

LESSON 5: **SEPARATE IS NEVER EQUAL**

SYLVIA MENDEZ & HER FAMILY'S FIGHT FOR DESEGREGATION

Know your audience.

This book is generally recommended for ages 6 – 9 /Grades 1st to 4th or 2nd - 5th. Some teachers/parents recommend this for 5-year-olds as well.

THEMES: Appreciate Diversity, Believe in Yourself(Empowerment)

BOOK: *Separate is Never Equal* Written and Illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh

MATERIALS:

- ***Laminated Poster 1:** Include title, author, and illustrator of book

Include underlined vocabulary words:

VOCABULARY WORDS:

Integrate - to make(a school or other organization) open or available to all racial and ethnic groups

injustice –something that is not fair

superior – better, of better-quality

inferior – not as good, of lesser quality

segregate - to separate people based on race, ethnic background, religion

desegregation: ending a law or practice that separates people of different races

ethnicity– a group of people that have a common national or cultural tradition

attitude – the way you think and feel about someone or something

overcome – to defeat or beat(Someone or something); to successfully deal with or gain control or rise above something difficult.

obstacle - something that makes it difficult to do something

- ***Laminated Poster 2:** Words to Poem– “Though Impossible“
- **Poem - Optional:** "Though Impossible" Individual sheet for each student
- **Writing Activity Sheet**
- **Pointer**
- **Vis-a-Vis marker** for laminated poster
- **Highlighter tape** (optional)

POSSIBLE LITERACY FOCUS: Generate a list of “ea” or “ee” words with children

Poem: Words with “ea” – (dream, seas), feat, reach teach, deal, heal ,cream, cheat, heat, mean, meat, please, lead, leap, cheap, steal

or- words with double “ee” – (seem, sweeping) green, agree, sneeze, jeep, feet, free, creep

meet, deep, need, queen, cheek, weep, sheep, sweet, street, freeze, steel

BEFORE READING OF STORY/DISCUSSION: For the older students, this book and the book in Lesson 8 can be a basis for more written activities and discussion of Civil Rights and Martin Luther King Jr., as well as judging people based on the color of their skin or the language that they speak. Comparison should be done between the two events, after Lesson 8, *Let the Children March*, is presented.

SHOW BOOK COVER: Read the author and illustrator’s name.

ASK: What do you think is happening in this illustration? Discuss. I will read the first part of the title so maybe you can get a better idea of what is happening in the illustration. After discussing their ideas, read the rest of the title. There is a big word in the second part of the title, “desegregation”. Say it with me. Let us clap the number of syllables that are in this word. Let us count it on our fingers. To understand this 5-syllable word, I am going to tell you what “segregate” means. (Clapping the syllables is probably unnecessary in a second-grade class.) Segregate is a smaller word---let us clap it. Yes, three syllables. “Segregate” (usually used with people)- to set apart from the rest, to separate or divide “Desegregation” is when the opposite is done— instead of separating and dividing people from each other---they are put together, unified.

DEMONSTRATE: (If helpful for your class) Use objects of different colors to demonstrate *segregate* and *desegregate*, or use cut-out construction paper figures in people colors to demonstrate this on a board. Use repositionable sticky squares to put them up to show segregation and then reposition them to desegregation.

Let us see if we can better understand these words: “segregate “and “desegregation” after I read this story. If you do not understand a word while I am reading, raise your hand and ask me. Also, think about what the author’s message may be. Are we just getting information, entertainment, or is there a lesson to this story?

READ STORY

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK/DISCUSS: As you are reading, stop at vocabulary words listed, and any words that you think the students might not understand. Discuss pages 2 and 3, **“Go back to the Mexican school. You don’t belong here.”** *Was it okay for the boy to say this? How did it make Sylvia feel? Why is Sylvia looking at her skin? Why do you think her cousins were allowed to go to the “White School”, and Sylvia and her brother had to go to the “Mexican School?”*

The “Mexican School” - hallways were not “spacious” or clean. The children had to eat

lunch outside where flies would land on their food because there were cows nearby. The education was not as good. Discuss “petition” – how signing that paper was a way of speaking out about how unfair the separate schools were. Discuss how the parents got a lawyer, Mr. Marcus, to help change the laws. Not only were the schools segregated but also public areas: Read: “No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed” sign. Discuss the “degrading” untrue reason why the school children were kept separate. What happened at the end of the story? Note that it was through the court, the legal system, and through working together, that desegregation happened. It was in the parents and friends believing that they could change the system. It started with one person, Sylvia’s father. What did Sylvia do when some of the children pointed and called her names? (She held her head up high and ignored it) What do you think the author’s purpose in writing the book was? Did we get information? Yes! Did the author also want us to learn from that information? What would that be?

