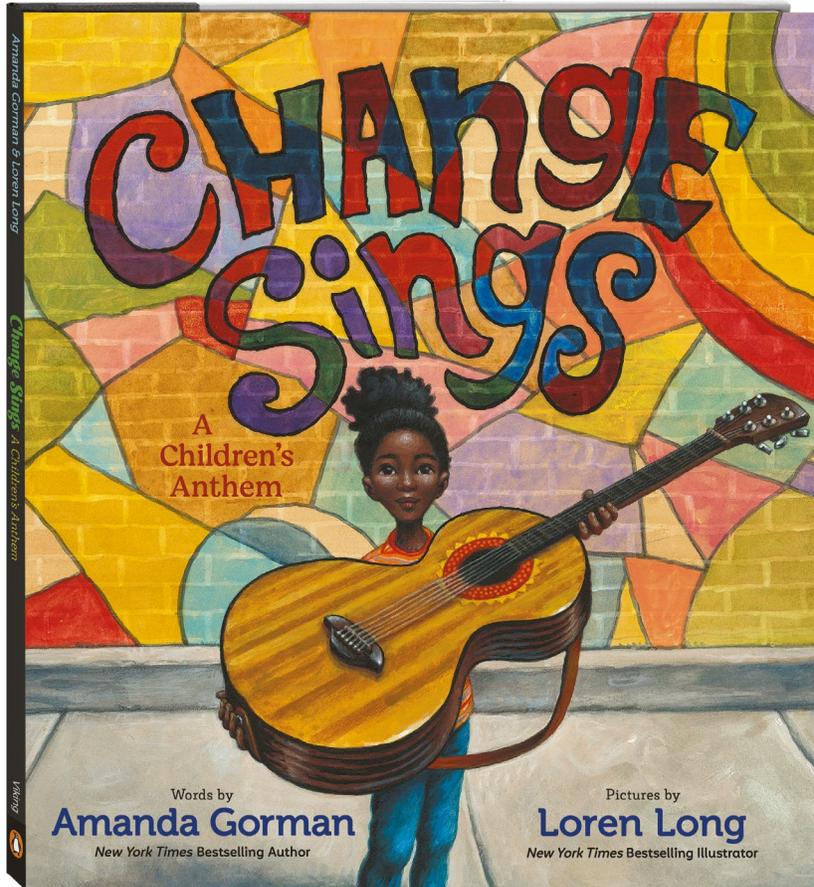


AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO **AMANDA GORMAN'S**



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About the Poet



Photo by Danny Williams

Amanda Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet in US history. She is a committed advocate for the environment, racial equality, and gender justice. Amanda's activism and poetry have been featured on the *Today Show*, PBS Kids, and *CBS This Morning*, and in the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, and *Essence*. After graduating cum laude from Harvard University, she now lives in her hometown of Los Angeles. In 2017, Amanda Gorman was appointed the first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate by Urban Word—a program that supports Youth Poets Laureate in more than sixty cities, regions, and states nationally. Gorman's performance of her poem "The Hill We Climb" at the 2021 presidential inauguration received critical acclaim and international attention. The special edition of her inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb," was published in March 2021 and debuted at #1 on the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists. Amanda appeared on the cover of *TIME* magazine in February 2021 and was the first poet to grace the cover of *Vogue* in their May 2021 issue. She was *Porter Magazine's* July 2021 cover star and received the Artistic Impact Award at the 2021 Backstage at the Geffen Awards. Her debut picture book, *Change Sings*, will be published in September 2021, and her poetry collection, *Call Us What We Carry*, will release in December 2021.

Please visit theamandagorman.com.

About the Illustrator



Photo by Pete Comparoni

Loren Long is the author and illustrator of the *New York Times* best-selling Otis series, which is in development as an animated television series. He's also the illustrator of the #1 *New York Times* best-sellers *Of Thee I Sing* by Barack Obama and *Love* by Matt de la Peña. He recently illustrated a modern edition of the Clement C. Moore classic *The Night Before Christmas*. He lives near Cincinnati with his wife and rescue hound, Charlie. Visit him online at LorenLong.com or on Twitter [@lorenlong](https://twitter.com/lorenlong).

