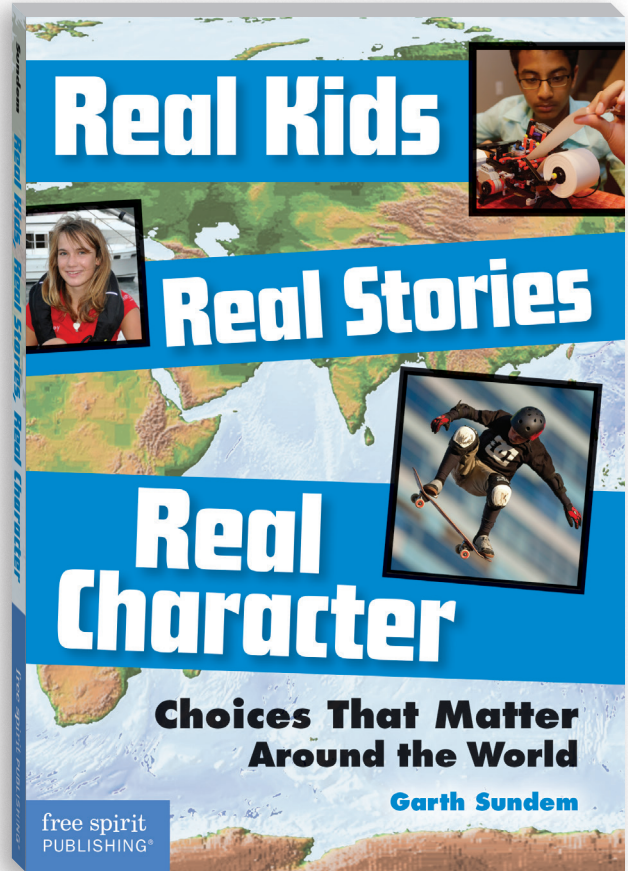


# A Leader's Guide to



## Garth Sundem

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# A Note to Teachers, Parents, Leaders, and Other Adults

If you've ever built a sandcastle below the high-tide line, you know what it can be like to help young people understand the power of their actions, decisions, and character. If your lessons become morality lectures, you can dig all you want, but tomorrow the water will have wiped the beach clean. Instead of making sure kids can recite the names and birthdays of five famous heroes or remember the difference between grit and persistence, the *Real Kids* books hope to help kids hold visions of their best selves in their *hearts*.

That's where a child's power to change the world lives—not just in a student's brain, but in his or her fingers and ankles and shoulder blades and everything in between, permeating every aspect of the way he or she walks through the world. You can't *tell* this kind of thing. You have to *show* it. The *Real Kids* books admit the impossibility of defining heroism or character in a way that will impact kids' lives once the bell rings or they close the book for the night; instead, these books offer models that we hope will light the flame of *possibility* in young readers.

The kids featured in these books are special in the same way that every child is unique and special—just like the students in your classroom, family, or group. By experiencing the actions of others just like themselves from all around the world, kids can truly internalize a lasting model of what it means to act with purpose, compassion, and commitment in their lives.

—Garth Sundem

# Suggestions for How to Use These Books

*Real Kids, Real Stories, Real Change* and *Real Kids, Real Stories, Real Character* include short, stand-alone stories of courageous and impactful young people from around the world. Here are some ways that teachers, parents, homeschoolers, and other adults can use these books:

## **To Begin or End a Class or Lesson**

Some teachers choose to read these stories aloud in their classrooms as a way to help kids settle in before instruction starts, as a way to close the day on a positive note, or even as a reward for finishing other work. Because the stories are short, they function well as a positive addition to other instruction or as a positive way to use extra time.

## **To Enrich Existing Curriculum**

Because the kids in these stories represent many interests, cultures, challenges, and activities, the stories often can be used to enrich an existing curriculum. For example, students might enjoy reading or hearing a story about another child's environmental activism while your class is studying a nature-based science unit. Or, you might use stories from a region of the world you are studying. Stories about kids using math, science, sports, art, or music can add a component of reading to other content areas.

