



## 'Mathematics for Our Past'

GRADES 4-6

"Mathematics for Our Past" began as a 6th-grade statistics project using tombstone data from the Ingham County Home Cemetery near our school.

Our students come from upper-middle-class homes and live in a sheltered suburban community with little exposure to anyone significantly different than themselves. Teaching tolerance is difficult when they have few experiences with diversity. This project introduces students to a diverse group of people who experienced intolerance.

In the late 1800s, the cemetery started as a burial place for residents of the Ingham County Poor Farm. Upon hearing the name, many ask, "What is a Poor Farm?" In the 19th century, it was mandated that each county care for its poor. The Poor Farm was a home for those who had been cast out of society: people with physical or mental disabilities; the elderly; those with no

family or estranged from their families; and unmarried, pregnant young women rejected by their families.

On our first visit to collect data and do rubbings, students had lots of questions. Why was the cemetery so run down? Why were babies buried there?

More questions came when we analyzed the data. Why was there so little information? A last name, maybe a first name. A death date, but no birth date. Sometimes a death age. A few small babies and a lot of people in their 70s, 80s and 90s, but hardly anyone in between.

The death years ranged from 1890 to 1943 and there were no tombstones from the 1920s. Why? Students had many guesses. Was it something to do with World War I? Was the farm shut down during those years? Did no one die in that time period? A local historian showed us how to do historical research. From that we learned that during the 1920s the Poor Farm received payment from a uni-

versity for bodies obtained for research.

Groups of students did presentations about the cemetery to anyone who would listen. We found out from the historical commission that we could apply for a historical marker for the cemetery. In the fall of the next school year our students were proud to have a historical marker dedicated at the cemetery.

This project has helped students become emotionally involved with real people who were very different than themselves. These lessons from the cemetery project enable students to better understand the meaning of tolerance, community building and justice in a very personal way.

For an excellent and complete lesson plan on learning about geography and history from your local cemetery, visit: <http://alliance.la.asu.edu/internetclass/ExampleLesson1.html>

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# Kids to the Rescue

GRADES 3-6

One day, Hadiqa, an Iranian American 6th-grader, comes to school wearing a white headscarf.

"Cool," says Tania, Hadiqa's friend.

"Not cool," whispers Tim, another 6th-grader. "What is she wearing? Looks like the Taliban. She should go back to her country." Hadiqa walks away but not before Tim grabs her and pours water all over her head and scarf.

"I'm Stephanie and this is Tyler," a voice says. "We're Conflict Managers, and we can help."

This is how Conflict Managers at Sacramento's William Land Elementary School work on the playground. A total of 11 intermediate students make up the group. After training for

five hours, each student gets a patrol day from social worker Cindy Sasaki, the coordinator.

What do the other students think of Conflict Managers? In a school survey, 90 percent of the students polled said they would recommend Conflict Managers to their friends.

For a comprehensive guide to Conflict Management developed by The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management visit: [www.state.oh.us/cdr](http://www.state.oh.us/cdr)

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**S.O.S. – Story, Options, Solution**  
CONFLICT MANAGERS' STEPS TO RESOLVE A CONFLICT

**S – STORY**

1. Agree to talk and follow the ground rules:
  - One person talks at a time
  - No interrupting
  - No name-calling or put-downs
  - Be honest
2. First person tells his/her side of the story using "I" statements.
3. Second person restates what first person said by saying, "What I heard you say was..." Ask questions for clarification.
4. Second person tells his/her side of the story using "I" statements.
5. First person restates what first person said by saying, "What I heard you say was..." Ask questions for clarification.
6. Agree on what the problem is.

**O – OPTIONS**

Brainstorm options with both people suggesting possible solutions. "Well, how about...?" No evaluating. All suggestions are accepted and written down.

**S – SOLUTION**

1. Evaluate options. Look for ones that are safe, fair and work for both people.
2. Choose a solution where both people can be winners.
3. If it doesn't work, get back together and discuss other options.
4. If this doesn't work and there is still a problem, ask a teacher you trust for help.



