

Unit Five – The Lens of Access to Resources

Introduction to the Unit

Essential Questions: *How does where people live affect their access to resources? How can access to resources be improved by the effort of one person?*

Overview

This unit breaks the pattern of the earlier ones, where the study of various socio-cultural and geographical themes was anchored in specific countries. In this unit, third graders will learn to look at various communities around the world through their access to basic resources. They will ask, “How does where people live affect their access to certain resources?” In Bend One, students will ponder three specific resources that are necessary for human development (clean water, food and education) and note that some communities, or persons within communities, do not have access to these resources. In Bend Two, third graders will pick one community to study in detail, pondering specifically on how resource management in this community might be improved. Third graders will ponder, “How can one individual make a difference?” or even, “How might *I* make a difference?” To support this inquiry, students will read inspiring stories of how individuals have helped solve their community’s problems by improving access to scarce resources. In Bend Three, you’ll channel students into social action--in this case, to develop a poster presentation advocating better management of a resource.

Getting Ready

- You’ll want to prepare your library so that you gather relevant texts for students to read. You may also print internet resources for your students. In the appendix you will find a list of websites organized by sub-topic.

- You'll want to choose texts that you will read aloud to your students. There are many options among them, *If the World Was a Village* a great text to use because it touches on issues of access to clean water, food, school, money, and health care. You can find additional titles in the appendix.
- You'll also want to select materials for centers so that students can study maps, statistics, and images related to access to clean water, food, and education.

Assessment

At this point in the year, you have a ton of data from your students. You have watched and listened to them all year. You have probably collected and studied their writing in their notebooks and published pieces and have plans for the needs of your whole class as well as small groups of students. Further, you have a sense of what your students have learned about cultures around the world and what you want to reinforce or reteach in this final unit of the year. As always, tailor your teaching to fit the needs of your students.

Social Studies Standards

- 3.2** *The American culture and cultures from around the globe share similarities and demonstrate differences in terms of their value, traditions, beliefs, holidays, and lifestyles*
- 3.10.a** *The physical environment can both accommodate and be endangered by human activities.*
- 3.10.b** *World communities use human and natural resources in different ways.*

CCSS Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7 *Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.8 *Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.9 *Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.*

Vocabulary

As in every unit, you will want to prepare your social studies word wall or word bank as well as plan for vocabulary instruction. You can make final decisions about the needs of your students, but we've made some suggestions below for terms that you may want to teach explicitly and encourage students to use across the unit.

Terms recommended in the national Social Studies Curriculum	Tier Two Terms
resources famine diversity homogeneity economics	similarities differences themes cause relief

Bend I: Looking at our World through the Lens of Access to Resources

With your help, third graders are becoming increasingly aware of the world around them-- looking at communities, cultures, geography and also imagining how daily life differs from place to place. This can be the time to insert a new lens over their perception of the world, to show that one way to explain the difference between the various vast regions and peoples is to consider the differences in their access to basic resources. You'll tap into issues that most third graders already realize on various subconscious levels: the world's resources are not equally distributed. This unequal distribution has to do in part, with geography but also with other factors. The lack of access to basic resources affects lives in ways that deserve attention and action. In this unit, children will explore specific instances and cases where basic resources are not accessible, they will compare the effect that lack of resources has on various communities, they will ponder solutions to problems of access, and finally, they will

engage in social action. Expect this to be a unit that opens up a new level of awareness and concern among children. For students of social studies, how can we aim for less?

Use Day One to teach the concept of ‘access’ and ‘resources’

Before launching a discourse on ‘access’ and ‘resources’, we recommend that you spend this first day introducing these concepts to your third graders and exploring what it means to lack access to these. On Day Two, you’ll divide students into small groups and send them to work at centers.

To start, you might begin with an open-ended inquiry of various resources (natural and man-made) that are necessary for healthy human development. Of course this can open a Pandora’s box of never-ending discussion unless you chart the course of initial lessons to focus on just a few, specific, resources for third graders to examine in depth. While it is worthwhile to start off by listing a multitude of resources, we recommend you narrow this unit’s discussion to about three, e.g. clean water and food (both are tied to natural resources) and education (a human infrastructure resource).