## **As an Integral Part of Instruction**

The most straightforward use of these stories is in units studying heroes, character, service learning, or other curriculum designed to support whole-child education. In these cases, the *Real Kids* books can be central to the curriculum. You might have students work in small groups, partners, or individually to choose a story they find particularly inspiring and then help students find ways to interact with or express the story in their own lives.

# Questions for Reflection, Discussion, and Writing: *Real Kids, Real Stories, Real Change*

## **The Doggy Dung Disaster**

Why do we buy bottled drinks and then also buy water bottles? Can you think of anything else we buy that comes in packaging we could use for something else?

## **The Longest Walk**

It can be challenging to make people care about the things you care about. In this story, Omar Castillo Gallegos uses a long walk to get people to care about the Mexican rainforest. What event, adventure, or activity could you use to raise awareness of the issues that are close to your heart?

## **Turtle Power**

The earth's population is growing, and more people means they need more space. Much of this space comes from developing land that provides animal habitats. Can you think of any alternatives? Now that modern medicine gives us the potential to grow the human population, how can we ensure space for the natural world as well?

## **Plastic Bags Sacked**

It's hard to remember to always bring cloth bags to the grocery store! Sometimes you forget to bring them and sometimes you weren't planning to go to the store but end up just stopping by. Some stores charge 5 to 10 cents (or more) per plastic bag. It may be harder for people with less money to pay these fees. Do you think that charging for plastic bags is fair? Whether or not it's fair, do you think the environmental benefits are worth it?

## **Show Me the Water!**

Water conservation seems impossible to do on your own. How much difference can shortening your shower by 30 seconds really make? It's when *everybody* takes a shorter shower that we save some serious water! If you could ask everybody in your neighborhood, city, state, or country to do one small thing to save water, what would it be?

## **Comic Book Hero**

Jumping over a building in a single bound is great and all, but you can do better. What would your comic book hero be able to do? What would be his or her super powers? What would your superhero do with these powers?

## **Top of the World**

Because of who you are, there are things other people assume you're not able to do. Maybe because you like language arts, you're not supposed to be good at math.



Maybe because you're short, you're not supposed to make the basketball team. If someone looked at you from the outside, what do you think this person would assume you *can't* do? Unfortunately, some of these assumptions may be true. Maybe you won't ever dunk a basketball. But some of these assumptions aren't true. What do people unfairly assume about you, and how could you prove them wrong?

### **When Small Voices Unite**

Imagine you're standing in front of a huge crowd of adults. Everyone is there to hear you speak. What would you speak about? What would you say?

### **Come Together**

Way, way back in human history, survival required being part of a tribe. These tribes shared food and defended themselves from other tribes. Today this "tribe mentality" is wired deep in our brains. What "tribes" do you belong to? Does your tribe have enemies? How would you compare the advantages of fighting these enemies to the benefits of making peace?

### **Get Up, Stand Up**

Every young person in the United States is guaranteed equal educational opportunity regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or financial status. But some schools have classes that only admit certain students. Maybe you have to test in or be chosen for these classes. Is this fair? Does the existence of higher- and lower-level classes lead to inequality in educational opportunity?

### **Living Proof**

Some things we know are bad for us, like smoking and not getting enough exercise. Other things *might* be bad for us, like eating crops sprayed with pesticides or eating meat from animals raised with antibiotics. What have you heard about things that can affect your health? Do you believe these things are harmful and if so, why?

### **From Rug Maker to Rescuer**

Pointing out problems isn't always a good way to earn popularity points. Have you ever seen something that was wrong but didn't say anything about it? Have you ever spoken out against something that was wrong despite knowing that your words could make things difficult for you?

