Making the Crooked Straight

FILM MATTERS

Study Guide Prepared For The Toronto Jewish Film Festival By:

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Making the Crooked Straight
Teacher Resource Package
Prepared by: Susan Starkman, B.A., M.Ed

Synopsis

Country of Origin: U.S.A.
Release Year: 2008
Original Language: English
Director: Susan Cohn Rockefeller
Runtime: 30 minutes
Themes: Civics, Self and Others, Personal and Social Responsibilities, Social Challenges
Making the Crooked Straight is a 30-minute documentary about one man's journey to save the world by saving one child at a time.
Born in Long Island, New York and educated at John Hopkins University, Dr. Rick Hodes has dedicated his life to helping heal the sick and poor of Ethiopia over the past 20 years. Many of his patients are stricken with tuberculosis of the spine, a disease that creates massive humps on the backs of its victims. Eventually they're forced into permanent forward-bending posture, which in turn prevents their lungs from working properly. If left untreated, it leads to death.
Driven by his devotion to Orthodox Judaism and its belief that "He who saves one life, saves an entire world', Hodes provides these patients with hospital care and arranges for complex overseas surgeries (often paying for these out of his own pocket). He has, thus far, fostered seventeen children in order to provide them with not only proper medical care but a home and an education.
Often compared with Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa, Hodes believes the only way to change the world is to be the change.
"Making the Crooked Straight" explores this remarkable man's work in Ethiopia, his highly original family life, and the spirituality that has guided his choices and sacrifices.

Curriculum Links

Making the Crooked Straight can be applied to a number of courses across the curriculum, from language arts through to social studies. The activities that appear in this guide relate to the following national standards:

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their

discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
The Standards for the English Language Arts (http://www.readwritethink.org/standards/) are published by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (http://www.ncte.org/).

National Standards for Civics and Government (Grades 9-12)

V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?
• What is citizenship?
• What are the rights of citizens?
• What are the responsibilities of citizens?
• What civic dispositions or traits of private and public character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?
• How can citizens take part in civic life?
The National Standards for Civics and Government (http://www.civiced.org/912erica.htm) are published by the Center for Civic Education (http://www.civiced.org/).

NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

Standard I: Culture
• Students will learn about culture and cultural diversity.
• Students will explore the nature of culture and specific aspects of culture, such as language and beliefs, and the influence of those aspects on human behavior.
Standard II: Time, Continuity and Change
• Students will learn about the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.
Standard IV: Individual Development and Identity
• Students will explore the influences on individual development and identity, including culture, groups, and institutions.
The Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/) are published by the National Council for Social Studies (http://www.socialstudies.org/).

National Science Education Standards

CONTENT STANDARD F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives
As a result of activities in grades 9-12 all students should develop an understanding of:
• Personal and community health
• Populations growth
• Natural resources
• Environmental quality
• Science and technology in local, national, and global challenges

Related Websites:
http://www.makingthecrookedstraight.org/about-the-film

Context: Who is Dr. Rick Hodes?

Before viewing the film, students may want to learn a little bit about Doctor Hodes and the nature of the work that he does in Ethiopia. Much has been written about him, and students should be encouraged to undertake their own Internet search to learn more about him.

Rick Hodes graduated from the University of Rochester Medical School in 1982 and completed his medical training in internal medicine at Johns Hopkins University. Between 1985 and 1988, he was a Fulbright Lecturer in Medicine at the Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia.

Since 1990, Dr. Hodes has served as the Medical Director of the Joint Distribution Committee's Medical Programs in Ethiopia. During Operation Solomon in 1991, Dr. Hodes was responsible for medical care of the 14,400 Ethiopians who were airlifted to Israel during a dramatic 48-hour rescue. Today, he manages JDC's two Ethiopia medical clinics in Addis Abba and Gondar City, which care for those seeking to qualify to move to Israel. The clinics also provide immunizations, pre and postnatal care, health education, family planning services, and nutritional assistance. In addition, Dr. Hodes acts as an advisor to the Israeli Ministry of Health, is an attending physician at the Mother Teresa Mission and runs a pioneering program that he designed which sends Ethiopian children to Ghana for spine surgery.

Over the past decade, Dr. Hodes' humanitarian work has led him to Rwanda and Kosovo, providing non-sectarian medical services to refugees. In addition, he has lent his medical expertise to Swedish Red Cross in Eritrea, the US Peace Corps in Ethiopia, and the NMC Refugee camps in Tanzania, as well as a host of other medical and humanitarian organizations.