On Day One, to introduce the concept of “shared resources” you might draw an analogy with how third-graders share certain resources (such as books, paper, the closet, sink, soap and garbage bin) in your classroom. Ask youngsters to imagine what they might do if they notice that they or their neighbor were not able to use one of these resources. What problems might they encounter if access was taken away? How might they solve this problem? “Imagine that you didn’t have access to the garbage bin—that there’d never been a garbage bin at all in this room. What would you have done with the pencil shavings after sharpening your pencil? Or the banana peels and empty juice cartons from lunch?” (Later, you might mention that access to waste disposal systems is a real issue around the world). Push third graders into pondering that while we take resources (like books and paper, the garbage bin, running water in the sink and water fountain) for granted, not every classroom in the world has these resources. To push students deeper into the work of considering access to resources, you might read-aloud and discuss a simple text that does this work. We recommend *If the World Were a Village* by David J. Smith, a book that examines how an imaginary ‘global village of 100’ shares resources such as Food, Air and Water, Money and Possessions and School and Work. You could plan an interactive read-aloud of this book, drawing student attention to how the villagers differ in their access to resources like clean water (how some cannot turn on a tap but must travel long distances) and how, despite an abundance of food, there is an unequal distribution (a portion of villagers remain underfed). It won’t be long before third graders begin making connections between this text and what they know independently about the world. You’ll want to be ready to support this interpretation. One way is to go straight from the read-aloud to studying selected images of

communities with and without access to certain resources. You could gather these from websites or from trade books. Students will study many more images at the Images Center but for now, you may just pick a few images from around the world that show the vivid effects of famine (lack of access to food), drought or dirty water (lack of access to clean water) and dark, under-resourced classrooms (lack of good education) and invite children to study these in small groups or through a gallery walk.

By now, third graders will be familiar with observing and analyzing images, they will have had practice answering generic questions such as:

- Who is in this picture?
- What are they thinking or feeling?
- What is the place (setting)?
- What story might this picture be telling?
- What details in the foreground or background help reveal the story?

You'll probably want to push students into connecting the content of the images with the broader theme of 'access':

- What resource might this image refer to?
- Does the image reveal scarcity or overabundance of a resource?

As small groups ponder answers to these questions, you might walk around and push each group's thinking further by showing them how to pick two images to place against each other to compare what each suggests or reveals about the other.

- Placed together, how do these images tell a different story than when they were placed apart?
- Does one photo provide the backstory for another photo?
- Who are the characters in the two photos and how are they connected?

As children become absorbed in the study of these images, you might voiceover a quick reminder for them to record observations in their content-area notebooks (or whatever the container is that your students have been using), to jot what an image reveals specifically about ‘access’ to a resource. That is, it isn’t enough to jot written descriptions for what’s going on in a photo, or even to explore how an image makes them feel *unless* they use the image to develop a commentary about ‘resources’ and ‘access’.

Once discussion and analysis of images is underway, you’ll want to interrupt the class’s thinking for a few minutes to introduce the guiding question:

Guiding Questions:

How does where people live affect their access to resources?

Children will need to extend their observation of ‘setting’ in the photograph by noticing how the details of this location might impact access to resources. For example, if it is a photo of children collecting water that looks murky, it will become significant that the photo’s background shows an industrial skyline, suggesting something about how industrial waste contaminates water. Similarly, if the photo depicts serious drought, the cracked, dry earth beneath bare feet is good indication that the area receives very little rainfall. Tell children that this is a question that we will ask ourselves again over the next few days because geography and location are big factors when it comes to access.

By Day Two, you’ll want to launch Centers, sending children off to peruse various maps, videos, short texts, statistics and images that will push their understanding that resources are not evenly distributed.