POEM/DISCUSSION: Project poem on board or have it printed on chart paper or poster board, which can be laminated for future use. Read the poem with children. Individual copies can also be distributed to students. *Sylvia’s parents believed that they could build a better world for their children. Mr. Mendez, Sylvia’s father knew it was wrong that his children were not allowed to go to the same school that Sylvia’s cousins were going to---he said, “It had to be mistake” and he would “take care of it”. It took one person who believed he could make a change and then together with others, it happened. Let us read the words to see how it relates to the book. Love, hope, and having a dream or goal helped to make desegregation happen. It is being together and understanding one another that brings peace. This cannot happen when we are apart.*

Let us read the words of this poem and talk about how they relate to Mr. Mendez and all of us. Is reaching a goal all about your attitude—your belief in yourself? Have volunteers come up to the poem to identify contractions with highlighter tape, or by circling them. Do a mini lesson on contractions. Include this poem in their poetry notebook, if they have one.

WRITING ACTIVITY: Questions you might ask:

What was the author’s message about standing up for what is right?

How did Mr. Mendez’ attitude help his cause?

Why is “separate never equal?”

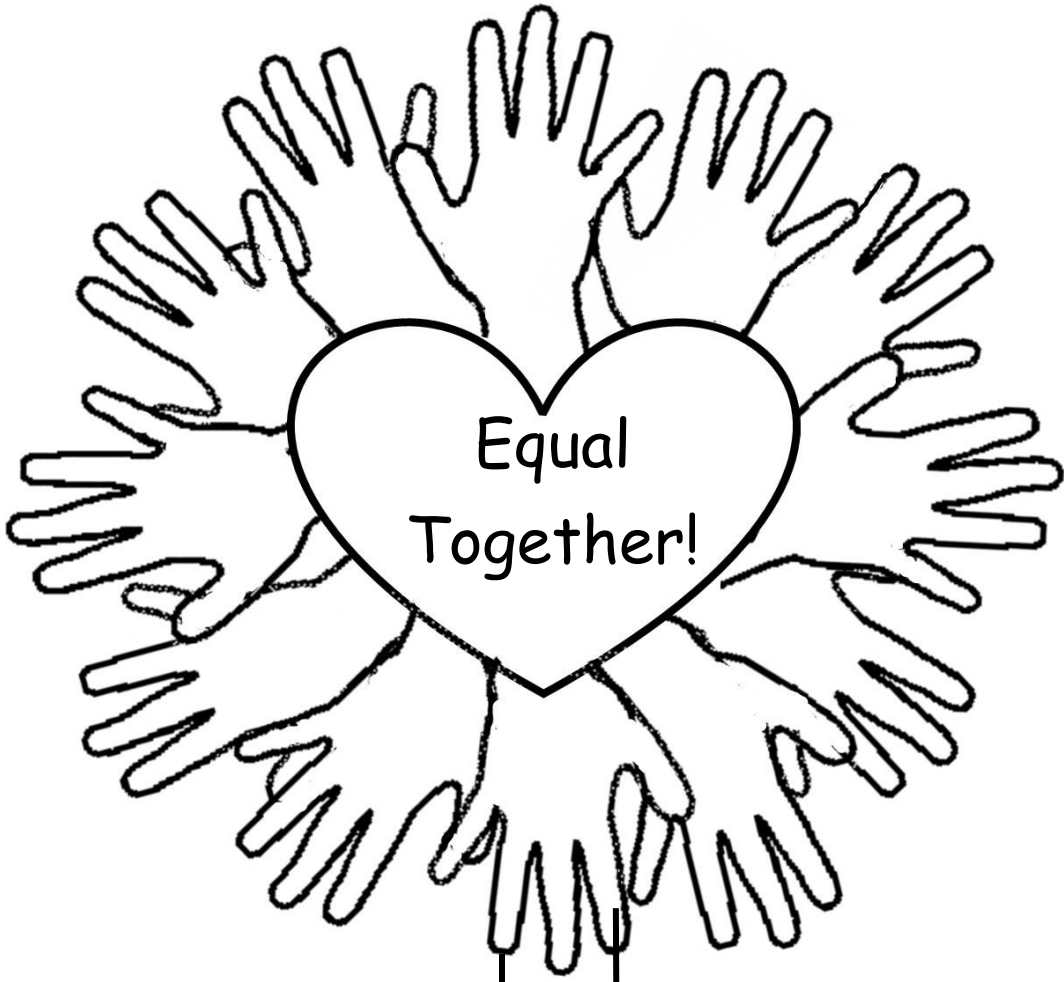
"Though Impossible"

Believe in yourself and in your dream
Though impossible things may seem,
Someday, somehow, you'll get through
To the goal you have in view.

Mountains fall and seas divide before
The one who in his stride
Takes a hard road day by day
Sweeping obstacles away.

Believe in yourself and in your plan.
Say not - I cannot but, I can.
The prizes of life we fail to win,
Because we doubt the power within.

Author Unknown



Equal
Together!

The
time
is
always
right
to
do
the
thing
is
right!

Martin Luther King Jr.