Dr. Hodes has lectured extensively around the world and published many articles. He has
been recognized for his important work throughout his career and honoured with several medical awards. In 2007, CNN selected Dr. Hodes as one of its "CNN Heroes" in the "Championing Children" category. The CNN Heroes program highlights "ordinary" people for their extraordinary achievements. Dr. Hodes was selected from among thousands of nominees worldwide, for his exemplary work caring for those in Ethiopia with heart and spine disease, and cancer over the past two decades.

Source: Joint Distribution Committee: www.jdc.org

Further Reading about Dr. Hodes:
http://www.aish.com/societywork/work/on_the_brink_in_ethiopia.asp
http://www.rd.com/your-america-inspiring-people-and-stories/dr-rick-hodes-helps-thechildren-
of-ethiopia/article104652.html
http://www.addisvoice.com/article/righteous_doctor_of_ethiopia.htm
http://www.urielheilman.com/1102rickhodes.html

Context: Joint Distribution Committee

Dr. Hodes is the Director of Medical Programs in Ethiopia for the Joint Distribution Committee. "The Joint", as it is known colloquially, is a non-government agency that is itself worthy of discussion as example of an organization that has had a powerful impact in improving the human condition throughout the world. While it was set up initially to aid Jews across the globe, The Joint provides non-sectarian disaster relief and operates a large number of initiatives to help people in need across the globe, including recent campaigns to alleviate the situation in Sudan.

The Joint Distribution was founded in 1914 when Henry Morgenthau Sr., then the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, requested funds from Louis Marshall and Jacob Schiff to alleviate famine amongst Palestinian Jews. Since its establishment, the Joint has undertaken countless initiatives across the globe to help people in need.

Selected Highlights of JDC Initiatives Since 2000:

2001: After the economic crash in Argentina plunged more than one third of the local Jewish population below the poverty line, the JDC's network of social assistance centres partnered with local Jewish organizations to provide food, medicine, utilities and rent subsidies to more than 36,000 beneficiaries.

2002: In response to the outbreak of terrorist attacks in Israel during the second Intifada, JDC provided summer camp experiences to over 300,000 children as well as other services to ease the strain of communities under fire.

2004: Following the South Asia Tsunami, the JDC collected over $19 million and mounted its largest-scale non-sectarian effort to date through its International Development Program. Partnering with Israeli and local organizations in Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, and Indonesia, JDC-IDP launched a myriad of programs, largely focusing on trauma therapy and training, rebuilding demolished schools, creating model refugee housing, empowering women through employment, and rehabilitating devastated fishing villages.

2008: In August 2008, as the conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia reignited, JDC staff travelled under fire to ascertain the whereabouts and well-being of Jewish families and elderly welfare clients, ensuring that they continued to receive food, medicine, and other basic necessities.

(Source: http://www.jdc.org/jdc-history/years/2000-present.aspx)

Related Websites:

http://www.jdc.org/jdc-home.aspx

Related Activities:

1. The JDC is a member of the InterAction Coalition, the largest coalition of U.S.-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focussed on improving life for the world's most poor and vulnerable people. Students could research some of the initiatives undertaken by the JDC since its establishment and compare them to the efforts of other selected organizations in the coalition. A full list of the InterAction Coalition partners is available on their website at http://www.interaction.org/
2. Students could research some of the initiatives undertaken by the JDC and describe the impact that the JDC has had globally in advancing the cause of human rights and social justice.

Context: Ethiopia (Official Name: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia)

Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa that is bordered on the north by Eritrea, on the west by Sudan, on the south by Kenya, on the east by Somalia and on the northeast by Djibouti. In order to understand the geographic, social and political context in which Dr. Hodes works, students should first do some research about the country and its people. Teachers could divide students into groups, with each one looking at a different aspect of the country (history, politics, economics, health care, etc.) Numerous sites are available online, a sample of which are listed below:
World Health Organisation: Ethiopia
http://www.who.int/countries/eth/en/
Nation Master
http://www.nationmaster.com/country/et-ethiopia
Imperial Crown Council of Ethiopia
http://www.imperialethiopia.org/
CIA World Factbook
https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html
Media Ethiopia
http://www.ethiopians.com/
Ethiopia is also home to one of the oldest Jewish communities known as the Beta Israel, or Falashas. In 1991, Dr. Hodes was responsible for the medical care of 14,400 Ethiopian Jews who were airlifted to Israel in a dramatic 48-hour rescue mission known as Operation Solomon. The history of Ethiopian Jewry is a fascinating one and students could research it as part of their exploration of Ethiopian history. Listed below are some relevant websites that deal with the Beta Israel:
http://www.jcrcboston.org/focus/strength/ethiopian-jewry/backgroundwho-are-the.htmlhttp://www.jcrcboston.org/focus/strength/ethiopianjewry/background-who-are-the.html
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html
http://haruth.com/jw/JewsEthiopia.html
http://www.iaej.org.il/pages/our_projects.htm
http://www.nacoej.org/index.html
http://www.ssej.org/index.html

Ways Into the Text: Citizenship

Making the Crooked Straight offers teachers an ideal opportunity to highlight the concept of citizenship with students. A variety of lessons can be constructed around the idea of what it means to be a citizen in a local, national and global context. Beginning with the communities with which students are most familiar (home, school, city), teachers can ask them to reflect on their rights and responsibilities towards their families, teachers and peers. Drawing on students' personal experiences, teachers can then broaden the discussion by having them explore how these obligations extend beyond their local parameters. To this end, teachers should introduce students to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

Introductory Citizenship Lesson

1. Overview

Begin by asking students what it means to be a citizen and what are the roles of a citizen. Allow ten or fifteen minutes for students to answer these questions as a large group.

2. Divide students into small groups (three or four) to discuss different types of citizenship, considering the rights and responsibilities that are relevant to each:

School
Neighbourhood
City/town
Region
Province
Nation
Continent
Global

3. Active citizenship

In these same small groups, discuss what it means to be an active citizen. What is an active citizen? How does one go about becoming an active citizen? What factors need to be in place in order to become an active citizen (i.e. peace, freedom from discrimination, opportunities to participate, etc.)? Provide examples of active citizenship.

4. Have groups come together to share their results with the class. What are the similarities in their responses? What are the differences? Write some of their responses on a large sheet paper for all to see and to consider. By comparing the diverse definitions of citizenship that emerge from the smaller groups, students will be better placed to understand how many perspectives exist toward one issue.

Heroes

Dr. Hodes is often described as a hero; indeed, in 1997, he was nominated by CNN as one of its heroes in the "Championing the Children" category. The concept of heroism is one that could be explored in a variety of ways across the curriculum, from language arts through to social studies and politics. Throughout recorded history, societies have revered certain individuals whom they perceived as possessing qualities that elevated them above the average citizen. Where real life often failed to produce flesh and blood heroes, artists would invent them; from Greek myths through to contemporary comic books and films, we can find countless examples of fictional characters who possess traits such as courage, selflessness and patriotism that reflect the prevailing values of their societies at a particular moment in time.

Although the concept of a hero has been with us since the beginning of time, the qualities that one looks for in a hero differs from culture to culture and evolves over generations. For example, two Roman heroines, Verginia and Lucretia, were admired for sacrificing their lives in order to maintain their status as Roman women of virtue. While Verginia committed suicide after being raped, Lucretia is killed by her father rather than being taken slave by Appius Claudius. In contemporary Western society, both of these acts would be viewed as tragic and the women would be looked at with pity rather than admiration. In fact, one of CNN's heroes in 2009 was Betty Makoni, the founder of Girl Child Network, an organization that provides haven for victims of sexual abuse. By

today's standards, the heroes are the ones who protect the victims rather than the victims who are willing to be sacrificed precisely because they have been victimized. The study of heroes should include both fictional and real characters and span a wide time period allowing students to understand how our ideas of heroes and heroism have evolved according to societal shifts.

Mythical Heroes

Teachers may want to introduce a unit of study on heroes by having students explore some of the earliest recorded examples of heroes, those of the ancient Greek myths and legends. Using the list below (teachers may choose to add other examples), students should find images of each character and research the stories with which they are associated:

Hercules
Odysseus
Theseus
Jason
Orpheus
Antigone
Iphigenia

Guiding Questions:

1. How is each of these characters depicted in various forms of art (e.g. sculpture, painting, etc.)?
2. What are some of the characteristics common to all Greek heroes?
3. What are the values associated with each specific hero?
4. What purpose did these myths serve in Ancient Greece?
5. Based on these stories, what character traits did ancient Greek society deem to be the most noble?
6. What values do these stories try to instil in their audience?