Praise for CHANGE SINGS

★ "In rich language and vivid art, this **HOPEFUL CELEBRATION** of the life-affirming power of change to ripple out into a better future is irresistible. Text and poetry work together to regulate a careful reading of this beautiful work.

One to keep, to read, and to reread."
—*KIRKUS REVIEWS* (starred review)

★ "This **UPLIFTING** serenade will instill readers of any age with hope for the future and the initiative to improve it."
—*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, (starred review)

"A lovely and loving call to action and kindness."
—*BOOKLIST*

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DEAR EDUCATORS,

We're proud to partner with Disrupt Texts on the creation of this educator guide for *Change Sings*. Disrupt Texts is a crowdsourced, grassroots effort by teachers for teachers to aid and develop teachers committed to antiracist/antibias teaching pedagogy and practices to create change. Amanda Gorman and Loren Long's *Change Sings* is a triumphant call to action for everyone to use their abilities to make a difference, and the following material helps you and your students be changemakers in your community.

To help bring this book to life in your class, this guide is aligned to the four core principles of Disrupt Texts: 1) Continuously interrogate our own biases and how they inform our thinking. 2) Center Black, Indigenous, and voices of color in literature. 3) Apply a critical literacy lens to our teaching practices. 4) Work in communities with other antiracist educators, especially Black, Indigenous, and other educators of color. Each principle stands for actions that are culturally sustaining and antiracist. Through each principle, teachers aim to offer a curriculum that is restorative and inclusive, and therefore works toward healing identities and communities. As you read this guide, you'll see how each of these principles informs the approach recommended to teach *Change Sings*.

As educators, sharing a book in your classroom can be a powerful way to inspire and engage students. You can show them that they have the power to make changes—big or small—in the world, in their communities, and in most importantly, in themselves. We thank you for taking the time to #TeachChange and for sharing Amanda Gorman and Loren Long's *Change Sings* with your students.