### **Hear That?**

Ryan Patterson's sign language translator is a tool that helps hearing people understand non-hearing people. If you could invent one tool that lets you understand another person or group of people, what would it be? How would it work, and what information would it help you know?

### **Pop Art**

Your perspective on the world is unique. You know and see things that no one else does. Think about one of these things. It might be something little you notice on your

way home from school every day, or the way a pet greets you when you get home, or a funny joke you have with your friends. Once you've come up with a unique perspective, draw it!

### **Early Warning System**

Your intuition can alert you to things your brain might not sense. But it's not a perfect system! Your intuition can also make you scared of the dark or reluctant to meet new people or try new things. When has your intuition helped you solve a problem or avoid a bad situation? When has your intuition been wrong? Have you ever assumed something (or someone!) would be lame, but it turned out awesome?

### **Workers Unite!**

In a labor union, workers get together to demand higher wages or better working conditions. If the employers don't agree, the workers could stop working. But sometimes a business can't afford to pay its workers higher wages. To make ends meet, a company might have to let go some of its workers or charge more for its products or services. What do you think about labor unions? Is it right for workers to demand higher pay? Or, if people are unhappy with their jobs, should they just find new jobs?

### **Sow What You Reap**

P.B.K.L. Agyirey-Kwakye planted what he needed, namely trees for firewood. What do you need? If you could plant something that would grow into a thing you need, what would it be?

### **Ryan's Wells**

What is the difference between solving someone's problem and helping someone solve his or her own problem? What are the pluses and minuses of each approach? When is it right to swoop in to solve a problem quickly and easily and when is it better to step back and let a situation sort itself out?

### **Back on the Board**

Surfing after losing your arm in a shark attack is an extreme example of the phrase "getting back on the horse that threw you." But everyone has had opportunities to try again after failure. When have you had to "get back on the horse" in your life?

### **A Wish to Breathe Free**

If you could step away from your life to look at it from another perspective, what injustices might you see? Who would you "speak for" and what would you say?

### **The Matchless Girl of Matches**

It might seem like you need a new phone, new clothes, or new headphones. But what do you *really* need in order to succeed? What do you need to build a successful life after you finish school?



### **Lemons to Lemonade**

Forgetting a homework assignment is an opportunity to get more organized. Not making the basketball team is an opportunity to try something new. In your life, when has a failure or mistake opened new doors?

### **New Land, New Life**

When so many people escape from a country, it can leave a struggling country even worse off than it was before. When is it right for a person to seek a better life elsewhere and when is it right to stay put and try to transform a country from within?

### **A Leg Up on the Competition**

If you are the fastest runner, anything less than winning might seem like a failure. If you have health challenges, just finishing the race can be a major victory. How do your expectations determine “success”? Do you think you should set low expectations so that you can “succeed” more often?

### **See It to Believe It**

How much trash does your family throw away every week? Does it overflow the bin or could you go a few weeks without getting rid of it? Think about what goes *into* the trash. Is it food or packaging or dust bunnies? Pick one of these “trash categories”—how could you cut down on the amount that ends up in the waste bin?

### **Outta This World**

When you’re young, so many of the things you do seem like “practice”—you practice writing stories and building inventions and arguing your opinions so that you can do those things for real when you’re an adult. But Christopher Paolini shows that you can do “real” things even while you’re young. How could you use your talent, time, and tenacity to do something real *right now*?

### **Sports Hero**

Which do you think is more intense, a sport you play with your mind or a sport you play with your body? Which kind do you think is most celebrated at your school?

### **Beyond His Years**

What is your definition of *wisdom*? Do you think you need to have lived a long life full of many experiences to have wisdom, or is it something you can be born with or discover while you’re young?

### **Young Master Yani**

Is there something of which you consider yourself a “master”? Are you on your way toward mastery of something? What has it taken or will it take for you to be a master of something you care deeply about?