Animated Heroes: Comic Books and Manga

Where the myths and legends surrounding the various gods captured the popular imagination of ancient Greece and Rome, today's fictional equivalent would be the superheroes of comic books and films. There are countless websites devoted to the study of comic books and animated films and there are numerous ways in which teachers can utilise them in the classroom (a brief list appears at the end of this section). For the purposes of this study, it would be useful for students to research American comics as well as their Japanese counterparts, manga. What are the similarities and differences between American and Japanese superheroes and how do they reflect the values of their respective societies?

Guiding Questions/Activities

1. Provide a brief history about the origins of both Japanese manga and American comic books.
2. Compile a list of American comic and Japanese manga series from each decade from the 1930s through to today.
3. How do these different series reflect the events and issues that were occurring in the United States and Japan at the time of their publication?

4. How have specific superheroes changed over time?
5. Compile a list of 4 American superheroes (2 male and 2 female) and 4 Japanese superheroes (2 male and 2 female). What are the specific character traits of each that makes him/her heroic? What situations enabled them to become heroic?
6. What are the physical characteristics of each superhero?
7. What character traits are valued in male superheroes? What character traits are valued in female superheroes? How do these differences reflect American and Japanese attitudes to women in their respective societies?
8. What values do these heroes try to instil in their readers?
9. What Japanese manga series are most popular in the United States? What do you think accounts for their popularity?
10. Draw a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting American comics and Japanese manga.

Related Websites:
http://www.teachingcomics.org/
http://comicsintheclassroom.net/
http://www.history.com/classroom/admin/study_guide/archives/thc_guide.2627.html
http://www.teachingdegree.org/2009/07/05/comics-in-the-classroom-100-tips-tools-andresources-
for-teachers/
http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/631
http://www.webenglishteacher.com/graphicnovels.html#
http://www.ipl.org/div/graphicnovels/gnsSchoolsNLibs.html
http://www.graphicnovelreporter.com/

Real Life Heroes: Historical and Contemporary
What is the definition of a hero in our own society? Before students look at examples of people who have been depicted as heroes by the media, they should first form their own definition of what it means to be a hero. Teachers could pose the following questions as prompts, recording students' responses on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard:
1. What are the characteristics that define a hero?
2. What criteria should we use to decide who is a hero?
3. What is the difference between a celebrity and hero? Can one be both? Why/why not?
Taking into account their responses to the above questions, students should then come up with a two or three sentence definition of a hero that they can use in relation to their subsequent research into heroes.

20th Century American Heroes
Divide students into 10 groups, assigning each one a decade from the 20th Century. Each group should select three people from their decade who were commonly regarded as heroes of their day. Using the following questions as a guide, students should report their findings to the class:
1. Why was that person considered a hero in his/her day?
2. What characteristics did that person display that made him/her heroic?
3. Would that person be considered a hero today? Why/why not?
Once each group has reported its findings, the class as a whole should discuss how, (if

at all), Americans have changed their ideas of what constitutes a hero. What qualities do they think heroes must possess in order for them to still be considered heroes in our time? How do the heroes they selected reflect the values of that generation? Do the heroes they selected fit the definition of a hero that they constructed?

21st Century American Heroes

There are numerous websites devoted to contemporary heroes that have lesson plans and activities attached to them. In particular, the My Hero Project provides educators and students with a range of activities related to heroes and heroism. Their website can be found at: http://www.myhero.com/go/home.asp

Since Dr. Hodes was selected by CNN as one of its heroes of 2007, teachers could direct their students to the CNN Heroes website at http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/ and complete the following questions and activities:

1. What are the seven categories of heroes chosen by CNN? What other categories might they have selected?
2. Choose two heroes from different categories. For each one, take notes on that person's personal history, character traits and contributions to society. Do these people fit the definition of a hero that you created? Why/why not?
3. Draw a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the two heroes that you chose from the list. How do their personal histories compare (e.g. ethnicity, religion, educational background, economic status)? How do their heroic actions compare (e.g. do they work individually or as part of a team? Is their heroism related to their career or to something outside of their professional lives?)
4. Will these heroes stand the test of time? Why/why not?