SINCERELY,
DISRUPT TEXTS AND PENGUIN YOUNG READERS SCHOOL & LIBRARY MARKETING

#DISRUPTTEXTS

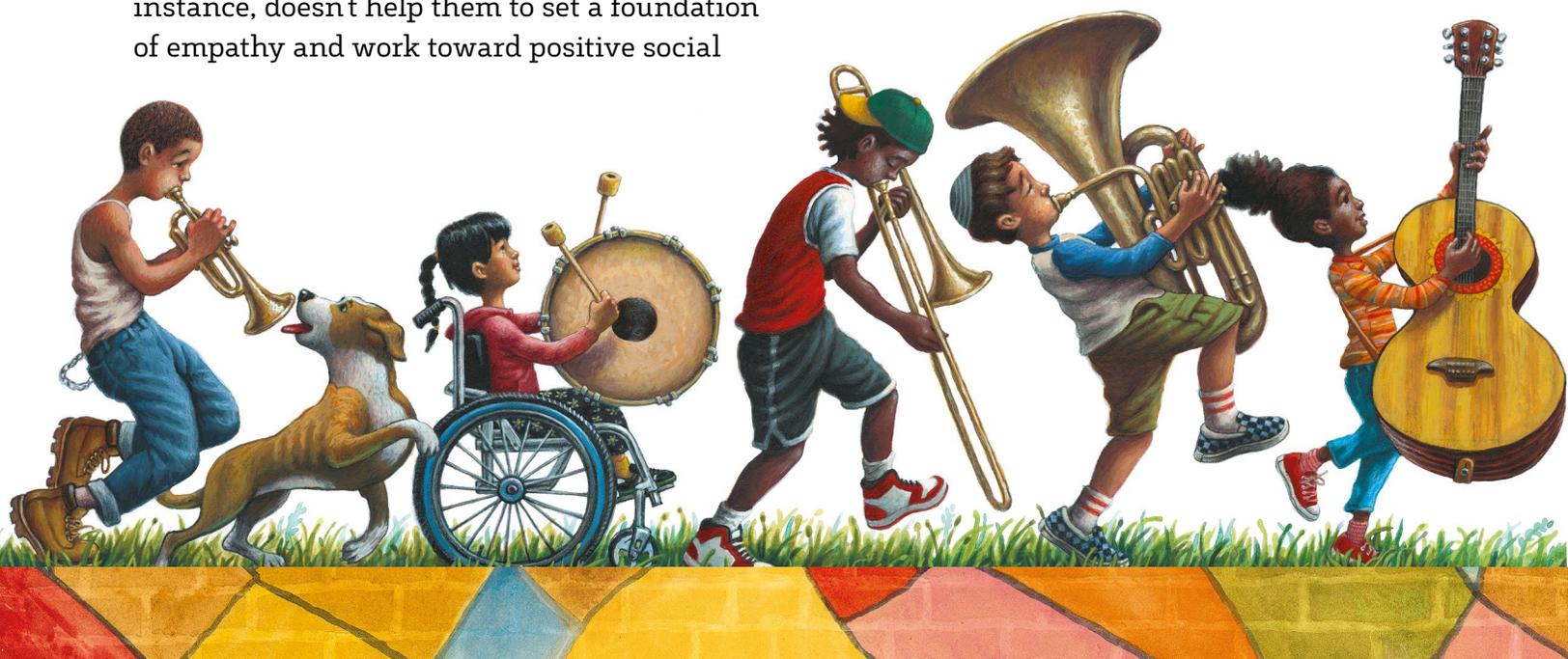
THIS GUIDE WAS WRITTEN AND DEVELOPED BY #DISRUPTTEXTS: TRICIA EBARVIA, LORENA GERMÁN, DR. KIMBERLY N. PARKER, AND JULIA TORRES. FIND OUT MORE ABOUT #DISRUPTTEXTS AT DISRUPTTEXTS.ORG.

Considerations for Teachers and Students

Change Sings is a call to action for readers to make change in their own communities. In preparation for reading the book with students, it's important to know that questions about activism and social change may surface. Students might wonder why some of the problems of hunger, intolerance, and vandalism, for example, found in the book exist. It's critical to be honest; while adults might not have the answers to why these problems exist, we must be thoughtful about not oversimplifying these matters, either. It's okay for children to know about these realities, some of which might even be impacting their own peers. For example, the main character brings food to a hungry woman and child. According to the USDA's latest report, more than 35 million people experienced hunger in 2019. Households with children are at risk of experiencing more hunger, and it is possible some of your students may be dealing with this reality. (You can reference [this site](#) for more information about childhood hunger.) Shielding children from the issue of childhood hunger, for instance, doesn't help them to set a foundation of empathy and work toward positive social

change. Instead, teachers are encouraged to openly welcome these conversations, with these books serving as a catalyst for that learning, and to believe in the power of children to make change in their world.

Gorman's words may inspire students to take action. We encourage you to create opportunities for students to practice leadership and problem-solving skills, using scenarios in *Change Sings* as a starting place. Before entering these conversations with students, consider how to engage in discussions about national issues without it becoming a partisan conversation. Find a wide variety of sources that are age-appropriate for children that invite productive conversations that enable teachers to focus on the facts about a problem, rather than what might be said about the problem. This preparation will make the conversation one that all students can engage in regardless of their political beliefs, and is a conversation focused on what the issues are and what possible solutions might be.



Themes and Essential Questions

EMBODYING CHANGE

One of the strengths of this book is that the main character models for readers what it is to be the change they want to see and how to take matters into their own hands. Gorman is clearly calling us to act and not just talk about social change. Some essential questions to ask students that focus on embodying change are:

- What changes are needed in society and what role can you play in that change?
- What stops us from working for change?
- What is an important source of motivation for you to work toward change?