## **Snail Paint**

From dandelions to dryer lint, the overlooked things in your world can be useful. Research the use of one overlooked item or plant or animal. Now show your class how to use it!

# Questions for Reflection, Discussion and Writing: *Real Kids, Real Stories, Real Character*

## **Zach Veach: The Courage to Be Different**

Why do you think it was hard for Zach’s parents to let him start racing? How was Zach affected by his father’s courage? Have you had anyone in your life who has shown similar courage toward you?

## **Eunice Muba: To Educate a Girl Is to Educate a Nation**

The culture in which Eunice Muba lives puts restrictions on certain members of society. What restrictions do you think are imposed by the culture you live in? What kind of courage would it take to push against these restrictions?

## **Winter Vinecki: Born to Run, Learning to Fly**

This story starts with tragedy. Have you or someone you know experienced a tragedy that required courage to endure? Do you think that sometimes tragedies lead to great things?

## **Arti Verma: “Caste”-ing Off**

When we think of courage, the first thing that comes to mind is physical courage—the willingness to confront danger. But as Arti Verma shows, courage has many meanings. What do you think courage means to Arti Verma? What other kinds of courage do you know?

## **Tom Schaar: Fully Committed**

If you only try something halfway, failure seems safer—you know you could do better if you really wanted to. If you try 100 percent, failure is scary—not only could you deck yourself super hard on a skateboard ramp, but giving your all and failing means you might not be good enough. Right? Which way do you choose to fail? Which is better?

## **Michael Bowron: How to Hotwire a Truck Radio**

Michael put himself in danger to save his dad’s life. Where is the line between courage and stupidity? Is there such a thing as too much risk when helping others?

## **Jasuel Rivera: Clean Up That Mess!**

Look around you. What materials do you see? Brainstorm five things you could make with these materials!

## **Calista Frederick-Jaskiewicz: Origami Salami**

There is art and there’s math and science, and these things don’t mix. Or do they? How do you think art is expressed in math and science? How do you think science and math are used in art?

**Shubham Banerjee: Creativity Is Inside You**

Shubham's project came from the need to solve a specific problem: braille printers were too expensive. What problem do you see in the world and what could you invent to solve it?

**Sam and Ben Tollison: A Monster to Love**

Sam and Ben's creativity builds a connection between people. It's not just that a sick child gets a cute monster, but that this monster connects the child with the giver (and the giver with the child). The gift of a monster shows this person he or she isn't alone in the world. Who do you know who could use a connection like that? Now, how can you use creativity to make a connection?

**Amanda LaMunyon: Mistakes Are Part of the Painting**

Some skills are easier for some people than others. Make a list or think about what you are good at. Now, think about or list what you are bad at. Pick one of these skills that is challenging for you. What could you start doing today to improve this skill?

**Alex McKelvey: 600 Acts of Kindness**

This story includes a list of some of the gestures Alex made to express kindness. Which of these acts do you think were *most* kind? Which ones fall lower on the list? In general, what makes something kind?

**Kevin Curwick: @OsseoNiceThings**

Insults are about power—they make you feel better than the person you insulted. What do you think is the purpose of a compliment? Whether online or in the real world, you have the opportunity to offer compliments or insults. Can you find the time today to offer an unexpected compliment?

**Connor Long: Nice Guys Finish Last**

If you're reading this book or any book, you're pretty lucky. It means you can read, you're in a classroom, or someone cares enough about you to read to you. There are people in this world, and even in your community, who aren't as lucky. Some people, like Connor Long's brother Cayden, can't play on the playground without special equipment or assistance, or are left out because they look different or act differently than others. What could you do for someone like this today?

**Hashmat Suddat: People Don't Know and I Don't Blame Them**

No matter who you are, there are things about you that people will misunderstand. Maybe it's something about the way you look, or an assumption about your skills, motivations, or even your character. When have you felt misunderstood? What truth would you like people to know about you?