General Discussion Questions/Activities:

1. Is a hero born or made?
2. Can one person make a difference on a global scale? Why/why not? Provide examples to support your answer.
3. Provide examples of film heroes from the 1950s through to today. How has the physical representation of heroes changed over time (compare photos of various actors who were cast as heroes)? How have the personality traits of heroes changed over time (e.g., the strong silent type compared to the more emotionally expressive heroes of today)? How do these changes reflect changes in society over time?
4. Divide the class into groups. Assign each one a different country and have them compile a list of people regarded as heroes in that country. What characteristics make them heroic in their homeland? Would they be considered heroes by American standards? Why/why not?
5. Compare the male heroes chosen by CNN with the female heroes. How are they alike? How are they different? Do you think that society holds women to the same standards of heroism as men? Why? Why not? Provide evidence to support your answers.

TEACHING THE UN UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The best resource for teaching this document comes from the United Nations Cyberschoolbus and can be found at http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/declaration/index.asp.
This interactive declaration goes through all of the thirty articles of the document, explaining every one in plain English and proposing specific classroom activities for each. Teachers can divide students into pairs with the task of exploring particular issues in depth (e.g., racial discrimination, freedom of speech). Students would be required to find the articles relating to their assigned issues from the subject index provided on the interactive declaration and complete the activities suggested under those articles.
Once these activities are completed, students have the opportunity to report back to the UN so that their actions may be included in a global atlas of student actions to be published on the web. The guidelines for how do to this can be found at http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/activities.asp

Hints

- In classroom assignments, use examples of real people and historical situations in which rights were at stake.
- Identify stories relating to human rights in local and international media and relate them to the relevant articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Relate the issue of human rights and its principles to classroom and school situations.

TEACHING THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

(Adapted from BCTF/CIDA Global Classroom Initiative 2006)
The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the world's most ratified international treaty, with only two countries in the world (Somalia and the United States) not giving it legal force. There are 54 articles in the convention, but it is governed by four fundamental principles:
1. Non-discrimination (article 2): Children should not suffer nor benefit because of race, colour, language, religion, or national, social, or ethnic origin, or because of any political or other opinion; because of their caste, property or birth status, or because they are disabled.
2. Best interest of the child (article 3): Laws and actions affecting children should put their best interests first and benefit them in the best possible way.
3. Survival, development and protection (article 6): The authorities in every country must protect children and help to ensure their full physical, moral, spiritual and social development.
4. Participation (article 12): Children have a right to have their say in decisions that affect them and their opinions must be taken into account.
The Declaration of the Rights of the Child can be found at http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/child.asp and a plain language version can be found at http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plainchild.asp. Teachers may also want to refer students to Say it Right! – The unconventional Canadian youth edition of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, found at

http://www.rightsofchildren.ca/sir/index.htm. Another interesting site is http://www.unicef.org/knowyourrights/convention_cartoons.php where students can view 30 second animated films relating to each one of the articles of the charter. Teachers can assign specific articles from the convention to students and have them explain their meaning to the rest of the class in whatever form they choose (e.g., poster, oral presentation). Their explanation should include the article number, the general meaning of the article, and which of the four general principles of the Convention it relates to. They should also provide examples of what this right would look like in practice and how it might be violated.

Assessing Cases

In small groups, have students go through the following examples, classifying them as abuse or neglect and identifying what article of the convention is being violated:

- Abandoned children who live on the streets
- Children who live in refugee camps for years
- Homeless children who sleep in a shelter with their parents
- A 12-year old forced into prostitution after fleeing an abusive home
- A child who works in a factory for more than 12 hours a day to help support the family
- A child, working as a domestic, is beaten for breaking a dish
- Children strapped to a bed in an orphanage
- Child who can't go to school because his or her parents can't afford the school uniform
- Teenagers kept at home to baby-sit younger siblings while parents work.

After completing these activities, students should brainstorm the question, "What can be done to ensure that the Rights of the Child are not violated?"

Becoming a Global Citizen

After students have explored the impact that other individuals have had on the world, they should focus their efforts on taking action themselves, either in their own community or further afield. One useful resource for teachers wanting to encourage their students to become global citizens is www.oambassadors.org This organization is a joint venture between Free the Children and Oprah's Angel Network designed to connect young people in North America with people around the world to address problems such as hunger, poverty and limited access to education. Teachers can apply to form an O Ambassador Club at their school (http://www.oambassadors.org/enrollments/step/0) either as part of their classroom programming or as a school-based extracurricular program for their students. The clubs focus on working towards the UN Millennium Development Goals:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Related Classroom Activities

Seven Steps to Social Action

(Adapted from www.oambassadors.org/educators)

Step One: Find a cause you care about.

