terms and ten ways to get started as an environmental activist.

Talking Points:

Before the Read Aloud:

1. Have the students share some natural disaster, environmental disaster, or manmade disaster which has touched their lives as young community citizens. These might include: hurricanes, quick moving tornados touching down, blizzards, building collapses, polluted beaches, contaminated waters, sea creatures washing up on shore and other environmental calamities. Ask them to share stories of how these calamities have affected their lives or those of their family and community. Make a list of what they share and then ask them what response as active citizens they or their adult family members made to these calamities. Listen and write on experiential chart responses, which may include: letters, emails or calls to local officials, meetings, protests with signs and petitions.

During the reading:

1. What emotions does the oil spill bring out for Sam and her peers? How does Sam deal with her emotions in her life and as she watches adults take action?
2. What actions are Sam and her peers able to take as she learns more about what is needed to prevent future oil spills and to protect the environment?
3. In what ways besides it being designated as a national calendar day, was the first Earth Day that Sam attended important for her and the adults in her community? As the story ends, what key actions and knowledge are part of Sam’s first Earth Day experience?

Take Action:

1. Invite the students to individually select one of the suggested back material 10 ways to become an environmental activist. For the selected way, challenge the student to prepare a sign or a short 60 to 90 second speech or an illustration/editorial cartoon showing what needs to be done- a digital photo can also be used. Have students each presented their chosen environmental action step and film or photo them for the school website or bulletin board display. Even better have them present at an adult local government or community group council meeting or share their video with an approved set of peers in the school or school partners.

28. The Story of Barbie and the Woman Who Created Her (2017)

Cindy Eagan –Illustrator Amy June Bates

New York: Random House Grades 2-4

Topics: Student Voices, Building Community, What it means to be an American Citizen, Entrepreneurship as an aspect of Citizenship, Cultural Values, Women’s Roles in American Society

Genre: Picture Book Biography

This book helps young readers who inherently play with toys and are the consumers driving that market, to be alert to the ways in which the toys represent the American spirit of entrepreneurship. It also is an excellent approachable and accessible way to get them to think about the ways in which the designers and marketers of toys are using these products to promote cultural and social values. Finally, the story of Ruth Handler, far less well known than her iconic doll, introduces young readers to the field of invention as a pathway to entrepreneurial success and contribution to our evolving American values. The story also documents the way a single American toy has changed parallel to the way American society has changed and how pop culture mirrors those changes.

Talking Points:

Before reading the book:

Ask the young readers to share a toy or stuffed animal which they truly loved when they were young (ages 2-4) and perhaps still have in their bedrooms or closets as a keepsake. Have them share what they loved about that toy and why it meant so much to them. Of course, sharing a personal favorite from the reader’s childhood, will get the conversation going. Make certain at least 2-3 young readers share favorite toy stories.

Before starting the Read Aloud, show the students the cover of the book, and ask them if they know who is responsible for designing Barbie. Depending on whether they listened carefully to the movie script, they may or may not know her name. Tell them this is a story about the woman who designed this doll over sixty years ago.

During the reading:

2. How did Ruth realize from watching her daughter, the need for the new type of doll she would invent/design?

3. What was the reaction of the bosses at Mattel when Ruth shared her ideas for developing a teenager type of doll (not a baby doll) with lots of clothes and accessories? How did Ruth react to this negative responses from the bosses at Mattel/ did she give up her idea because it failed at first? Why or why not?

4. Besides just designing Barbie as a fashion doll with loads of clothes and accessories, Ruth wanted the doll to have adventures and a story. Why was and is this idea, still present in Barbies created today, so important for the Barbie brand? Why was Ruth’s issuing different Barbies who represented women working in jobs (flight attendant, nurse, surgeon) or advocating for political roles (candidate Barbie), so important for the doll’s success? When you play with your toys, do you make up stories and dialogue for them to say to one another?

Take Action Project:

Divide student into teams of 3-4 students each with each getting a large sheet of white paper, markers and writing paper or access to digital recording (flipgrid or recorder in class). Ask each group to propose a new type of Barbie or Ken doll with a job or different culture focus than those that already exist. Tell them that if they like, they can focus on a Barbie and a Ken who represent their individual cultures or jobs/roles, the Barbies have not depicted so far. Challenge them to draw or describe in words clothing and accessories or even a setting for their dream Barbie/Ken and explain why their design would be successful. The student presentations can initially be done in front of the class, but can also be filmed and/or photographed and shared on the school site.

