

WITH EYES TO SEE



PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: CONSCIENTIZATION MOZAMBIQUE, GUINEA/SIERRA LEONE, AND AFRICA

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

When we think of Africa, many wonderful things come to mind: varied cultures and languages, legendary lands (deserts, lakes, mountains), incredible animals, and much more. There are many negative images as well: AIDS, malaria, civil wars, famine, slavery, etc. Like any place, and especially one as large and diverse as Africa, the true story of a people and their land is much more complex, interesting, joyful, sad, engaging, and diverse than the stereotypes can describe.

Concern America first worked in Africa between 1979 and 1994 providing surgical and medical professionals to two hospitals in Sierra Leone. Support of these projects was forced to end when the instability of the country became so intense that the personal safety of the Concern America field personnel and others could not be assured. Concern America returned to the region in 1999 to support Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea who were displaced by their country's horrific civil war. Concern America is also working in northern Mozambique on an HIV and AIDS prevention project.

Development projects, like those mentioned above, go a long way to alleviate human suffering. Stories abound of people helping each other, whether on a small scale, like helping a neighbor shovel snow from her steps, or on a larger scale, such as building a community water system. . Much is focused, of course, on the result of the action, i.e. the water that is now flowing in a community, and this *is* very important. We pay less attention, however, to the changes these projects bring to the people and the organizations carrying them out. By recognizing the many benefits that come from people working together to create better communities and a better world, the labels of "helper" and "helped" become transformed and take on new meaning. We have a great deal to teach each other, including the child shoveling snow with the 80 year old neighbor, and the water engineer working along side the rural farmer.

It is hoped that this edition of *With Eyes to See* will bring a piece of Africa alive in the classroom, and that students will learn from a few of the millions of stories the continent and its people have to tell.

A new vision of development is emerging. Development is becoming a people-centered process, whose ultimate goal must be the improvement of the human condition.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

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CONCERN AMERICA

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IDEAS

~~Concern America in Africa~~

Concern America (C/A) is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, nongovernmental development and refugee aid organization that partners with materially poor communities in "developing" countries in projects to assist them to move their communities out of poverty. In the U.S., C/A offers social justice education to groups of youth and adults. As part of its mission abroad, C/A supports the following projects in Africa:

MOZAMBIQUE: The project builds local capacity to impede the further spread of HIV and AIDS in communities in rural communities through in depth HIV and AIDS prevention training with community leaders and youth, capacity-building support with local HIV and AIDS organizations, and coordination with government agencies and coalitions in the region.

GUINEA/SIERRA LEONE: Recent conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire have created a refugee crisis in the region. Working both with the refugees in Guinea and those who have returned home over the past couple of years, C/A provides mental health training and support, skills training, micro-credit loans, and adult literacy.

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." Archbishop Desmond Tutu

K-12

Where to Start?

A great resource for teaching about Africa is provided by PBS at its *See Africa as Never Before* series, which can be found at www.pbs.org/wnet/africa. The website provides information and resources for educators and students that can be used in the classroom, including many interactive exercises for use on the site itself. Highlights of this website and the *Africa* series include many photos depicting the variety of people, cultures, climates, etc. of Africa, music, games to make music, other interactive games, background information, and teacher tools. This site does a great job of introducing students to Africa, and can be used as a springboard for other classroom activities on the continent. Africa, with its 54 countries, 1,000+ languages, and 800 million people has innumerable possibilities for study, understanding, and connections to the classroom and our students.

4-12

Africa through its People

If you were to ask students, or the average person in this country, to make a list of influential people of Africa, how long would the lists be? Short? The same is probably true with most regions/countries of the world, but a great way to better understand a place and its people is to learn about its leaders (and not simply political here). What does knowing of Archbishop Desmond Tutu tell us about the history and people of South Africa? What do we learn about the environmental situation in Kenya and Africa by studying Wangari Maathai, the 2004 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize? Or of the political struggles of Zimbabwe by listening to the music of Oliver Mtukudzi.

As a way to learn more about Africa, students can research these and other important Africans. The following list is just a start!

- Steven Biko (South African Anti-Apartheid activist)
- Miriam Makeba (South African singer)
- Ken Saro-Wiwa (Nigerian poet)
- Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Egyptian, first African Secretary General of the U.N.)
- Cesaria Evora (Cape Verdian singer)
- Paul Rusesabagina (of the movie "Hotel Rwanda" fame)

ACTION: Highlight inspirational yet little known Africans throughout the classroom and the school.

What's Going on in Africa These Days?

6-12

What are the top news stories in Africa? The crisis in Darfur, Sudan? AIDS? Malaria? What do these stories tell us about Africa today? What are we missing? Is the "news" a good way to learn about a place?