Setting Up Centers

We will be helping you set up centers, and asking schools to help each other. There will be time over the upcoming year to set up systems for sharing resources--for now we want to lay out what we think our shared hopes should be for the resources we collect and the task cards we design. While choosing materials for the centers in this unit, it will be important to keep two factors in mind. First, our centers should make the role of geography/location in allowing or preventing access to resources as explicit as possible. In other words, we can work together to set up centers that support children in finding answers the guiding question ‘*How does where people live affect their access to resources?*’ It will be important to choose photographs that may easily be located on a map or that reveal an area’s geography, almost as if the photos contain clues of location on a map. This means that when choosing a photograph of people living by a riverside, for example, we’ll prefer ones that have details to help children guess the possible location: perhaps women are clad in saris and a billboard in

the background is covered with Sanskrit (Children will guess that this is India, that the river is probably the Ganges). In other words, we'll constantly be looking for photos that are rich with details that allow for interpretation.

Secondly, it will be important that the resources we put forth within and across centers connect with and support each other. So if the *Images* Center has a photo of sari-clad women doing their washing at a river bank, we'll want to make sure that the *Maps* Center holds maps of India, that the *Video* Center showcases environmental concerns related to the Ganges, that the *Reading* Center contains several texts on how the Indians use this river for transport, in cremation ceremonies, for religious ablutions. One might think of the Centers as a multi-media jigsaw puzzle for children to put together, except that there is not one correct image on the box cover but multiple possible interpretations. We'll want for there to be varied understandings for children to construct, to realize also that some of these will be unexpected and unusual.

Thanks to recent technology and information explosion, you will find countless resources to support you in compiling content to display at each center. The challenge is to be selective, to choose content that is easy for third graders to process and connect with what they already know. Another challenge is not to give too much information (you don't want to bombard youngsters with an overwhelming array of content) nor too little (there ought to be enough at each center to engage students through the month, and also material that can be revisited).

For example, here is a brief, representative idea of what might go into the Map Center. You'll want to include content that informs children's understanding of all three resources: food, clean water and education. The World Food Program publishes a 'hunger map' of the world (<http://cdn.wfp.org/hungermap/>) that reveals areas with low, moderate, high and very high levels of undernourishment. Similarly, at <http://maps.howstuffworks.com/world-food-nutrition-map.htm>, children might study the average daily calorie consumption per country. Comparing these with optimum values of healthy caloric intake will help children figure out countries that *overconsume* and *underconsume* the world's food. Even more interesting, would be to provide another provocative layer of understanding: showing the regions that produce the world's major food crops and then comparing to see whether the food growers are even the ones that eat the most! Further, Oxfam's website has a map that shows how food prices have gone up since 2010, sending tens of millions into poverty, calling this the 'global food price crisis'.

But you'll also want to look for maps that show access to clean water, various countries national 'water footprints' (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4787758.stm#map>) or even a 'skewed map'

where the territory size is shown shrunken up or expanded depending on people's lack of access to clean water

(<http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/worldmapper/display.php?selected=186>). This means that North America appears shrunken and Asia and Africa appear unnaturally bloated. When third graders see the world mapped out in challenging, unfamiliar ways, you can imagine the conversations this will follow. Similarly, you could provide students with information related to literacy rates by country so that they can begin to compare and contrast literacy rates around the world and by gender. (This information can be found on wikipedia when you enter 'international literacy rates.')

Remember, you'll need to support these thought provoking maps with material at other centers. Again, you'll keep an eye out for material that is at third grade level. At the Statistics Center, for example, you'll want to present numbers and ratios that third graders can imagine and understand. The World Food Program shares several statistics that provide a comparative analysis on its webpage (wfp.org/hunger/stats), "Hunger is the world's number one health risk. It kills more people every year than Aids, malaria and tuberculosis combined." The website also provide accompanying statistics on malnutrition and stunted growth. We also recommend the following page of the of the Family Care Foundation website where the world's population is reduced to a village of 100 people in a way that existing demographic ratios stay unchanged, i.e. there are 61 Asians, 13 Africans, 12 Europeans, 9 Latin Americans, and 5 from the USA and Canada.