RESTORATION AND HEALING

Gorman wants us to think about restoring and healing our hurting nation. Before you read, help students develop an understanding of the concepts of restoration or healing, or both. As you read with students, invite them to notice all the moments where restoration and healing are taking place. As you reach a page where the image portrays restoration or healing, pause and ask students: What action on this page is restorative? Once students have observed this throughout the book, welcome them to think about how they can practice this in their own lives.

Key Concepts

SOCIAL CHANGE

Help students understand what social change is and gain a historical understanding of previous seekers of social change. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is featured in the book and he is an example of a person from history that sought change. They should understand that social change is about making living conditions better for all people.

ACTIVISM

This is the act of fighting against oppression and for social change so that people's lives are better. Activists risk something—sometimes their lives—in order to seek social change for themselves and others.

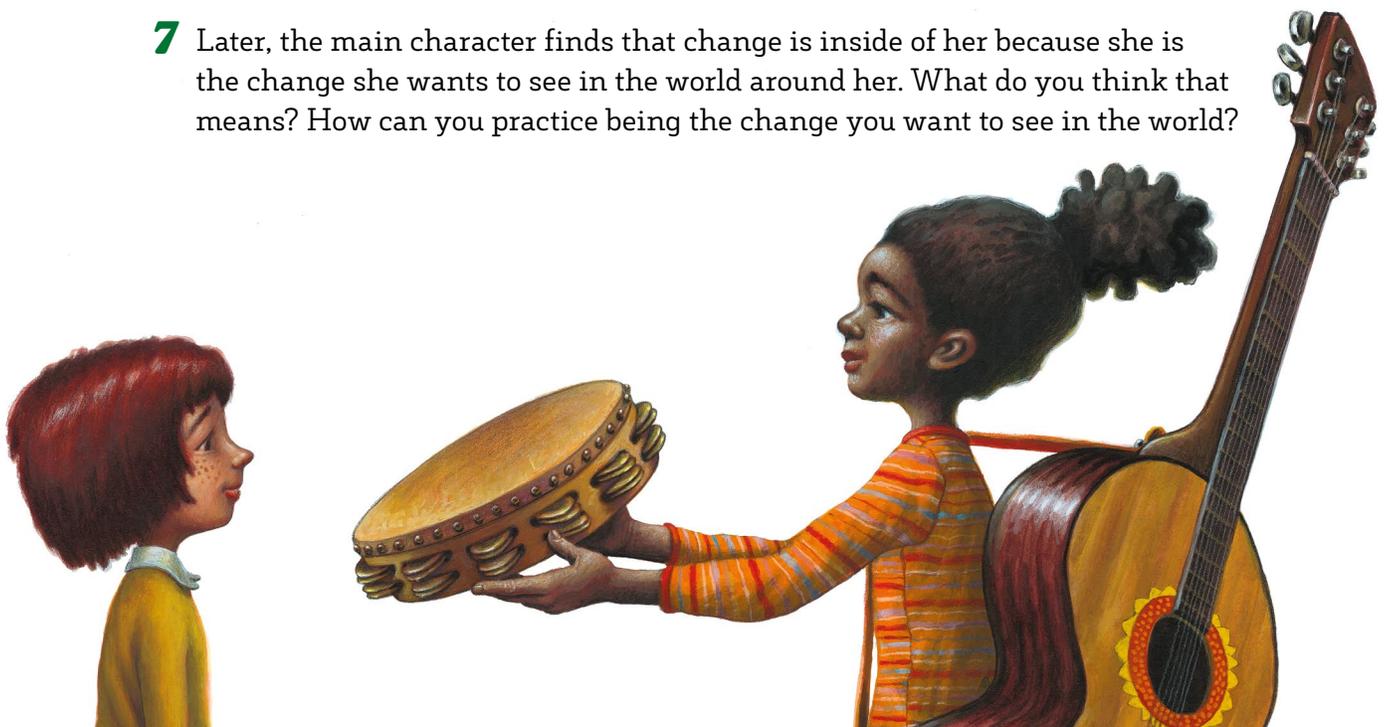
RESTORATION

This means to restore something to its original state, or to restore something that is broken and needs improvement. In the context of this book, restoration means helping people mend their hurting lives and circumstances.