**Justice Miller: Turning Down Fame**

Think about a time when you had a choice to do the right thing or the thing that would make you look good. Maybe you were tempted to copy a friend's homework

assignment? Maybe you gave in to the temptation to take credit for something you didn't really do? Try to come up with an example of when you acted for your personal benefit and one example of when you did the right thing despite it being hard. Finally, forgive yourself for the times when you acted for your benefit instead of doing what was right. Wanting to be seen as awesome is part of being human. Accepting this can help you do what's right the next time.

### **Robert Nay: Bubble Ball**

If you had to spend 200 hours learning to do something completely new, what would it be? Why is this skill important or meaningful to you? Now . . . could you spend that much time learning a new skill? When you really think about it, 200 hours isn't that much, is it?

### **Christopher Cruz: Drab to Fab**

Christopher and his classmates at PS 123 transformed the school cafeteria. What at your school needs transforming? Is it a physical space, a school rule, part of the school culture? Now, what can you do about it? Warning: this might require persistence and grit.

### **Danny DiPeitro: A Persistent Hunch**

Have you ever felt like adults look at you as "just a kid"? On the other hand, sometimes adults' experiences let them look at situations from a more mature perspective. When should an adult's opinion matter more than the opinion of a young person? When should a young person be taken seriously despite his or her opinion going against what some adults think?

### **Mikaela Shiffrin: Practice Makes Perfect**

Is there a skill or an activity you want to get better at? What could you do to *really* practice? For example, in basketball you could shoot 100 three-pointers every day. To improve your writing, you could write 1,000 words every day. For cooking, you could try making a new recipe every day. Improvement isn't always easy. It's about persistence and grit. But if you choose to follow through and keep practicing, you could be the next Mikaela Shiffrin of your activity.

### **Samantha Garvey: Big Mussels of Science**

Samantha Garvey shows that it's possible to stay focused on success even when you encounter hurdles and major distractions. Everyone faces their own challenges and distractions in life. Maybe the challenges that threaten to sidetrack your success have to do with family or friends or an opportunity to make unhealthy decisions. How do Samantha's distractions compare with the challenges you and the people you know face?

### **Tatyana McFadden: Ya Sama!**

In this story, Tatyana overcomes two major things: her disability and unfair rules. Which of these do you think required more resilience? Just like Tatyana, you probably

have personal challenges and challenges within your school, society, or culture. Which do you think require the most personal resilience?

**Amit Dodani: My Name, My Story**

Amit's challenge required even more resilience because of the expectations generated by his parents being gifted speakers. Maybe you feel pressure from your parents, siblings, or others to act certain ways—good or bad! In what ways do you meet or not meet these expectations?

**James Williams: Victor Not Victim**

Do you think that everyone is born with the resilience needed to overcome circumstances like those of James Williams's childhood, or do you think that James is somehow special?

**Benni Cinkle: That Girl in Pink**

On the Internet, you can be cruel without anyone knowing who you are. What do you think it says about us as humans that we can be so cruel when we know our actions are anonymous? Also, why do you think Benni Cinkle's response to the Internet cruelty made people change their opinions of her?

**Diego Frazão Torquato: Music from the Heart**

How do you think music contributed to Diego's resilience? Do you use music to help your own resilience? If not music, what do you lean on when times are tough?

**William Kamkwamba: Tower of Power**

Food, water, electricity, education, clothes, shelter—many or all of these things are probably provided for you. What aspects of your life *are* you responsible for? What do you consider your most basic responsibilities?

**Laura Dekker: Around the World in 519 Days**

It seems like this story should be included in the section on courage. Why do you think it is placed in the responsibility section instead?

**Diane Tran: Jailed for Responsibility**

Diane Tran makes a difficult choice: choosing to work so hard for so many hours that some days she just can't make it to school. By acting responsibly toward her siblings, she acts irresponsibly toward her education. What do you think about the choices she makes? If you were in Diane's situation, what would you do?