Collect one week of newspapers (the largest local paper of your area like the L.A. Times or the Chicago Tribune), and catalogue the stories on Africa. What kind of canvas do they paint of the continent? Then visit www.allafrica.com (a news website covering Africa), and look at the top headlines there. Are they the same as those in our newspapers? What picture do they portray of the region? Are many stories similar to those about what is happening in the United States? What differences are there? If we wanted to learn more about Africa, where could we turn?

ACTION: Students can write a letter to the editor of their local paper to share their findings on newspaper coverage of Africa.

"No matter how mighty and strong a tree is, it will always dance to the tune of the wind"
-Okelola Olamigoke

And the Moral of the Story is....?

2-12

Most children who have grown up in this country know many fairy tales as they have been retold over and over through children's books, cartoons, and movies. This activity focuses on the "classic" European variety tales, but asks students to read them as if they lived in Africa, and then rewrite the tales to fit their new surroundings.

Choose a fairy tale familiar to the students, and imagine that your classroom is in a country in Africa (that the students have studied). By taking on the role of another culture, parts of the tales may be surprising. A good example is the "Three Little Pigs," in which we learn that the first two pigs, by being somewhat lazy and careless, build houses of straw and sticks that don't last. In many areas of Africa, both due to economic and environmental reasons (not laziness or carelessness), many people live in such houses. Another example is "Little Red Riding Hood," which could still be about a young girl delivering food to her grandmother's house, but the wolf is hungry because its habitat has been decimated.

ACTION: Are the morals taught by these fairy tales relevant to many African countries? Students can rewrite the tales they have chosen from an African perspective, and then put them together into a book to share with others. A clever children's story that mirrors this retelling of fairy tales, and reading the book is a good way to model this exercise, is the "The True Story of the Three Little Pigs," by Jon Scieszka, told by the wolf who only went to the pigs' houses to get a cup of sugar, and they misunderstood his intentions. Also, choose related stories from other cultures and compare the differences in characters, images, etc. (there are numerous versions of Cinderella from a wide variety of cultures, for example).

(exercise adapted from *With Eyes to See*, Winter I 2002, *Nonviolence*)

"African women in general need to know that it's OK for them to be the way they are - to see the way they are as a strength, and to be liberated from fear and from silence."
-Wangari Maathai

Map It

K-12

How big is Africa? How many countries does it have? Two quick exercises:

1. For younger students, ask "what is Africa?" to teach the concepts of *continent* and *country*. Using many colors, have them color in a map of Africa to show how many countries there are.
2. For older students, on large newsprint (one for each), draw the continents of the world to scale (with countries). Put up all of them next to each other: any surprises? Before this can be done, ask how many continents there are (not everyone agrees: the number ranges from 5-7!).

RECOMMENDED

It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger.

Then people will appreciate your leadership."
-Nelson Mandela

"After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb."
-Nelson Mandela

CHILDREN'S BOOKS ON AFRICA

Try these children's books on Africa. Each was reviewed, along with many others, on the Africa Access website (www.africaaccessreview.org). Africa Access was founded in 1989 to help schools, public libraries, and parents improve the quality of their children's collections on Africa.

1. **Africa is not a Country**, by Knight and O'Brien, demonstrates the diversity of the African continent by describing daily life in some of its fifty-three nations.

2. **Beatrice's Goat**, by Page McBrier, tells how a young girl's dream of attending school in her small Ugandan village is fulfilled after her family is given an income-producing goat. Based on a true story about the work of Project Heifer in Uganda.

3. **Boundless Grace**, by Mary Hoffman, (the sequel to *Amazing Grace*), follows young Grace as she goes to visit her father and his new family in Gambia, West Africa.

4. **Day Gogo Went to Vote**, by Elinor Batezat Sisulu, tells of Thembi and her beloved great-grandmother as they go together to vote on the momentous day when black South Africans vote for the first time.

5. **It Takes a Village**, by Jane Cowen-Fletcher, takes place on market day in a small village in Benin, where Yemi tries to watch her little brother Kokou and finds that the entire village is watching out for him too.

CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Guinea, and Mozambique.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in California which include:

- * The St. Nicholas Project
- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * School and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Feel free to contact the Education Coordinator at Concern America for more information on any of these projects.

We hope you join us for Concern America's Next WALK OUT OF POVERTY, April 8, 2006! Call Janine or Eli at Concern America to get information, walk packets, posters, flyers, and/or to schedule a presentation for your group. The Walk provides education for the participants and a sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world, while raising money for Concern America's development work in Latin America and Africa.

Put your message of peace in an essay. The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation holds the yearly Swackhamer Peace Essay Contest, an annual international high school essay contest answering topical questions related to global peace and security. The deadline is June 1, 2005, and more information can be found at www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/awards-&-contests/swack-contest/index.htm.