

Service-Learning Through Themes in Literature

Created by Joey Hoffman, Frederick County Public Schools

Subject Area: English

Grade Level: 9-12

This service-learning program is an infusion into the ninth grade English curriculum, focusing on a teacher-selected theme in literature. The theme will unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the course. The service project is developed in collaboration with students, teachers, and community partners in response to a need identified by the partner in the community. The program seeks to provide ongoing assistance to meet the need during the course and is continued by students in subsequent classes. The literature chosen for this class can be linked by the common theme of *tolerance* (appreciating diversity, respecting differences).

The primary literature includes: "The Contender", by Robert Lipsyte, a 1960s novel set in Harlem, involving teenagers faced with prospects of a future in the ghetto; "The Miracle Worker", by William Gibson, the drama of Helen Keller's struggle with multiple disabilities: blindness, deafness and muteness; "Night", by Elie Wiesel, an autobiography of a young Jewish boy's experiences with the horror of the Nazi death camp; "Romeo and Juliet", by William Shakespeare, the well-known tragedy of two teenagers' love and the family feud that resulted in their deaths.

Preparation: Students prepare for service through reading, discussion, presentations by speakers, simulation activities, and planning with staff of our partner, a school for students with severe physical and mental challenges.

Action: Individual students from the English class pair up with students with disabilities from the partner school, to engage in joint activities, including recreation, a service project, a dance, a scavenger hunt/field trip to a nearby mall, a field trip to Baltimore's Science Center, and either a picnic with team sports and games in the spring, or a holiday celebration in December.

Reflection: Students participate in ongoing reflection through discussion and writing. They also create a final project display and write letters to their partners in the special schools.