29. Virginia Wouldn’t Slow Down- The Unstoppable Dr. Apgar and Her Life-Saving Invention (2023)

Carrie A. Pearson

Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter

Norton Readers, New York. Grades 2-5

Topics: Student Voices, Building Community, Rights and Responsibilities, Public Health.

Genres: Informational Non-fiction Picture Book, Informational Medical Advances/Public Health Picture Book- Steam Biography, Picture book Biography-

This picture book biography not only shares the story behind a doctor whose last name is known to most new parents, but also introduces the young student reader to career, public health, neonatal, and college prep opportunities. Beyond the introduction and inspiring back story of Dr. Virginia Apgar, the picture book also offers grade and age appropriate background into shifting American research and job opportunities for women in the early 20th century. The personal story of Dr. Apgar beyond her achievement in terms of developing the Apgar test for infants, includes her multi- dimensional personality, sociability, work ethic, independence, playing the violin and flying the world using her pilot’s license. This beautifully and charmingly illustrated –with fitting multimedia art, book provides a needed and inspiring introduction into the life of this civic and scientific female role model.

Talking Points:

Before reading the book:

How do medical tests, conditions, and vaccines get their names? Are there any actual persons behind the Salk vaccine, Parkinson’s disease, Crohn’s disease and Asperger syndrome? Riddle me this, what test do baby’s take before they leave the hospital? How can they pass or fail it, if they have had no time to learn any skills? Tell the young readers ahead of time that most adults cannot answer these two questions. So they are welcome to guess. Let them talk about the answers.

During the reading:

2. What fact did you just learn which explains why we had the discussion we did before we read this non-fiction story, life story. What challenges did Virgina face being born as a female in the early 1900s that females do not face today? How did Virginia react to these challenges as a child and teen?

3. In what ways can we read about Virginia’s life through Nancy Carpenter’s illustrations? This story has a title “Virginia Wouldn’t Slow Down.” What actions of Virginia’s does this title reference?

4. When Virginia decided to switch to becoming an anesthesiologist how did she learn about the new specialty? What was different about Virginia’s work with mothers and babies from the work of other doctors? What hurdle did Virginia face as a woman in her field in convincing the doctors to accept her invention/idea for the Apgar newborn baby test?

Take Action Project:

Two options:

1. Challenge the students to identify at least two life lessons they as young learners can take from Virginia’s actions and achievements in her life. Ask them to explain in words how her actions inspire them as they begin to live their own lives as successful caring members of their community. In addition to expressing the life lessons they take from Virginia’s biography, suggest they also create a poster using downloads of her photos or facts from the timeline in the back of the book.
2. Have students choose a scientist whose name has become part of medical terms such as Sabin, Salk, Parkinson, Asperger, and Dick. Have them research the scientist’s life and identify at least two life lessons beyond the achievement in science that they can take from this life

30. Baba’s Gift- A Persian Father’s Love of Family

(2022) Arianna Shaheen Amini and Christina Maheen Amini – Illustrated by Elaheh Taherian.

Grades 2-4. Especially recommended for ESL students and schools which serve many distinct diverse and blended diverse families.

Topics: Immigration/Acculturation, What it Means to be an American, Building Community, Rights and Responsibilities, Global Community, Cultural Values

Genres: Immigrant Non-fiction picture book, Iranian non-fiction book, cultural series, fathers and daughter stories.

Baba’s Gift is a deep picture book that initially reads as a father daughter and family values affirming story. But another layer of cultural depth and emotional meaning is added to the story as the father, who is based on the actual father of the sister co-authors, emphasizes to his family, that the same moon they gaze up at in California, shone over him when he grew up in Iran. Throughout the story, the father a proud immigrant who trained as a doctor in California, continues to use family Persian artifacts, gardens, language, storytelling and foods to make certain that his family are connected to one another with love and connected through their shared Persian culture. Of necessity, the story focuses on why the father left his beloved homeland but also on positive aspects of American values that enhance their lives as Americans of Persian background. A key aspect of this non-fiction biographical narrative is one illustration where the father is pictured against a blackboard with the words: memory, emotion, attachment, and love. Ultimately this is a book for all young students including those whose families are immigrants, since it emphasizes family values and cultural continuity.

Talking Points: Before reading the book:

1. (This question might be shared the day before the reading for optimal young reader connections to this story to be made).What sayings or keepsakes or photos do your family members share with you that reflect their past when they were your age? If applicable share a saying, experience or object from your own family, such as a saying from a parent’s Yiddish speaking family about “Going out by walking on your hands with your feet on the top.” This saying meant that the child was mixed up in his or her focus.

