

LESSON 2 | Writing for Informed Social Action



Celebrate the 100th day of school (or any day!) with the power of the pen.

Objective

Students will use empathy and research skills to write persuasive letters supported by evidence-based claims.

Time

135 minutes (or three 45-minute periods)

Materials

- Videos from rednosedayinschool.org
- Use the Power of Words to Be an Everyday Hero! activity sheet
 - version A for grades 2–3
 - version B for grades 4–5
- Envelopes
- Stamps (or mail letters digitally)

Before Class

- Use this interactive map to find child poverty stats for your state or country: <https://goo.gl/k7Mcoc>.
- Find your local elected officials and their mailing addresses on the government website for your city or town.

1 Begin the lesson by projecting or writing this quote for the class: “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 students read it silently to themselves to internalize meaning. Then write out the definition of *poverty*: the condition of lacking sufficient money or goods to meet basic human needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

2 Show the videos about child poverty and spark a class discussion guided by the following questions:

- What themes or ideas were explored in the videos? What situations were unfair?
- Have you ever witnessed or experienced injustice related to poverty?
- Did these videos 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 Write this quote on the board: “When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.” —Malala Yousafzai, education activist. Ask students if they think that they are capable of changing the world. Explain that, to celebrate the 100th day of school, they’re going to use the writing skills they strengthened this school year to do something powerful to make a difference in the lives of children.

4 Tell students 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 Use the Power of Words to Be an Everyday Hero! activity sheet with students. Have them use the Stats/Facts Bank on their sheet as well as information from your class discussion to support their arguments. (Older students can conduct their own research, time permitting.)

6 After students draft their letters, they should revise and edit with the help of writing partners and teacher input. Work with your class to address and mail their letters. Encourage them to reflect on their experience and how they served as Everyday Heroes.

Extensions

- Invite guest speakers from local government agencies to address your class about the importance of supporting children in need in your community.
- Older students 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.

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 5 children live in poverty in the U.S. That's 15 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 5 children live in poverty in the U.S. That's 15 million children.



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



Poverty can contribute to poor mental and physical health.



Most 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,