

The Recess Revolt

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,671

LEVELED BOOK • R

The Recess Revolt

Connections

Writing

Identify an issue in your school or community. Write an essay proposing a solution. Include the pros and cons of your solution.

Social Studies

Research one civil rights leader. Write a biography that covers the person's early life and impact on society.

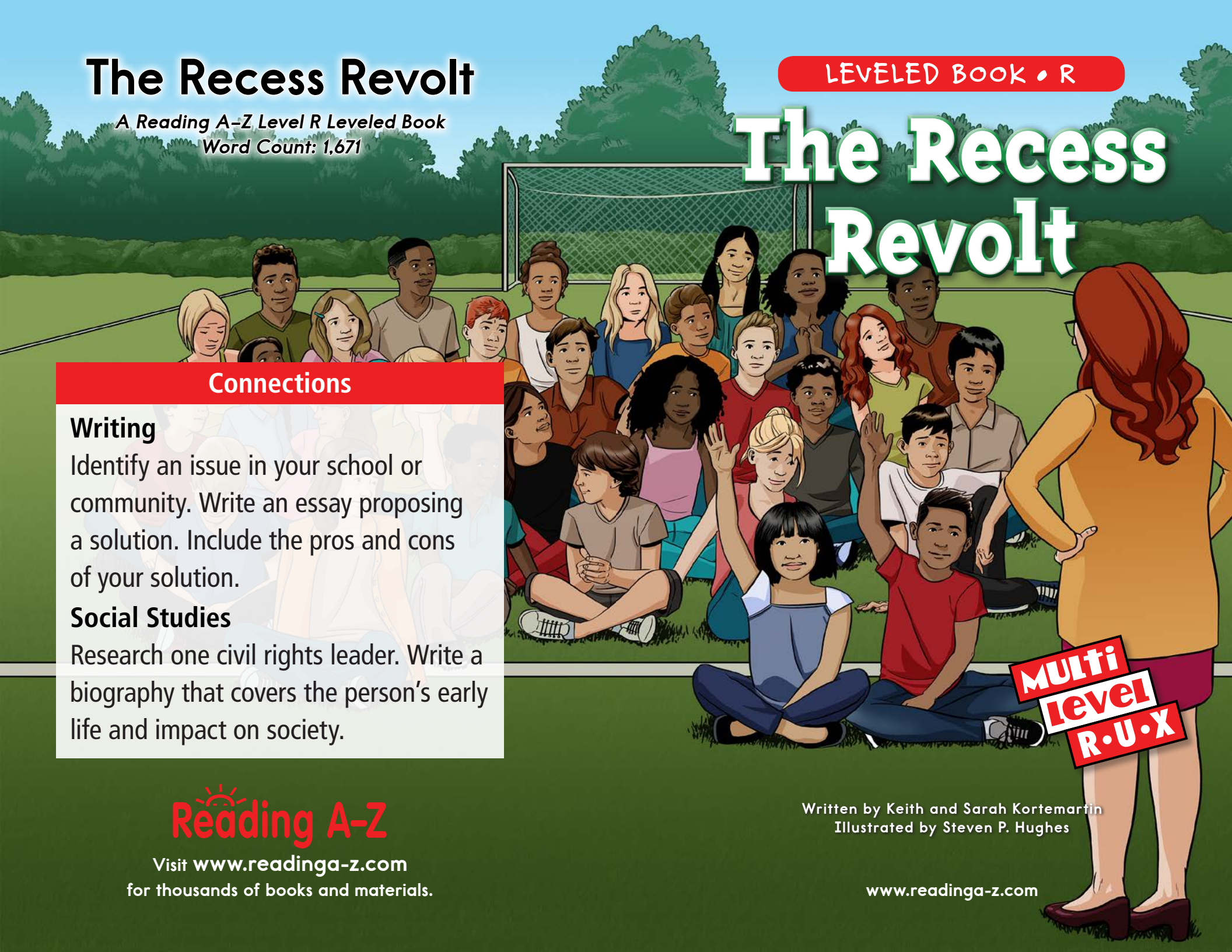
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**Multi
level
R•U•X**



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Focus Question

What effect does the lesson Elias and Ada learn in class have on the outcome of the story?

