

# Writing for Informed Social Action



## Make a difference with the power of the pen!

### Objective

Children will use empathy and research skills to write persuasive letters to support children in need in their communities

### Materials

- Reading passages (included)
- Videos from [rednoseday.org/videos](http://rednoseday.org/videos)
- Activity sheet (included)
  - Version A: Grades 2–3
  - Version B: Grades 4–5
- Envelopes and stamps (or mail letters digitally)

### Before Starting

- Use this interactive map to find child poverty stats for your state or country: [bit.ly/2YHj9yZ](http://bit.ly/2YHj9yZ).
- Find your local elected officials and their mailing addresses on the government website for your city or town.

**1. Begin** by showing this quote to your child: “Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another.”—Alfred Adler, psychologist.

Have your child read it silently to themselves to internalize meaning.

Then share the definition of poverty: the condition of not having enough money or goods to meet basic human needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

**2. Share** the videos and/or reading passages about child poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Be sure to view the videos first, as some content could be sensitive for young children. Ask your child the following questions:

- What themes or ideas were explored? What situations were unfair?
- Have you ever seen, heard about, or experienced injustice related to poverty?
- Did these stories make you feel empathy? Were you able to imagine yourself in that situation?
- What would you want to see changed in your own life and community related to this issue?

**3. Share** this quote with your child: “When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.” —Malala Yousafzai, education activist. Ask your child if they think that they are capable of changing the world. Explain that they’re going to use their writing skills to do something powerful to make a difference in the lives of children.

**4. Tell** your child that they will be writing persuasive letters to their local elected officials about child poverty. Their letters will inform officials of the problem, suggest a way to help, and ask them to be Everyday Heroes in the fight to eradicate child poverty. Emphasize that writing to their elected officials is a way to celebrate the education that they are receiving by using important literacy skills to be Everyday Heroes.

**5. Review** the following activity sheet with them (Use the Power of Words to Be an Everyday Hero!). Have them use the Stats/Facts Bank on their sheet as well as information from your discussion to support their arguments. (Older children can conduct their own research).

After your child drafts their letter, they can **6. revise and edit** with the help of a parent/ caregiver or sibling. Work with them to address and mail their letters. Encourage them to reflect on their experience and how they served as Everyday Heroes.

### Extensions

- Older children can read chapter books dealing with child poverty, such as *Serafina’s Promise* by Ann E. Burg.
- Share more about Malala Yousafzai, using her story as an example of how young people can help make a difference in the lives of other young people. Learn more here: [malala.org/malalas-story](http://malala.org/malalas-story).



Name \_\_\_\_\_



# Use Words to Be an Everyday Hero!

You can help other kids by writing a letter to your elected officials asking them to help end child poverty.

## FACTS BANK



1 in every 6 children live in poverty in the U.S. That's 12 million children.



Poverty can make it hard to get an education.



Poverty can make it hard for kids to stay healthy.

DEAR \_\_\_\_\_,



Say who you are and why you are writing.



Explain how the elected official can help.



Thank the elected official for their time.



SINCERELY, \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_



# Use the Power of Words to Be an Everyday Hero!

Make a difference by writing to your elected officials **informing** them of the problem of child poverty. **Present an action** that can help, and **persuade** them to give their support. Time to create the best letter ever for children just like you!

## STATS/FACTS BANK



1 in every 6 children live in poverty in the U.S. That's 12 million children.



Poverty can get in the way of children getting an education.



Poverty can contribute to poor mental and physical health.



Many of the children's parents work, but don't earn enough to meet all needs.

**DEAR**  
\_\_\_\_\_,

**Introduce yourself.**

**State your concern and why you are writing. (Write from your heart!)**

**Offer a solution and explain how it would help.**

**Provide two or three reasons, evidence, and/or facts to support your concerns.**

**Conclude by strongly restating your concern(s) and asking for support in being an Everyday Hero.**

**Thank the elected official for their time and consideration.**

**SINCERELY,**  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Clean Water in Nepal

When people have clean water, they are healthier.

**W**hat would life be like if you didn't have clean water to drink? Thirteen-year-old Manita\* knows—and she's seen how clean water makes life better.