(familycare.org/special-interest/if-the-world-were-a-village-of-100-people/) Simplifying big numbers to reveal the ratios between them is a great way to trim large, unruly statistics into measures that third graders can imagine and understand.

At the Images Center you'll probably want to be careful not to inadvertently typecast any race or culture through your selection of images—it is crucial to develop the sensitivity in youngsters that inadequate access to basic resources can *and does* affect all kinds of people and places around our world, far away, but also close to or within our own communities. We suggest that you choose a few images that when set side by side disrupt stereotypes that students may hold. For example, you may choose a series of images related to food shortages that represent different cultures around the world, including the United States. Or a series of photos of families eating together, including images from around the world. The point is to disrupt potential stereotypes. This means you will need to choose wisely when selecting images from the internet. You may choose to make use of photos found in books such as *One World, One Day* by Barbara Kerley, that deliberately and sensitively show daily life across the globe.

Support Increasingly Independent Small Group Work

Once the materials for each center have been carefully chosen, you'll want to develop task cards that channel students to roll up their sleeves and dig in. Whereas the task cards at the start of the year tended to specify with some detail the work that you hoped kids would engage in, by this time in the year, you'll want small groups to approach each center with independence and agency, to think, 'How should we, as a group, tackle this?' Children will have to work collaboratively in small groups to take control of their own learning, pondering questions of how best to divide time, tasks and responsibility. Throughout this bend, you'll need to teach group-work skills and ethics, to intervene with instruction that reminds group members to be respectful listeners, to be inclusive of everyone's ideas and to be good managers of their time and learning.

A task card at each center may look something like this:

The information in this center tell us about people's access to a certain resource.

- How will your group divide time so that every member of the group learns from all the materials at this center?
- How will you divide responsibilities between the members of your group?
- Who is the timekeeper?
- Who will record the questions your group comes up with after studying materials?
- Who will record what is common in group members' notes?
- Who will summarize what the group has learned at this center?
- How will you decide that your group is making the best use of time? How will you grade your own learning? What is your group doing well? What does your group need to work on, still? What problems is the group facing and what might you do about it?

Guide children to layer their understanding as they rotate through centers

Over the next few sessions, you will watch over third graders' movement through the various centers, noting their progress and assessing where they may need some quick instruction. To manage center time, we suggest that you divide the class into as many small groups as there are centers, and send each group off to one center. After a calculated

interval of time, you'll signal for groups to rotate to a new center, and then to another, until each small group has rotated through all the centers in the room. Children will need adequate time to study all the material at each center--an entire session or more--before moving to the next one. Note also, that you'll need to have set enough material at each center to engage children's attention for this amount of time, i.e. that material at each center is neither sparse nor overflowing. After this initial rotation, you'll want to structure time for small groups to sit together and talk and also to revisit centers of their choice to develop connecting ideas and understandings across centers. Children will also benefit from protected writing time to reflect on and consolidate what they have learned across the unit and the year.

When children first visit a center, they'll find a lot to take in because they'll be encountering content that is brand new. They'll need time to study the information that you've so carefully arranged and presented and time, also, to create notes. You'll want to hold them accountable to all they've learned about note-taking in previous units. During this first visit to centers, remind kids to think about how they will structure their notes, to draw on what they have learned this year about extracting the main idea and bulleting the supporting evidence for this main idea, about creating T-charts to compare, about noticing headings, glossaries and subtexts, about analyzing images and photos, about asking questions and coming up with theories. Allow at least a session at each center, before you give the signal for them to move on to the next.

One thing to watch out for is that students carry what they learn at one center to the next, layering their understanding with each new set of materials. Each time you signal students to move onto the next center, you might follow up after a while with a voice-over, reminding them to use what they know from previous centers to make sense of the material at the new center. You might even visit small groups at each center to push them to do this work more directly. "Can you think of ways that these maps connect with the texts you were looking at previously, at the Reading Center?" or "When you consider these statistics, are you reminded of any of the images you were looking at before? Give me an example? Wow!... Jot that down." Jotting down such connections is important--it is a way for children to catch and concretize the associations they're making, allowing for them to revisit and elaborate these at a later point.

