

THE POWER OF OUR VOICE

A lesson in expressive empowerment for Grades 3-5

Jaysa is a young girl from Bridgeport, Connecticut who speaks out at public hearings and helps catalyze the opposition to the coal-fired power plant that is causing her asthma. She addresses the environmental injustices in her community and reflects on the power a single voice can have on creating positive change. In this lesson, educators have the opportunity to explore how pollution disproportionately affects low-income communities and how its members can empower themselves to take a stand.



"It's a lot more powerful when you talk from the heart."

Jaysa's courage to speak out can be explored through Young Voices for the Planet's "A.C.T.I.O.N" plan. This lesson prompts students to use a graphic organizer to analyze Jaysa's story of courage. Through the "passion-action-reaction" format, students will identify how Jaysa used her voices to act on their passions. Then, students will brainstorm how they too can use the power of their voice. On the following pages, educators will find a detailed lesson plan which includes standards, learning objectives, essential questions, and step-by-step instructions needed to bring this activity to life.

Link to film: <https://www.youngvoicesfortheplanet.com/youth-climate-videos/words-have-power/>

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Lesson Plan Instructions



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How can we use our voices to improve our community?

OBJECTIVES:

Students will analyze how people can express written or oral ideas to create change. Students will brainstorm local, national, and global issues that are important to them. Students will determine how they can express themselves about issues that matter.

DIRECTIONS (suggested lesson time of two 40-minute class periods)

1. Opening Activity - Sticky note carousel: Begin the lesson by distributing three different-colored sticky notes to each student in addition to their handouts. Project the directions on the board to have students brainstorm three things: A problem they see in their town, a problem they see in their country, and a problem they see around the world. Have students write down a brainstorm on their handouts, then select one answer to place on each sticky note (designate a color for each). When they finish have them stick their answers under three designated spots around the room (TOWN/COUNTRY/WORLD). After all students have finished, have them return to the three spots to select one random sticky note that is not theirs and return to their seats. Direct students to travel around the room and share the responses on their sticky notes with classmates for a set time (1-2 minutes). Bring all students back and have a class-wide discussion of the ideas they heard, keep a running total somewhere visible.

2. Introduction: After demonstrating that there are many issues that affect us close to home, explain to students that there are many young people, just like them, who are using their voices to change the world. Ask students, "how can young people make a difference?" and stress that though they cannot vote, spend money, travel, and do other things that adults can do, they have their voices - and people listen.

3. I do - We do - You do: Distribute handout and tell students that in this lesson, they will see the story of a young girl using her voices to change her community in a positive. Students will view the film "Words Have Power" (link on cover page) and you will model the first part of the handout ("I do") by going through each question and having students help you respond.

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Lesson Plan Instructions (Continued)

Then, have students complete the second half with a partner/small group ("we do"). Have students complete the third portion of the handout on their own ("you do"). This portion includes a guided "A.C.T.I.O.N" plan that has students extend their thinking when responding to the "action" portion.

4. *The power of our voice trading cards:* This creative assessment is the perfect activity to add to your next bulletin board. To bring the activity to a close, students will fill out their own "power of our voice" trading cards by using the "you" part of the handout to write down what they are passionate about and how they can use their voice to create a change. The cards can also be laminated and attached to their backpacks, cubbies, etc.

5. *Extension opportunities:* a) Online activities to learn more about Malala Yousafzai

<https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/famoushistoricalfigures/malala/>

b) Resources for teaching about environmental justice

<https://humaneeducation.org/blog/2017/resources-teaching-environmental-racism-environmental-justice/>

c) Five Teens who changed the world article

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/0e9e80de-62cb-4782-a26f-1cd480d28f26>

MATERIALS:

- Computer with internet connection, projector with A/V
- Sticky-notes of three different colors
- Student handouts
- Writing utensils
- Scissors

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS:

- For ELD students: Complete graphic organizer with a partner, provide transcript of film, provide sentence stems for handout, allow students to illustrate their "trading cards"
- For Differentiated Instruction (DI): Allow students to work at own pace for "we do" and "I do" portions, provide list of possible selections for trading card responses