Words to Know

app	protests
budget	resisted
civil rights	signatures
funding	sit-in
petition	

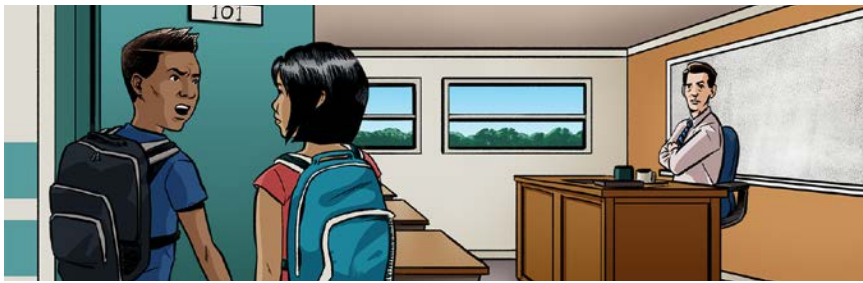
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Correlation

LEVEL R	
Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30



Elias walked into social studies class, complaining to his friend Ada about the new school recess rules.

"It's so dumb," he said. "Isn't recess supposed to be about free time and having fun?"

"All right now, settle down," Mr. Sterling called from the front of the room. "I know it's only the first day, but we already have a lot to do."

Elias sank into his chair, still upset. He had spent the whole summer looking forward to playing chess again with Ada during recess. When they got to the playground, though, they'd found a new set of recess rules in place. Instead of playing on their own, students now had to do activities run by the teachers. Elias and Ada had been sent over to the soccer field right away, with no chance to argue.

It's so unfair, Elias thought.

"All right, class," said Mr. Sterling. "We're starting with the **civil rights** movement of the 1960s. What do you already know about it?"

"Rosa Parks," someone said.



Someone else called out, "Peaceful **protests**."

"Right," said Mr. Sterling. "The civil rights protesters **resisted** unfair laws, but they did it in peaceful ways. One way they did was called a **sit-in**." The class settled in to take notes.

"Sit-ins started in restaurants, which were often open only to white customers," Mr. Sterling went on. "African Americans would go to a whites-only restaurant and order food. When they were refused, they'd simply sit and wait to be served. Sometimes people would yell at them, or throw food, or threaten them, but they just sat quietly."

“Did it work?” asked Elias.

“It worked very well,” Mr. Sterling said. “The restaurants couldn’t make money with protesters sitting at their counters. Meanwhile, the whole country was watching the protesters’ peaceful actions. Slowly, the whole system of separating races in public spaces began to fall apart.”

They talked about peaceful protests for the rest of the class. Elias followed everything carefully, and when class ended he turned to Ada.

“I’ve got an idea about how we might get our free time back,” he said. “Meet me on the soccer field at recess tomorrow.”

The next day, Ada joined Elias on the soccer field, and he told her about his plan. “We’re going to sit down right in the middle of the field,” he said. Ada looked at him as though she thought he was crazy. “It’s a sit-in,” Elias explained, “like we learned about in class yesterday. We’re going to sit here quietly and refuse to play to protest the new recess rules.”

“Do you really think that will work?” Ada asked.

“I think it’s worth a try,” Elias said. “It worked for the civil rights protesters, so why not us?”

Ada looked unsure but sat down next to him.

At first, nothing much happened. Then Ms. Fremont, the teacher in charge of the soccer game, jogged up to them.

“Ada and Elias, what are you doing here? I need you over on this team, please,” she said. They looked at each other nervously but didn’t move.



“Don’t you want to play today?” she asked.

They shook their heads silently. Ms. Fremont looked at them for a moment. A couple of other kids came over, trying to see what was holding up the game.

“Well . . . you can take a break today,” Ms. Fremont said, “but you can’t do it here. I need you to move to the sidelines so you don’t get hurt. And I’m going to need you back in the game tomorrow, okay?”

Reluctantly, Elias and Ada rose and shuffled off the field. “Walk really slowly,” Elias whispered to Ada. “We want people to notice what we’re doing. These protests only work if lots of people join in.”

His plan worked. As kids moved in and out of the game, several of them asked Elias and Ada what they were doing. When Elias explained, people got excited; clearly, many other kids were unhappy with the new rules, too. By the end of recess, several more students had joined them on the sidelines, watching the game quietly. When the whistle blew, they all stood and returned to class.

All that day, word of Elias’s protest spread throughout the school. Kids kept coming up to him in the halls during class breaks and passing him notes. By the end of the day, his throat hurt from all the talking he’d been doing. He told everyone, “If you want to protest the new rules, meet us on the soccer field tomorrow at recess.”

The following day, a group of thirty kids waited for Elias on the soccer field. Elias was surprised. He’d never thought that so many kids would join in. He looked around, cleared his throat, and spoke to the crowd.

“All right, everybody,” he called, “let’s try this again. We’ll sit in the middle of the field. They’re not going to be able to play the game with all of us sitting there.”





As the students began sitting down, the teacher came running over.