As students move across three or more centers, you'll want them to develop a cumulative understanding of the disparate material they're seeing. "Remember," you might tell your third graders, "each center will help you *build off* something you saw at other centers. For example," as you talk, you'll walk over to the map center so children follow your words better, "if I am looking at this map of Africa and studying the desert systems," point to the specific map so children can see, "I'll remember the African drought photograph that I'd

looked at the earlier center,” hold up the photograph and place it next to the map, “and wonder, *where* on this map could this photo have been taken? Where might such a drought have occurred?” You could go on to show children that the photo probably wasn’t taken near the coasts, rainforest or oases because there is no greenery or water anywhere in the photo. As groups study an image or a text, continue to slip in with the question, ‘How does this connect with something you learned at another center?’ You can expect children to draw unique and unexpected connections but do push them to cite reasons or supporting evidence for how one source connects with another.

Embed Discussion and Reflective Writing

Once they’ve visited all the centers, students will be armed with notes and you’ll want to use the last session or two of this bend to push third graders to consolidate all that they’ve learned by reflecting and writing longer off their notes in their content-area notebooks. Expect that some of this writing and reflecting will generate as many questions as conclusions--these questions are one of the best measures of true engagement with the topic. Encourage inquisitiveness about the topic, sharing with children that in fact, the more one learns about a topic, the more questions one generates. It will be immensely helpful for children to see you model how you study a map or a set of statistics to come up with further questions, and also how you develop theories to answer these questions.

When small groups have all had a chance to visit each center at least once, encourage them to jot notes and engage in discussions, you’ll want to reiterate the guiding question: *How does where people live affect their access to resources?* Children may want to discuss and list specific factors that have led to the shortage of a particular resource at a specific location. They might ask, “Why is there an absence of clean drinking water?” or “Why might the literacy rate for girls be lower than boys?” Children might realize that geography alone does not always explain the shortage of a resource and this can be a great chance to support discussions about overpopulation, war, barriers to trade, pollution and government policies. You might find several students on their way to developing an inquiry into the role of one or more of these factors to explain what they’re seeing in statistics and photographs. Be ready to celebrate and support this work when it happens.

If you feel your third graders are ready for even more sophisticated comparisons, you might guide them to notice that several disparate locations share lack of access to a resource, e.g. that communities in X, Y and Z are alike in that they do not have access to clean drinking water or that X, Y and Z all share low levels of female literacy. You might push third graders into comparing what about these communities is common by asking, “Do they all face similar obstacles?” Or, “What is common across these places?” As you move between centers and listen in on small group conversations, you’re likely to notice children considering

consequences. “What happens when a community doesn’t have access to clean drinking water? To food or a balanced diet? To books, libraries or schools?” It is worth drawing students’ attention to such questions. You’ll probably want to return to the guiding question, “How does the lack of access to a resource affect and shape a community?”

Bend II: Thinking of Solutions to Our World’s Problems

It’s important to anticipate your students’ emotional responses to the content in this unit. Be prepared for children to be slightly unsettled, as they learn about the differences people face when it comes to access to water, food, and education -- things many, but not all, children take for granted. Even though your students may have grown up watching UNICEF commercials on television or hearing about how they should not waste water, they may not have truly grasped the significance of these issues. We believe this unit provides a space for students to become more aware of the larger world and the struggles people face. We want to help students understand the challenging realities of the world we live in while helping them grapple with the world’s injustices and their own growing awareness.

The movement from the first bend to this one seems inevitable. As children begin to see the world through the lens of access and resources, one question that you can be sure will come up, again and again, is, “How can this be fixed? How can access be improved?” and even, “How do I help the person in this photo? What can I do about this?” When a third grader asks this question in any form, be sure to celebrate the moment, to acknowledge that this is the most significant and powerful question of all to ask. In this bend, you’ll assure third graders, “Till now, we’ve been studying the problems. In this bend, we’re going to study some solutions.”

