

# AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT, ACTIVISM: A SOCIAL JUSTICE APPROACH

**A**wareness, Engagement, Activism: A Social Justice Approach is an ETFO resource for K-8 students that explores equity and social justice themes through children's books, activities and related resources. The resource is based on the ten monthly themes from the ETFO kit *Social Justice Begins with Me*.

The online version of *Awareness, Engagement, Activism* can be downloaded for free at [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca) by going to the Resources section and clicking on the eResources. A print version can be purchased through [shopetfo.ca](http://shopetfo.ca).

Our hope is that we can inspire you to begin class discussions and dialogue around issues of social justice. As we build awareness of experiences and realities other than our own, we can motivate our students to become socially engaged and responsible citizens. As part of the dialogue, both teachers and students are encouraged to identify, examine and critically challenge forms of injustice. Often, the starting point of making connections rests on the simple principle and well-used catch phrase, "think globally, act locally."

The excerpts from *Awareness, Engagement, Activism* featured below highlight the variety of grade levels, children's books, themes, objectives, activities, culminating tasks and curriculum areas offered in the resource. Download the online document for the full range of activities, as well as lists of materials and ministry curriculum expectations.



# EARLY YEARS JK/SK

## ZOOM!

Author: Robert Munsch

Illustrator: Michael Martchenko

Publisher: Scholastic Canada Ltd., Toronto, 2003

ISBN: 10 0-7791-1432-9

## September

Theme: Self-Esteem

## May

Theme: True Worth and Beauty

## Synopsis

Lauretta's mother takes her shopping for a new wheelchair. Lauretta decides to try out the "nice new 92-speed ... dirt-bike wheelchair" and ends up with a speeding ticket. While her parents react to the news, Lauretta's older brother injures himself and requires transportation to the hospital. Lauretta saves the day but decides to exchange her new wheelchair ... for a faster model!

## Objective

(Big Idea/Character Development Connection)

- Relating to differences
- Finding commonalities

## Ministry Expectations

Personal And Social Development

- Self-Awareness and Self-Reliance

Language

- Oral Communication
- Reading
- Writing

## Curriculum Connection Expectations

The Arts

- Drama and Dance

Science and Technology

- Exploration and Experimentation

## Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks

As a topic to initiate discussion, ask the students if they know someone who uses a wheelchair; if there is such a student in the class, she/he can be encouraged to talk about their experiences.

Call the class to the carpet, show them a pair of crutches, and ask the students if they are aware of their purpose.

Show students a pair of glasses or a hearing aid and ask how each one is connected with the subject of a wheelchair in order to initiate a discussion of assistive devices – what they are, why people use them, etc.

Show students a toy or real wheelchair or images of a wheelchair and invite them to talk about their use.

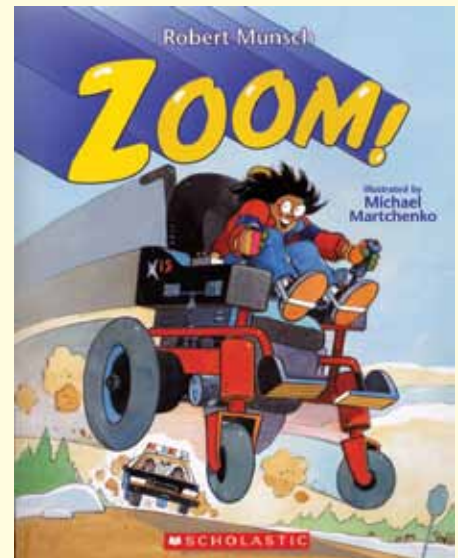
If a real wheelchair is available, teacher/volunteer/guest can talk about how it is not a toy, but an essential tool to assist its user with mobility. If appropriate, students can be invited to sit in it and experience what it feels like.

Ask students to bring in a newspaper/magazine and invite them to look for images of people with disabilities.

Ask, "If someone in a wheelchair came into our classroom, what would we need to change?"

Read the book to the students. Possible questions include:

- Why does Lauretta want a new wheelchair?
- Why does her mother want it to be a surprise?
- Why does Lauretta reject the first three models?
- Why does she choose the 92-speed dirt-bike model?
- How does Lauretta get into trouble?
- What is her mother's reaction?
- What happens to her older brother?
- How does Lauretta join up again with the police officer?



# PRIMARY GRADE 3

- Why is Laretta the heroine of the day?
- Why does she decide to exchange her wheelchair?