“What is this again?” she asked sharply. Elias spoke up.

“We’re having a peaceful protest, Ms. Fremont,” he said. “We want our free time at recess back.”

Ms. Fremont pursed her lips and ordered everyone to get up, but no one did.

“Whose idea was this?” Ms. Fremont asked. Elias and Ada raised their hands.

Ms. Fremont shook her head and said, “I think it’s time for a trip to the principal’s office.”



The principal, Ms. King, looked from Elias to Ada and back again.

“Explain this to me, please,” she said.

Elias explained how much he’d been looking forward to playing chess with Ada at recess this year. He explained how much he hated playing soccer. He explained how angry he was that there was no free time at recess anymore. He explained how he’d gotten the idea for a sit-in in social studies class. When he finished, there was a long silence.



“All right, you two—I understand why you’re unhappy,” Ms. King said finally. “But what about all the kids who like playing soccer? What do they think about the new recess rules?”

“I don’t know,” Elias admitted.

Ms. King nodded. “I think we need to know more,” she told them. “I want you to write a letter explaining how you feel. Then I want to see how many of the other students are willing to sign it. You have three days to bring me your **petition**. We have about four hundred students in this school. If you can get more than two hundred **signatures**, I’ll work with you to look at changing the rules. Meanwhile, no more sit-ins. Do we have a deal?”

Elias and Ada nodded.



That night after school, Ada and Elias worked on their petition. In the letter, they argued for a return of free time at recess.

The next day, they began to pass around their petition all over the school. They found that once the kids understood what was in the petition, most were happy to sign. It seemed as though everyone was fed up.

“First music class got canceled, then art class, and now there’s this recess stuff,” another fifth grader complained to Ada. “It’s like we never get to do anything fun at school anymore.”

By the end of the second day, they had more than two hundred signatures. Elias and Ada marched into Ms. King's office and put the paper down on her desk. Ms. King examined it and looked up at them.

"You've explained your actions well," she said. "Now let me explain mine. The school had some big **budget** cuts this year, and we had to cut P.E. as well as art and music. We didn't want to cut any of them, you understand, but we had no choice. Meanwhile, the law says that elementary school students must get thirty minutes of exercise every day. I thought that the only way for us to do that was to get everyone playing sports during recess. But I can see that this is not working for everyone and that the students are unhappy. So we'll need to think together about what we can do to find a new solution."

Elias and Ada thought about it.

"What if we could raise the money to bring P.E. back?" asked Ada suddenly. "Could we have our free time at recess back if we brought back P.E.?"



"I think so," said Ms. King slowly, "but that won't be easy. You won't raise the money for a P.E program with just a bake sale or a car wash."

"We need to reach more people," said Elias. "Wait a second! I just saw something the other day that might work for us. It was an **app** you can use to raise money online. We can set a **funding** goal, and people can give whatever they want from their phones or computers."

"We can certainly try it," Ms. King said.

For the rest of that week, Elias and Ada worked with Ms. King to set up a fund-raiser online. On Friday, the fund-raiser went up, and they sat back to wait and hope.

Over the weekend, they watched as their fund-raiser link was shared, and shared, and shared again throughout their town.



On Monday morning before the start of school, Elias and Ada raced into the principal's office with some news. The owner of a local sporting goods store had called Elias personally. He wanted to give money to fund the school's P.E. program for the next five years.

Ms. King sat back in her chair and looked from one to the other.

"Well done, you two," she said quietly.

Elias and Ada grinned at each other and did a high-five. Ms. King stood up and shook their hands. "I'll be in touch with Mr. Pope at the sporting goods store," she told them. "Meanwhile, I just heard the bell for recess. Don't you two have a game of chess to catch up on?"

Glossary

app (<i>n.</i>)	a computer program or application designed for a mobile electronic device such as a cell phone (p. 14)
budget (<i>n.</i>)	an amount of money to be used for a specific purpose or time frame (p. 13)
civil rights (<i>n.</i>)	legal, social, and economic rights that guarantee freedom and equality for all citizens (p. 4)
funding (<i>n.</i>)	money given by a government or other organization for a specific purpose (p. 14)
petition (<i>n.</i>)	a formal written request, usually accompanied by the signatures of a large number of citizens (p. 11)
protests (<i>n.</i>)	actions done to express strong disagreement or disapproval (p. 4)
resisted (<i>v.</i>)	fought against something; opposed control or change (p. 4)
signatures (<i>n.</i>)	people's names, each signed by that person (p. 11)
sit-in (<i>n.</i>)	a form of peaceful protest that involves people sitting in a particular place and refusing to move (p. 4)