

TAKING SIDES

LEVELS: middle school and high school
SUBJECTS: language arts and social studies
TIME: one to two class periods



POEMS FOR TWO VOICES

We often speak of the “voice of conscience” that guides our actions, goading us to be responsible, good citizens. We hope our students listen to that voice when a friend brings a weapon to school or contemplates suicide.

After watching the “Responsibility” Act, talk with your students about whether they’ve been caught in a situation like the students at Reseda High School, or any situation when they weren’t sure what was the right thing to do. Talk about the inner voice of conscience that should help each of us make the right decision.

Poems for two voices help students listen to the voice of conscience.

Give your students copies of one or two poems for two voices. Explain that the two voices might be two different people in conflict or a discussion inside one person’s head. Each voice has a line. In the middle are words that the two voices share.

This is just the beginning of the poem. With this format, your class can talk through their decisions and conflicts. By practicing giving voice to their consciences and conflicts, students may learn to make better decisions.

Ask your students to write their own poem for two voices to share with the class. They can choose to write about a conflict they’ve experienced or one like **WARN** that they’ve observed.

Rick Moulden
Chinook Middle School
Bellevue, Wash.

Steve Fleishman
Marj Montgomery
Newton, Mass.

LEVELS: middle school and high school
SUBJECT: civics
TIME: 15 minutes



“IT’S NOT FAIR”

Most students have a strong sense of fair play. You can use the concept of fair play to open students’ eyes to the power they have to influence events—and, to the way they already exercise that power responsibly.

Pose the following dilemma for your students: “You have just received a failing mark from your favorite teacher. You don’t think you deserve the grade, but he/she refuses to discuss it with you. What are you going to do?”

Take suggestions. Encourage your class to come up with as many responses to their predicament as possible.

When students exercise their power to right a wrong, they’re exercising their “responsibility.”

Doug Miller
Fremont High School
Sunnyvale, Calif.

| FIRST VOICE | JOINT THOUGHTS | SECOND VOICE (conscience) |
|--|---|--|
| Cam just brought a gun to school. He knows that it’s against the law. He’ll get caught or someone will get hurt. | Guns and school don’t mix. | Someone needs to talk to Cam and tell him that he might get in real trouble. |
| Cam’s your friend. He wouldn’t do this without a good reason. | Someone might get hurt. Someone might get shot. | The school needs to know. Someone needs to tell Cam. |
| You can’t tell on a friend. | | You’re the one who knows. Tell Cam to tell the school. |



BILLS OF RESPONSIBILITIES

As members of the school community, your students have rights and responsibilities. If there isn't already a written list, challenge your students to write one. Most of us are acutely aware of our rights, but can your students write a "Bill of Responsibilities" that they believe in? On

this page and the next are two samples. The first sample is from the Boys Brotherhood Republic, a 50-year-old democratically run boys club in New York City. The second sample is from the small town of McLennan, Alberta, which developed a charter of responsibilities under the leadership of a local Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman.

HANDOUT

YOUNG PEOPLE'S Bill of Responsibilities

To My Country, My Parents,
and Myself—That I May:

1. Honor my parents, my elders, and my teachers.
2. Take care of my body, mind, and spirit.
3. Improve myself through education, in preparation for the future.
4. Perform my work to the best of my ability.
5. Develop high moral principles and the courage to live by them.
6. Grow in character and ability as I grow in size.
7. Respect the rights and feelings of others.
8. Be honest with myself and others in what I say and do.
9. Set a good example so others may enjoy and profit by my company.
10. Obey the laws of society and live in harmony with others.
11. Preserve and support our American way of life and the government of our people.

Boys Brotherhood Republic
888 East 6th Street, New York, NY 10009



HANDOUT

Town of McLennan Charter of Responsibility

I am grateful for the country in which I live.

I recognize that along with the rights and freedoms I enjoy and cherish comes responsibility.

I recognize that the foundation of Canada is built on commitment to family and friends.

McLennan is a community of individuals, families, and friends. It is my desire to ensure that McLennan is the best possible place to live for me, my family, and friends.

I shall strive to keep and to uphold the laws of the land.

I shall establish and maintain a safe and secure environment for myself and my family.

I shall foster and support an environment that maintains McLennan as a safe and secure town for all to enjoy in peace and harmony.

I shall support and uphold the members of the McLennan RCMP Detachment as they strive in partnership with me to provide safety and security to the citizens of McLennan.

I shall endeavor to uphold and support this Charter of Responsibilities.

Sgt. Ronald Mostrey
Detachment Commander
McLennan RCMP

Lawrence Meardi
Mayor
Town of McLennan

“ON THE WINGS OF CHANGE”