# Rethinking Discovery'

GRADES 6-8

Discouraged by images of Columbus greeting indigenous people with hopeful smiles and handfuls of gifts, I found it necessary to challenge middle school students with another point of view. *Morning Girl* encourages students to expand their perspectives on the themes of exploration and "discovery."

*Morning Girl* paints the story of two Taino siblings living before the arrival of Europeans. The two children in the story are the same age as most of the readers, and the students easily connect with the lives of Morning Girl and her brother, Star Boy. When they see what Columbus does in the story, they ask questions such as, "How could Columbus discover this island if people were already here?" Or, "How could he think he could force his language and religion upon these people?"

Students then listen to the song "1492," from the music compilation *I Will Be Your Friend*, and their queries are affirmed. The lyrics highlight both sides of "new world" exploration with such lines as, "It was a courageous thing to do, but someone was already here." Although the Columbus controversy is the essence of this unit, students learn skills and methods of critical thinking that are applicable to future learning and thinking about issues of tolerance, respect and empathy.

Along with *Morning Star* (ISBN# 078681358X), also see Jane Yolen's book *Encounter* (ISBN# 015201389X) for another native child's perspective on the invasion of Columbus.

*Rethinking Schools* has published *Rethinking Columbus* (\$12.95), which is considered the definitive teacher's tool for educating about the invasion of America. Visit [www.rethinkingschools.com](http://www.rethinkingschools.com).

To order your free copy of *I Will Be Your Friend* go to [www.teachingtolerance.org/resources](http://www.teachingtolerance.org/resources).

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## 1492

words & music by Nancy Schimmel

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two  
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.  
It was a courageous thing to do,  
but someone was already here.

(Chorus)

The Inuit and Cherokee,  
the Aztec and Menominee,  
Onondaga and the Cree,  
Columbus sailed across the sea,  
but someone was already here.

Columbus knew the world was round  
So he looked for the East while westward bound  
But he didn't find what he thought he found  
For someone was already here.

It isn't like 'twas empty space  
The Caribs met him face to face  
Could anyone discover the place  
When someone was already here?

So tell me who discovered what  
Thought he was in a different spot  
Columbus was lost, the Caribs were not  
They were already here.

# Write for Us!

If you're involved in a project that successfully promotes acceptance of diversity, community-building, peace and justice, tell us about it — and earn some extra money in the process.

Teacher essays (up to 1,000 words) describe effective classroom programs related to tolerance and diversity. Fees range from \$300 to \$800 per published essay.

Activity Exchange items (up to 400 words) should include concise information on specific classroom activities. A fee of \$100 to \$200 is paid for each Activity Exchange item published.

Longer lesson plans will be considered for inclusion on our website.

Fees for web activities range from \$200 to \$500.

Study previous issues of the magazine to see the style and content we're looking for, and send your manuscript to:

## Teaching Tolerance

ATTN: Submissions  
400 Washington Ave  
Montgomery, AL 36104

We also welcome artwork or photography relating to the activity.



## Breaking the Barrier

**GRADES 6-8** The day had started out normally with a game planned for language arts. We split the room in half, one side being the “yes” side and the other side the “no” side. The students were to answer questions by moving to one side of the room or the other.

“Would you stand up for a friend if they were being bullied by someone?” “Would you treat someone differently for how they looked?” It wasn’t their answers that shocked us, it was the fact that before they moved, they looked to see what their friends were doing.

All of these students were following the crowd.

We realized that these students probably did the same sort of thing in the hallways, the locker rooms and on the bus. If they saw someone being treated unfairly, they would wait to see what everyone else did before they would take action. Would they even take a moment to consider their own morals, values or sense of judgment? Would they do the wrong thing just because everyone else was doing it?

The game was originally created because the students were beginning to read a novel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, about pride and courage in the tumultuous, pre-civil rights South during the 1930s. During the reading of the novel, they contemplated the damage done by prejudice and how they could grow to be courageous individuals who stand up for what they believe.

Students became very passionate about the mistreatment of African Americans. They felt strongly about not treating others the way Cassie and her family were treated in the novel. We told them things like that still happen today and it would take each one of us to stand up for each other to stop the mistreatment of others. We had a friend come in and speak to the class about his experience growing up as an African American child in the turbulent 1950s South. Little by little, we saw their views changing as they realized that following the crowd might not be the best thing to do.

