

FIGHT TO LEARN The Struggle to Go to School

by **Laura Scandiffio**

Genre: Non-fiction

Themes: school; education; global studies; teamwork; society; problem-solving

Suitable for: Grades 6–12

Common Core standards : RH.6-12.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
L.6-12.3
SL.6-12.1, 1a, 1c, 1d, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
WHST.6-12.1, 1b, 2, 2b, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10

ACTIVITY IDEAS

The following activity ideas are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text.

Comprehension activities:

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text

BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK

Activities to build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and to establish prior knowledge and interest and develop predictions of what the text will be about.

1. What does the “right to an education” mean?
2. How is it defined and protected by international law?
3. How is the right to an education connected to other human rights?
4. Why is it important to protect and advance children’s rights to education?
5. What is your idea of a good education?

6. What do you have a right to expect from your teachers and schools in order to get a good education? For each of these rights, what responsibilities do you have?
7. In small groups, create a list of 10 basic rights that you feel are the most important to living a quality life.
8. What would happen if any one of these rights were taken away?

Oxfam's Global Charter for Basic Rights

(There are many worldwide organizations advocating for children around the world; this is one example.)

In response to calls from communities and organizations which Oxfam works with around the world, ten basic rights have been identified. The list was developed over a long period of consultation with groups of people who suffer poverty and injustice. The rights are equal in status and interdependent. They are all based on existing legal rights which many countries already claim to provide for their citizens, but which are often denied in practice.

Every person has a basic right to:

1. A home – not just a roof over their head, but somewhere they can identify with and feel secure in.
2. Clean water – water which is safe for drinking, washing, and cooking.
3. Enough to eat – enough food of the right kind to provide a healthy diet.
4. A safe environment – an environment free from pollution or disasters like flooding.
5. Protection from violence – including the effects of war, as well as violence on the streets and in the home.
6. Equality of opportunity – equal chances for people whatever their race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, class, or nationality.
7. A say in their future – the right to have their opinions and wishes heard and taken account of and to have control over what happens in their lives.
8. An education – a free, equal, and adequate education for all children, and any adults who have been denied it in the past.
9. A livelihood – a way to provide for one's own needs in life—this might be land to farm; a useful skill; work opportunities; benefits or other state support.
10. Health care – including prevention of disease and disability as well as treatment.

9. Read the poem below. What rights are being threatened based on Oxfam's Global Charter for Basic Rights?

A poem by Thumeka and Bongiwe, Khayelitsha

If the child is not educated
she or he gets into child labor
and works hard while still young.

Many children are employed in taverns where alcohol is sold.
They look after houses when the owners are not there.
They are sent on errands to the shops by neighbors.
People hit the child whenever they feel like it.

If a parent sends you to school
they have high hopes for you.
After the child has finished education
everyone in the house can rely on that child.
People respect the child because they are educated.
The child becomes a good example to others.

If there are problems at home
the child faces them even more when at school.
If the child is unhappy at home
it is going to be even worse at school.

Teachers make fun of the child, who does not understand things,
older children look down on him or her.
A child who is late for school fears the teacher
because they may be hit.
Then the child ends up not going to school at all.

Every child must have what they deserve at home
or it will be difficult to learn at school.

WHILE READING THE BOOK

Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

1. Print out a blank map of the world. As you read about places around the globe where education is not readily available, use pins to mark their locations on the map.
2. How does the power of education change lives?
3. How do basic rights affect each other? How are they connected?
4. How does the point of view of each story contribute to the authenticity of the content?
5. What do schools look like across the globe? What are the most important characteristics for a school to have?
6. All of Oxfam's basic rights are based on existing legal rights which many countries already claim to provide for their citizens. Find examples where this is not the case.
7. What humanitarian agencies are mentioned in *Fight to Learn*?
8. Find examples in the book where goals that seemed impossible were achieved through passion and determination.
9. How do war, violence, poverty, and discrimination affect education? Who is affected?
10. Discuss themes of appreciation, gratitude, and heroism. What examples can you give from the book?

AFTER READING THE BOOK

Activities to inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further discussions.

1. Research and create a multimedia presentation on the importance of global initiatives for education. Include agencies discussed in the book or others you have found.
2. In groups, choose a problem facing education around the world from the book. Plan a campaign for the "Right to Learn."
3. What was the most shocking thing you read about in *Fight to Learn*?

4. Write an essay describing the home, government, and school connection. Who is responsible for an individual's success?
5. What is Laura Scandiffio's purpose for writing *Fight to Learn*? Analyze how the structure and content contribute to the power, tone, and persuasiveness of the text.
6. Why do you think this book was written as short true stories rather than a novel?
7. Debate: We should protect and advocate for individuals living in our own developed countries before spending time, money, and resources helping those in "developing countries."
8. Go back to your world map. Research all of the places you read about to determine if they are developed or developing nations. Create a list of obstacles for children around the world based on what you read. Compare and contrast the struggles among developed and developing nations.
9. How did *Fight to Learn* deepen your understanding of the world?
10. What is the connection between education and life expectancy? Explain using details from the stories.
11. How do you have the power to change the world?
12. Write a Thank You note to someone in your life whom you feel deserves to be recognized for helping you achieve successful outcomes.