Discussion and Lesson Ideas

Consider the following discussion questions for ensuring reading comprehension. These can be discussed as a whole group after reading the book together. Some questions are written for first and second graders and others are for older elementary grades.

- 1** On the first page, the main character says, “I can hear change humming.” What does “humming” mean, and what do you think she means when she says change can hum?
- 2** The main character says that she doesn’t fear change. Why would someone fear change?
- 3** What does it mean to “dream with the cries / of tried-and-true dreamers”?
- 4** The main character is at a park with a friend and they have large bags. What are they doing at the park?
- 5** The main character is bringing something in a bowl to a child and an adult. What do you think she’s doing and why is she doing it?
- 6** Page 14 says, “I show others tolerance, / Though it might take some courage.” What do you think tolerance means? Why does it require courage? On the next page is a person with a dog. What is he doing and what about his action makes him seem intolerant?
- 7** Later, the main character finds that change is inside of her because she is the change she wants to see in the world around her. What do you think that means? How can you practice being the change you want to see in the world?





Below is a list of lesson ideas that explore and expand different aspects of the book. These are lessons that might require several days to complete and also zoom into different details of the text.

EXPLORING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (THIRD AND FOURTH GRADE)

In the first couple of pages, we see a mural of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Engage students in a study to learn about him, his words, and his activism. You can play his speeches, read his messages, watch excerpts of documentaries and films about him, and more. Ideally, your learning about Dr. King will go beyond the one-sided and limited narrative often shared about him and his work. Consider an in-depth study where you ask students questions such as:

- What did Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stand for?
- What changes was he fighting for?
- Who worked with him? What organizations was he a part of?
- How was he more effective at bringing about change by working with others instead of working alone?
- Who are some local, everyday people (even in our school) that have worked toward change?



Discussion and Lesson Ideas CONTINUED

STUDYING RHYMES (FIRST AND SECOND GRADE)

Gorman calls *Change Sings* a “children’s anthem.” As you read the pages aloud, invite students to pay attention to the words that rhyme. For example, on the first page, “humming” rhymes with “coming” and “song” rhymes with “along.” Keep the rhymes displayed on a board or elsewhere in the classroom. Also, explore how this can be considered an anthem and encourage students to use Gorman’s poem as a mentor text to craft their own.

When you have discussed all the rhyming words, teach students about vowels and consonants, and identify which sounds are rhyming in the different pairings. For example, on the second page, the word “scream” rhymes with “dream.” In both words, the sound that rhymes is the vowel combination “ea.” Noticing these rhymes and studying how the letters blend together is a helpful way to learn word parts, gain spelling skills, and continue building letter knowledge as students build literacy skills.

UNDERSTANDING ACTIVISM AND PROTESTING (THIRD THROUGH FIFTH GRADE)

One of the features of Gorman’s book is its rich intertextuality. There is one page, in particular, that draws connections to larger social movements and the long history of activism and protesting. While students may know some of the larger connections, others may not see them right away. With your help, this book can lead to a rich conversation about protest strategies and social change.