This unit provided both teachers and students the motivation to step out of their comfort zones. We continue to work on establishing a tolerant environment in our school hallways and beyond.

*The No Dissing: No Name Calling Week kit (\$129.95) is a great resource for making the hallways safe for students. Find out more at [www.nonamecallingweek.org](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org).*

*Mildren D. Taylor’s Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (\$6.99, ISBN # 0140384510) is available at Puffin Publishers.*

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## Tolerance and Genocide

GRADES 9-12

As a world history teacher, I seek to connect the events of the past with the issues of the world today. While planning a unit on World War II and the Holocaust last year, I read the book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, by Samantha Powers. It opened my eyes to the atrocities of the Armenian genocide, the Khmer Rouge, the Holocaust, Rwanda and Bosnia. Most genocides are ignored and not addressed in public schools.

I created a lesson focused on the larger question of personal responsibility. I chose this not to take away from the horrific events of World War II, but to bring to students' attention that despite the oft-quoted phrase regarding the Holocaust — "Never again" — genocides continue to occur around the world.

We discussed the statistics and evidence regarding genocides. "Who was responsible?" "Are you responsible if you do not try to stop things like this?"

"Why do people treat other human beings in ways like these?" Students wrote essays about what they would do if they were in a situation where a group was being targeted.

My 9th-grade students were thoughtful, respectful and articulate. The lesson served to expand students' thoughts about genocide from "The Holocaust was a horrible event" to the idea that genocide will continue to exist as long as our world has intolerance, ignorance and people who do not stand up for what they believe in.

This year, I am going to extend the activity into a five-day lesson thanks to Choices for the 21st Century Education Program. Choices produces curriculum units on a variety of public policy, historical issues and international issues that are designed to help students understand events and use civic judgment to explore policy alternatives.

The lessons regarding genocide were ideas that spoke to students

and remained with them after the unit ended. I think when they realized that millions of people in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe had died from genocide during their own lifetime, students were shocked, saddened and even scared.

They realized that genocide can happen anywhere in the world where intolerance exists. Some students expressed the concern, "If it could happen to them, it could happen to me."

*The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program* is available at [www.choices.edu](http://www.choices.edu) or *Choices Education Program*, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912.

Samantha Powers's book, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, is published by HarperCollins Publishers (ISBN# 0060541644).

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## Power Poetry

GRADES 9-12

In a recent creative writing class, I was shocked at the apathy my students had regarding laws and political platforms that promote hatred or intolerance. Several in the class were nearing voting age and one or two were legally able to vote, but no students were interested in finding out more about the political process. One student simply remarked, "Politics is boring."

We began to discuss some of the current issues that would affect the students in our classroom. College tuition was going up. There were issues about immigration, health care, transportation, jobs and gay marriage. They realized that many of these policies were designed to promote the intolerance of people whose ideas and beliefs didn't fit in with the dominant group. My students began to wonder how they might let other students know about these important issues. We talked about the importance of sharing ideas and beliefs by finding a common language with which we might communicate.

I wanted my students to see the range of social and political power that words could have, to see the way words could be shaped to give voice to the voiceless. We had been learning how to use literary devices and had been reading poems by authors who used these devices well. These writers also commented

on the necessity of accepting varied voices in a traditionally white, male discourse. I hoped they'd see writing as a means of transformation for themselves and their readers.

Our writing process coincided perfectly with the president's upcoming State of the Union address in January. Their assignment was to listen to the President's address and then use any combination of the poetic devices we'd learned to respond to an aspect or an idea within the speech. They read their responses out loud in class.

None of us was prepared for the range of responses written. The next day, when each student read, there was a deeper fellowship in the classroom. We were a diverse class, and we had found a way to share our personal opinions and practice tolerance of each other's varied beliefs. We learned to question rather than to criticize. We learned to listen rather than to be right or wrong.

Check out the *Favorite Poem Project* at [www.favoritepoem.org](http://www.favoritepoem.org) for ideas on how teachers can revitalize poetry in the classroom.

Kirsten Ogden

California Poets in the Schools Program  
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