Manita lives in the village of Ambote in Nepal. A few years ago, before they had clean water, life was very different. Families had to get water from streams high up in the mountains. But climbing there was really hard. Carrying the heavy water was a lot of work. Even worse, the water outside wasn't protected from germs. Almost everyone in the community got sick often, just from drinking the water!

In fact, 700 people had to go to the local health clinic each month in 2010. But not anymore. Today, only about 65 people visit the health clinic each month—a huge difference. How did this happen? Ordinary people around the world raised money to build a new water system!

Here's how the new water system works. Giant pipes capture the natural spring water high up on the mountain. Gravity pushes the water down to faucet stands located throughout the community.

Instead of having to climb and search for water to carry home, now families can turn on a faucet right next to their homes. And



because the water is protected from germs, the health of the community has been transformed for the better.

"Before the water project came in, we had more sick people in the village," Manita shared.

For kids like Manita, better health means being able to go to school. Now she can study math, science, English, and Nepali with other 9th graders. That means Manita can dream bigger!

"I want to be a scientist," Manita declared. "I want to make medicines to cure the ill." With clean water and an education, Manita can work on keeping her community healthy for years to come!

*\* Name has been changed to protect privacy.*

# Hunger in Missouri

## Filling backpacks and hungry tummies

One in six American children aren't sure where they will find their next meal. Kitiana, a 10-year-old from Springfield, Missouri, is one of the children who face hunger.

"When I was really young, I walked in the kitchen thinking, 'What's for breakfast?' But there was nothing in the cabinets, and I thought, 'Oh no,'" remembers Kitiana. "My mother caught me digging in the cabinets and said, 'Sorry, we can't have anything for breakfast, lunch, or dinner today.' So we just snacked a little. It made me feel so hungry. It felt pretty bad."

Now Kitiana and her brother, Thomas, a first-grader, live with their grandma. Their grandmother used to work, but had to stop after adopting her grandchildren. Kitiana and her brother take food home every week through the Backpack Program.

The Backpack Program provides hungry children with backpacks full of nutritious and easy-to-prepare food on Friday afternoons so they have food to eat throughout the weekend. During the week, children can get food at school.

The Backpack Program is one way that local food banks are helping to keep children safe from hunger. A food bank



is an organization that gives free food to people who need it.

"My favorite thing in the backpack is the spaghetti and chocolate milk," Kitiana says. "It makes me feel fantastic to bring the backpack home!"

Kitiana explains that because her grandmother sometimes gets sick and can't cook a lot of food, she has the children grab something from their backpacks to help when they're hungry.

"I'm glad the Backpack Program is here, because we have enough now, but one day we could run out of money and run out of food, but at least we'll have things from our bags."

# A Path to Education in Bhutan

Education creates possibilities for the future.

Every morning, when Pema\* was four, he would walk through fields of rice and corn in the country of Bhutan.

But unlike the rest of his family, Pema would keep going—past the fields that his relatives worked for generations. After 15 minutes climbing the foothills of the Himalayan mountains, he'd reach his destination: an old building that has been turned into a preschool.

Pema's district is one of the poorest in the country. It's also *remote*, which means it's far away from where other people live, so it's difficult to connect children to schools. Many children fall behind in reading, writing, and math before finishing first grade.

To help, organizations trained preschool teachers throughout Bhutan to help children like Pema learn and stretch their imaginations.

"I like all the learning corners," Pema said about his preschool. His favorite corner was pretend play. There, he could pretend to be a farmer like his parents, shop at the market, work at the local health center, or cook a Bhutanese meal.



"Before the training, pretend play here was playing with dolls," the teacher explained. "Now we include community elements, like the farming tools. The children take interest because they have seen their parents using these and doing this."

But there's nothing imaginary about the skills Pema developed. His mother, Jamba, said, "Compared to his siblings, Pema is starting much earlier. He knows his ABCs and is starting to read." This was important preparation for elementary school.

Although Jamba is unable to read or write, she knows that once a path for education is created, the possibilities are endless.

\* Name has been changed to protect privacy.