Make certain that at least two to three young readers share their responses.

During the reading:

1. Although the family here are located in the state of California, in what ways does the father make certain that they remember that the father and other family members were born in Persia? Does the father only use objects or stories to help his daughters remember their Persian heritage/cultural connection? Why might he also use ways to remind his daughters of their inheritance that include movement and scents?
2. Why did the father choose to leave his beloved Iran and his family? What does the father mean when he says that he was living in two worlds? What value do the two worlds he shows on the Venn diagram share?
3. In what way are Baba’s daughters connected to his mother, although they never met her since she lived in Iran and died before they were born?

Take Action Project

1. Have children develop two to three questions they would like to ask their parents or other adults about their family values and traditions. Children can also interview school staff. Ask the students to create a heart, Venn diagram graphic or other poster illustrating the family values they learn about through their interviews. Displays of the posters can be posted in the school or for the PTA as well as shared online through the school’s website. If desired a guest volunteer parent can visit the class and the students can write up what they learn from this shared classroom research. This conversation of family shared values and cultural backgrounds can also form the basis of a podcast with students and family members talking about culture and shared values that can focus on different cultures and experiences culled from the particular school.

31. Muslim Girls Rise-Inspirational Champions of Our Time -2019

Grades 3-6- Excellent for ESL learners

Saira Mir- Illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel

New York: Simon and Schuster

Topics: What it means to be an American, Immigration, Women’s Roles, Student Voices, Building Community, Rights and Responsibilities.

Genres: Informational culture studies, non-fiction female history, inspirational literature, youth leadership guides.

As per its name, this accessible but deep in factual and cultural import nonfiction work, focuses on inspiring all its readers to “rise” in every sense of that verb. The narrative shares authentic historic and present day personalities who from their childhood have dared to dream beyond their stereotypes to achieve. The narrative includes one page descriptions of contemporary active young Muslim women who are proactively improving American and global social conditions as a whole through needed grassroots projects such as: open tables to foster cultural discussion (Amanda Saab), protecting women and political prisoners in Iran (Shirin Ebadi), beauty equality in the United States (Nura Afia), Olympic fencer team USA (Ibtihaj Muhammad), and writing books encouraging races to collaborate together on projects advocating love (Ilyasah Shabazz). In addition to cogently summing up a broad spectrum of Muslim female achievements and causes which contradict uninformed perceptions of Muslim females, the author also highlights quotes from each of the featured women which are universally applicable and can resonate in students’ lives.

Talking Points:

Before reading:

1. Challenge students to share ways in which some of the females in their lives might be mistakenly viewed from afar based on their appearance or personalities, but are really very different and far more powerful when someone meets them. For example, one mother seemed very sweet and weak, when one met her. But if her child were in any way threatened or insulted, she would rise up with a powerful voice to defend her child and shock others with what she could say and do physically as well. Another seemingly elderly over 70 female was also a martial arts expert and surprised a man who attempted to grab her purse, by tripping him up on the sidewalk and holding him until good Samaritans got police on site. Let the children share at least two females who are not what you think when you first glimpse them.

During the reading:

2. Do a selected picture walk through the book with the students challenging them to anticipate from the illustrations the achievements or activities, the featured Muslim women have accomplished. Have them share what they “read” through the illustrations and list them on an experiential chart. Among the ones they will cite: Girl Power (Muslim website), speaking out (at a podium), flight control engineer for NASA, elected US House Representative, and a comedian.

3. Have the students select based on their picture walk several personalities as a talk focus. For each after the reading, ask the students what is meant by the quote that the authors placed at the top of story. Have them explain the quote in their own words. Then challenge them to consider how that quote can apply to their own lives or not.

 4. Conclude with sharing Linda Sarsour’s page. Ask the students what unexpected figure is included in that page’s graphic (a male holding up a sign- “This is what a feminist looks like”). Ask further how the graphic above Linda’s story really expresses the author’s purpose in putting together this collected biography. What is Linda’s achievement and how did she accomplish it?

Take action project:

5. Have the students divide into teams of three to four and choose two to three quotes which they agree strongly with or disagree. Have them write a letter to the featured leader and explain why the quote inspires them to action or why they disagree or feel this quote is not relevant to them.

OR

Have them write or draw an illustration of how they hope in their own future lives to Rise as Saira Mir defines it.