Immerse Students in a Study of Social Action

You might begin by teaching children that others like them have asked the same question and that some have also worked at finding solutions to the world’s problems of access. You can teach students that there are governments, agencies and individual people who are busy across the world to solve problems of access. You might decide to show videos that showcase the work of development agencies such as America’s No Kid Hungry Campaign (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azXZhXj6j3Y>) or India’s Akshaya Patra Foundation (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScPy15FCF2o>). You’ll want to read aloud stories of individuals who’ve taken courageous, innovative steps to improve access to resources, such as the story of one woman in Kenya (Wangari Mathaai) who began a tree planting movement. Or the story of *One Hen* where a young boy (Kwabena Darko) started a tiny poultry farm which later grew to be the largest in Ghana. Or of fourteen-year-old William

Kamkwamba who built a windmill from junkyard scraps to bring electricity to his drought-affected Malawi village, *The Boy who Harnessed the Wind*.

Your bigger purpose is to immerse children in stories that inspire, true examples that can serve as mentors for social action. So the first two or three sessions in this bend may well be spent watching videos or reading aloud excerpts from and discussing texts such as *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* or *One Hen*. You'll want to spend some part of these sessions inspiring the whole class with the idea that we need not be silent, helpless spectators of the suffering we see around us. But you'll also want to send children back to their small groups, to discuss these stories and to writing longer in their content area notebooks. You could provide guiding questions such as:

- What problem was solved and how?
- Why is this story worth telling and repeating?
- What about the story was particularly remarkable or inspiring?
- What could I learn from this story?

Of-course your bigger aim is for students to make the move from being inspired by these stories to thinking about how *they* might change the world. While it is easy to rile third graders into picking up a knapsack, wearing the savior spirit and bursting out into the big, wide world ready to change it, you'll want to teach that big deeds need focus. This raises important curricular questions: How can we help our students pick one issue to concentrate on? How can our students begin to build on that issue and plan out what they really want to say or do about it? Third graders will need your guidance to move from the general to the specific, to narrow their focus and study how the problem of accessing *one* specific resource may be tackled.

By the third session of this bend, therefore, you'll want for each small group to pick either food, water or education to study in detail, and then, to help groups narrow their focus and articulate the access issues for this resource. One way is to create the following chart addressing the the five W's:

- **What** resource will our group focus on--water, food or education?
- **Who** doesn't have access to this resource? (Pick one or several locations or communities that need better access to this resource.)
- **Why** don't people have access to this resource?
- **Why** is this worthy of concern? Why is this a problem?
- **How** does lack of access affect life in this community? How does it affect children?
- **What** are some things that can be done about it?

Notice that these questions are provocative. You are not merely aiming to generate discussion, you're hoping to generate ownership and resolve, for third graders to become passionate about the very real issues of today's world.

Small groups will probably begin by looking back at the notes they took earlier at the centers and using them to compile answers to this list of questions. Once each group has narrowed an area to work on further, they will need to articulate *why* this is such a noteworthy problem and what might be done to address the problem. It will probably take several sessions for groups to hash out responses through discussion, revisiting material at the centers to find evidence and examples and consolidating agreed upon responses. Once again, small groups will need to set goals, divide tasks and responsibilities among themselves, and collaboratively pick a focus. This may be a good time to remind students to use all they know of building ideas through conversation. For instance, you might need to prompt children to listen respectfully, without interrupting, when another group member is speaking and to look the speaker in the eye, then add their own idea using language prompts you've used across the year, such as:

- "I agree/disagree with what you're saying because,"
- "I agree but I also think that there's more to it..."
- "To add to what you just said..." or "That reminds me of..."
- "What you just said made me realize that..."
- "What you just said made me wonder whether..."
- "I wonder if one solution to the problem you just mentioned might be..."

You might ask each group to assign one member to take notes as others are talking, so that the main points of these discussions are recorded.