Brainstorm with students about an issue or cause that is important to them. In order for them to really care about social issues, they need to empathise with people affected by the issues. Films such as Making the Crooked Straight personalise the issue of the need to provide the world's poorest citizens with access to health care. Teachers can also rely on newspaper articles, guest speakers and stories to bring an issue to life for students. Have students scan current newspapers and magazines for stories about people in need and brainstorm how they might contribute as a class.

Discussion Questions:

What makes you angry?

What makes you speak your mind?

What do you wish you could change about the world?

How do you think you help to bring about this change?

Step Two: Do your research

Once the class has determined which issue they would like to address, students must ensure that they are well informed of the details and complexities of their chosen cause. To this end, they must make a list of questions and find answers by doing as much research as possible. Students should consult textbooks, media sources, websites and experts in order to learn as much as they can about their cause.

Guiding Questions:

How current is your information? Ensure that your facts and statistics are the latest available.

How reliable are your sources? This is especially important with regard to information gleaned online. Students should consider if their site is linked to a reliable organization or institution.

How balanced is the information they are receiving? Are all points of view on an issue being represented?

Step Three: Build a dream team

Assign specific tasks based on a person's individual strengths. Students could divide themselves into groups based on specific character traits that they feel best describes their personalities:

- Creative/artistic types who are imaginative
- Doers who are energetic
- Reasoners who are well organised
- Communicators who can build bridges between different groups and encourage team work

Guiding Questions:

What makes a good leader?

What adjectives would they use to describe an ideal leader?

What are my particular strengths and how can I apply them to a leadership role?

How should a leader behave towards others?

Step Four: Meet around the round table
Choose a time and place for people to get together. Ensure that the students convening the meeting have a written agenda and specific goals outlined. Students should share the research they have done on their issue (see step 2) with the group and devise a plan of action that gives each person a particular job to do.
Guiding Questions:
Do you have a clear agenda for your meeting?
Have you made sure that you have given everyone in the group a chance to express their ideas and opinions?
Have people left this meeting with a clear sense of their individual responsibilities within the group?

Step Five: Make a plan of action
The best way to set goals is to break your cause into a group of manageable tasks which differentiate long-range goals from short-term ones. For example, if your cause is universal primary education, you might want to think about one country on which you would like to focus. Once these goals have been determined, students need to draw up a plan of action which can be broken into specific tasks such as organising fund raising events, buying school supplies with the money raised, etc.
Guiding Questions:
What is your goal?
Who can help you reach your goal?
What will your team need to do to reach your goal?
What challenges will you face? How will you overcome them?

Step Six: Problem solving
Once students have come up with their initial plan, they will need direction and support with regard to implementation. It would be useful for the group to look at other student run initiatives to get ideas on how they might organise their project and how they can keep their goals realistic.
Guiding Questions:
What is the scale of your project? Is it realistic and appropriate?
Can you accomplish your goals within a particular time frame? You need to ensure that your activities fit into the school calendar.

Step Six: Take action
Once the meetings have taken place and the tasks assigned, it's time to implement your plan of action and find ways to make global issues relate to your community. For example, sponsoring a book drive at your school can raise student awareness about literacy issues while helping to provide local and international school libraries with books.
Guiding Questions:
Has your activity/program been successful in raising awareness of your issue?
Have you ensured that you have provided participants with the chance to provide you with meaningful feedback?
Has your activity/program been successful in recruiting more volunteers who want to help you reach your long-term goals?

Were there any surprises?
What did you learn from the experience?

Step Seven: Have fun

While your goal is to raise awareness about a serious issue, people respond best to others who are enthusiastic about their work. If people see you having fun, they will want to be part of whatever it is you are doing. To this end, make sure that your meetings are enjoyable (a little bit of food goes a long way in meeting this goal), and that your activity/project creates opportunities for people to forge new friendships. Don't forget to celebrate your achievements. Teachers can help by acknowledging students' efforts in assemblies and school websites/newsletters. School yearbooks are also an ideal place to chronicle your hard work and honour your victories.