**Sarbast Ali: A School of One**

Responsibility can be like an arrow pointing at something you are responsible *for*. Maybe you act responsibly for a parent or a neighbor or your school or yourself. In this story, who or what do you think Sarbast felt responsible for? Who or what do you feel responsible for? For which of these responsibilities do you feel most strongly?



# Suggestions for Relevant National Standards

Civics <sup>1</sup>	Grades K–4	Grades 5–8
	<p><b>II. What are the basic values and principles of American democracy?</b></p> <p>D. What are the benefits of diversity in the United States?</p> <p>E. How should conflicts about diversity be prevented or managed?</p> <p>F. How can people work together to promote the values and principles of American democracy?</p> <p><b>V. What are the roles of the citizen in American democracy?</b></p> <p>E. What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American democracy?</p>	<p><b>V. What are the roles of the citizen in American democracy?</b></p> <p>A. What is citizenship?</p> <p>B. What are the rights of citizens?</p> <p>C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?</p> <p>D. What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?</p> <p>E. How can citizens take part in civic life?</p>

1. Center for Civic Education, *National Standards for Civics and Government*, [www.civiced.org/standards](http://www.civiced.org/standards).

Economics <sup>2</sup>	Grades K–4	Grades 5–8
	<p><b>Content Standard 1: Scarcity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People make choices because they can't have everything they want.</li> <li>4. Whenever a choice is made, something is given up because resources are limited.</li> </ol> <p><b>Content Standard 14: Entrepreneurship</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Entrepreneurs are individuals who are willing to take risks, to develop new products, and start new businesses. They recognize opportunities, like working for themselves, and accept challenges.</li> <li>2. Entrepreneurs and workers often are innovative. They attempt to solve problems by developing and marketing new or improved products and processes.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Content Standard 1: Scarcity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The choices people make have both present and future consequences.</li> </ol>
Geography <sup>3</sup>	Grades K–12	
	<p><b>The World in Spatial Terms</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context</li> </ol> <p><b>Places and Regions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The physical and human characteristics of places</li> <li>6. How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions</li> </ol> <p><b>Human Systems</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics</li> <li>13. How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface</li> </ol>	

2. Council for Economic Education, *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics*, [councilforeconed.org/resource/voluntary-national-content-standards-in-economics](http://councilforeconed.org/resource/voluntary-national-content-standards-in-economics).

3. National Geographic Society, *National Geography Standards*, [nationalgeographic.org/standards/national-geography-standards](http://nationalgeographic.org/standards/national-geography-standards).

U.S. History	Grades K–4 <sup>4</sup>	Grades 5–12 <sup>5</sup>
	<p><b>Topic 1: Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago</b>  <b>1A:</b> The student understands family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.</p> <p><b>Topic 4: The History of Peoples of Many Cultures around the World</b>  <b>7A:</b> The student understands the cultures and historical developments of selected societies in such places as Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe.  <b>8A:</b> The student understands the development of technological innovations, the major scientists and inventors associated with them and their social and economic effects.</p>	<p><b>United States Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)</b>  <b>1:</b> Recent developments in foreign policy and domestic politics  <b>2:</b> Economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States</p>

4. National Center for History in the Schools, *National Standards for History in Grades K–4*, [www.nchs.ucla.edu/history-standards/standards-for-grades-k-4/standards-for-k-4](http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/history-standards/standards-for-grades-k-4/standards-for-k-4).

5. National Center for History in the Schools, *United States History Content Standards for Grades 5–12*, [www.nchs.ucla.edu/history-standards/us-history-content-standards](http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/history-standards/us-history-content-standards).

Language Arts <sup>6</sup>	Grades K–12
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="407 306 1404 541">1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and non-fiction, classic and contemporary works.</li> <li data-bbox="407 583 1404 701">2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.</li> <li data-bbox="407 743 1404 978">3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).</li> <li data-bbox="407 1020 1404 1094">11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.</li> </ol>

6. IRA/NCTE, *Standards for the English Language Arts*, [www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/Sample/StandardsDoc.pdf](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/Sample/StandardsDoc.pdf).