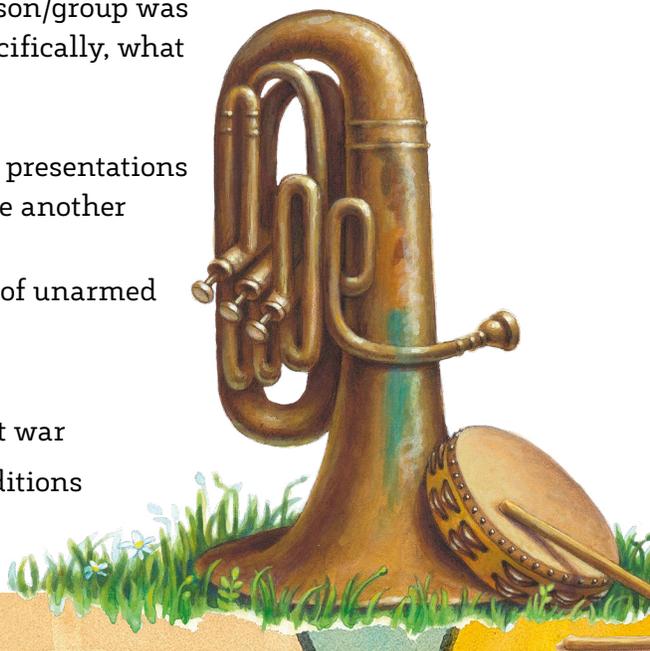
Eleven pages into the book, it says, “I use my strengths and my smarts, / Take a knee to make a stand.” That second line is echoing many protests and actions of civil disobedience that range from taking a knee to sitting, all in the name of making a stand. Getting to know people that embody what the book inspires would be a very helpful way of bringing the book to life, as well as offering models of change to follow. Consider an exploration of the following protest strategies with students.

STEP 1: Invite students to select a protester or movement from the list with links below.

STEP 2: Invite students to research and learn about what the person/group was advocating for and how they went about fighting for change. Specifically, what steps they took and what strategies they used.

STEP 3: Invite students to share their findings with the class via presentations or any other mode of sharing. This way, students are teaching one another many strategies and a diverse range of people’s stories.

- [Colin Kaepernick takes a knee](#) to protest killings by police of unarmed Black people
- [SNCC sit-ins](#) to protest segregation
- [Women in Liberia praying](#) and protesting for peace against war
- [A grape boycott](#) as a form of protest for better working conditions
- [2013 prisoner hunger strikes](#) for better conditions





Fences and Bridges

Gorman introduces the idea of a fence versus a bridge in the story when the main character literally builds a ramp/bridge for a person in a wheelchair. The reader sees the bridge scene after encountering someone who seemed “intolerant” since they were blocking their ears and were drawn as not listening and therefore close-minded. Talk to students about this analogy of building bridges and not fences. Ask: What does a fence do? How might it stop a conversation between two people? What does a bridge do? How might it lead to connection and relationship? Then, help students understand how our actions and approaches might be fences or bridges and that in our work for social change, we should be striving to be bridge builders, or connectors. Make sure students understand that an open mind is an important aspect of building relationships, or bridges, with other people. Often what separates us are our differences, but bridges cross the waters of difference.

Reflecting on the Self

Throughout the book, the main character makes a series of “I am” statements, including “I am just what the world needs.” Consider using this line as a social emotional activity with your students. First, welcome students to create a self portrait. They can portray themselves however they want, including as many artistic details as they desire. They should leave a space at the bottom of the page for a final writing task. You could possibly invite an art teacher or artist to support you with this portion! Once the portraits are finished, students can practice writing words by adding ones around their self portrait that state their talents, gifts, and special parts of who they are. For example, students might write: friendly, writer, singer, mathematician, or other words. If they need help writing these words down, they can speak them and you can write them in a visible place so they can copy them onto their self-portrait. When the portraits are done, students can copy the sentence “I am just what the world needs” at the bottom of their page. These can be displayed in the classroom so that the students can witness each other’s strengths and beauty, asserting that this class is, in fact, what the world needs!

Middle and High School Activities

Using picture books with older students can be a powerful way to introduce complex topics described in simple terms. Ensuring that students understand nuanced ideas allows for robust discussion and processing of complex topics. This book can be used to explore issues of social justice, poverty and homelessness, hunger, intolerance, and disability and access, for example. Consider using this book to launch into a study by asking students questions based on the topics in the chart. You can begin by reading the book as a class, then partnering them off to briefly brainstorm answers to these questions. Next, bring the students back to a large group discussion where they can share their ideas and engage in an open-minded and deep exploration about the topics at hand.

