

Young Problem Solvers

Young people will be the next generation of leaders and change-makers. But many don't wait until they are in positions of power to take action. These innovative minds search for and create solutions to the problems they see around them. This text set explores young people who research, invent, or speak out to solve problems.

Essential Questions

1. Whose responsibility is it to solve problems in the world?
2. How can young people make an impact on their community? How can they impact the world?
3. What inspires young people to take action?
4. Why is it important for young people to be involved in finding solutions?

Introduction to the Theme

Read the following quote aloud: “No matter how old you are, you can change the world.” Tell students this is advice from an individual featured in one of *TFK*'s articles for this text set. Create a scale on chart paper. Have the scale range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Tell students to write their name on the paper to show their level of agreement with the quote. Have a class discussion about why students agree or disagree, and ask volunteers to share examples that support their opinion. Hang on to this chart until the end of the unit.

Informational Text

These *TIME for Kids* articles can be used to discuss the theme of young problem solvers.

1. **“Robotics Champions”** (November 15, 2019)
Young people from 191 countries competed to find a high-tech solution to ocean pollution.
2. **“Kid Heroes for the Planet”** (April 19, 2019)
Read about young people who have worked to improve planet Earth.
3. **“Eight Questions for Evan Barnard”** (February 22, 2019) When Evan was a kid, he helped fix a Braille nature trail. When he was older, he set out to create his own.
4. **“Bodybuilding”** (October 23, 2017) Using a 3D printer, eighth graders built a prosthetic hand for a local farmer.
5. **“Helping Others”** (September 6, 2017) A kid designed the Ability App to help people with disabilities navigate public spaces.
6. **“Soap Club”** (January 20, 2017) Eco-Soap Bank recycles soap for people in need.

Literary Text

These fictional texts can be used to discuss the theme of youth problem solvers.

1. ***Iqbal and His Ingenious Idea***, by Elizabeth Suneby.
Iqbal, who lives in Bangladesh with his mother and sister, finds a clever way to reduce pollution.
2. ***The Seismic Seven***, by Katie Slivensky. Brianna and a group of kids are working on a summer project, which turns out to be stopping a massive supervolcano that could destroy civilization.
3. ***Jack and the Geniuses: At the Bottom of the World***, by Bill Nye and Gregory Mone. Jack and his siblings travel to Antarctica for a science competition. But when they discover that a scientist has disappeared, they must search for her and her missing research.
4. ***The Light in the Lake***, by Sarah R. Baughman.
Addie joins the Young Scientist program and spends a summer measuring water pollution levels at Maple Lake. She also becomes intrigued by the place's mysterious secrets.

Optional Extension

Return to the statement from the beginning of the lesson and ask students if their opinion has changed. Allow students to write their name in a different color to indicate their level of agreement after reading the texts. If there are any students who still disagree, you may wish to have a class debate. To further drive this point home, have students write a newspaper article featuring a young problem solver. This can be a person from one of the texts, someone they have read about elsewhere, or someone from their community. When they're finished, have students share their articles and vote as a class on which one should be front-page news. Bind the articles into a shareable, inspirational newspaper about young problem solvers.

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