

Poetry: Bringing a community together

Middle school

Objective

Students will organize, publicize and hold a poetry slam to benefit Habitat for Humanity.

■ PREPARE

Before they begin work on the event, have students think about the life and ideas of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and how these ideas relate to their own community.

- Contact your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate before introducing the project to students. Visit www.habitat.org/local for contact information.
- Ask students to share what they already know about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Share video clips of moments in Dr. King's life from the following link: <http://www.thekingcenter.org/PhotoVideo>.
- Distribute copies of the attached worksheet. Read the first quote together. Define *reconciliation* (coming together to resolve differences or conflicts). Have students answer the questions that follow. Explain that Dr. King wished to create a "beloved community" in which people treat each other kindly and fairly.
- Explain that many organizations are working hard to fulfill Dr. King's dream of a "beloved community." One of those organizations is Habitat for Humanity. Tell students that Habitat for Humanity works to ensure that people have access to safe and decent housing. Read the second quote on the worksheet. Have students answer the questions. Discuss how without providing opportunities for adequate housing to everyone, no one is truly equal. We all must be given the same opportunities if we wish to achieve Dr. King's dream of a beloved community.
- Explain that students will participate in a day of service to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day and benefit Habitat for Humanity. Together, read Coretta Scott King's essay about the meaning of the holiday at <http://www.thekingcenter.org/KingHoliday>. Discuss how working to help others fits in with Dr. King's mission.

■ LEARN

Part 1

- Have students write poems that express the ideas of a

"beloved community." Tell students that these poems will be read at a poetry slam that will benefit their local Habitat for Humanity branch.

- Allow students to write their poems in any style they see fitting for the occasion.

Part 2

- Divide the group into three committees: planning, publicity and program.
- The planning committee will identify a location for the event, keeping in mind the expected size of the audience. They will contact the location in order to make reservations. They will also determine how the event should benefit their local Habitat for Humanity affiliate. For example, students might accept financial donations in place of an admission fee. This committee will also invite Habitat for Humanity volunteers and staff members to attend the event.
- The publicity committee will promote the event. They will make posters for their school, take out an advertisement in their school newspaper or Web site, and possibly write a letter to a local newspaper. They will also create a short informative sheet about Habitat for Humanity to be distributed to the audience.
- The program committee will plan the actual event. They will determine the order of the speakers and whether or not additional speakers are needed. They will determine an emcee. They will also design a program to hand out at the event.
- Hold the poetry slam in the next few weeks. Deliver the donations to the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

■ REFLECT

Once they have held their event, ask students to consider the meaning of what they have done.

- Ask students to write a paragraph describing their experience and emotions at the slam.
- Collect the paragraphs to make a scrapbook about the event. Students can also contribute photographs to the book.

Famous quotes by Martin Luther King Jr.

Directions: Read the quotes. Answer the questions that follow.

“There is another element that must be present in our struggle that then makes our resistance and nonviolence truly meaningful. That element is reconciliation. Our ultimate end must be the creation of the beloved community.”

1. Why do you think Dr. King believes that reconciliation must be a part of the struggle for equality?

2. What do you think Dr. King’s “beloved community” is like? Why is it so important to create it?

“Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.”

3. What does this quote mean? What does it say about society?

4. How does this quote relate to the goals of an organization like Habitat for Humanity?