Use a cue chart to look at questions like: “What?” “What if...?” “What would...?”

Invite students to act as journalists whose job it is to interview the characters in the book.

Arrange the students in corridor formation after the story is read and instruct each one to act as a different voice in the story.

Explain the use of tableaux (frozen statue poses) and invite students to re-enact aspects of the story.

Tell the students to take the character of Laretta from *Zoom!* and put her into another story that they know, like a fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Frog Prince,” etc. Expand on this idea: What if it was the wolf in a wheelchair? What if it was the woodsman in a wheelchair?

Create a book around the theme: “What do I know about wheelchairs?” Use the sentence starter: “I know...” and complete the sentence by drawing a picture.

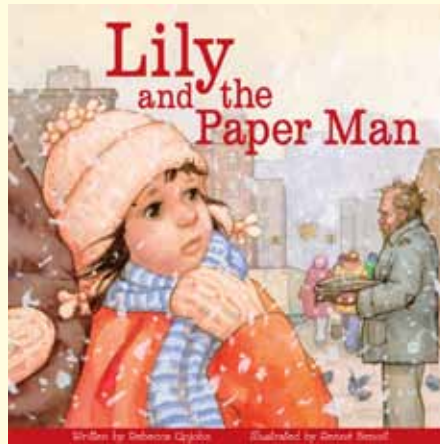
## Extensions

For science and technology, students can look at other vehicles and compare the size and thickness of wheels, if they have motors or not, and what they are used for.

Have the students draw a picture of their classroom, play equipment, etc., and create ideas on how this part of the school could be made to be user-friendly for all.

## Community Engagement and Related Resources

Invite a guest speaker to the class (from another class or a student’s family member, etc.) and have her/him talk to students about their experiences with using a wheelchair. Discuss with the students ahead of time what sort of thank you gift would be appropriate to give to the guest.



## LILY AND THE PAPER MAN

*Author: Rebecca Upjohn*  
*Illustrator: Renné Benoit*  
*Publisher: Second Story Press, 2007*  
*ISBN-13: 978-1-897187-19-7*  
*ISBN-10: 1-897187-19-X*

## February

**Theme:** Caring

## May

**Theme:** True Worth and Beauty

## Synopsis

Walking with her mother on the way home from school one day, Lily runs straight into a gruff and untidy-looking man selling papers on the street. Lily is afraid of the man but when the weather turns cold, she starts to see the paper man differently – she sees his bare toes through the holes in his boots and his thin shirt through the holes in his coat. As she lies in her cozy bed at night, she wonders how the paper man stays warm. Lily comes up with a wonderful idea ...

## Objective

**(Big Idea/Character Development Connection)**

- Community
- Caring
- Empathy
- Classism
- Ageism

## Ministry Expectations

**Language**

- Oral Communication
- Reading

- Writing
- Media Literacy

## Mathematics

- Number Sense and Numeration

## The Arts

- Drama
- Visual Arts

## Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks

**Read Aloud** – Let students take a look at the cover and predict what the story is about. Read the book aloud to the class and stop at the words: “I know what to do!” Have students guess what the ending will be.

**Making Connections** – Ask students if they have seen a homeless person and what was their reaction. Will they do anything different having heard this story? Have they or someone they know helped a person in need? What did it feel like?

**Writing** – Let students describe the main idea of the story and provide three supporting details.

**Culminating Task** – Let students write a different ending to the story.

## Extensions

Let students dramatize various scenes from the story (e.g., Lily walking in the rain with her mother, stopping to buy the newspaper, and the man staring at Lily).

Have students draw a picture of an urban scene on a rainy day or a snowy day.

## Community Engagement and Related Resources

Run a used clothing exchange or a used clothing drive in the school by having students make the announcements, create posters, and collect the clothes in boxes. Let students sort the clothes by size and description. Send a letter home to parents to inform them of the time for the clothes exchange, or alternately pack the clothes and send them to a charitable organization.



# JUNIOR GRADE 5

## LET'S TALK ABOUT RACE

Author: Julius Lester

Illustrator: Karen Barbour

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005

ISBN: 978-0-06-446226-6

### January

Theme: Rights of a Child

### April

Theme: Local and Global Citizenship

### Synopsis

Julius Lester says, "I write because our lives are stories. If enough of those stories are told, then perhaps we will begin to see that our lives are the same story. The differences are merely in the details."

