

CIVICS IN LITERATURE

★★ *April Lesson Plan* ★★

GRADES
K-4

A black and white portrait of a man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a suit and tie. The portrait is partially obscured by a large, semi-transparent circular graphic on the left side of the page.

**"HERE IS YOUR COUNTRY.
CHERISH THESE NATURAL WONDERS,
CHERISH THE NATURAL RESOURCES,
CHERISH THE HISTORY AND ROMANCE AS A SACRED HERITAGE..."**

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This installment of the National Constitution Center's *Civics in Literature* initiative features suggested readings and activities for teaching Earth Day and Tax Day in your classroom. To find previous book suggestions and lesson plans from past civic holidays, visit constitutioncenter.org/learn! *Civics in Literature* is designed to meet the common core standards for students from kindergarten through fourth grade. These materials strengthen foundational skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. *Civics in Literature* allows younger students to access complex topics and issues by meeting them at their level and guiding them to a higher level of understanding.

READING LIST

City Green

by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan*

Me...Jane

by Patrick McDonnell

If You Made a Million

by David M. Schwartz



AUTHOR

Anne Spector

Anne Spector is an educator whose career has taken her into classrooms from first grade to 3rd year law students. She has taught in both the School District of Philadelphia and the School District of Cheltenham Township where she also served as a Central Office Administrator. Mrs. Spector holds an undergraduate degree in psychology, a teaching degree in Secondary English, a graduate degree in Reading, and Elementary and Secondary Principal Certification.

Throughout Mrs. Spector's career she has dedicated much of her time to developing and implementing programs that promote student voice and citizenship education through a marriage of literacy and civic literacy. With a team of educators that includes her writing partner Elaine Scarpino, Anne is helping to create the *We the Civic Kids* program for elementary students, grades K to 5. Her work in this field began over twenty years ago when she collaborated with Temple University's LEAP program (Law Education and Participation) to help in the development of law-related education material. She continued her work in elementary civic education by creating a K to 4 program known as *Let's Take Two...Two Steps Back, Two Minutes to Think, Two People to Solve a Problem*.

After retiring from Cheltenham, Anne joined the staff at the National Constitution Center as the Director of PennCORD, First Lady Marjorie O. Rendell's Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy. Through her work with PennCORD Mrs. Spector created S.T.A.R. Force (Students Thinking and Acting Responsibly), a K to 6 program that married literacy and civic literacy as a way to teach basic civic knowledge, promote public action between and among our youngest citizens, and provide practice in democratic deliberation.

Mrs. Spector embraces the notion that...*reading is our first freedom*. She is thrilled to be able to bring this philosophy to children and their teachers across the country through materials that highlight children's literature with lessons that connect young minds to complex concepts and build student voice.

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FEATURED BOOK AND ACTIVITIES

City Green by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

Many of us know of a place in our community that needs some tender loving care. *City Green* is the story of a community that joins together to turn a trash-ridden plot of land into a community garden. Do you have a project for your community in mind? What steps would you take to make your idea into a reality?

Activity #1: Before Marcy and Miss Rosa can actually start their community garden they need to get permission from the elected officials in their community. First, they must write a petition and try to get the neighbors to sign it.

Find out to whom you would have to ask permission if you wanted to plant a community garden in a vacant lot in your community. Then, develop an action plan for how you would get your friends and neighbors to help out.

Activity #2: Think about how you would handle the following “Sticky Situation”:

You and a friend are walking home in your neighborhood. Two girls from your class are walking in front of you. Suddenly one of the girls throws a wrapper from the candy bar she is eating on the ground. You call out to her and ask if she knows she dropped the wrapper. She answers, “It’s only a dirty old vacant lot where everyone throws their trash. Why should I have to pick up my wrapper?” What would you do or say in that situation? Be prepared to support your answer.

Activity #3: The right to petition the government is written in the U.S. Constitution. Think of an issue you would like to bring to a teacher, a principal, a state representative, a community leader—even the President of the United States.

Write a short letter that explains what you would like to see changed. Then begin to gather signatures, letting the signers know what you want and to whom you will be giving your petition.

Whether planning a field trip, looking for innovative ways to enhance classroom instruction or seeking a deeper understanding of American history and active citizenship, the National Constitution Center is an educator's ultimate civic learning resource.

Learn more at
CONSTITUTIONCENTER.ORG/EDUCATION



THE MUSEUM OF *We the People*

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