There is no real way to predict what world-changing solutions third graders will come up with and not all of them might be practical for you to oversee or support. So, you will probably want to channel groups' social action plans into work that you can monitor and teach. One way to do this is to channel children into social action that involves raising awareness of a problem within the school community or their own neighborhoods. You might share examples of how one or more students learned about a specific issue for the first time and how powerful this awareness feels, or how third graders are already thinking differently because of all they've learned this month. "One of the biggest jobs of social activists," you might tell your students, "is to raise awareness and tell everyone how serious this problem really is and how urgent it is to change the way we live, so that we can become part of the solution."

Bend III: Changing the World by Changing People's Minds

Bend Three: Changing the World by Changing People's Minds

In this bend, you'll push third graders to become active advocates for change. If one small group has focused on the lack of access to clean drinking water around the world, they'll want to think about why this is not just the problem of the communities who are suffering; why this is, in fact, *everyone's* problem. This ability of looking at local problems through the global lens is at the heart of true social action initiatives. You'll want to insert some teaching that highlights this concept. "We can sympathize with kids who have to drink contaminated water and suffer from parasites or die from dehydration," you'd say. "We can say, 'What a shame. What a pity,' and move on with our lives because, after all, what can be done, the world is an unfair place." But here's the thing. We know that the boy who built a windmill to bring electricity to his village or the boy who started a poultry farm with one hen didn't just accept the way things were. They did something. So raising awareness is important but not enough...it is powerful to tell the world, "There is lots we can do. There are solutions."

Set children up to create a poster presentation of their case study

A way to channel students into doing this work is to set them up to create a poster presentation about their chosen issue, to present to other groups (and/or other children in their school). You will want to help children narrow down and decide the content that they want to convey in their poster, deciding on one big message or theme that is most urgent to

communicate. “Of all the things you know and have discovered about this issue,” you’ll say, “what is the most important to get across?” Teach groups, for instance, that effective posters use a minimum of words for maximum effect, that less can be more, that the best posters have visual oomph. Groups may want to develop a graphic, chart, image or diagram that crystallizes many words into a single visual. We suggest that you encourage your groups to draft several versions of their poster, just as they have learned to do in writing workshop, in order to consider their options and to make deliberate choices as writers of posters, in this case.

You may also need to warn third graders against cluttering their posters with too much background information. This could mean that students use the poster to highlight their own question or hypotheses, rather than reproduce the information that is already out there. Students will want to revisit the different centers to consider a map or statistic that they want to use for their poster, or an image that can serve as inspiration for the feeling they hope to evoke through their own poster.

As groups design their poster, you might teach them to keep an eye on design, to consider the poster through an aesthetic lens and deliberate on the layout. Groups will need to decide what image or text should be positioned in the center versus what might go into a sidebar or become the subtext. Third graders will need to choose a catchy caption and to consider the dominant colors and fonts, one that reflect their topic. Push student thinking with questions such as: “You want this poster to show how terrible hunger is...what colors would you use to present this idea?” You’ll hope that your third graders realize that pink and purple may not be the best choice for the theme they’re portraying, though pink and purple may be their own favorite colors. Mentor posters can become an invaluable teaching resource at this point. You might show the slideshow of some professionally designed posters from websites such UNICEF, The World Food Program, The Smile Train, or Operation Smiles and other relief sites. Invite children to note the use of color, the amount of and kind of text used, the nature of captions, the use of maps and images. You’ll want these showcased posters to mirror the themes that children themselves are studying to deepen their understandings.

You’ll also want small groups to begin thinking of how they might present their posters. This presentation might be a 2-3 minute speech about what is in the poster or it may be a summary of the group’s questions, concerns and social action plan. For the celebration of this month of work, students may set up their posters for a gallery walk in the classroom or in the school hallway and present these to an audience of students and parents. In addition to creating these posters and raising awareness for the issues of access to clean water, food, and education, students may choose to collect donations to support relief organizations such as Oxfam or FEMA, or may find ways to volunteer with local organizations that provide relief and assistance for people in need.