Mr. Lester shares his own story as he explores what makes each of us special. Karen Barbour's dramatic, vibrant paintings speak to the heart of Lester's unique vision – truly a celebration of all of us.

### Objective

(Big Idea/Character Development Connection)

- I am a story. So are you. So is everyone.

### Ministry Expectations

#### Language

- Oral Communication
- Reading
- Writing
- Media Literacy

### Curriculum Connection Expectations

#### Math

- Data Management and Probability

#### Science and Technology

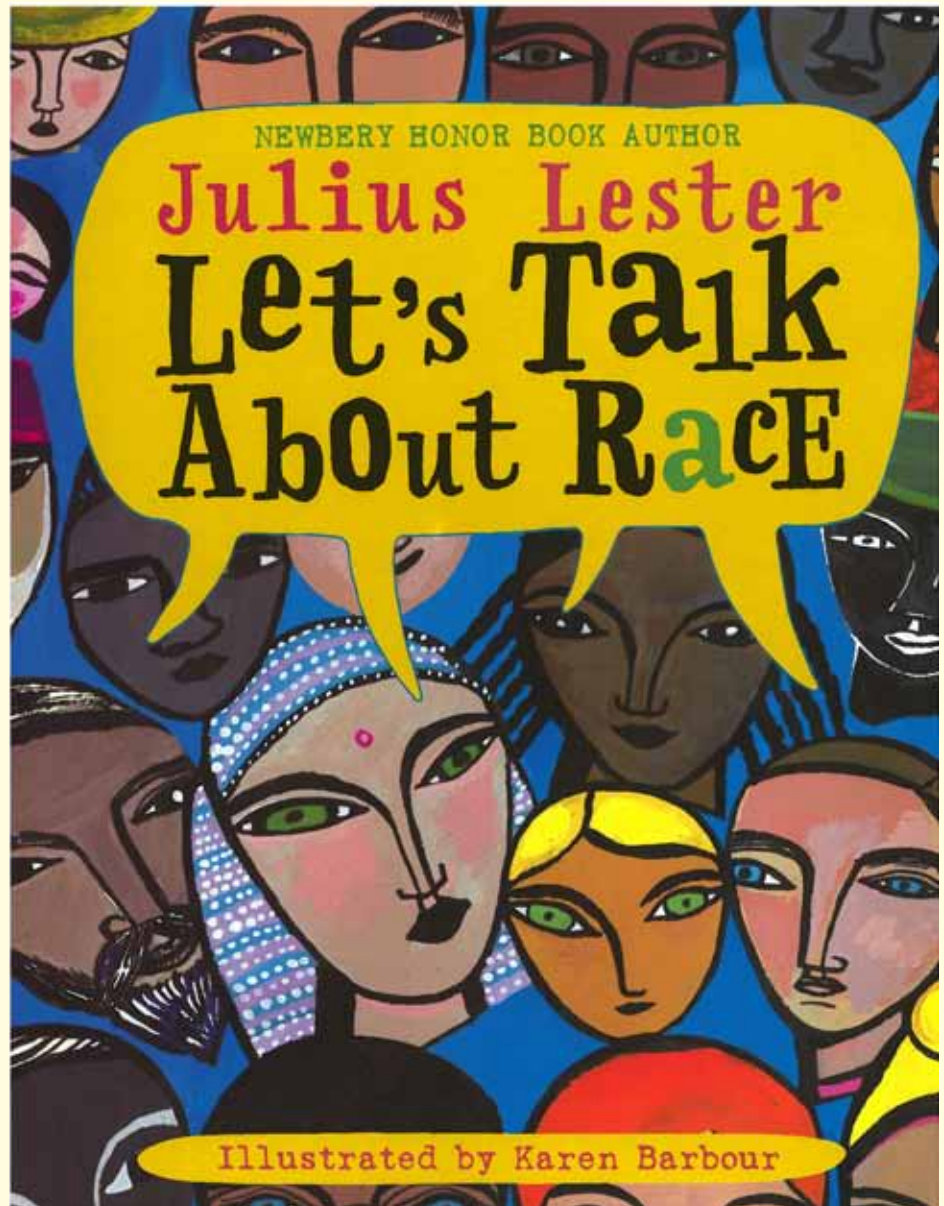
- Understanding Life Systems

#### Health and Physical Education

- Personal Safety and Injury Prevention
- Interpersonal Skills

#### The Arts

- Dance
- Drama
- Visual Arts



### Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks

This book lends itself to teaching features of text as an oral exercise, predicting, visualizing, and inferring for comprehension and narrative writing as a text form.