SOCIAL JUSTICE	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 What do you think this means?2 What stops us as a nation from having social justice?3 What power do young people have to bring about social justice in this nation?4 Who are some young people you can think of that have successfully worked toward social justice? What strategies did they use?
POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Why do you think we have poverty and homelessness in this country?2 What do you think is the relationship between the two?3 What are some other factors that might cause someone to stay in poverty, homelessness, or both?4 What policies do you think we need as a nation to remedy poverty and homelessness?
HUNGER	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 What social and emotional problems might hunger cause in a family? For an individual?2 Do some research on food deserts and food sustainability. What information did you find and what relationship might those two concepts have with hunger in the United States?3 What are some food disparities you've observed in your own community?
INTOLERANCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 What do you think intolerance means, and what makes someone intolerant?2 What are some elements of tolerance that we should practice more as a nation?3 What social movements and changes have taken place throughout the history of this nation that have led to more tolerance?4 What roles do race, racism, culture, bias, and hate play in intolerance?5 What do you think is the opposite of intolerance, and what do you need to do to practice it in your own life?
DISABILITY AND ACCESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 What do you know and what can you share about disability and access?2 How much of an issue is physical access to buildings and services for those with disabilities at your school?3 How accessible is your community, your home, your school, and other public places?4 What changes do your school or community have to make in order to be more accessible to all people regardless of their physical needs?

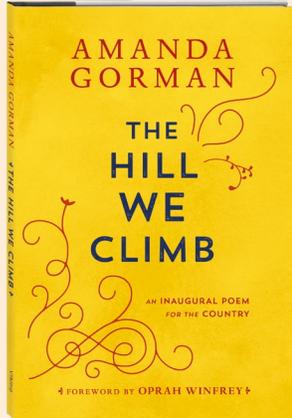
Extension Activities

PICTURE BOOK PAIRINGS

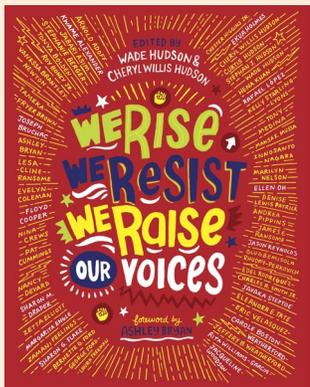
Pairing picture books is a good idea for showing the way one idea can be explored by different authors across different subjects. Books that could be in conversation with *Change Sings*:



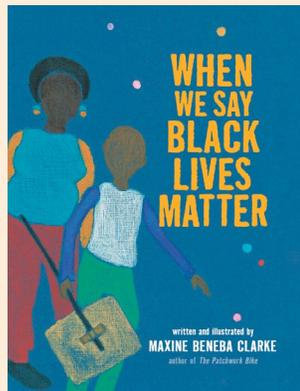
Our 1st Protest
by London C. Williams



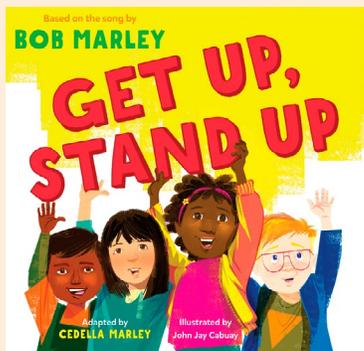
The Hill We Climb
by Amanda Gorman



We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices
by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson



When We Say Black Lives Matter
by Maxine Beneba Clarke



Get Up, Stand Up
by Bob Marley and Cedella Marley

VISUAL ARTS

The book begins and ends with a mural and presents a powerful opportunity to engage students in thinking about their community. You might want to focus on the classroom community, the school community, or the larger communities to which they belong. Ask them: How can we beautify the space you've chosen as a way to inspire people to work for social change? Individually, students can draft ideas and then bring those ideas to the larger class. Together, the class can design a mural. If it's a classroom-based project, then as the teacher you can decide how to allow students to bring this idea to life. If it's a school-wide project, then you should check in with school leaders and seek support. Involve students in the process so they practice advocating for themselves. Lastly, if it's a city-based idea, you might want to begin by reaching out to the local mayor's office and starting from there.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[January 2021 Statement by #DisruptTexts](#)
[Facts About Child Hunger website](#)



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