# Relevant English Language Arts Common Core Anchor Standards<sup>7</sup>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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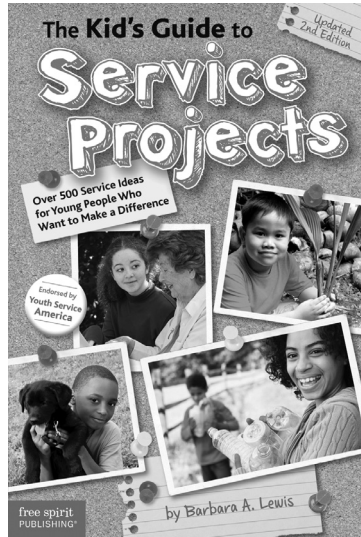
## About the Author



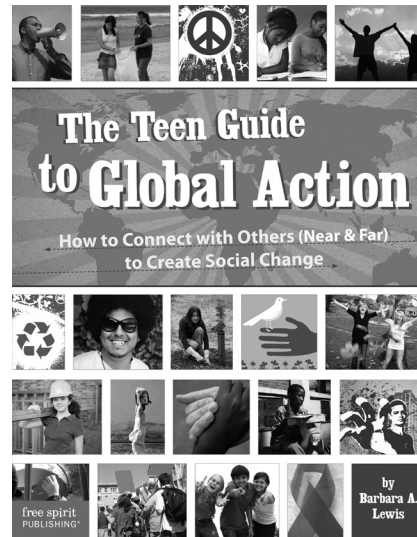
Garth Sundem hopes to make nonfiction non-boring, with over a dozen books for young people and adults. He has been a TED-ED speaker and has been featured on *Good Morning America*, the BBC, Public Radio International, and National Public Radio. In addition to books, he writes for [GeekDad.com](http://GeekDad.com), [PsychologyToday.com](http://PsychologyToday.com), and at his website ([garthsundem.com](http://garthsundem.com)) where you can learn more about his other books, his speaking, and connect with Garth on social media. Garth lives in Boulder, Colorado, with his wife (a former teacher and now a psychologist focusing on gifted education), two kids, five chickens, two guinea pigs, and a pack of Labradors.



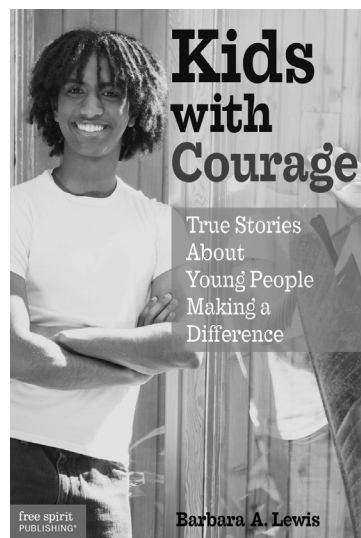
# Other Great Books from Free Spirit



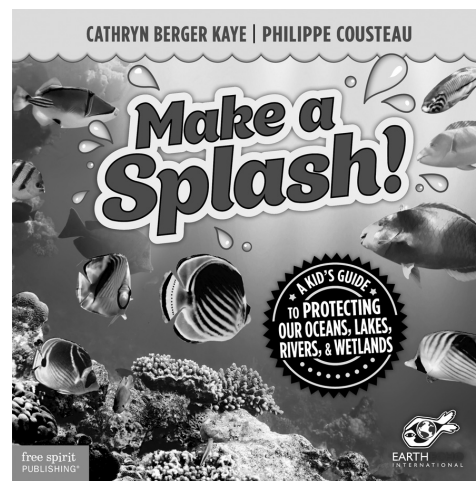
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