The culminating task will be a written narrative piece, with the appropriate organization, conventions, etc. Offer critique on the oral presentation for projection of voice, eye contact, facial expression and pitch. Be mindful of cultural considerations. Discuss implications for assessment.

Have students predict what the book is about. Discuss the word race.

Discuss features of text as you go along; (e.g., Why are the words: "HOW DOES YOUR STORY BEGIN?" capitalized? Why does the author use brackets, colons, semi-colons, etc.?)

Stop at each question and discuss the variety of races in the classroom, community, city or province.

Discuss the terms “racialized” and “racial minority.” When should these terms be used?

Continue the discussion about similarities and differences.

Have students discuss how our bodies function. Connect to the science unit on human organs and the skeletal system.

Do a follow up as a writing exercise. Have students work with a partner. Do a Venn diagram, recording similarities and differences between the two of them.

Have students write a narrative about their partner.

When they have written a rough draft, edited each other’s work, and completed a good copy, they present their story to the class as the culminating task. Students will be assessed for their writing process and their oral presentation.

**Extensions**

ELL Stage 1 students write about their partner in their first language.

Another student or parent, who is fluent in both languages, translates. This is a useful way to get to know the student.

Students working at a higher level can research the origin of their own family.

**Math**

Imagine creating a graph of the different races in the class and the school.

Why would a graph like that showing races be misleading and problematic? What are some assumptions that are being made? Discuss.

**Science**

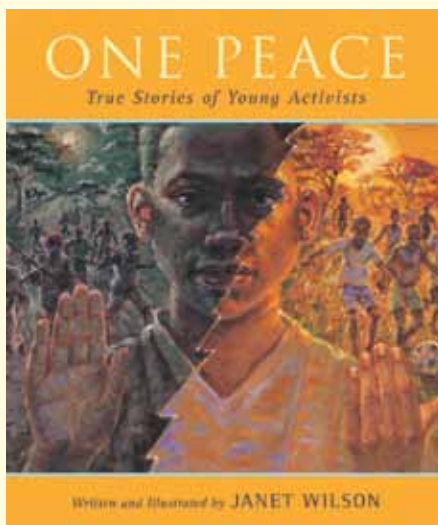
Draw a picture, or make a model of the skeletal system to show how parts work together and that all skeletons have the same structure.

Discuss the elements of design used in the illustrations in the book.

**Community Engagement and Related Resources**

- Translators for ELL students
- Families of students for research of family origin
- Book: *The Other Side*
- Book: *The Colors of Us*

**INTERMEDIATE GRADE 7**



**ONE PEACE: TRUE STORIES OF YOUNG ACTIVISTS**

*Author and Illustrator: Janet Wilson  
 Publisher: Orca Books, British Columbia, 2008  
 ISBN: 978-1-55143-892-4*

**November**

**Theme:** Peace

**April**

**Theme:** Local and Global Citizenship

**Synopsis**

*One Peace* celebrates the “Power of One” and the accomplishments of children from around the globe who have worked to promote world peace. Profiles of young people who have made a difference include Craig Kielburger, Farlis Calle and Kimie Weeks.

**Objective**

**(Big Idea/Character Development Connection)**

- Contributing to a peaceful world
- Acceptance
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Citizenship

**Ministry Expectations**

**Language**

- Reading
- Writing
- Media Literacy

**Curriculum Connection Expectations**

**The Arts**

- Drama

**Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks**

Students can read through the different stories of youth activists and compare stories.

Ask students to investigate peace initiatives in their community.

Have students analyze the book using critical media literacy techniques. For example, ask: What differences can you identify in the way the young activists are represented in the different texts? Do you think the added media texts enhance their youth activists’ profiles?

Compare the book to the website and describe how they are similar and different in profiling the peace activists or initiatives.

Create short skits, role-plays or a series of tableaux to represent aspects of the stories. Discuss the presentations to provide feedback.

**Extensions**

Research different organizations that promote peace. Invite a guest speaker to share information.

What symbols come to mind that relate to peace? Create a display.

**Community Engagement and Related Resources**

- Book: *Old Turtle*
- Book: *On the Wings of Peace*
- Website: [www.peace.ca](http://www.peace.ca)