

## Janaki Venkayya: Committed to Caring

### Grade Levels

7-12

### Description

This lesson draws on essential questions pertinent to a language arts or social studies classroom, including those related to civic responsibility, personal engagement, and individual development. These activities may be adapted to include elements of texts otherwise being addressed in class. Each portion of this lesson may be altered to suit the particular needs, academic language considerations, and reading level of the classroom. For language arts classrooms, this lesson may be included with texts such as *The Glass Castle*, or other pertinent novels. It can also be included as part of a service learning project.

### Standards Met

Common Core Standards - English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.10/8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.10  
By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literacy nonfiction in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.10  
By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

ODE Grade 7 Social Studies Standards:

#### Government Strand

16. The ability to understand individual and group perspectives is essential to analyzing historic and contemporary issues.

## ODE Grade 8 Social Studies Standards:

### Economics Strand

22. Choices made by individuals, businesses and governments have both present and future consequences.
25. The effective management of one's personal finances includes using basic banking services (e.g., savings accounts and checking accounts) and credit.

## ODE HS Social Studies Standards:

### Civic Participation and Skills

6. Effective civic participation involves identifying problems or dilemmas, proposing appropriate solutions, formulating action plans, and assessing the positive and negative results of actions taken.
7. Individuals can participate through non-governmental organizations to help address humanitarian needs.

## Concept Addressed

Homelessness and ways to assist homeless persons in the students' area.

## Learning Objectives

The students will become familiar with an Ohio Trustee and her civic participation. They will be able to identify various causes of homelessness and reasons that homelessness perpetuates. Students will be able to search a variety of informational sites and texts to create action plans and evaluate options for a hypothetical homeless family.

## Considerations

- Students will need a working understanding of how to conduct online searches.
- Students may need additional expansion upon concepts pertinent to the subject of homelessness, depending on what the teacher assesses regarding their prior knowledge.
- Teachers will need to be mindful of students' personal responses to this issue. Some students may elect not to share experiences or may show discomfort surrounding the topic.
- Students will need to work in groups for the main portion of this lesson. Teachers should decide how and when they wish to establish student groups if students are not seated in

group formations already. Also teachers have the flexibility to decide how many students to a group based on their classroom needs.

### Materials Needed

- Computer, projector, and/or Smartboard.
- The Smith Family scenario sheet, adapted from a lesson plan from [www.homelesshub.ca](http://www.homelesshub.ca)
- Access to computers for each group, or devices if allowed in the classroom.

### Assessments of Learning

- Student responses to discussions and brainstorming.
- Student summary of findings and self-reflection.

## Instructional Outline (55 minutes)

- At the beginning of class, introduce and bring up the online game “Hobson’s Choice\*: The Game you Just Can’t Leave.” at <http://vinformation.famvin.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/hobsons2n.swf>  
\*Note: this game is hosted by a religiously-related website however it does not have a religious aspect to it and did not originate from a religious organization, rather through [realchangenews.org](http://realchangenews.org)
- If your classroom has the computers available allow students to work through the game a few times on their own or in pairs, otherwise, boot up the game via Smartboard or projector and make choices to work through the game as a class a few times. After the students have had some time with the game, hold a discussion about their thoughts on it, its accuracy, and whether it has changed anything about how they think about the issue of homelessness. (15 minutes).
- Ask about whether any students have experience working with homeless persons or know anyone who has, and invite students to share their stories. (5 minutes).
- As a class, view the Ohio American Trustee video of Janaki Venkayya: <http://www.artsci.uc.edu/departments/communication/research-and-scholarship/ohio-american-trustees-project-/janakivenkayya.html>
- Give each student group a copy of The Jones Family scenario sheet. Read aloud the scenario and brainstorm on the board as a class as to what basic needs the Joneses will need to meet. (5 minutes).
- Review rules for online use and seeking web-based information as necessary based on your school’s policies. Allow students to look online for resources in their community, such as Venkayya’s Gandhi House, that can provide for the Smiths’ needs, making sure that they have found resources for all types of needs compiled on the board. Ask that students look up local rates for apartments and hotels to figure out how long they can make their money last. Stress that this is not a problem to be solved, but rather a way to understand the family’s situation. (30 minutes).
- Either as a homework assignment or as an in-class assignment, depending on the length of your class time. Have students write an individual summary of their findings, and also reflect upon the situation. What were the most challenging needs to meet? Were there any surprises for the students in terms of what was available? What barriers could there be for the family in finding these resources themselves?

## The Smith Family

The Smith family just moved to town from out-of-state. Mr. Smith is to start a new job within three weeks. His medical insurance will not begin until sometime after. The Smiths have found an apartment and moved in, and have about \$1,300.00 in cash which will have to last them at least one month.

The Smiths have been out shopping for supplies and other necessities. They have spent \$300.00. When they arrive home they discover that a flood has destroyed their apartment and everything in it. They do not have renter's insurance or other way to be reimbursed for the damage. They do not have any friends or family, being new to the area. They are now homeless.

In your groups, search for ways for the family to meet its basic needs. Bear in mind that they have \$1,000 to meet the needs of all family members for the month.