

## 15. The Stories of Our Lives

*This activity allows students the opportunity to gain a broader understanding of, and empathy for, the plight of the hungry and homeless.*



### Materials Needed:

Video “Rwanda to Canada”

Video “Fragile” (DVD player)

Books (see list on following page)

Writer’s Notebooks/Journals

**Teachers should preview all video content before screening it for students. Before use, consider classroom and community sensitivities, and age-appropriateness.**

### Rwanda to Canada

This is a remarkable and dramatic story of survival and sanctuary for a Rwandan refugee. As a child, alone and on the run in the jungle, Christian Butara survived the Rwandan genocide in 1994, but not without witnessing his father’s murder and losing more than 100 family members and friends. Christian tells the moving story of his childhood and the solace and opportunity he found after immigrating to Canada.

**Content Warning: some graphic images and content**

**Length: 15:30 minutes**

Key Words: “refugee” “genocide”

### Fragile

Fragile is a music video performed by young, talented Amanda Falk to lyrics and music written by Amanda Falk. The music is powerful and depicts motivating and thoughtful imagery of hunger, homelessness and poverty from around the world.

**Length: five minutes**

Play the video, “Rwanda to Canada” to illustrate how desperate a life can be. Alternatively, play the music video “Fragile.” Then, students will work with a partner through the following activity:

### Step 1:

Each partnership chooses a book from the suggested book list below. Students take the time to carefully read the story together, discussing thoughts and feelings along the way. Students should pay particular attention to the critical character that has been identified for each book.



**Step 2:**

Students use their Writer's Notebooks/Journals to write a diary entry from the point-of-view of the critical character. Time should be spent sharing their entry with their reading partner upon completion.

**Step 3:**

Students take on the role of either the critical character or a talk show host. Together, the two students create a series of interview questions that the host will ask the critical character. Answers should be discussed and agreed upon. The questions and answers will ultimately share the "story of my life" for the critical character. Remind students to be aware of sensitivity and respect when creating their questions and answers.

**Step 4:**

Each partnership enters the role-playing situation of talk show host and critical characters in front of their classmates. The stage could be set with an appropriate desk or table, a microphone and other small props to add to the dramatic nature of this activity. A sign entitled "The Stories of Our Lives" could be hung in the background. Through the series of questions and answers, classmates will gain an understanding of a variety of issues surrounding homelessness and poverty.

**Step 5:**

Groups come forward and continue to share their role-playing scenario with classmates. Teachers should judge the appropriateness of doing all groups in one day. This activity could easily be spread out over several class periods.

**Step 6:**

Students return to their Writer's Notebooks/Journals to record their thinking after the interview presentations. Students should be encouraged to reflect upon any changes in opinion they may now have after hearing from several different critical characters.

**Suggested Picture Books:**

<b>Bibliographic Information</b>	<b>Point of View: Critical Character</b>
Barbour, Karen, <b>Mr. Bow Tie</b> , San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991.	Mr. Bow Tie
Bunting, Eve, <b>Fly Away Home</b> .	Boy
Bunting, Eve, <b>December</b> .	Simon
Canfield, Jack, <b>Chicken Soup for Little Souls: The Braids Girl</b> , Florida, Health Communications, 1998.	Izzy
Chin, Karen, <b>Sam and the Lucky Dragon</b> .	Sam
Cooper, <b>Getting' Through Thursday</b> .	Andre
Day, Marie, <b>Edward the "Crazy Man"</b> , Toronto, Annick Press, 2002.	Crazy Man or Charlie
DiSalvo, Dyanne, <b>A Castle of Viola Street</b> , USA, Harper Collins, 2001.	Andy
DiSalvo, Dyanne, <b>Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen</b> .	Uncle Willie or nephew
Foreman, Michael, <b>Mia's Story</b> , Massachusetts, Candlewick Press, 2006.	Mia
Groth, Bonnie Lee, <b>Home is Where We Live: Life at a Shelter Through a Young Girl's Eyes</b> .	Little girl
Gunning, Monica, <b>A Shelter in our Car</b> .	Zettie
Guthrie, Donna, <b>A Rose for Abby</b> .	Abby
Kroll, Virginia, <b>Shelter Folks</b> .	Joelle
Lambert, Matthew, <b>Joey's Birthday Wish</b> .	Joey
Mackall, Dandi, <b>Silent Dreams</b> .	orphan girl
Martin, Chia, <b>Rosie, the Shopping Cart Lady</b> .	Rosie
McGovern, Ann, <b>The Lady in the Box</b> .	Dorrie
Powell, E. Sandy, <b>A Chance to Grow</b> .	Mother
Roth, Judith, <b>Cups Held Out</b> .	
Testa, Marie, <b>Someplace to Go</b> .	Davey
Vos Wezeman, Phyllis, <b>Benjamin Brody's Backyard Bag</b> .	Benjamin
Williams, Vera, <b>A Chair for my Mother</b> , New York, Greenwillow Books, 1982.	little girl
Wine, Jeannie, <b>Silly Tillie</b> .	Silly Tillie or Laundromat owner