**Social Issues Book Clubs**

In many ways, this unit is closely connected to the Interpretation Text Sets unit. If you are a grade 3 teacher, this unit will set students up for deepening theme and interpretation work in the grade 4 *Interpretation Text Sets* unit. If you are a grade 4 teacher, this unit will build on the work you have begun in the *Interpretation Text Sets* unit, and set them up for more sophisticated work when they reach the Grade 5 *Interpretation Text Sets* unit.

**Texts for This Unit**

* Prepare for this unit by putting together baskets of books organized by a variety of issues. Each basket will contain a couple of novels (perhaps new, perhaps familiar), a couple of picture books, a couple of nonfiction short texts, a poem, a song). The example shared in the e-doc is a basket with *Fly Away Home, The Hundred Dresses,* an article on child poverty, a book about being unique).
* For your readers at or above grade level, you will want to put together baskets of texts that have a few possible issues or themes in common for the students to uncover. For your students not quite at grade level, you may want to create a mixed-genre basket that has an obviously common issue or a single issue about which you know they are passionate.
* You may also wish to support more emerging readers by having them work in a basket of books organized around the same issue as the whole class basket. You will not want to label these baskets as containing a particular issue. Rather, it is the job of the book club to uncover the issue.
* It may be helpful if you created baskets with a partner or grade level. Using books from the book room and sharing the task of finding articles on a particular issue allows for two people to share the task of collection.

**Structure of This Unit**

* The structure of the unit is similar to that of other units in that the teacher uses a set of texts with which to model the types of thinking the book clubs will parallel with their own text sets. In this case, the “class text set” will be one basket of books focusing on one issue for the whole class to study together through the read-aloud and minilessons. This basket will be used by the teacher to demonstrate how to uncover and identify the issue(s) that connect the theme and to pull in other familiar texts to the collection that fit with the issue(s).
* Book clubs will then work with their own basket of texts. The job of the book club is to read the texts in their baskets and to consider the themes of these texts, what the author’s message or perspective is, and how a common issue(s) is addressed in each of the texts and across the texts. The book club may then think of other texts they have read that may fit with this particular collection, and they should be encouraged to add those texts to the basket. This work of “uncovering” the issue is very engaging and motivating for students!

**Instructional Resources**

* To support you in teaching this unit, you may want to see specific minilessons in the chapter “Reading for Justice and Power: A Social Issues Book Club Unit” by Mary Coackley, from *Constructing Curriculum: Alternate Units of Study*, which is in your *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* kit (the shorter, fatter book).
* The e-doc is also helpful in suggesting essential questions to ask in this unit that supports students in interpreting theme and comparing issues across texts.
* Use a variety of digital texts to teach students about all the aspects of inferring theme in texts, such as plot vs. theme, symbolism, interpreting author’s message, tone, and so on. For lists of digital texts (video clips, poems, photographs, song lyrics, etc.), sample lessons, and teaching ideas, see the following website: **digitalbins.wordpress.com**